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**Cultural Considerations for Music Therapists Working with Immigrant Korean Elders in
America: A Literature Review**

Capstone Thesis

Lesley University

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MA, Clinical Mental Health Counseling: Music Therapy

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Abstract

This literature review aims to introduce Korean cultural context to music therapists with little to no experience working with immigrant Korean elders and explore within the literature on the music therapy theory the possibilities of better serving immigrant Korean elders in America. This paper is intended to act as a recommendation for music therapists to be able to better serve immigrant Korean elders within their practice through cultural considerations and other key topics. Five key topics are explored: (a) culture and cultural sensitivity, (b) characteristics of Korean culture, (c) Korean traditional therapeutic music, (d) immigrant Korean elders and the issues they face, and (e) music therapy approaches for immigrant Korean elders. In addition, this literature review offers relevant recommendations based on personal experiences as well as supplementary research and observations made within said experiences.

Keywords: immigrant Korean elders in America, cultural sensitivity, Korean culture, music therapy (practice and theory), Korean traditional therapeutic music

Cultural Considerations for Music Therapists Working with Immigrant Korean Elders in America: A Literature Review

I am Korean. I grew up in Korea, playing western classical music since I was six years old and later came to the USA to study jazz. I hardly think about myself in the Korean cultural context in music because I was familiar with music ranging from Baroque's Western music genre to the Postmodern era, Ragtime to Fusion Jazz. Moreover, I was not interested in Korean music. In my first-year internship, I worked with clients who had a Jewish cultural background. I realized that providing their own cultural music along with events of the Jewish calendar was not enough to access their values, norms, characteristics, and beliefs. It was an eye-opening experience, and my newfound awareness led my attention to cultural considerations in a therapeutic setting. During that internship, I realized that culture is not just about language, customs, food, or ways of thinking, which led me to ponder about myself in the same context. This belief and curiosity led me to decide my future career target population: immigrant Korean elders who speak Korean and little to no English, have a lack of accessible and affordable counseling due to this language barrier, and still maintain their homeland traditions and values despite the difficulty of remaining in the America. This year while I am writing this thesis, I am working with immigrant Korean elders, and it has granted me great opportunities to learn about the population and culture. I am helping their emotional and mental difficulties with support counseling, along with music therapy. I had a passion for working with them because I witnessed how music lifts their spirits and watched how it could celebrate their lives and bring back joy to their hearts. This passion and belief and my curiosity to rediscover myself culturally has driven me to focus my thesis on the usage of music therapy for immigrant Korean elders.

This capstone thesis is targeted towards other music therapists who may serve immigrant

Korean elders during their work. This thesis, however, is not redefining the base of music therapy work but, instead, is an addition to what has already been studied and applied in the field. I have chosen a critical review of the literature for my thesis to educate myself in the topic of interest so that I may understand existing issues and contribute what I have found from this research as well as personal experience. Music therapy in the modern setting is often driven by Western European/North American standards and theories (Hadley & Norris, 2016), which often overlook the needs of immigrant Korean elders, and this is evident in the gap in the research (Jang, 2016) I have seen regarding this issue. This literature review works to find studies, however few there may be, on the aforementioned topic and find relationships between previous studies and theories that may tie into my specific topic/population group. In addition, the exploration of Western theories and interventions of music therapy utilized with immigrant Korean elders is explored along with any shortcomings and further suggestions to the future development of proper and effective treatments for this target group. Within this literature review, there are five discussion topics: (a) culture and cultural sensitivity, (b) characteristics of Korean culture, (c) Korean traditional therapeutic music, (d) immigrant Korean elders and the issues they face, and (e) music therapy approaches for immigrant Korean elders. In addition, there are relevant recommendations made based on personal experiences as well as supplementary research and observations made within said experiences.

Literature Review

Culture and Cultural Sensitivity

Culture is an inherent part of people and society and is made up of a culmination of a series of beliefs, actions and behaviors. It is in essence who we are as people and is tied closely to each and everyone's identity. Because of the importance of culture to people, it is crucial to be

aware of the differences that exist in various cultures and to be culturally sensitive when meeting clients in the music therapy field.

Brief Definition of Culture

Edward B. Tylor, a pioneer of modern anthropology, in 1871 gave a definition of culture that in some ways is still used today. He stated that, “culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Bidney, 1959, p. 1). The phrase, “complex whole” points to a focus on systems that became prominent in social theory during the twentieth century (Stige, 2002). Another definition of culture refers to beliefs, actions and behaviors associated with sex, age, location of residence, educational status, social economic status, history, formal and informal affiliations, nationality, ethnic group, language, race, religion, disability, illness, developmental handicap, life style, and sexual orientation (Dileo, 2000). According to Stige (2002) culture is something that takes place when people spend time together. They interact, create and use artifacts along with making and breaking rules, which in turn create more rules. Culture shapes people and is shaped by people in both conscious and non-conscious ways, some of which can be related to human nature evolved in phylogeny.

Cultural Sensitivity

Wheeler and Baker (2010) pointed out the importance of the therapist’s worldview while Hadley and Norris (2016) emphasized the importance of understanding the cultural aspects of a client’s preferred music. Music therapists be cautioned into a somewhat naïve way of thinking where the struggles and growth of a client may be compared across cultures. This comes from a misunderstanding of what the terms “culture,” “cultural sensitivity,” and “cultural competence”

mean despite the vast majority of music therapists agreeing on the importance of multiculturalism (Topozada, 1995). Stige (2002) specified that the misunderstanding of cultural competence can be stated as a lack of cultural sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity can be viewed as one's willingness to question what may be taken for granted and that things may always be different. This can help a music therapist better acknowledge the differences between clients.

Outcomes for cross cultural proficiency have been identified in relation to the profile of the clinician, which suggests that s/he should be characterized by having professional relationships across cultures (Manoleas, 2009), abilities to inquire about a client's culture while maintaining clarity regarding boundaries, and accurately interpreting a person's nonverbal communication (Wilson & Green, 1983). Such awareness is characterized by sensitivity to culturally relative views, as for example, about what to disclose to whom and under what conditions. Ronnau (1994) suggested that this profile should include commitment, awareness of self and of the meaning of difference, curiosity and knowledge seeking about a client's background, as well as an ability to adapt his or her practice behaviors to this new knowledge. In the book *Culture-Centered Music Therapy*, Stige (2002) explained the process of becoming culturally competent:

The journey begins with exploration of one's own personal bias and cultural influences and proceeds to cultural awareness, the insight that our clients are innately impacted by their own biases/cultural influences. This step is then followed by cultural sensitivity, the curiosity and desire to truly understand the implications of another individual's cultural influences, or the integration of acquired knowledge from increasing cultural sensitivity into the therapist's assessment and treatment planning process. (p. 112)

McGoldrick, Giordano, and Garcia-Preto (2005) suggested that European Americans must understand their own and other cultural experiences as a basis for understanding ethnic minorities. Preli and Bernard (1993) suggested that the lack of self-interpretation can lead to personal discomfort, which may be misinterpreted as a failure to relate to ethnic minorities when interpreted in relation to ethnic minorities.

Korean Culture and Therapeutic Music

Many cultures can seem vastly different from one another as well as being challenging to understand from an outside perspective. Korean culture is no exception from this, and especially so since its culture is not as widely explored like others. However, there is an aspect of it that is particularly important and useful to explore, which is the history of therapeutic music deep within the roots of Korean culture. An understanding of this can truly improve the quality at which we can serve immigrant Korean elders.

Characteristics of Korean Culture

Confucianism and Collectivism. Confucianism is the sociocultural framework that guides an individual's moral thinking and behavior found in East Asian countries such as South Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore. In addition, it has been an integral part of ethical texts, acting as guidance for people's good behavior in these countries (Ma & Smith, 1992). Park et al. (2005) stated that Confucianism has been dominant in Korean society for thousands of years, which has administered political, social, and family relationships. The Confucian ethics are outlined into five feasible instructions, which govern the five most essential human relationships: 1) affection between father and son, 2) devotion between sovereign and subject, 3) distinction between the roles of husband and wife, 4) courtesy of the young for the old, and 5)

trust between friends. These ethics come together to outline a strict hierarchical procedure for human relationships based on age and sex (Ma & Smith, 1992, p. 11).

In the same aspect, Englehart (2000) postulated that collectivism is also one of the features of Asian society that is “characterized by a set of values that includes obedience to authority, intense allegiance to groups, and a submergence of individual identity in collective identity” (p. 549). The principles of collectivism emphasize unquestioning acceptance of norms, attitudes, and group-based values (Park et al., 2005).

Bochner (1994) stated that Koreans are more obedient or delicate to the requisition and assumed needs of their group and avoid voicing any opinions that may cause a disturbance to the harmony of their respective group. Consequently, Koreans tend to unify with others in a group and are less assertive in pursuing personal goals if the result may jeopardize their relationship with said group.

Han. By intertwining with the various episodes of Korean history and the features of its culture, especially to that of the Japanese occupation, *han* has become an icon of the Korean identity (Howard, 2004; Willoughby, 2000). In the 1920s, the historical-cultural *han* concept arose and was shaped by the traumatic colonial past of Korea (1910-1945). *Han* is generally interpreted as feelings of unsolved rancor, grief, or resentment due to an extremely dreadful experience (Boman, 2020). According to Kim (2017), this characteristic or national phenomenon of Korea known as *han* did not exist in ancient Korea. Instead, this was instilled within Koreans during the Japanese colonial period, which has rooted itself into an essentialist and biologist notion. Kim added *han* is often illustrated as “running in the blood of all Koreans, and the quality of Korean sorrow as being different from anything Westerners have experienced or can understand” (p.258). In the same way, Moon (2013) emphasized that *han* is entailed only to

people of Korean origin who may interpret its philosophical meaning and psychological expressions.

Han is a crucial psycho-cultural concept in Korean history and culture. Despite the fact that *han* is challenging to put into words, *han* is reflected in a variety of aspects within Korean culture such as music, literature, film, and art (Boman, 2020). Moon, (2013) however, emphasized how *han* may be transcultural, meaning that it may go beyond Korea and Koreans.

Although *han* involves profoundly negative and destructive emotions, Kim (2007) noted, “*Han* is not an exclusively negative phenomenon” (p. 9). It is not simply a purely negative effect, but it has also been historically characterized to be responsible for creating complex beauty. Boman (2020) pointed out that *han* does not simply entail the ongoing trauma of the nation but instead provides a means for its own resolution. This manifests itself into the uniquely and beautifully Korean cultural productions.

Hung. Like *han*, *hung* is hugely rooted in the social behavior of many Korean people today and is associated with the communal lifestyle that characterizes pre-industrial village life (Mills, 2010). *Hung* is mainly interpreted as amusement, enthusiasm, merriment, and pleasure in Korean-English dictionaries; however, Mills (2012) pointed out that these words have not fully encapsulated *hung*'s meaning. Park (2011) described the closest definition of *hung* as “fun,” which should not be compared to that of transcendent experiences achieved through strict discipline. Instead, it is the derivative of the subversive, escapist, world-creating processes of playful creativity.

Mills (2010) noted that foreign visitors to South Korea are often surprised by the prominence of the idea of doing things together as one. While encouraged participation of communal events is not unique to that of Korean culture, the *hung*-driven generation of

togetherness is deeply rooted in the Korean psyche, with its origins reaching far back in history. The characteristics of *han* and *hung* also present themselves in Korean traditional therapeutic music, which I explore next.

Korean Traditional Therapeutic Music

Music is an audible form of expression of the psycho-cultural code and aesthetic patterning that forms within a society. “Traditional” music can be defined as how a society views their past in contrast to that of their present. Through excavation, preservation, or reconstruction, traditional music is constantly reclaimed to represent the national or ethnic identities around a postcolonial world (Park, 2011). In Korean culture, music has held an explanatory power much longer than it has in the West on at least the official governmental level due to its heightened sensitivity to the social and spiritual properties of music (Hesselink, 2007).

Korean Traditional Music. Based on the purpose of the performance and audience, Korean traditional music is generally assigned into two divisions, which are *aak* (elegant music), enjoyed by the aristocracy, and played at court; and *minsogak* (folk and secular music), typically appreciated by the common people and traditionally denoted as folk music by listeners of this style (Choi, 2006). Jeon (2017) explained that the most critical aspect of *aak* (court and aristocratic music) is emotional restraint; for example, slow tempi, simple rhythms, and calm melodies emphasized the music’s serenity. While *aak*’s characteristics are simplicity and calmness, *minsogak* (folk music) features feelings of joy and sorrow and is enjoyed by the common people (Choi, 2006).

Korean traditional music, *aak* and *minsogak* have played a major role in Korean culture and society going back thousands of years as seen in Korea’s recorded history. Music has given enrichment to numerous events such as those held in the palace courts, weddings, religious

holidays, funerals, incantations, group labor, rituals, rural holidays, and so on in the center of Korean society and culture and has continued to help people improve their sense of identity. (Kim, 2014).

Han and Hung in Korean Folk Music. In pre-industrial Korean society, singing folk songs together, like anywhere else, became an important source of entertainment as well as developing social ties (Jeon, 2017). *Han* and *hung* often refer to vital characteristics of traditional Korean folk music, which is typically referred to by musicians and scholars as emotional states of suffering and joy. From their point of view, folk music serves either as a vehicle for the purgative outpouring of pain or as an expression of feelings of joy, which often encourage positive emotions. Although *han* and *hung* are noticeably different in scale, style, and procedure, traditional performances and Korean traditional rituals are closely associated with both of them (Mills, 2010).

As people seek for a release from their *han*, music has been served as a catharsis in Korean folk song; mirroring the realities of listener's lives and carrying their grief within narrative stories with rhythmic patterns (Willoughby, 2000).

Hung incorporates various characteristics throughout its folk song traditions. These characteristics include humor (often bawdy in nature); encouragement of celebration despite troubles; the usage of repetition in both music and lyric, which enables broad participation and synchronization with work or dance; and the incorporation of interactivity between participants, often through alternating between unison or solo singing (Mills, 2012).

Shamanism. Korean music has evolved around spiritual worship, purging, and healing ever since its prehistoric beginnings. The shaman, usually a woman, acted as the channel through which humans and spirits communicated. With singing and dancing, the shaman soothed evil and

wiped-out grievances, as well as guiding souls to the afterlife (Jeon, 2017). Mills and Park (2017) explained the shaman's role in Korean traditional rituals. The shaman leads those who are present through a diverse form of ritual episodes, oftentimes with help from pupils and musical accompanists. She acts as a therapeutic forum for problem-solving that gives people several opportunities to state their problems, release their pain, interpret problems through various divination procedures, offer relief through advice and entertainment, and invite people in peaceful prayer and ritual acts to appease gods of the Korean folk pantheon. During the ritual, they chat, laugh, sing or clap along, dance, and occasionally perform songs themselves karaoke-style with drum and/or gong. Even though people openly grieve during the ritual proceedings, a party-like atmosphere is often present.

Pansori. *Pansori* is a vocal genre that is a musical narrative form performed by a solo singer and accompanied by a percussionist who encourages them. *Pansori* is known for expressing emotions in music because of the tales of woe and sorrow that are often related. The performer delivers a long, dramatic story within song, speech, and gestures. They must produce a large variety of characteristic tone qualities to properly relay dramatic aspects of the stories as well as creating diverse music (Jang, 2013). Willoughby (2000) described that *pansori* reflects the lives of the common people's daily pains and sorrows, joys or triumphs. These are known as *han*, which are revealed in the numerous stories of *pansori* and may have found its roots within this form of music.

Pihl (1994) explained that *pansori* performers tried to reflect on everyday life and illustrate the realities of their listeners' lives. The process of suffering seems more critical to the audience than a happy resolution, as it provides the audience a means to tolerate sorrow and stimulate sympathy through grief. Willoughby (2000) added that *pansori's* expressive nature

fuels an experience of catharsis for the audience through the “sound of *han*” created by particularly harsh and rough vocalizations or sound qualities. Moreover, Jang (2013) emphasized that these vocal characteristics of *pansori* are highlighted and intensify the sentiment of *han* with greater tragedy. These sounds can become a symbolic vehicle that expresses personal or even national experiences.

Pungmulnori. *Pungmulnori* originates from shamanistic music and was used in rituals, which are combined with dance and acrobatics. The composer or composers of *pungmulnori* are unknown, as it has never been written down. In fact, it is an oral tradition that has been passed down from one generation to the next. However, rather than legends, myths, or stories of ancient history, it is known as a unique healing music (Kim, 2007).

Hall (1996) stated that the purpose of the *pungmulnori* could be for any reason that was measured to be important to the community and was played day and night continuously. It was used to celebrate the planting of crops at the beginning of the growing season as well as the harvesting of the mature crops or even the repelling of evil spirits. These were all done in addition to its main use of healing individuals' physical and mental/emotional issues through music and dance.

Pungmulnori has an aspect of a sense of unity and community that everyone is focused on (Kim, 2014). Kwon (2015) emphasized the *pungmulnori*'s principal roles were for developing a stronger sense of community and identity among the people. The desire to become “one” or to create a united sense of “we” is often portrayed through the heavy usage of the word unit “we”. While there were songs where only the Shaman could sing or play, everyone else was involved as a musician or dancer. Four instruments were used in these ceremonies, which may have symbolized the four elements of nature: earth, wind, thunder, and rain. Despite being seen as

archaic in terms of Western standards, *punmulnori* held core components of modern music therapy such as empowerment, support, the intentions, and therapeutic underpinning (Kim, 2014).

Arirang. *Arirang* is a Korean folk song that is often described as Korea's national song (Kang, 2013). The song is not one song but of many differing variations and versions tailored to the many regions of the country. With people creating new lyrics and melodies over many generations, there are some estimated 3,600 variations belonging to 60 different versions (Jeon, 2017). Yang and Lee (2016) added that *arirang* has been sung for different occasions and purposes: to soothe the struggle of farming, to pray for a wealthy and peaceful life, or to entertain people gathering for a celebration. While the melodies and lyrics may differ from each region, all of them have included a common refrain similar to "*arirang*" or "*arari*" (Jeon, 2017). *Arirang* embodies the common people's feelings of joy, anger, sorrow, and gratitude felt in their daily lives (Kang, 2013).

Music has played an important role throughout Korean history, often used as a means of expression and enjoyment in social gatherings. It has also been utilized as a healing tool for shamanistic rituals and therapeutic meditations (Kim, 2014). Professor Han Myoung-hee at Seoul City University stated how Koreans had active interaction with the Chinese, Mongolians, Siberians, and Japanese, as well as Central Asian regions, from early on, thus influencing the music. However, at the very core of Korean music, there has always been an indigenous and unique musical style (Sutton, 2011).

Immigrant Korean Elders in America

Jang (2016) stated that migration can be viewed as another stage of the process of life due to the dramatic separation and complex personal process of it. Since the 1960s, immigration from

the Korean peninsula to the United States has dramatically increased due to political, economic, and military relations between South Korea and the United States. In 2017, roughly one million Korean immigrants settled in the United States, representing 2.4% of the 44.5 million immigrants in the nation (O'Corner & Baralova, 2019).

On the other hand, Seo et al. (2019) noted that Korean immigrants' cultural stress could be more severe than other Asian immigrants since they generally have lower English proficiency levels and fewer friends of different ethnicities. First-generation Korean Americans have been recognized as one of the most understudied ethnic groups, despite being one of the largest and fastest growing Asian American populations. Moreover, Korean immigrants in the United States have a tendency to maintain stronger ethical attachment to traditional cultural values as well as preserving their collective identity (Jang et al., 2007).

Jang (2016) found that Korean immigrants who had less social support struggled with psychosocial adaptation through his study examining quality-of-life issues among the elderly. In addition, Mui (2000) stated that immigration and socialization had been found to increase the risks for situational stress and somatic symptoms when familial support is weakened or unavailable.

In Korean culture, old age is usually linked with rising authority in the family, and it is also an expectation to receive respect from the children and grandchildren. Despite this, Korean immigrant children may adapt to American culture well and consider their relationship with their elders more as peers, with each living apart independently. Korean immigrants who hold a strong sense of familial unity may experience acculturation gaps with their children, which can be a cause for distress for the elders (Mui, 2000).

Post Korean War

The country of Korea was little known to the Americans before the Korean War. Sixty years later, the Korean War is regarded as the Forgotten War (Cumings, 2017) compared to the widely recognized World War II and the Vietnam War that followed it due to receiving minimal public attention (Kim et al., 2017). While historical information of the Korean War is available, there is a limited amount of the recorded and documented psychological and emotional impact on the lives that lived through the Korean War (Liem, 2005).

The War began in 1950; those who immigrated and left Korea post-war would include Koreans who are currently 60 years old and older who are the first generation of Korean immigrants. There is limited information about Korean immigrants' war experiences and less known long-term effects of the War on individuals, families, and successive generations and their backgrounds in the aftermath of the Korean War (Kim et al., 2017). Alexander (2016) stated that wartime experiences can be particularly traumatic, and memories of that kind can have a long-term effect on the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of the individual, especially when war and sociopolitical factors are involved.

Before Korean immigrants came to the United States in larger numbers, South Korea was slowly reconstructing from the Korean War that lasted from 1950-1953. The first several years were occupied with the accounting for missing or injured family members, navigating a non-existent healthcare system, living with political corruption, and finding limited job opportunities (Cumings, 2017). Along with this, individuals and families were trying to find their basic needs of shelter, food, and water (Kim et al., 2017). Many Koreans began leaving their homeland looking for access to more opportunities in the United States (Min, 1995). When they started their new life in the United States, language barriers, cultural differences, and other issues prohibited discussion of their life during the war they lived through and survived (Liem, 2005).

Cumings (2017) pointed out that exposure to war can leave a permanent mark that frequently includes death, starvation, confusion, and feelings of hopelessness. Many Korean immigrants who experienced the Korean war reported losing family members, extreme poverty and hunger, and being displaced several times (Min, 1995).

Korean immigrants' early childhood experiences with lack of food and uncertain economic conditions led them to focus on their children's well-being and quality of life. On many occasions, they gave no explanation for their children about parenting style and the values they emphasized from the experiences of the war, as well as Korean cultural standards (Kim, 2010). Liem (2005) and Kim (2010) indicated that survivors of the Korean War would rarely speak of their experiences to their own children, which is a common reaction to trauma based upon the literature. Alexander (2015) stated how the intense emotions that trauma produces results in memories that are imagistic and fragmented that may be difficult to piece together into a sound narrative. In addition, the collectivistic nature and values of maintaining emotional restraint in Korea caused many survivors of the Korean War to be silent about their experiences. People who were under the age of around seven during the war may have difficulty fully verbalizing their fears, anxieties, and the horrors they witnessed at such a young age. Therefore, it will be difficult for Korean immigrants to explain and share their experiences of growing up in Korea during and after the war, due to the fear of opening past emotional wounds (Kim et al., 2017).

“Saving Face”

While emotions and feelings are universal across societies, the various hierarchies based on age, sex, seniority, rank, prestige and culture can influence this social expression in differing ways (Lee, 1983). Korean immigrants culturally express themselves in various ways as they

attempt to adapt to their changing social environment. One of these methods of expression, or lack thereof, is the Asian practice of “saving face.” In order to maintain one’s self integrity and image, they will mold their behavior and expression of emotion in a more desirable way (Chung, 2016).

Reading faces is something Koreans have been educated and conditioned to do from their culture by comprehending the spoken and unspoken message. The face is more than just an outlet for emotion but a platform to conceal it as well. A Korean may be able to express great emotion when they feel none or be able to show no emotion when they feel a great amount. This at times comes into conflict with other groups, as many emotions become interwoven and come off as secretive or at times deceptive. In Korean, the word “face” does not only mean the literal one but can also be applied in a social context of either showing contempt or humility (Kim, 1993). Within Korean society, the hierarchy based on sex, age, seniority, rank, and prestige has set in stone a cultural behavior of self-effacing. Koreans often attempt to maximize their private self while minimizing their public self (Lee, 1983).

It was considered taboo in the past for Korean women to expose their faces in public and either covered their faces with a long mantle or did not leave the house until after sunset. The face was seen as a platform to present one’s good education and background as well as a vault to hide away emotions. As self-disclosure was discouraged in this past culture, so too was emotional expression in certain social contexts (Seo & Cheah, 2019).

Psychological defense mechanisms act to maintain and build up one’s self esteem while also working to prevent self-degradation or social rejection with many taking the form of disguise. Western cultures focus on one’s own self esteem as a reason for saving face, whereas

the Korean adaptation of this is an act of saving face based on the community's attitude towards them and not as an act of preservation of one's own self esteem (Kim, 1993).

Loss in Change

Everyone experiences change, but sometimes change comes at a price of losing a part of oneself. Immigrants face a vast amount of change that carries with it challenges and distress such as a loss of familiar environments and social networks (Tartakovsky, 2007), a demand for new skills such as language, loss of one's employment, wage, and social status (Dean & Wilson 2009), downward social mobility, "culture shock," familial conflict, social isolation, and loneliness (Ding et al., 2011).

Identity is heavily linked to our surrounding society and our role in it. Immigration brings much change to this identity and outward change often comes first, but without inner change there can be conflict, pain, and grief. Immigrants often neglect the importance of inner change and see it as a change of scenery, like moving a plant to new soil. However, this can only be successfully done when one is able to identify the effects of the new location on growth, care and the overall ability to thrive (Lee, 2009).

Many Korean immigrants struggle with cultural differences and their immigrant status. Their lack of exposure to racial diversity (Min, 1995), poor English proficiency, and underemployment (Hurh & Kim, 1990) often result in a conflict of identity when they interact with other ethnic groups. Paired with a lack of proper coping skills, these identity crises are heavily consequential to Korean immigrants (Min, 1995).

Previous studies proposed that identity issues can be a significant cause for depression. When behaviors or ideas involving self-concept are not reinforced by others (Hurh & Kim, 1990)

or the expression of a socially suitable self paired with the silencing of one's authentic self occurs, this can be cause for depression (Dean & Wilson 2009).

Casado et al. (2010) stated that the feeling of loss of identity and the yearning for one's past self-identity is a manifestation of identity discontinuity. By acknowledging identity issues as risk factors for high depression levels amongst Korean immigrants, it can contribute to the understanding of a parallel between identity and depression. With this, the prevention of such high levels of depression and health problems resulting from it can be found.

Lee (2009) noted that some first-generation Koreans experience fundamental anxiety, such as asking why they are here at all. Many Koreans express that they feel typically powerless; powerless in their own homes, as they observe their children adapt to American culture as they grow older and Americanize their lifestyle, which first-generation Koreans do not fully understand; powerless outside their homes for an inaccessible world of politics; powerless in their business where they recognize economic success is not guaranteed. Korean immigrants voluntarily left all that they knew in their homeland with the hopes of improving their life in America with overidealized expectations.

Older Asian immigrants who could not adapt to their host society's cultures are more likely to spend most of their time alone at home and more likely to experience depressive symptoms (Lee & Holm, 2011). For older immigrants, a lack of English skills, inability to drive, and lack of familiarity with public transportation systems hinder their ability to meet their daily needs, such as shopping and accessing health care services. On top of this, it also restricts them from engaging in social connections, which would help decrease the risks of social isolation. Older Korean immigrants' social isolation causes their heavy dependence on family members, which reduces their sense of control and psychological resilience when undesired incidents

happen (Casado et al., 2010). This all can ultimately lead to much grief within these immigrant Korean elders.

Grief

Lascari (1986) defined grief as “the process that allows us to let go of that which was and be ready for that which is to come” (p. 271). Grief is a global experience and a normal response to loss through the process of psychological, social, and somatic reactions. Rando explained that grieving is an essential process in order for people to accept loss and move on with their lives.

Numerous behavioral psychology studies recognized that the experience of loss invokes grief and that it has a strong impact on the psychological state of people (Casado et al, 2010). Lee (2009) highlighted that immigrants may always experience recurrences of migratory grief because their homeland is always there. They may suffer recurring migratory mourning even though they deny their connection to their homeland that they left because an immigrant carries the country and cultures within themselves. This grief never really disappears but instead slowly diminishes, constantly lingering in the background.

Bustamante et al. (2017) identified seven forms of possible migratory mourning: 1) family and loved ones, 2) language, 3) culture (customs, values), 4) homeland (landscapes, colors, light, smells, temperature), 5) social status (access to opportunities, papers, work, housing, healthcare), 6) belonging (prejudices, xenophobia, racism), and 7) physical risks (on the migratory journey, accidents, persecution, helplessness).

In addition, previous studies indicated that immigration may cause stressful experiences, as well as possibly exposing the individual to one or a set of traumatic experiences (Bustamante et al., 2017). Many researchers have affirmed that the migration process carries intense levels of stress; this process can trigger mental or physical problems, symptoms, or illnesses and may

disrupt human adaptive ability. Some researchers made note of possible suffering conditions that distinctively originate from the stress induced by immigration: “Ulysses Syndrome” or the “immigrant syndrome of chronic and multiple stress,” which is similar to that of an adjustment disorder with cultural aspects (Otalora et al., 2011).

Bustamante et al. (2017) pointed out an interesting perspective on the representation of “homeland” from both a migrant and clinical perspective. For most immigrants, their homeland is the most beautiful place in the world, which may manifest as their identification of homeland with parental figures. From a clinical perspective, the fantasies of the homeland are closely related to the immigrants’ mental state. When a person is not willing to be in a place, the person tends to amplify the negative aspect of the place and amplify feelings of it as suffocating or oppressive.

According to Lee and Holm (2011), migratory grief is often considered to be a disenfranchised grief, disenfranchised grief is when the grief experienced by an individual cannot be openly acknowledged. The expectation that immigrants must simply adjust to the loss that may occur during the process sets a dismissive tone towards the forms of grieving one might express over personal and cultural loss. This disenfranchised grief must be given more attention, and it must be understood that it can complicate the grieving process (Casado et al., 2010).

Music Therapy implication for immigrant Korean Elders in America

We have explored in depth the cultural context of immigrant Korean elders that come to the United States and the burdens and troubles they may bring with them. While many of the Western European/North American centered music therapy theories have trouble addressing all the needs of immigrant Korean elders, there are a few that can work well with them: Culture-centered Music Therapy (CCMT), Culturally Informed Music Therapy (CIMT), Community

Music Therapy (CoMT), and Humanistic approaches to Music Therapy. More recently however, there has been a new method called Creative Pansori. While it was specifically made to treat those suffering with depression, the inspiration it takes from *pansori* makes it particularly compatible with immigrant Korean elders. So, whether it be CCMT, CIMT, CoMT, Humanistic Music Therapy, or Creative Pansori, an understanding of all of these is vital for the proper treatment of immigrant Korean elders.

Culture-centered Music Therapy (CCMT)

Alan Merriam and Bruno Nettl (1965) advocated the study of music in culture as opposed to the study of music itself. Later scholars of cultural studies and ethnomusicology developed this philosophy into the study of music as culture. Music is not simply something individuals passively consume but instead has been shown to be purposely utilized. Several authors have shown how individuals actively use music to build their own identity as well as giving meaning to their daily lives (Groce & DeNora, 2001; Ruud et al., 1999; Small, 1999).

However, there has been a misunderstanding of the meaning behind the terms “cultural sensitivity” and “cultural competence.” Despite this, the majority of music therapists agree that multiculturalism should be highly valued in music therapy education and practice. Many music therapists have fallen to the notion that the struggles as well as growth of their clients can be seen as a common trend across cultures. This is not the case and has been shown to be a somewhat naive way to think (Stige, 2002).

Stige (2002) suggested that culture-centered music therapy can go beyond the pre-existing models of music therapy by taking into account the individual and local context, which can push for radical changes and reevaluations of what music therapy can be. While music therapy would be ineffective if boiled down purely to culture, it would be wrong to assume that

culture plays no part in music therapy. He defined two of the ways therapists can relate to culture, which are: culture-specific and culture-centered music therapy. Culture-specific therapy is the acknowledgement of the fact that, “a client comes to music therapy with a cultural identity, as does the therapist, and that music therapy therefore may not be considered a ‘culture-free’ enterprise” (p. 115). An example of this may be therapists choosing specific musical choices out of respect for the client and their culture. However, this is only one of many aspects to consider, which include notions of health and relationships, expressing emotion, etc. Being open to discuss such matters is key to providing qualified and ethically defensible therapy (Stige, 2002). The importance of culture-specific music therapy rises as most of modern society becomes more and more multicultural, especially in urban areas, as well as an increasing acknowledgement of the value of identity (Wheeler & Baker, 2010).

Culture-centered music therapy, on the other hand, is not an opposite viewpoint compared to culture-specific music therapy but is actually in itself a type of culture-specific music therapy. It is not a difference but more so an addition of the notion of being willing to rethink music therapy at a basic level, integrating the notion of culture itself into it (Stige, 2002).

Culturally Informed Music Therapy (CIMT)

Culture in music therapy holds significant value and meaning for both the therapist and the client as the music itself is a representation of one's culture or, even more, the self and society to which one belongs. A misunderstanding of culture can take place during the assessment, treatment, or even during termination of the client (Forinash, 2001). This misunderstanding may cause adverse effects to the relationship between therapist and client and inhibit an effective plan for treatment (Kim & Whitehead-Pleaux, 2015). Dileo and Magill (2005) emphasized that music therapists must not only thoroughly examine the client's cultural

needs and preferences for music but also their own cultural values and how these two sides may conflict. A remedy to this is to develop genuine skills in multicultural empathy.

Current music therapy theory and methods are centered around European American middle- to upper-class people, along with the Western values of separation-individuation, autonomy, self-assertiveness, and verbal articulateness (Kim & Whitehead-Pleaux, 2015).

Music therapists must not simply thrust what they deem the most appropriate form for treatment based on their own culture upon their client, but instead must work to incorporate the client into this process and take into account their own culture and worldviews. This can all be described as a culturally informed music therapy (CIMT) (Kim, 2013). Culturally informed music therapy is an approach to music therapy made for clients who have experience within two or more cultures through music (Kim, 2013). Flexibility is key to CIMT, and when the client is assessed, the therapist must not only learn of the client's needs but also learn about his or her culture (Kim & Whitehead-Pleaux, 2015).

It is common for a client's identity to consist of various cultures, which may cause confusion for them. Music is more often than not deeply rooted into most cultures. Based on their race, country of origin, or ethnicity, a client may experience a culture of heritage, which the therapist must attempt to learn along with the role that music plays within said culture. However, some clients do not identify with their culture of heritage. In this case, the therapist, during assessment, must work to figure out whether or not they identify with it and whether or not a client may express their own culture musically (Chase, 2003).

To be a culturally informed music therapist, one must be a bearer of culture who has learned the songs and some language of their client, stored this material, and utilizes it when appropriate (Shapiro, 2005). Humility and openness along with a genuine interest in the client

are also needed and help to allow for their own strengths, knowledge, and worldviews to come into play. A deeper understanding of the client allows for the therapist to better serve them, and to do so they must design intake forms and assessments that allow for other cultures to have a voice rather than the dominant one taking over (Kim, 2013). Practicing CIMT requires one to take a journey of self-exploration to reveal to ourselves the biases that lie within us so we can work through them in order to better serve the client (Chase, 2003).

Community Music Therapy

Several therapists are responsible for the development of community music therapy (CoMT) (Stige et al., 2016). Through the 80s, Kenny (2014) had developed social and system focused ideas about music therapy theory that apply to modern CoMT. Kenny made the case that music therapy practices must be seen as being a part of a broader sociocultural system. Ruud (1998) argued that the bio-medical and psychological perspectives on health often leave out the social and cultural aspects of human life. Music therapy cannot simply observe one at an individual level but must also observe the social and cultural condition or context of the client.

An individual can only be fully understood when their context and culture are also explored (Shapiro, 2005). Community music therapy must be sensitive to the context of people and focus on the collaborative music making of said people. It must encourage musical participation, social inclusion, equal access to resources, and collaborative efforts towards the health and wellbeing of modern societies. Community music therapy also acknowledges that individual impairments are not the only sources of disability and disadvantage, but that discrimination and marginalization are also responsible. Our capacity for free will as individuals is affected by our political freedom along with the minimum number of conditions by which our basic needs are met (Soshensky, 2011).

Wood (2006) explained how the various experiences of the musical community have enabled the development of a community where people engage in doing and learning together, which is what CoMT attempts to do. Along with this, musical studies as well as social sciences also apply to CoMT as music is much more than just a form of expression. Within context, Small (1999) explains how it is at times better seen in the context of a social activity described as musicking. Through this, music can create social resources by processes of bonding within a group as well as bridging gaps between other groups (Aguiar, 2002).

Community music therapy derives from the belief that music manifests from wellness, be it as personal as one's immune system or as social as a crowd singing together at the World Series. Through this belief, CoMT attempts to recreate this healthy organization of real life through music rather than simply playing sounds to an illness like a medical treatment of sorts. It is not the only way to go about music therapy, but it certainly is a unique form of it (Wood, 2016).

Humanistic Approaches in Music Therapy

Most music therapists' motives for entering this career are some combination of a personal connection with music and a particular honor for humanity. Although numerous theoretical directions inform music therapy models and methods, it can be argued that all forms and expressions of music therapy are humanistic in some sense (Abrams, 2018).

Despite the formalization of humanism in North America and Northern/Western Europe, humanism has ancient roots in Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism in Asia, Zoroastrianism in the Middle East, and the Ionian philosophies of Greece (Schneider, 2010).

By the 1980s, the definition of humanist music therapy began to appear in the literature (Crawford et al., 2010). Wheeler (1981) developed the following explanation of a humanistic

approach to music therapy from the perspective of psychotherapy theories. Wheeler explained that in the relationship between therapist and client, the client is free to grow within the guidance of the therapist to aid in clarifying awareness of their inner experiences. This philosophy can be applied to a variety of music therapy situations. The therapist first accepts a musical or non-musical choice by the client and then helps them express their inner experience musically and verbally. According to Abrams (2018), the humanistic approach of music therapy works and processes within the principles of humanism, which suggests that everyone has an innate ability to realize their unique potential for health and well-being, given the conditions that can adequately serve as opportunities for change. Music therapists working within a humanist orientation can utilize a wide variety of methods and practices guided by humanist lessons and principles. Schneider (2010) later provided the following definition: humanistic music therapy refers to a psychotherapeutic space in which an individual's personal and trans-personal development through sound and music is assisted, using an approach that emphasizes respect, acceptance, empathy, and coordination.

The humanistic music therapy framework was heavily inspired by the medieval concept of *Música Humana* by Boethius (Planchart, 1992). This concept represents an example of understanding persons, humanity, and all realms of human wellbeing through music. This proposed framework is not intended to be final or authoritative. Instead, this is a set of new ideas that may or may not be meaningful, useful, and/or relevant in a given context. It is presented in the spirit of imagination, exploration, and discovery and must continue to adapt, evolve, and grow. According to humanity-centered views, there are numerous implications for understanding music therapy based upon an understanding of humanism and music. This formula is rooted in

the notion that music is a concrete and temporal-aesthetic-relational way of being (Abrams, 2018; Crawford et al., 2010).

By extending the humanistic approach to the way of being into a way of well-being, music therapists can develop the temporal-aesthetic-relational dimension of all areas of health and development (often considered "non-musical") into musical language. By solving the musical non-musical dichotomy in this way, the humanist core principle of music intervenes in the music therapy process and goals, providing a cornerstone for music therapists to magnify their unique expertise into other interdisciplinary care communities. There are countless ways to think about the humanistic dimensions of music therapy that can have a meaningful impact on theories, models, ways of working, and fields not yet explored in the clinical context (Crawford et al., 2010).

Creative Pansori

Creative Pansori is a newly discovered music therapeutic method especially designed for people undergoing treatment for depression. Korean music therapist Hyun-joo Kim developed Creative Pansori in 2014, basing the clinical method on the elements of the Korean UNESCO heritage '*Pansori*.' Kim created a clinical way to incorporate the patient's self-expressive narration with verbal and non-verbal interactivities with the therapist (Kim & Mastnak, 2016)

Pansori is also called Korean folk opera, a Korean narrative song genre, and is usually played dramatically by a vocalist and accompanied by a *puk* (a double-headed drum). The word *pan* meaning "open space" and *sori* meaning "song" or "sound," the term *pansori* itself refers to markets, public squares, other open places where performances were originally made (Gorlinski, 2013). The Creative Pansori reflects the spirit of the traditional form of *pansori*, which dates back to the 17th century and is rooted in Korean shamanism (Kim & Mastnak, 2016).

From an anthropological point of view, creativity is deeply intertwined with human development and involves developmental adaptability and social adjustment issues (Simonton, 2003). There has been strong evidence for meaningful interactions between creativity, brain function, and art. However, the underlying neurobiological mechanisms are still unknown (Boden, 2013). Creative Pansori involves elements of the approaches of art-related inspiration along with aesthetic free association on one end. On the other end, there is creative production and artistic expression. Improvisation makes use of the power of creative moments therapeutically, and expressive singing presents more information that is self-representing (Gorlinski, 2013). The therapeutic moments of Creative Pansori refer to psychological and cultural ethnic aspects. Along with rhythmic percussion accompaniment, the narrative epic chant expression features essential elements of Pansori (Jang, 2013).

Hyun-joo Kim and Mastnak (2016) explained Creative Pansori's essential aspects through analysis of numerous clinical sessions: 1) empathetic reactivity: the therapist shows high awareness for the client and highly precise micro-reactivity. The therapist's percussive accompaniments and body movements are aggregated with the client's dynamic expression; through this, the patient's physical and mental "here and now" is exactly reflected by the therapist's performance. 2) percussive frames: the therapist not only doubles the client's activities through percussive accompaniment but instead provides therapeutically supportive and meaningful frames and artistically perfect coordination of the client's speech rhythms and the therapist's response. 3) Artistic synchronization: both therapist and client get synchronized in the musical performance for expressive artistic experiences, the powerful agent that drives feelings of identity in artistic practice. 4) psychosomatic synchronization: the therapeutic process leads to particular body-oriented synchronization between client and therapist, for example, micro-

movements, muscular tensions, and respiratory rhythms. Throughout the body-orientated therapeutic experience, there are psychological regulatory impacts. 5) Being one in performance: the process of synchronization is not only based on cognitive reactivity, but clients can also experience the mystical "becoming one" within the sphere of sound and rhythm.

Pansori, which describes a culturally emphasized way of expression, differs from emotional reactions such as mourning, crying, and laughter, in which artistic, aesthetic, and psychological transformation play an essential role. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this is not necessarily done in the sense of a defense mechanism, but it can be interpreted as a form of cultural sublimation. Traditional Pansori utilizes stylized speech and respects the scenic design. Creative Pansori can encourage the client to express deep feelings or can either serve as a safe space that prevents them from getting mentally lost. This subtle balance between psycho-artistic freedom and cultural boundaries is a core part of Creative Pansori as well as possibly becoming a guideline for other arts-therapeutic settings (Kim & Mastnak, 2016).

Discussion

The purpose of this capstone thesis is to introduce music therapists with little to no experience with working with immigrant Korean elders to the cultural sensitivity that is required to effectively treat them. This cultural sensitivity is learned through the understanding of the historical and cultural roots music has had in Korean culture and the role it has played in mental and emotional healing throughout its history. This thesis offers suggestions to the Western European/North American-dominated practice of music therapy in order to better serve Korean immigrant elders.

This cultural sensitivity entails the understanding of various characteristics of Korean society and culture. Confucianism and collectivism have deep roots within Korean culture in the

way it has shaped people's social, political, individual, moral, and familial views in life and how these may differ from those in Western society. "*Han*" and "*hung*" along with "*Arirang*" are driving characteristics of Korean culture that have been utilized as methods of healing through music such as *pansori* and *pungmulnori*, both of which have roots within Korean shamanism.

Personal Experiences

As a Korean music therapy graduate student, I know the amount of change and help that music therapy can bring to people, but I also know how Korean immigrant elders in the United States are underserved. There are various underlying factors that many music therapists often struggle to see or may completely miss such as the act of saving face and the feeling of loss and grief that comes with immigrating to a foreign land that differs so much from home, which may cause cultural trauma. The Western European/North American-dominated music therapy theories that are utilized often do not take into account these various differences and hurdles that immigrant Korean elders face. That is why I looked deeper into the music therapy literature to attempt to uncover methods and theories that would allow music therapists such as myself to better serve these target clients.

Based on the aforementioned topics regarding the lack of culturally sensitive treatment of immigrant Korean elders in Western music therapy, the five works of music therapy theory literature reviewed in this capstone thesis; CCMT, CIMT, CoMT, Humanistic Music Therapy, and Creative Pansori, can be studied and utilized to better improve the quality of said treatment. I myself attempted to apply these theories in practice during my own internship working with immigrant Korean elders, from which I learned a great deal as I was able to see these various theories be demonstrated in real time with actual clients.

I had entered this internship believing that I would not have any issues in regard to the treatment and care of immigrant Korean elders, as I myself am Korean and have been immersed in its culture as I grew up there before I moved to the United States. The reality, however, was that there were so many factors that I did not take into consideration and, as a result, made it much more difficult than I realized to serve these clients. For starters, these immigrant Korean elders had grown up in a completely different generation and political and social climate as well as having gone through massive life-changing events such as the Korean War. I had not taken into account these personal contexts that each individual had. Being culturally sensitive was something I went in holding as a tool I believed I could effectively utilize in treating the clients, but I had quickly found out that the job was much harder than what it seemed and that even my own cultural sensitivity was lacking in certain areas.

There are so many different theories on music therapy and what way is the best to treat a certain group of clients that I had to seriously narrow down and refine my search in order to come upon the five works of music therapy theory literature I had used in this capstone thesis. While there may have been many others that could have been used, these five in particular seemed to stand out and promised the best results. However, despite my own deep search and pruning of material, these were still non-qualitative or quantitative results. Instead, the results were a more personal and subjective observation of how these different methods of music therapy theory worked with certain clients. While this may have been a promising start, much more concrete and objective research should be done in order to fully understand just how much more we could develop our understanding of which theories and practices would better serve immigrant Korean elders.

Too often in the treatment of immigrant Korean elders in the Western-dominated music therapy practice, these individuals are simply diagnosed with depression and/or anxiety and prescribed medicine to “treat” it. It does not take into account the deeper roots that may have been a cause for such issues such as “*Han*” and “*Hung*.” As mentioned before, music has always played a powerful role in the healing of mental and emotional scars that Koreans and Korea itself have faced over its history. Understanding this special connection between music and healing within Korean culture can be integral to the development of modern music therapy theory that can be utilized to better serve immigrant Korean elders.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

I cannot stress enough how important cultural sensitivity is to the treatment of not just immigrant Korean elders but to all clients in general. I myself believed that my identity as a Korean would be enough to understand these individuals but was quickly deterred from that notion when I realized just how different the deeper and personal contexts of these people were. There were multiple methods and focuses that I had thought of and explored during my internship working with immigrant Korean elders that I did not include within this capstone thesis.

One in particular was how the cross generational relationships between the immigrant Korean elders, their children, and their grandchildren would be affected in a foreign setting such as the United States. In Korean culture, the elder was often seen as the leader within the family who held authority and would often try to pass down a legacy of their culture and traditions. However, due to the more often than not difficulty of communication across generations between the elders and their children, and especially so with their grandchildren, it is often felt that all of

these expectations and responsibilities are taken away from them, which leaves them feeling hopeless and alone. This, of course, leads to much emotional and mental stress and trauma.

Another one of these points of interest that I observed was how Korean immigrant elders would often feel a deep longing for home. They knew that in time they would pass away and that they would be buried, but the thoughts of being laid to rest alone in a foreign land would bring much sorrow to them. Being buried with one's ancestors was such an important aspect of Korean culture, and many Korean immigrant elders felt that this connection to their own lineage was being cut off right at themselves since they were in an entirely different land. Home meant so much more than just a place they were used to.

These are some of the issues that I found were prevalent amongst many Korean immigrant elders that I worked with, and I encourage others to look further into these. Additionally, studies and research into such traumas that these individuals face could bring forth better and more effective methods of treatment for Korean immigrant elders.

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