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RUNNING HEAD: DECONSTRUCTING THE CLINICAN

Deconstructing the Clinician: An Auto-Ethnographic Study

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Science

In Music Therapy

by

Nicole Moy, MT-BC and Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa, MMT, MT-BC

Molloy College

Rockville Centre, NY

2021

MOLLOY COLLEGE

Deconstructing the Clinician: An Auto-Ethnographic Study

by

Nicole Moy and Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Molloy College

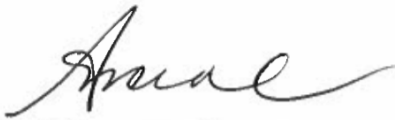
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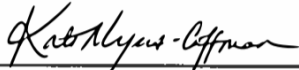
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Abstract

There is little research focused on uncovering bias in the music therapist. This study utilized autoethnography and was guided by a participatory action research (PAR) lens to explore a music therapist's experience of and relation to internalized bias and interlocking systems of oppression, such as white supremacy, sexism and ableism. Autoethnography refers to a combination of autobiographical and ethnographic methods. PAR focuses on collective meaning making, redistributing harmful power dynamics, and societal change with a liberatory aim. While I (Nicole) was the primary participant and investigator in the research, Natalia was invited to the study as a co-investigator and participant. Natalia was asked to facilitate three music therapy sessions with myself as the client. We engaged in a reflexive process of collaboration with one another throughout the study. Data included recordings and transcripts of the music therapy sessions, our reflective writings, art, memories, and relevant literature. Data were analyzed through the continuous process of autoethnography. Findings are presented in narrative form, interwoven with writing from both Natalia and myself. This study may contribute to the growing body of research in the larger music therapy community regarding client experience, bias, and systems of oppression.

Keywords: autoethnography, participatory action research, oppression, bias

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Deconstructing the Clinician: An Auto-Ethnographic Study

Personal bias is an innate component of the human experience. To deny it is to deny our humanity as music therapists. However objective and impartial we may like to believe we are, our experiences, beliefs, and personal context are always present in the therapeutic space. It is critical to acknowledge, recognize, and deconstruct our own biases along with the ideological systems that have influenced them – not so that we may appear as a blank canvas, but so that we may foster a therapeutic relationship that is safe, healing, and avoids harm.

The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) issued an aspirational Code of Ethics document in 2019, providing clinicians with a “guide to action” (Shultis & Schreibman, 2020, p. 7). This document identified eight “Core Values” and five ethical principles to be used to inform our practice as music therapists. Principle 1.2 states that the music therapist will “identify and recognize their personal biases, avoiding discrimination in relationships with clients, colleagues, and others in all settings” (AMTA, 2019). Under this Code of Ethics, it could be argued that to willfully deny personal bias is an unethical act in music therapy practice.

Recognizing my own personal bias requires introspection, vulnerability, and awareness in ways that may be uncomfortable and unconventional. In doing so, I must consider how my individual experiences as well as larger social, political, and economic forces shape my life. Locating myself, the individual, within these systems may provide a framework to further understand and dismantle my own personal biases.

Cultural Location Statement 1

Nicole

I locate myself in this discussion as a white, nondisabled, neurotypical, cisgender woman. I am the grandchild of first-generation immigrants from Peru and Ireland, and I am the

grandchild of Italian Americans. I was raised in a middle-class family, with food security and economic stability. The neighborhood in which I currently live with my family in Long Island, New York is a highly segregated one, comprised of 89.1% White residents, 8.3% Hispanic or Latinx residents, 1.2% Asian residents, 0.9% Black residents, and 1.5% residents who identify as two or more races (United States Census Bureau, 2019). This community was built, and continues to operate on, stolen land that was previously occupied by the Secatogue peoples (Town of Islip, 1975). It, both historically and presently, profits greatly from the manifestations of various oppressive systems. I have benefited from the systemic manifestations of oppression my entire life. These systems guaranteed my economic security, safety, education, and my relative comfort.

I grew up seeing myself represented in my teachers, role models, family, and friends. My schools, a formative place for most American youth, were a space in which I thrived academically. The Eurocentric and ableist narratives disseminated through these years of education nurtured my budding tendencies toward perfectionism and self-critique.

I was naturally curious, loud, and sassy as a child. I loved (and still love!) sweets and dancing around my living room with my siblings. My parents used to lovingly pinch my full cheeks and call me “Chubby Checker”. My self-understanding shifted as I entered school. From a young age, I was bullied and ostracized by my peers, and struggled to make friends. I learned that my thoughts and my body were wrong, and so I adapted to fit in. As I came to understand my role within peer groups, I understood that my survival and social capital as a young girl was based on attractiveness and passivity.

I quickly recognized that my singing voice could be another source of social capital. My family and friends provided emotional, physical, and monetary resources as I began to sing in

church and school groups. At this point, I became heavily involved in my family's Roman Catholic church by singing in choir and cantoring. I learned here that using my voice could be a way to help others. I had very little knowledge of other religions or spiritual practices at this time, nor was I curious to find out. I knew that the Roman Catholic Church has been a source of harm to those who live outside of heteronormativity, but I knew that *my* family, *my* community, *I*, wasn't prejudiced – to anyone! I took comfort in that belief. I no longer identify strongly with the Roman Catholic religious institution, but I acknowledge that it was a large part of my upbringing and musical identity formation.

I am a practicing music therapist and a graduate student in a music therapy program in the United States. I entered this field wanting to help others while doing what brings me joy: music. The two years I have spent in this program have been transformative. Through a continuing journey of study and engagement with my peers, professors, and supervisors, I became equipped to examine how my intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships unfold within the dominant systems of our culture. I am aware of how these ideologies were constructed and carried out without consideration for all people

The therapist-client relationship holds an innate power dynamic, particularly when examined through the popular lens of the Western medical model. My identity within the dominant systems discussed above further position me in a place of dominance in the therapy room. My experiences and biases have undoubtedly impacted my presence in therapeutic relationships with my clients. For these reasons, I am using this space to begin to formally unpack my personal biases and illuminate the oppressive systems that have shaped my worldview. This study will come to an end, but I recognize and must emphasize that this is a lifelong commitment to accountability with no endpoint or arrival. I am responsible to those I am

in community with to engage in the continuous work of interrupting systems of violence, oppression, and harm. However, I cannot interrupt what I am willfully ignorant to, and it is in this spirit that I engage in this work.

Rationale and Research Question

My identity has been shaped not only by my personal experiences but by the dominant social, economic, and political ideologies of the United States. In fact, the two are inextricably linked. Stige and McFerran (2016) stated “knowledge is embodied as well as embedded in social context” (p. 864). The knowledge I have gathered through my life cannot be decontextualized nor does it exist in a vacuum of absolute truth. In music therapy, this standpoint is often considered when talking about ideas of cultural responsiveness, cultural humility, and social justice in practice. Rarely, however, have clinicians turned the focus from the *systems* to the *self*, to explore how our actions as clinicians reflect these internalized contexts.

My internalized biases will undoubtedly have some influence on how I show up for my clients. The AMTA’s 2019 survey of members indicated that our field is comprised of 34.9% 20-29 year-olds, 87% cisgender females, and 85.1% White/Caucasian/European(s) (American Music Therapy Association, 2019). Many facets of my identity are represented by this substantial portion of our field. As a clinician developing therapeutic relationships and coming from the historically dominant position, it is imperative that I examine how my life has been paved by oppressive ideologies.

People who have been historically and systematically marginalized by dominant systems have been doing the work of reflection and education for centuries, providing nuanced discussion and critiques of white supremacy, patriarchy and other ideologies of oppression. I say this to explicitly name that nothing I write here has been outside of the influence of prolific authors,

activists, educators, and movement workers, many of whom are cited throughout this work. For example, the work of Angela Davis (2003) has allowed me to gain understanding of how racism is not only related to personal prejudices, but is deeply systemic, as demonstrated by her writings on the prison industrial complex. Meanwhile, the writings of Audre Lorde (1984) and Octavia Butler (1993) have pushed me to critique epistemologies rooted in white supremacist patriarchy and divest from oppressive binary ways of thinking. My understanding of intersectional analysis as it relates to disability, gender, and race has been greatly enriched by the work of Alice Wong (2020), Ericka Hart and Ebony Donnley (2017), and Jessica Leza (2020). It is important to acknowledge the holistic labor of these individuals, engage with their work and amplify their platforms. However, reading, listening, and amplifying are not the only things necessary to combat oppressive systems and their ideologies. These frameworks have been internalized through generations of conditioning within the well-oiled machine of dominant culture in the United States, and they reside within us. They must be identified, interrupted, and deconstructed internally for external change to take place.

To lean solely on external sources for education and reflection implies that I have not internalized and partaken in these oppressive systems. This notion further burdens groups who are most affected and harmed. Without self-awareness and constant examination, I may perpetuate the violence I am looking to interrupt. Frankly, while oppressive systems are a macro-problem, I believe I must do intrapersonal, micro-level work with myself to understand how to move about the world in a way that is consistently anti-oppressive. As Norris (2020) asked, “What in music therapy must die so that freedom may be affirmed?” (p. 6), I ask myself, what must I interrupt internally so that I may show up in consistent allyship to my clients’ and colleagues’ liberation?

Below is a short vignette recalling a significant moment at one of my clinical placements, an inpatient psychiatric hospital, in which many factors relating to identity and oppressive systems were at play.

I enter the men's unit at my clinical placement. I am very apprehensive but trying to mask it so that none of the residents become aware. My supervisor, a tall white masculine-presenting person, leads the way into the activity room. As we set up and unpack our instruments, a few residents file in one by one. Some smile and wave as they enter, and others walk in slowly, hesitantly, and in silence. We begin the improvisation-based music group, and a Black resident enters and quickly walks to the back of the room. They sit about ten feet away from me, and begin to speak quietly, seemingly to themselves. My supervisor greets them, and I feel my anxiety creep in. Why am I so nervous? The resident does not respond, and their speaking volume grows. I can now make out some of what they are saying. While their speech is disorganized, the words that I do hear frighten me. I hear, "I'll kill her, that fucking bitch! She... no, I don't know. It's not my fault anyways – that dumb ho! Strangle her, whatever. What are you gonna do?" I become increasingly distressed, trying to remain present in the group while keeping an eye on the resident. Their eyes dart back and forth, and I am afraid of what will happen if our eyes meet. My supervisor seems unphased, continuing to lead the percussion-based improvisation. The resident gets up, and moves to the wall immediately behind me, slamming their body against a barred window. They are now yelling and beating their hands against the wall, screaming, "I'll kill her, that fucking bitch! Let me out – I need to go!" The music stops and two nursing assistants quickly enter the room and physically restrain the resident, guiding them out of the room. My supervisor directs the remaining residents back into the music and returns to the group.

This experience stayed with me for the remainder of my time at that clinical placement. I hadn't processed much of it – but I felt the fear and avoidance viscerally when I revisited that unit. As I began my research for this study, this memory resurfaced, now imbued with further meaning. I saw my avoidance and apprehension not only as my own, but as something that has been inculcated in me. I asked myself a few questions in reflection:

1. How is white supremacy present in this situation? Would I have a similar level of fear if the resident was a white person? Have I internalized ideas about Black masculine-presenting people and violence?
2. How is sexism present in this situation? Would I feel this same fear described if this had happened on a women's unit? Would my supervisor have reacted differently if they were not a masculine-presenting person? Have I internalized ideas about male dominance over women?
3. How does ableism inform the way in which I engage with residents experiencing active psychiatric symptoms? Have I internalized fears about people living with mental illness?

It is from this position of questioning and reflection that I enter into this research study.

This study will be the formalized start of my journey in identifying and dismantling my internalized biases from the dominant systems of oppression at work in the United States. It is my hope that this study is one that every music therapist, particularly white music therapists in the United States, replicates in their own way. The purpose of this study is to examine and reflect upon how I, a music therapist, experience music therapy as a client working with a music therapist devoted to anti-oppressive practice. The following research questions will be addressed:

1. What is my experience as a client in music therapy from an anti-oppressive lens?

- a. What insights have I gained as a client in relation to my role in systems of oppression?
- b. What can I, as a client, take from this experience into my future practice as a music therapist?

Review of Literature

This literature review will address many ideologies of oppression, intersectionality, manifestations of oppression, and liberatory frameworks in music therapy. It is out of the scope of this paper to provide a thorough discussion of these topics in their full complexity. As mentioned earlier, there is a wealth of literature addressing these topics in depth. Readers who would like to explore further may revisit the authors mentioned above as a starting point.

The standard by which information is judged, in the United States culture of academia, is inevitably wrapped up in the political system described by hooks (2012) as, "imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (p. 4). It has been important for me to call into question what I consider a valuable source of knowledge or information. Within the confines of what is considered by academia as scholarly work, I struggled to get a full picture of the concepts I was exploring. For these reasons, you will notice I cite traditional peer-reviewed projects, as well as commentary pieces, theoretical texts, and works of fiction.

Throughout the literature review, I present questions for reflection. As I entered into this space of self-interrogation, these questions have allowed for a point of focus. I invite you to pause and reflect on your own responses to these questions. Write them down, discuss with a friend, music on it, and see if they hold some meaning for your experience as well.

Identifying Terms

The following terms call for nuanced discussion and I am challenged as I grapple with contextualizing them through my own experiences. I recognize that by selecting certain descriptions over others, I am already navigating a level of subjectivity in this review. For this reason, I have chosen to refer to this section as “identifying terms” rather than “defining terms.” Terms can be defined in a myriad of ways, depending on historical context, the language being utilized, and who is creating the narrative. I have chosen to focus on explanations that I identify with and resonate in relation to my lived experiences, my positionality as a music therapist, and understanding of the experiences of others. While I will be focusing on terms that came up most presently during my exploration, I want to emphasize the importance of an intersectional understanding of lived experience.

Oppression and Privilege

Oppression and privilege are interdependent concepts. *Oppression* is explained by McHugh (2007) as “a multi-faceted experience that consists of having an outside force limit, arrange or constrain (sometimes physically and violently) an individual’s or collective’s life or aspects of their life” (p. 89). *Privilege* is identified by the *Collins English Dictionary* (2014) as, “advantages and immunities enjoyed by a small usually powerful group or class, esp[ecially] to the disadvantage of others.” In short, those in positions of privilege are dependent upon systems of oppression in order to maintain their benefits. I, for example, experience privilege in my identity as a white, nondisabled, cisgender, heterosexual person as a result of dominant systems of white supremacy, patriarchy, cissexism, heterosexism, and ableism.

Interlocking Systems of Oppression

Here we will examine some of the many oppressive systems that govern the dominant narratives in Western culture, particularly in the United States. Each of these systems warrant

their own deep study and practice of interruption, which is out of the scope of this paper. This section will provide a brief identification before moving into reflection. Additionally, while they all may have distinct manifestations of violence against those they oppress, it should be noted that many of these systems are linked and work to uphold one another.

Colonialism can be identified as the practice of subjugation and exploitation of one dominant group over another (Horvath, 1972; Ypi, 2013; Kohn & Reddy, 2017). Colonialism appears externally in the form of physical exploitation of Indigenous lands and people. Internal colonialism manifests in segregation, policing, and economic divestment strategies that provide systemic support of the colonial project (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Settler colonialism is distinct in that it uses elements of internal and external colonialism simultaneously to support the continuous and permanent removal of Indigenous peoples from a territory for the purpose of settlement (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Bonds & Inwood, 2016). The United States is an example of settler colonialism working effectively at all levels, to maintain control of land belonging to Indigenous people in an exploitative fashion.

Colonialism collaborates with the system of *white supremacy*, to achieve its goals. White supremacy, is described by critical race theorist Francis Lee Ansley (1989) as:

A political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.

(p. 1024)

As I write this, the United States is experiencing a period of significant civil unrest in the wake of the continued state-sanctioned killings of Black and brown individuals along with a global

pandemic that has disproportionately affected communities of color. I focus on the systemic definition of white supremacy and other systems mentioned to combat the individualistic mentality that has whittled racism down to historical accounts or the violence of a few extreme white nationalists. The United States was built, at a foundational and structural level, on tenets of white supremacy, from the displacement and genocide of Indigenous peoples to the enslavement of Black folks. The violent roots of our development are still present in practices of environmental racism, resource hoarding, the school-to-prison pipeline, and immigrant detention centers, to name a few examples.

The economic and organizing system of modern *capitalism* arose from an international practice of European domination (Frieden & Rogowski, 2014). Historically, capitalism has resulted in crises due to its exploitative nature and the inevitable gap it creates between the upper and lower classes (See, 2004). Spector (2014) centers the connection between racial oppression and economic exploitation, particularly through the example of the super capitalist power of the United States. Further, Spector affirms that racism is intrinsically linked to systems of structural power, which must be critiqued to achieve an equitable society.

The current system of capitalism in many Western nations fuels patriarchy as well as the above-mentioned class oppression. *Patriarchy* can be broadly identified as a system and ongoing practice of male dominance (Christ, 2016). Many descriptions in the literature refer to patriarchy as it relates to the gender binary (male dominance over women); I would like to point out that patriarchy impacts cisgender women, transgender and nonbinary folks, and all individuals who identify outside of the Western gender normative. *Sexism* is a manifestation of the patriarchal society in the form of discrimination or prejudice based on sex or gender presentation. *Cissexism* refers to the dominance of cisgender narratives and prejudice against those who identify as

transgender, non-binary, or otherwise gender non-conforming (Serano, 2009; Johnson, 2013).

Heterosexism refers to the dominance of heterosexual narratives, and how prejudice manifests against those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, or queer (Lorde, 1984).

Ableism can be identified as “a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body... that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is cast as a diminished state of being human” (Campbell, 2001, p. 44). Ableism may manifest in prejudice towards people with disabilities (Bogart & Dunn, 2019). Prejudice can result in physical abuse, and can result in inaccessible building construction.

Oppressive Systems in Music Therapy

The systems identified above shape our society and are undoubtedly present when we engage with clients in music therapy. As clinicians, we constantly grapple with our own beliefs while working with clients of varying identities and backgrounds.

Obscuring Oppression with Privilege

As coined by Sumerau and Grollman (2018), obscuring oppression is a process by which “people seek to make sense of social problems by emphasizing assumed societal morality and progress” (p. 323). Oppression is insidious in the way it manifests or reinvents itself. Because patriarchy, white supremacy, and ableism are so rooted in our society, they may seem invisible to individuals or groups who reside within spaces of privilege. When very real social problems serve to critique ideologies that society at large holds as truth, it may be easy to deflect to the norm.

What does the “norm” look like in music? Music is our primary medium as clinicians, and most (arguably all) music has deeply nuanced contextual meaning that can perpetuate

oppressive ideologies when used in sessions. For example, popular songs often contain lyrics which reinforce patriarchal and heteronormative ideals (Hadley, 2016).

Questions for reflection: Think about the most recent song you've used in a session. How did the lyrics address gender? Sexuality? Race? Ability? How does your cultural location interact with the context of these lyrics? How does your client's cultural location interact with the context of these lyrics? If the music used didn't have lyrics, can it be identified within a social, historical, and cultural moment?

Ableism in Music Therapy

Hadley (2016) provided several small vignettes demonstrating how assumed societal morality can lead to harm in music therapy practice and training. One example addressed the deep-seated ableism that acts as a gatekeeper in education settings. Student music therapists have been shut out of the profession if their disability prevents them from performing certain AMTA-specified competencies, sometimes without the discussion of accommodations at all (Hadley, 2016).

Anti-Oppressive Frameworks

As long as oppressive structures have existed, scholars of liberation have worked to interrupt them. Theories of intersectionality, feminism and decolonization developed out of the radical imagination of those whose lives are most impacted by violent oppressive structures.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the notion that each individual resides within many facets of identity at the same time that impact their experience in a uniquely contextualized manner. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), is a foundational scholar and theorist in intersectional feminist theory who proposed intersectionality to center Black women in the discussion of antiracist and

feminist discourse. Describing the concept of intersectionality, Crenshaw offers the analogy of a traffic intersection to make her point:

Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (p. 149)

Intersectionality opposes the “single-axis” frameworks that have been utilized within social justice movements, because they’ve failed to acknowledge the complex experiences of marginalized peoples, specifically Black women, who exist within the intersections of various oppressed identities (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139).

Deconstructing Colonial Paradigms

Decolonization has been described as “the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies of the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches. Decolonization involves valuing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge and approaches and weeding out Western biases or assumptions that have impacted Indigenous ways of being” (Cullet et al., 2018, p. 7). This description comes from a guide Indigenous peoples created and intended for frontline workers in secondary education. This valuable resource not only centers the voices of Indigenous people, but also provides an opportunity for non-Indigenous people to more capably decolonize their own epistemology.

By providing a review of social work education and theory, Choate (2019) demonstrated how the field’s universalist perspective has been a source of harm for Indigenous people. The projects reviewed provided critiques for the applicability of the attachment theory in respect to

Indigenous populations, specifically regarding childcare and the process of assimilation through adoption (Choate, 2019).

Feminism

Modern feminist thought involves “a commitment to ending all forms of domination, oppression, and privilege that intersect with sexism and gender bias, including (but not limited to) racism, classism, colonialism, heterosexism, ethnocentrism, white supremacy, ageism and ableism” (Enns, 2004, p. 8). The visibility of the intersections of oppression make feminism a particularly applicable framework when speaking about liberation. While a nuanced discussion of varied feminist thought is out of the scope of this paper, I will be discussing the iterations of feminism that impacted me most significantly as I conducted my research.

Feminist theory posits the familiar adage that *the personal is political* (Brown, 2010; Conlin, 2017; Enns, 2004; Hanisch, 1970). Davis (2016) elaborates on this idea, stating that “what we often assume belongs most intimately to ourselves and to our emotional life has been produced elsewhere and has been recruited to do the work of racism and repression” (p. 142). In other words, those experiences that seem most individualized and personal to ourselves are directly related to and are consequences of the systems in which we exist.

Anti-Oppressive Frameworks in Music Therapy

Baines (2013) identifies ways in which music therapy has aligned itself as an anti-oppressive practice. This historical exploration emphasizes the significance of contributions from feminist music therapy, community music therapy, resource-oriented music therapy, culture-centered music therapy, and music-centered music therapy. Baines (2013) concludes that while these approaches, particularly community music therapy, may align with anti-oppressive

practice, the name itself is unclear. The descriptor “anti-oppressive practice,” while broad, is clear in its intention to employ language to create a more equitable society.

Feminist Music Therapy

Feminist music therapy is an approach growing in popularity among music therapy clinicians and educators. Hadley (2006) cultivated a formative text on feminist music therapy, offering clinical perspectives as well as theoretical and pedagogical considerations.

Curtis (2012) illuminated the rise of a feminist movement in music therapy, sharing reflections on their own experience of social justice in music therapy work. Regarding feminist music therapy, community music therapy, and intersectionality, Curtis stated:

For me, feminist music therapy is by its very nature community therapy, work is done within and with the community... it also, however, extends beyond the scope outlined by community music therapy with its explicit feminist analysis of the community. It looks at the oppression of sexism as it interacts in people’s lives with the multiple oppressions of racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, and ableism. (p. 212)

Culturally Informed Music Therapy

Kim (2020) developed Culturally Informed Music Therapy (CIMT) specifically for clients who reside in two or more cultural locations. This approach is theoretically grounded in the belief that all individuals exist in a reciprocal relationship with culture, shaping it as it shapes us. CIMT provides a model of cultural being that allows for space, nuance and contextualization of lived experiences. By acknowledging the individual culture, the collective culture, and the universal culture, Kim (2020) affirms that while we all varied and unique, our lives are indeed impacted by collective cultural elements, such as gender, disability, and race.

The identification of both music therapists and clients as multi-faceted cultural beings invites a discussion about bias formation and how it may impact the therapeutic experience. Kim and Whitehead-Pleaux (2015) offer, “Unfortunately, some of these messages with which we interpret the world contain biases, and we carry them into our sessions with our clients. To practice CIMT, we must embark on a journey of self-exploration to uncover these biases and work through them” (p. 59-60).

Culturally-Centered Music Therapy

Swamy (2014) offers perspectives on culturally-centered music therapy practice, drawing from their own experiences, research, and clinical cases. The research calls into question the long-held belief that *music is a universal language*. This statement, while catchy, can be a source of harm if used to guide our practice. Swamy (2014) suggests, “music therapists should investigate whether there has been a history of past injustices, colonisation, war or partition involving any of the countries their client has lived in” (p. 40).

Swamy’s (2014) insights seem to contradict the widely-held belief that music therapy is neutral and apolitical (Webb & Swamy, 2020). To me, it seems like holding this view of music therapy practice may erase the experiences of our clients and perpetuate harm. For example, the use of a popular song from the 30’s and 40’s, “Don’t Fence Me In,” may impact older adults from varied cultural locations in a group music therapy setting very differently. For a white older adult in the group, the lyrics, “Oh give me land, lots of land under starry skies above, don’t fence me in,” may be nostalgic, and allow for authentic emotional expression around topics of aging. For an older adult from an Indigenous community, this song may be a reminder of trauma, harkening to the genocide of Indigenous peoples in the name of “exploring the West,” It is

imperative that as music therapists, we examine the context and culture of the music we bring to sessions, and how that may interact with the context and culture of our clients.

Epistemology

According to Edwards (2012), “Making our epistemological perspective explicit... helps us to reveal many layers of our context, and how they intersect with one another, as well as identify limits as to what we can understand or know” (p. 383-384). This emphasis on context and intersectionality is how I have come to understand my epistemology. I have located myself specifically within systems of white supremacy, capitalism, sexism, and ableism for the purpose of demonstrating how these layers of context are integrated within my identity. My worldview is consistent with standpoint epistemology, acknowledging the effects that social, cultural, and political systems have on the individual’s experience (Hunt, 2016).

Method

In developing the methodology for this study, I encountered a host of structural and ethical issues. While I saw the value in sharing my lived experience through autoethnography, I struggled to reconcile the implications of centering another white/abled/cis/hetero narrative in the research world, where identities similar to mine are already overrepresented. I fumbled through trying to find ways to make this project a space for reflexivity, accountability and growth.

Using PAR to guide the process of autoethnography has provided a critical space in which the reflective introspection can be connected to actionable change in community, while mitigating potential harm and promoting equity through the research process.

Reflections on Developing the Method

To provide further context on the development of the method, I will give a brief chronological description of events. At the onset of the project, around the first week of September 2020, Dr. MacRae was assigned to be my thesis advisor. Dr. Myers-Coffman was assigned to be my committee member shortly after, in October. With both their feedback and guidance, I formulated the first draft of the study proposal. In this proposal, the method was solely framed around autoethnography, and the music therapist involved would be taking the role of participant. Dr. Myers-Coffman had given me a few names of recommended music therapists to reach out to upon recruitment, one of them being Natalia. Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa is a friend and colleague of Dr. Myers-Coffman, and they know each other well. I took Dr. Myers-Coffman's recommendations, and proceeded to prepare my proposal for edits and IRB approval.

Work with an editor is required by Molloy College as a component of the thesis process, and so I sent my proposal to Alan Herrera, an editor who was recommended by a peer. Following my work with Alan in December, this proposal was approved by the Molloy College's IRB, and from that point I began my recruitment process. Considering Dr. Myers-Coffman's recommendation, and my own research, I decided to contact Natalia to see if she might be interested in participating. After a series of events, discussed in detail below in the Co-Investigators/Participants section, it was made evident that an amendment was required to continue on with the research in an equitable manner.

At that point, around late January 2021, I had a series of meetings with Natalia, Dr. MacRae, Dr. Myers-Coffman, and Dr. Eckhart of the Molloy College IRB. In one of these meetings, Dr. Myers-Coffman offered Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a helpful lens from which this study might be restructured in a less harmful, more equitable manner. With the input of all the folks mentioned above, I began to draft an amendment to the methodology of the

study. At this point, Dr. MacRae invited Dr. Myers-Coffman to continue on the project in a co-advisory role, and Dr. Myers-Coffman accepted.

It is important, while seemingly tedious, to understand the order and context of how these events transpired. Every individual on this research team has contributed to this project and influenced my work in a distinct way. It is necessary, for the sake of transparency and accountability, to be explicit in the varied, nuanced roles everyone had in this process.

Autoethnography

As the primary researcher and subject in this study I have drawn from a first-person research model and use autoethnography to explore my experiences with oppressive systems as they relate to music therapy. Ellis and Adams (2014) describe autoethnography as, “ethnographic research, writing, stories and methods that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (p. 254). Autoethnography requires introspection, reflexivity, and contextualization. Additionally, autoethnographies are often presented as I-based texts to the reader, promoting accessibility and autonomous voice (Rolvsjord & Hadley, 2016).

I used an autoethnographic approach to guide my methodology as I chronicled the interactions between the self and overarching systems. Autoethnography has been used in the music therapy literature to hold space for introspection, reflection, and contextual analysis of the individual experience (Freeman, 2018; Shaw, 2019). Bruscia (1996) used autoethnography to reflect on their experience at the First International Symposium of Qualitative Research. More recently, Devlin (2018) used autoethnography as a framework for introspection surrounding their clinical work with autistic non-speaking clients.

Autoethnography, while based in a phenomenological framework, allows for narrative exploration of personal experiences imbued with contextual significance. Ellis (2004) states, “I

tend to write about experiences that knock me for a loop and challenge the construction of meaning I have put together for myself. I write when my world falls apart or the meaning I have constructed for myself is in danger of doing so” (p. 33). Ellis’s words and rationale for using autoethnography resonated with me as I worked to untangle and interrupt systems of oppression that have resided in my body for years.

Why all of the introspection? Audre Lorde, an activist, poet and key scholar of the late twentieth-century feminist movement, wrote:

Whenever the need for some pretense of communication arises, those who profit from our oppression call upon us to share our knowledge with them. In other words, it is the responsibility of the oppressed to teach the oppressors their mistakes. I am responsible for educating teachers who dismiss my children’s culture in school. Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future. (1984, p. 516)

As Lorde’s sentiment echoes throughout various marginalized communities today; I feel that the use of autoethnography is called for. Because I experience privilege due to systems of oppression that have cut short the lives of others, it is my responsibility to investigate my compliance within these same systems. Through sharing this autoethnographic process, I hope to integrate insight into action so that I may actively fight against these oppressive systems in my work both as a human and music therapist.

Participatory Action Research

The reflexive nature of autoethnography aligns well with a PAR framework. Participatory action research validates personal knowledge and critiques the idea of knowledge as acontextual (Stige & McFerran, 2016). This commitment to honoring lived experience and contextualization aligns well with my epistemology and intent in conducting this study. Equitable relationship building and centering the fullness of participant's experience divests from widely accepted norms of Western academic research. PAR has been known to subvert these power dynamics of traditional research models and make people in positions of power experience discomfort (Stige & McFerran, 2016).

PAR researchers view it essential to be working in collaboration with participant communities to build the design of the study from the start of the research process (Gustafson & Brunger, 2014). Because of this, while our project has been influenced by PAR tenets, it could not be considered an authentic example of PAR research. As described earlier, the course of events happened as such that Natalia's collaboration, and resulting amendments, occurred long after the development of the original proposal.

In recent years with the continued efforts towards more client-centered work, music therapists have been influenced by PAR principles in their research. Thomas (2020) utilized a PAR lens in their pilot study working with Black and African American limited resource adolescents through a community music therapy-based approach. Participants were heavily involved in the collaborative process of creating goals for the music therapy groups, the assignment of roles in the group, and analyzing the data results at the end of the project (Thomas, 2020).

While traditional autoethnography lends itself to first-person action research, Hunt (2016) notes that projects may expand as they develop to include second or third persons as co-investigators. This may allow for ideas from participatory action research and autoethnography to coexist and inform one another.

Co-Investigators/Participants

Through purposive sampling, personal investigation and recommendations from advisors, I located a few potential candidates for collaboration in this study. Inclusion criteria considered were as follows:

- At least five years of experience with an active MT-BC credential as verified by the Certification Board of Music Therapists (CBMT),
- Completion of a Master's degree in Music Therapy,
- Familiarity with telehealth practices as they relate to music therapy, and
- Specialization in anti-oppressive music therapy practices.

I intentionally searched for a music therapist engaged in anti-oppressive practice due to the nature of my topic and research questions, and so purposive sampling was called for (Keith, 2016). Additionally, I included the completion of a master's degree program in the inclusion criteria to ensure that the music therapist had met advanced clinical competencies set forth by the AMTA (2015), specifically, Section 4.16, which requires music therapists to "Apply knowledge of social justice and disability studies in upholding the human rights of individuals served." Finally, in order to address physical safety concerns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary for the MT co-investigator to understand telehealth practices.

Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa was one of the music therapists whose names were offered by my advisors. Natalia is an experienced clinician who has cultivated much of her practice around

the work of trauma focused care. She has developed a six-week program for white-aspiring allies looking to deepen their anti-racism praxis. As an Afro Latinx clinician, Natalia resides within a unique cultural location that is different from my own. After considering her clinical expertise and her intentional work with white people surrounding anti-racism, I reached out to her in the hopes of working together. At this time, the study was only utilizing autoethnography and not a PAR framework. After a few back-and-forth exchanges via email, she generously offered to meet via Zoom to discuss the study. In this meeting, Natalia offered invaluable feedback critiquing the original parameters of the study structure, in which the music therapist's role was strictly that of an anonymous participant. Natalia pointed out where consequential harm would result from the study, specifically as it related to the music therapist's anonymity. She stated that this parameter would allow for the theft of intellectual property from the music therapist participant, which I would then benefit from as the researcher. Because of Natalia's specific experience in developing therapeutic curriculum addressing topics of bias and anti-racism, this would be particularly damaging. There is a long history of white people stealing, erasing, and profiting off of the labor of Black individuals with little to no consequence or accountability process. Considering the relational dynamics our cultural locations, I would be enacting this narrative of extraction, erasure, and violence in the research process. I realized during this conversation that while I had put a significant amount of thought into the intention of my study, I had not fully considered the impact on Natalia's experience prior to reaching out.

Dr. Myers-Coffman had mentioned in a prior email that a PAR framework might align well with the aim of my study, while respecting the agency and autonomy of the participating music therapist. After consultation with Natalia, my advisors, the Molloy College IRB, and my own research and reflection, I decided to expand the methodology to incorporate a PAR

framework. Given the nature of PAR and the aim of this study, Natalia's potential participant role shifted to that of a co-investigator, in which she would be able to choose to be identified throughout this project. Upon receipt of approval of these amendments from the Molloy College IRB, I presented an updated informed consent document to Natalia, which incorporated all of the changes we had discussed regarding PAR and the co-investigator role. At this point, Natalia consented to enter in the study as a music therapist co-investigator (MT co-investigator).

As the MT co-investigator, Natalia was invited to participate in ways that felt authentic to her. We discussed prior to the procedural work what Natalia's role might look like and continued to revisit this topic throughout the study's proceedings. My priority was to manage the logistical concerns of completing the thesis while centering Natalia's feedback, knowledge and experiences as much as possible. The following is a cultural location statement, offered by Natalia.

Cultural Location Statement 2

Natalia

I was born and raised in Puerto Rico, until the age of 19, when I came to Philadelphia as a college transfer. I am the granddaughter of maternal Spaniard grandmother, and Black Puerto Rican grandfather, thus the daughter of a bi-racial mother. On my paternal side, I am the granddaughter of a Black Puerto Rican man, and biological daughter of a Black Puerto Rican man. Growing up, I was called "trigueña, negra, negrita, morena," etc. all terms that highlighted my complexion and physical features. Some people with this genealogical background may refer to themselves as multi-racial, though Afro Latinx is the identity I have come to experience that suits me and represents me the best.

One of my early experiences of anti-black and body image within the Latinx culture was when I was in 7th or 8th grade. We had a social studies/history teacher who was a white presenting thin Puerto Rican female.

One day, we were being taught about our ethnicity and how there were the Taínos, the Spaniards and the African Slaves. The teacher then proceeded to speak about African physical features, noting that we had “someone here in class who has the hips and the waist ratio, the hair and the skin, etc.” she then named me and asked me to stand up-for everyone to look at me and notice these features the teacher had mentioned.

I have never forgotten the feeling in that moment. 12-13 years old, in a small class room in a Caribbean island-other and exotic.

Her intentions to do no harm, did not keep the moment from being harmful. Moments like these can build some significant body image challenges. Today, I am a proud Afro Latinx, proud of my curves, my build and my frame. But let me tell you-that teen girl still lives within and still has moments where she needs to be nurtured from an experience she did not need to have in the first place.

Keep in mind, no Taino examples were asked to stand up. No Spaniard examples were asked to stand up. This is one of many instances where I came to understand and experience colorism within the island.

My maternal grandmother raised the family as Roman Catholic, and I participated in being an altar girl for several years. I was also part of the ministry. A single, hard working, determined, kind, loving mom raised me. During my middle school years, my mom and maternal grandfather provided me with the opportunity to take multiple classes within a dance studio, take piano lessons with a highly qualified and well-known pianist, and join a well-known

choir with whom I was able to travel for the first time. I was able to attend a Greek philosophy school until 8th grade, and a Catholic high school. My mom was considered middle class, and my grandfather was considered upper middle class. My grandfather became the first pulmonologist in Puerto Rico. My mother became an attorney. My mom also ensured I received mental health services while growing up, therefore it was the combination of music and access to mental health that helped me through difficult stages. When I was 18 years old, my maternal grandfather passed away while holding my hand. There were times where there were no words or communication avenues other than hand holding and singing to him, with family around. This is how I decided to become a music therapist.

Throughout almost a decade of being within the field, my main focus and training has been within trauma. I have been fully trained in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) and have conducted research and presented such, pertaining the importance of cultural humility when working with trauma. I have also developed a six-week curriculum for helping professionals, utilizing CBT, music and written word. I am contracted to provide trainings for school teams, and provide consultations. Becoming a mother has heightened the need to use my voice and educate, while understanding that I do not speak for anyone other than my cultural location, my life experience and myself. This practice of cultural humility helps me actively work to balance confidence and consistent learning. It is my hope that participating in this research study promotes increased awareness, motivation, willingness and accountability for white presenting clinicians to consistently strive for moments of deconstruction, growth and rebuilding. As Dr. Maya Angelou stated “do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better.”

Procedures

Before starting music therapy sessions, I (Nicole) engaged in weekly journal writings. These writings were used to foster transparency and reflexivity through the process of constructing the study. I began prior to music therapy sessions so that I could capture moments of challenge, introspection, and emotionality. I continued to write these entries throughout the entirety of the study's progression in the interest of maintaining transparency, authenticity, and vulnerability.

After our discussions and dialogue mentioned above, Natalia was presented with an updated informed consent document. The informed consent document reiterated salient information regarding my research topic, plan, and the detailed roles of participant and co-investigator. Within the informed consent document was space for Natalia to consent to participation, as well as space for me to consent to participate in music therapy and payment for clinical services. Payment methods and scheduling were discussed and agreed to upon obtaining consent.

After Natalia consented to participate in the study and identify herself, we continued to engage in reflexive dialogue regarding the power dynamics present in the structure of the study. These conversations addressed the various aspects of our identities (e.g., race, age) as well as the relational components of the study (e.g., Student vs. clinician, client vs. therapist). This conversation was revisited continuously throughout both the procedural sessions and our intermittent dialogue.

Additionally, Natalia and I discussed what the specifics of what her role might look like in the study. We agreed that while this would be a revisited topic, it would be necessary to have clear communication between the two of us of expectations and boundaries prior to entering into the procedural sessions. Because the music therapy sessions were limited (three sessions at forty-

five minutes per session), Natalia suggested that a more didactic approach to the therapist-client relationship might be helpful. Because Natalia has developed curriculum related to this topic and has devoted much of her practice to this work, and her unique role as the MT co-investigator, I deferred to her decisions regarding how the sessions might be structured. We agreed to the research protocol below, and after each session completed the following:

1. Both Natalia and I engaged in a self-reflective practice following each music therapy session, as time allowed. This practice included various mediums of expression (reflexive journal writing, music, movement, drawing).
2. I (Nicole) transcribed the music therapy session, including descriptions of salient music excerpts.
3. I sent the transcripts to Natalia, who checked for accuracy in written dialogue and musical content.
4. Natalia sent the transcripts back to me, confirming their content as accurate and reliable.
 - a. If discrepancies in the written dialogue and musical content were identified, we met and revised the transcript together so that both parties felt it was an accurate representation of their experience.
5. Both Natalia and I shared our reflective practices with one another between sessions. Content of these reflections were used to inform following sessions.

Data Sources and Collection

The data collected from the music therapy sessions and reflection periods included written transcripts, reflexive journal writings, video recordings, art and music. Additional data included relevant research literature, related books and news articles.

Memories have been a significant component of the autoethnographic data. As Chang (2008) offers, “Memory is both a friend and foe of autoethnographers. Whereas it allows researchers to tap into the wealth of data to which no one else has access, memory selects, shapes, limits, and distorts” (p. 7). It is necessary to acknowledge the impact that my memories have on my report. Ongoing transparency and authenticity have been required as I navigated this dynamic in my research process.

In order to account for the subjectivity of memory in the data collection, I have included additional data mentioned above (transcripts reviewed by both Natalia and I, recordings and journals). Omission and inclusion in memories are natural to our humanness, as are subjectivity and bias. While in positivist thinking this may damage the quality of the study, I would argue that within this interpretivist framework all of our humanness, including bias and memory error, are valuable to uncovering lived phenomena.

Data Analysis

The utilization of autoethnography calls for introspection and cultural analysis when analyzing data. Analyzing these recordings, transcripts, memories and reflective writings have required a constant pivot between the self and the other (Chang, 2008). Because autoethnography requires significant reflexivity and examination, data analysis occurs alongside the process of data collection. Chang (2008) provides guidance on analysis for autoethnographers, presented in Table 1. My data analysis plan has been informed by these guidelines.

Table 1

Chang’s (2008) guidelines for analyzing autoethnographic data

Search for recurring topics	Analyze relationships between self and others
Search for cultural themes	Compare cases

Identification of exceptional occurrences	Contextualize broadly
Analyze inclusion and omission	Compare with social science constructs
Connect present with past	Frame with theories

Data Protection

Natalia has consented to identify herself in the study, although this was not required for participation. This meant that identifiers were not removed from the data or final data presentation and discussion. Natalia had the ability to revoke consent for identification at any point throughout the study prior to publication.

Video recordings have been stored in an encrypted and password-protected folder on my personal computer. Music therapy session transcripts have also been housed in an encrypted and password-protected folder on the same computer. Both folders were shared only between Natalia and I.

Data Presentation

Understanding and insight gained through data analysis were used to inform the study's main narrative. The narrative is divided into four chapters, one chapter acting as an introduction to the research process and the remaining three chapters reflective of the three music therapy sessions that took place. My inspiration for this narrative structure has come from Shaw's (2019) arts-based autoethnography, which provided a thorough and nuanced exploration of experiences navigating illness, disability, and ableism as a clinician. This research resonated with me as a reader and a researcher. It was compelling, authentic, and held space for the complexity of the topic being addressed. For these reasons, I looked to Shaw's (2019) work throughout my research process for guidance, specifically regarding presentation and incorporation of reflective writing pieces.

While there are descriptions of musical experiences from the therapy sessions present in the narrative, they are presented in an aesthetic based, process-oriented, narrative format. This is in contrast to music notated in the Western classical tradition. For example, instead of presenting a melody notated in treble clef within the Ionian mode, I might describe the melody as ascending, drooping, or repetitive. This decision is intended to promote further accessibility for a wide audience, and to divest from the dominance of Western classical music.

Relevant literature is embedded in the narrative for further contextual understanding of our experiences. Within the chapters are excerpts from mine and Natalia's reflective writings, marked by each of our names, respectively. It is important to name that my voice has been centered as the primary researcher throughout this narrative. This was in part due to the nature of the autoethnographic approach and the study's aim, the academic requirements of a master's thesis, and Natalia's role as co-investigator. At the end of each chapter, Natalia and I have presented questions for reflection along with recommended readings, to promote ongoing critical thinking as the narrative continues.

Ethical Considerations

When I consider ethics, I am reminded of the term *right relationship*, whose origins in Western literature are attributed to the Quaker community (Brown & Garver, 2009). Brown and Garver (2009) identify right relationship as "a guiding ethic for people wishing to lead fulfilling lives as creative and integrated participants in human society and the commonwealth of life as a whole" (p. 20). I attribute my knowledge of the term to Sonya Renee Taylor, who speaks to the right relationship as a return to equity, accountability and balance in systemic, emotional, monetary and interpersonal relationships (Sonya Renee Taylor, 2020).

Ethical considerations, and the importance of right relationships, have been at the core of many discussions with our research team throughout this study's amendments and proceedings. Ethics are embedded in relational processes, and as such must be navigated with humility and a critical lens. I have learned through this experience, that a lack of deep reflexivity and consideration regarding ethical decisions on the part of the researcher can lead to harm. For example, I had made an assumption about the ethical nature of anonymity in participation prior to engaging in this work. Because it is an accepted standard in most research practices, I accepted it as an ethical standard working in service of the participant's safety. While that is the case sometimes, rules of ethics cannot be generalized without relational nuance and have the same impact person to person. This was demonstrated to me in conversation with Natalia, when she shared how the structure of participant anonymity in this study would result in real, concrete harm. Moving forward, I have become increasingly critical of the standards of ethics presented by academic institutions, my workplace, and music therapy organizations. It seems to me that if we are developing ethical standards without direct input from those who will be most impacted, we run the risk of perpetuating harmful power dynamics, oppressive narratives, and violence.

Ethics are a highly discussed topic among autoethnographers. While autoethnography focuses on the *self*, an individual's full experience will always encompass both intrapersonal and interpersonal elements. For this reason, when we set out to write about ourselves, we will inevitably involve others. Ellis and Adams (2014) recommend autoethnographic researchers follow principles of respect for persons, justice, and beneficence in conducting their work. These principles guided my intentions and provided a space of accountability as I engaged in the research process. This is exemplified in the amendment process of the study's methodological structure after receiving feedback from Natalia, detailed above in the Reflections on Developing

the Method and Co-Investigators/Participants sections. If I had been truly centering respect for persons since the onset of the study development, I might have sought consult from a Black clinician on the study structure prior to engaging in recruitment processes. This would acknowledge and account for the historical and ongoing systemic violence that make our experiences surrounding justice and beneficence very different. While I had intended to observe and implement all of these ethical principles on my own, by failing to acknowledge the deep reflexivity and perspective required for respect for persons, I was unable to carry out my intention until provided feedback from Natalia.

Autoethnographers are also recommended to engage in process consent when conducting autoethnography (Ellis & Adam, 2014). Process consent acknowledges consent as an ongoing process. While I was required to draft an informed consent document for this study, I am aware that consent is not something to be obtained a singular time. Consent is a continuous relational process, requiring transparency and accountability. For this reason, it was stated in the informed consent document that the MT co-investigator may choose to leave this study at any time should they wish to do so. After obtaining written consent, I frequently checked in with Natalia throughout the study via email and Zoom, intending to provide opportunities for collaboration as well as opportunities to step back. Natalia has also been consulted regularly regarding her decision to self-identify.

A study proposal was approved by the Molloy College Institutional Review Board, ensuring that it met the standard requirements for ethical research.

Relational Ethics and Trustworthiness

Relational ethics are a large component of participatory action research and autoethnographic work. Similar to the principle of respect for persons, relational ethics refers to

the acknowledgement of interconnectedness and the value of respect between the researcher and participant (Ellis & Adams, 2014). In this study, I have demonstrated a growing understanding of relational ethics by taking care to continuously check in with Natalia regarding her participation as a co-investigator, amount of labor provided, and role expectations/boundaries. By including Natalia in the procedural process of checking transcripts, I intended to demonstrate respect for our relationship and the research. As I communicated with Natalia and my advisors during all stages of the study, I have engaged in a daily practice of transparency and authenticity.

To address concerns of trustworthiness, I have included reflexive journaling as a portion of my data collection. These reflexive journals are a space in which I held myself accountable, naming issues of subjectivity of ethics as the research process unfolds. I have also engaged in regular meetings with my thesis advisors. These meetings have been a space in which I have been held accountable to the trustworthiness of my research process.

The process of autoethnography is a challenging one that requires the researcher to navigate complex interpersonal, intrapersonal, and systemic issues. I have delved into the truth of my own lived experience by engaging in this study. I hope that through this ongoing process of critical self-reflection, I demonstrated the trustworthiness of introspection, art, relationships, and lived experience in research.

Chapter 1: Pre-Procedural Thoughts

“All that you touch You Change. All that you Change Changes you” (Butler, 2000, p. 3).

As I began this research process, I inundated myself with information. Reading articles, following educators on social media, listening to presentations and podcasts. I’d like to say that I jumped into the deep end, but I recognize that I am still at the tip of the iceberg. Additionally, it is important to reiterate that this is a continuous, relational process with no one point of

completion or arrival. Coming from where I was, I will say it did feel like an immersive experience. Each new piece of knowledge felt like it seeped into my skin and shifted a small piece of my fibers. I felt my cozy rug of ignorance being pulled out from under my feet, and the floor was cold and hard.

The more I listened, the more questions I had. How could I engage in a self-study of my experience as a white person without further centering whiteness? How should I select the music therapist to invite into this project? If I chose to work with a white therapist, will I be in a process of accountability and critical thinking, or will the narrative turn into a whiteness sympathy project? Then, if I seek out a therapist who is Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color (BIPOC), how can I counter the narrative of extraction? How can I enter into right relationship with a BIPOC therapist as I explore these issues? Is the idea I've put this much work into so far even worth pursuing, or is it filled with potential harms waiting to explode?

I struggled with these questions prior to contacting Natalia, as I navigated logistical concerns regarding the study structure. For example, I had originally intended to pay the music therapist on a sliding scale. This would have required further dialogue between the music therapist and I in order to consider their going rates for services and what I am able to offer monetarily. I had conversations with both my advisors and the IRB and received feedback that it would be much easier if I were to decide a fixed rate for the music therapy services. The following is a journal excerpt reacting to this very issue.

December 7th, 2020

Fixed vs. Sliding Scale for MT Participant

I'm frustrated that the 'easier' way to do things feels like the wrong way. If I want to be in right relationship with this MT, particularly if they are not a white cis man, who am I to tell them the value of their services? Who am I to quantify the value of their labor?

There were other times when I was made aware that the easy or simple route was also one of harm. I felt this present in a particularly challenging way when I first connected with Natalia and received feedback from her regarding the consequential harm embedded in my study. I had gone back to the IRB and asked that Natalia be able to self-identify (prior to shifting to PAR framework and addition of co-investigator role) and was denied due to concerns of privacy and confidentiality. It was unclear to me why Natalia's requests regarding her identity, privacy, and confidentiality were not paramount. It seemed as if, because research has traditionally been conducted in this specific way, there was not space for challenge, change, or critique.

It has been difficult to locate and clarify the spaces in which I have power, and how much proximity to power I am willing to forgo in order to show up in right relationship as a student researcher. For example, as a master's student, I need to complete this project to the satisfaction of my department in order to graduate. Graduation from a master's program has been shown to offer more economic opportunity to music therapists (American Music Therapy Association, 2019). As a student and young professional in an individualist, capitalist society, I have long valued the importance of economic independence and security. For this reason among others, it was in my interest as a student to go along with the rules and expectations put forth by my school.

As the situation regarding the study structure unfolded, I felt very little power to challenge this dynamic. I can recall a phone call I had with Dr. Eckardt in late January, in which I had prepared two pages of notes to defend my case for amending the proposed study protocol. I

had practiced my monologue with my cat several times before finally calling Dr. Eckardt. Because my initial request for Natalia's ability to self-identify had been denied, it felt as if I were causing massive conflict between myself and my academic authorities by pursuing an amendment. While Dr. Eckardt was very supportive once we had communicated, I had a fear that I was "causing trouble" and "getting on the bad side" of the academic network that I had worked so hard to cultivate during my time at Molloy.

Additionally, I felt a persistent dread at the thought of not being able to complete my thesis in time for graduation in May with our timeline being continuously pushed back. Most of my peers were scheduling their interviews and collecting data by January, and I felt back at square one. In a way, I also was feeling that I had already failed in my attempt to enter in collaboration with Natalia, because of my lack of consideration and awareness. My shame response and binary thinking made it difficult to process and continue to show up as a student and researcher.

Immediately prior to this initial meeting with Natalia where we sorted through the issues mentioned above, I remember pacing around my room, writing and rewriting thoughts to share, and trying desperately to ground myself. My chest was tight, and it was difficult to focus. Discomfort. Natalia's authenticity was palpable and shifted my experience of our dialogue. While I felt uncomfortable knowing that my intentions had not aligned with my impact, I also felt deeply appreciative of Natalia's decision to take the time to meet with me. We were able to agree upon the changes to the study, incorporating the PAR framework and shifting Natalia's role to that of MT co-investigator to create a more equitable and accountable space. I felt motivated after this meeting to pursue an amendment process with the IRB. I also felt a responsibility to handle future situations with more care, to do better.

Context is Key

It was helpful to contextualize my pre-procedural experiences through a resource Natalia shared in our first session regarding white supremacy culture (Jones & Okun, 2001). My initial emotional responses of shame and stress were exacerbated by characteristics of white supremacy culture, namely, perfectionism, either/or thinking, and individualism (Jones & Okun, 2001).

While my research questions aimed to explore my role in systems of oppression, something that I am by no means an expert in, I felt very personally affected by the feedback Natalia provided and the following difficulties with amending the study. There was no sense for me at the time that two things could exist at once – that yes, I had devoted a lot of time and energy to the study at that point, and, I had a serious lack of consideration around Natalia’s experience. My individualist tendencies promoted an absence of analysis connecting my actions to the system of white supremacy. This furthered my feelings of isolation, shame, and that there was something wrong with me.

Chapter 2: First Session

To begin this session, Natalia shared a visual wheel with me, titled “Becoming Anti-Racist” (Ibrahim, 2020). Natalia invited me to use this wheel as a framework to identify my positionality around anti-racism work in spaces of fear, learning, or growth, specifically as it related to the clinical vignette located on page six. I entered into a space of critical thinking around my experiences that continued for the duration of our sessions together.

Themes and Salient Points

In preparation for writing this chapter, I revisited the session recording and transcript. As I listened to the session again, I jotted down themes that felt significant in relation to my

experiences. Themes identified in this session included *self-compassion*, *characteristics of white supremacy culture*, *finding a fluid role*, and *accountability as a relational process*.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is something that I struggle with. I believe that my relationship with myself will inevitably be mirrored in my relationships with others, so it made sense to me when self-compassion came up in the session.

This theme first appeared when locating my positionality within the clinical vignette but reappeared several times later. As I reflect on the places in which self-compassion was brought up, I wonder if self-compassion might include holding the full context of whatever is being considered. For example, when I first located myself in Ibrahim's (2020) wheel as it related to my clinical vignette, I did so in an acontextual way. Acontextual in the way that Portrait Mode on an iPhone will focus intently on one's face but blur out their surrounding environment. Natalia offered a recontextualization, not as an "out", but to promote self-compassion.

Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture

Do you think a fish questions the water they swim in?

As we continued, Natalia shared another visual depicting characteristics of white supremacy culture (Jones & Okun, 2001). Seeing this visual was a significant moment, as many of the characteristics listed were things that I strongly identified with, to my own detriment. These characteristics include *perfectionism*, *sense of urgency*, *defensiveness*, *quantity over quality*, *worship of the written word*, *only one right way*, *paternalism*, *either/or thinking*, *power hoarding*, *fear of open conflict*, *individualism*, *I'm the only one*, *progress is bigger/more*, *objectivity* and *right to comfort*. You will see these characteristics mentioned throughout the paper, as there were many anecdotal instances in which my behaviors were demonstrative of my

deep investment in this culture at the time. Every day, this information provides a framework with which I am able to pause, question my instinctual actions and reactions, and potentially make a different, less harmful, choice.

Finding a Fluid Role

This theme emerged as Natalia shared a recorded song, “I Know Where I’ve Been”, from *Hairspray*, performed by Queen Latifah. As we processed our experiences of listening to this song, Natalia offered the importance of everybody’s different and ever-shifting role in the ongoing work of anti-racism. Perhaps, more importantly for me to hear, was that this is not the work of an individual. No one person can dismantle and destroy white supremacy, in fact, that narrative harkens to white saviorism and perpetuates further harm. Practicing ongoing intentionality and self-compassion may allow for the cultivation of anti-racism practice in authentic, effective and sustainable ways. Further reflections on this music experience will be detailed in Chapter 5.

Accountability as a Relational Process

One of the most salient themes for me in this session was the reframing of fixed terms such as “ally”, “anti-racist”, “accountability” into relational processes that are continuously developed and practiced. Processing the topics covered in the session with Natalia was a far different experience than reading a book on anti-racism. This, to me, was due in part to the nature of relationship and accountability. When reading a book, unless in a book club or class setting, I am typically processing the information in an egocentric manner. This is not to denounce myself, but simply to state that when I am not in relationship with others it is difficult to consider other’s perspectives and experiences. Natalia’s distinct and unique voice in these

sessions allowed for my thoughts and actions to be processed in a relational feedback loop of sorts, with the integration of a perspective outside my own.

As I continue to process, I am considering how accountability may act as a process of knowledge. I offered in the session that while I understand a lot of things cognitively, it is another thing to practice them in relationship with people. Now I am challenging that thought, because what does it mean to understand something if we do not embody it in practice?

Nicole's Session Reflections

Written on March 4th, 2021

I felt good about the session. I was irritating myself - because I feel like I was trying to justify everything and anything I said (to deflect responsibility).

It made me feel affirmed and comfortable that Natalia kept bringing up self-compassion. I felt that she really heard me and picked up on the paralyzing anxiety quickly (lol). I think that these sessions will be helpful in turning thought, theory, and feelings into motion and action.

The Binary is White Supremacy!!!!

Written on March 6th, 2021

Not a spectrum of... (& not linear)

Bad racist <-----> Good Ally

But a sphere... like the one Natalia offered [anti-racist wheel]

From 3.9.2021 (After transcribing session)

Quality over quantity

Recognizing humanity involves embracing that this is a lot of work. Can't tackle every single "ism" at once and have an 'endpoint' to its deconstruction. I think part of my subconscious may have hoped for that.

Natalia's Session Reflections*Written on March 4th, 2021*

Reflection of 3/4/3021

One of the first thoughts I have about this journey is that it is important to reiterate that it is only the beginning, and that there is no place of arrival. Just like happiness is a journey, so is being an aspiring ally. It is in the moments where individuals show up within the context to challenge a harmful narrative, for example. I am also sitting with the awareness of how valuable my personal work on authenticity has been, as this work, within this particular research context, is highly personal and required emotional labor. Some aspects I would like to look into for future sessions are affirmative action and diversity committees; their purpose versus their implementation and effectiveness. Another theme that comes to mind as important, is the one of self-compassion, not only for myself, from Nicole to Nicole. A phrase I would like to encourage challenging in accuracy and helpfulness is "I feel like no matter what I do, I'm never going to not do harm," and how if applying self-compassion, one can shift into an invitation of perpetual movement, as opposed to an automatic halt and cessation. That is a good place to start, and revisit.

Natalia's Recommended Reading List

To begin assisting during this journey. For continued challenging, learning, unlearning, as well as augmentation of BIPOC voices and their immense contribution to humanity, while fostering accountability through assertive communication. May this source of readings help you begin, repeatedly.

For session 1:

- *Black Fatigue; How racism erodes the mind, body and spirit.* By Mary-Frances Winters.

- *Black women's mental health; balancing strength and vulnerability*. Edited by Stephanie Y. Evans, Kanika Bell, and NSenga K. Burton
- *Eloquent Rage: A Black feminist discovers her superpower*. By Brittney Cooper

Chapter 3: Session 2

As part of our ongoing communication, Natalia and I shared written reflections with one another in between sessions. These reflections informed our continued work together. In this session, Natalia shared a song titled, “First World Problems”, performed by Chance the Rapper and Daniel Caesar. Reflections from this music experience will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Themes and Salient Points

Similar to my process for writing Chapter 2, I listened to the session recording and read through the transcript again. I noticed that as I continued with this process of re-visiting, I experienced new connections as I recalled more recent experiences. I journaled in response to this experience, and as a result themes of *either/or thinking*, *honor in accountability*, and *examining the goal* surfaced.

Either/Or Thinking

Difficulties with thinking in binary terms have been a pervasive issue that I have encountered in my personal therapy prior to this research project. I can often feel overwhelmed and trapped when I enter into these ways of thinking, particularly when it concerns my interpersonal relationships. A common thought I have is, “If I don’t do *x*, then I am a bad partner/sister/daughter/friend”. This not only erases the reciprocal, *relational* nature of relationships, but it assumes that being a *good* partner in relationship is a fixed point, and not an ongoing process.

This way of conceptualizing relationships can be detrimental to engaging in processes of accountability, particularly as it relates to anti-racism work and allyship. At the start of the second session, Natalia asked me to reflect on my written notes from March 6th, (see above in Nicole's Session Reflections), specifically where I drew out a line, at one end labeled "Bad racist" and the other end labelled "Good ally". I shared that often, what can stop me in my tracks when engaging in relationship with others is this oversimplified, binary thinking that is characteristic of white supremacy culture (Jones and Okun, 2001). I become stopped by the fear that by doing something wrong, or not doing something, I may be labelled as a "bad racist". For example, when I see music therapists engaging in discourse online around topics of systemic racism and cultural humility, I am often afraid to speak up for fear of saying the wrong thing. The thought that enters my head is, "If I say x incorrectly/unintentionally cause harm with my words, I will be labelled as *bad*." This leads to me saying nothing at all, which then furthers the cycle of self-deprecation. I think, "You didn't say anything/speak up, so you are *bad*."

I had drawn this line to show myself how unrealistic and dehumanizing binary thinking can be. This visual, in comparison to the anti-racist wheel (Ibrahim, 2020), provided a juxtaposition that has helped me to reframe stress-driven, either/or thought patterns when they enter my head space. To reframe my example above regarding online discussions, now when I feel that fear of speaking up, or speaking at all, I try to pause and reflect on what is going on for me emotionally in that moment. I can hold space for both my initial, reactive thoughts, while also reflecting on what is pushing me in a state of fear. Once I have that understanding, I can consider what the potential impact might be on my sharing, and what the potential impact might be of my silence.

Honor in Accountability

Throughout this session, Natalia and I discussed what accountability can be, and what it is not. Accountability is not cancel culture, and not carceral in nature. It is transformational, holds space for consequence, and it is situational. These are things that I understand cognitively, but struggle with integrating in practice.

Natalia spoke to the great honor present in accountability. She shared that, there is a certain amount of faith that someone has to have in you in order to invite you to grow alongside them. And while growth may be uncomfortable, it is always worth it. As we sat in this second session, I felt greatly indebted to Natalia for her willingness to hold me accountable to the consequential harm embedded in the initial structure of the study (discussed in detail on p. 21-22). I more fully understood at this point that while I had been the one to reach out to Natalia about this study, she had been the one to extend to me an opportunity to grow.

In reframing accountability as an opportunity, rather than a punishment, I feel more able to be present authentically with others. This reframing makes it easier for me to move through the initial shame response that comes up for me when I cause harm and enter into a place that focuses on prioritizing care for the person harmed. I am eager to show up to meetings with our research team and share my experiences truthfully, and I feel more able to inquire about how my actions are experienced by others.

Examining my Motivation

It has been important for me to critique the motivation behind my actions throughout these sessions and my day-to-day experiences. This theme manifested in a few different discussions during our second session. In response to the ongoing discussion of accountability, Natalia had shared a visual differentiating the words “kind” and “nice” (Caminiti, 2019). The word “nice” was described as, *never want to rock the boat, most concerned with not upsetting*

anyone, afraid to speak up when they witness unkind behavior, and, worried about being liked (Caminiti, 2019). In contrast, the word “kind” was described by the following, *willing to make waves, most concerned with doing what is right, willing to speak up and take a stand, and, worried about being kind* (Caminiti, 2019). This visual provided a framework as we discussed superficial calls for unity in spaces where the motivation is to be *nice*. Natalia pointed out that in group settings when “love” and “togetherness” requires silence and erasure of harm, violence is being enacted in the group dynamic.

At one point during the session, Natalia asked me, “Now, do you worry about being liked?”. I had to stop myself from laughing because it felt as if she had seen right into my insides and named them clearly. Likeability politics have been a course requirement since day one in learning how I navigate the world. In peer and familial relationships, I have grown up in a culture of conflict avoidance, and concern for other’s feelings as priority. This focus on likeability seems to stem from fear of open conflict, another characteristic of white supremacy culture (Jones & Okun, 2001).

When I think of the motivation behind my engagement with anti-oppression work, I can point to many times in which I was motivated by wanting to be liked. I can recall numerous occasions where I witnessed my mostly white peers post their surprised and outraged Facebook updates on the latest act of police violence, so maybe I watched a documentary and reposted a viral infographic myself. I didn’t want to stir the pot, so I followed suit and called it awareness. What was missing, as Natalia pointed to in our session, is the acknowledgement of the harm and complicity I engage with every day as a person of great privilege living in this world, and a commitment and practice of interrupting harm.

I find that as I grow, I try to challenge my engagement in anti-oppressive work to not be fueled by likeability, but by the desire for care and growth. This usually will involve decisions that actively make myself and my immediate circle uncomfortable. For example, I will engage my family in discussions surrounding the frequent anti-Black violence depicted in the news. In these conversations, I acknowledge my own complicity in white supremacy and invite my family members to do the same. I do not hesitate anymore at the first sign of conflict, even though I imagine that sometimes my parents and grandmother wish I would. I have witnessed a shift in our relational dynamics as I move past needing to always be the easygoing, likeable daughter and granddaughter, and I have seen us all grow in our understanding of one another and the world around us.

Nicole's Session Reflections

Written on March 9th, 2021

Was feeling very anxious prior to the session today. Tuesday is my busiest day & I didn't want to come off as unprepared or unengaged.

That being said, I felt much more fully engaged/less anxious than Thursday (3.4?)

I think this comes from the "once you know better, do better" ["Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." - Maya Angelou] quote Natalia had shared, along with other things we discussed but I'm beginning to feel some freedom in it?

I think it was really important to name 'likeability' (?) is that the word (?) but the people-pleasing. It was a relief to be able to discuss this with Natalia, holding that while it comes from a place of childhood pain, it can manifest harm when enacted in relationships.

Written on March 10th, 2021

It didn't feel overwhelming and I felt more clarity than anything in discussing it. I felt myself wondering about Natalia's experience of the sessions. I can't believe we only have one more, and I wonder if I talk too much. I know I tend to overintellectualize & talk to avoid feeling, and I've been so preoccupied with the anxiety that I don't feel very 'tapped in' to what else is going on in my heartspace/feeling space.

This was highlighted

- When Natalia mentioned that she is a very somatic person. I would say that I very easily take on others' energies (family, partner), but it can be hard for me to drop in and feel my sensations, my experience. Going off that, I am a little uneasy with the idea of 'tapping in' while in session with Natalia. There has been so much grief and anger I've been processing in relation to this project, and I don't know if these sessions are the place to bring that. 'White Woman Tears' comes to mind, and I am aware of the potential harm in centering my emotional/feeling experience.

Natalia's Session Reflections

Post session reflections 3/9/2021

I acknowledge I entered the session today, with tired and subdued affect. I had to encourage myself to be present and provide with energy, while also allow myself to be authentic within my presentation. This is a process that is not foreign to me; I have become quite familiar with the checking- in with myself and utilizing my energy intentionally¹ within professional spaces. I recognize that this is a way of decolonizing and unlearning ways of being that are intertwined with how we have often been taught about what it means to be a productive

¹ This is supposed to say "intentionally" instead of intestinally - which quite honestly, is also correct.

professional, and the implications of what that label can have on us as individuals, versus us as a collective, or community.

I am reminded of the importance of congruency and authenticity, as well as the importance of language. The use of words, the power they carry, the influence they have in relationships, and how they add sensory input into our presentation and navigation of spaces we are a part of. I am encouraged in the complicity of conversation and the use of music within this specific session. Part of the work in decolonizing the mind, is to allow it to in connection with the body, taking into account that the body often carries our emotions. I, for example, have a variety of stomach challenges when I am anxious. In the same space where the connection takes place, there is also an invitation for challenging, unlearning and the intentionality that comes from existing with purpose and on purpose. I am also reminded of how difficult and heavy that journey can be, especially when the feeling of discomfort is unfamiliar. It is part of my hope for Nicole to not only see the honor in being given the opportunity to learn and grow, but also feel the honor, because with that feeling comes motivation, movement and quality of connection, rather than quantity of reach within a sea of fragmentation.

Natalia's Recommended Reading List

For session 2:

- *Decolonizing Trauma work: Indigenous stories and strategies.* By Renee Linklater
- *The body is not an apology; the power of radical self-love.* By Sonya Renee-Taylor
- *Please; radical self-care for wild women of color.* By Black Girl Bliss

Chapter 4: Final Session

In our final session together, Natalia shared with me some helpful interventions focused on exploring discomfort and the somatic space. The first experience involved locating feelings

experienced in the body through art. The following experience involved identifying thoughts, feelings, and body reactions after listening to different sound clips. Reflections related to these sound clips will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5. Natalia's inclusion of multiple sensory mediums provided me with an opportunity for a more fully integrative experience in this session.

Themes and Salient Points

In preparation for writing about this final session, I revisited the session tape, transcripts, and written reflections. I also checked in with myself physically, as this chapter had much to do with integration of the somatic experience. This check-in involved getting up from my workspace, taking a walk, and doing a quick body scan before returning to my work. When I returned, I began to journal and prepare my thoughts. Themes of *connecting mind and body*, *holding multiple truths*, and *discomfort does not signify danger* arose.

Connecting Mind and Body

I have mentioned to Natalia many times over the course of our sessions that I tend to overintellectualize things. It was significant for me to have multiple interventions focused on the somatic experience in this session, to bring my awareness to my body's ability to provide me with information.

This theme relates to points I have discussed throughout this project about valuing certain types of knowledge over others. I have not spent much of my life valuing somatic or sensory information. In fact, I have spent most of my life devaluing my body experience, because it was often in dissonance with input from my schooling, family, professional spaces, etc. Instead of valuing the knowledge of my body, I escaped into my brain, theorizing and analyzing until I only

felt exhausted. Theorizing, and intellectualizing, to me, relate to *worship of the written word*, another characteristic of white supremacy culture (Jones & Okun, 2001).

In addition, there was a mind-body struggle I experienced throughout these sessions. I had intense feelings of grief, frustration, and anger throughout this research process, and I didn't feel that it was appropriate to bring those feelings into our session space. This was due to many factors, namely the time constraints and the emotional labor that my sharing might place on Natalia due to our cultural locations. So, I was having all of these feeling experiences in and out of the sessions but struggling with my thoughts surrounding what to do with them. Once I named this in a written reflection, Natalia acknowledged this in our session. Natalia honored that the feelings I had were an organic part of this process and encouraged me to utilize my personal therapy as a place to support and explore these feelings further. We shared in the difficulty presented by the limitations of the study structure and the realities of the complex therapist-client dynamic we had cultivated.

I continue to struggle with this idea in my interpersonal relationships with people outside of my cultural location. As I continue to engage in my anti-oppressive practice, I feel *a lot* of things, on a daily basis. I struggle with knowing who to share these experiences with, and with whom it might cause more harm than connection. Utilizing personal therapy as a container for these experiences is helpful. I am still grappling with what it means to show up authentically, holding my emotional-bodily-thought experiences, in my interpersonal relationships with friends, colleagues and even family members.

Holding Multiple Truths

This theme stands in contrast to the *either/or thinking* that is characteristic of white supremacy culture (Jones & Okun, 2001). Holding multiple truths is an aspirational process that I

am engaged in. That is to say, that I struggle with unlearning the binary and dismantling the related truths I had developed in my understanding of the world.

For me, this theme came to be most visible during the first intervention Natalia presented. This intervention involved identifying four of the most present emotions I had experienced during the week. I named feelings of *hope*, *fear*, *frustration*, and *sadness*. Once those were identified, I transferred those emotions to places in which I experienced them in my body. To do this, Natalia invited me to draw an outline of a gingerbread-esque person, and then locate each feeling using a different color on the relevant parts of the body. As I located them, Natalia asked if I was able to feel my hope and my fear at the same time.

This question pointed to something I struggle with, in relation to *either/or thinking*. I feel like I often swing on a pendulum between emotional states in relation to engaging with anti-oppression work. I sometimes feel spurts of energy, hope, and motivation. I read, have discussions, and feel engaged in community meaningful ways. I then reach a point where my discomfort becomes overwhelming, and I feel fear. The discomfort can come from being called on a misstep, ongoing state violence, or even conflict within my interpersonal relationships. This resulting fear may slowly creep in, or pile on quickly, and can often leave me feeling hopeless. This can stem from something as simple as one thought, for example, “If I continue to engage in this work, I may need to shift my relationship with this person...”. When I am not engaged in authentic communication and relationships that foster accountability, this thought can implode, and it becomes increasingly more difficult to enter back into a space of motivation and engagement.

As I continue on from this project, a large personal goal of mine will be to hold space for multiple truths in my engagement with anti-oppression work. I can feel the strength from my

hope, and the resistance from my fear. I have done it before, albeit in different circumstances. For example, in my clinical practice, there have been times when I have experienced a fear-based countertransference in relation to my client's strong emotions. My client may be expressing extreme anger, and I am afraid to be in that space, musically or non-musically, with them, due to my own personal experiences around anger. In these situations, I need to hold space for that countertransference, and trust that the therapeutic alliance will be strengthened if I do not react from a place of personal fear. In reflection, I am pulled to move forward knowing that I am capable of feeling and navigating nuance in my daily encounters with oppressive systems and harm.

Discomfort Does Not Signify Danger

This theme really has been present through all of our sessions, but I think that it was most explicitly named during this last one. Particularly because of the intervention Natalia presented, which named clear intentions for exploring an integrated experience in sound. Before introducing the sounds, Natalia clearly laid out the parameters of the intervention. The sounds would be played for thirty seconds, and after, we would discuss my thoughts, feelings, and body reactions to the sounds. Knowing the expectations and the time-sensitive nature of the intervention allowed me to feel trust in engaging authentically.

The first sound clip featured a bamboo windchime, and the second clip was a mix of thunder, rain and windmill sounds. These sounds were both unfamiliar to me. I had mixed reactions to these, but one of the most important takeaways was the clarity I felt about my safety and my ability to engage curiously in the unknown. Because Natalia and I had a clear understanding about the parameters and context of the experience, I was able to navigate unfamiliarity without fear.

Music and sound can have a significant role in shaping one's experience of safety. I remember I had attended my partner's concert a few years ago, which was featuring a percussion ensemble. The group was performing a piece that was approximately 30 minutes long and was a soundscape utilizing nature sounds. At the time, I had done no research on the piece, and had no idea what to expect in terms of duration or aesthetic. I made it about fifteen minutes, and promptly had to leave the concert hall during the piece after becoming overwhelmed with a stress response. I did not understand what had caused this at the time, but I attributed my need to leave as a response to personal stress related to my upcoming recital and graduation.

In this memory, I was not physically unsafe. However, because of my inability to hold on to the context of the experience, witnessing a performance of unfamiliar music at a college percussion concert, I confused discomfort with being unsafe. I was unable to cope with my stress response evoked from the music, and I made a defensive move – I exited the concert hall. I can fall into this behavioral pattern easily when engaging in anti-oppressive work. It has been important and helpful for me to develop coping skills to sit with discomfort, both in music and non-music spaces.

Vulnerability and conflict can cause discomfort. But what is comfort, really? Natalia named in our second session that one's experience of comfort in relationships can often be traced back to the denial of others' lived experiences. This is amplified when considering power dynamics related to racial identity, economic status, disability, gender, etc. I have grown critical of the use of the word comfort, as I find that its presence somewhere usually indicates the erasure of harm somewhere else.

For example, when I imagine a commercial symbol of comfort, I think of Amazon Prime. Particularly during the pandemic, Amazon Prime has been a large source of comfort, allowing

my family to get masks, groceries, books, anything we may need, in a day or so. While Amazon has undoubtedly provided access and ease for the millions of consumers utilizing its services, there have been multiple worker-led movements critiquing the harmful work conditions within the company (DCH1 Amazonians United, 2020; Selyukh & Bond, 2020). This warrants a much larger discussion about capitalism, responsibility, and what allows a man like Jeff Bezos to have a net worth of \$194.8 billion dollars while his workers do not have the resources they need (Forbes, 2021). My point, however, is that the comfort afforded to consumers by corporations like Amazon does not come without the exploitation and harm experienced by its workers. While this is a commercialized example, I believe that the dynamics of erasure and harm demonstrated play out in our interpersonal relationships as well.

It seems that discomfort is a natural and necessary part of being in authentic, healthy community with others. When we hold space for discomfort, we hold space for the full humanity and experience of others.

Nicole's Session Reflections

Written on March 11th, 2021

I am sad that this is our last session. I wish I had given us four, or even five. There's just not enough time and I have so many thoughts!

I'm glad Natalia offered her thoughts on my reflections. I felt heard and on the same page. I still struggle with navigating how much of my emotions to share, in this therapist-client relationship and in my other relationships with BIPOC because of not wanting to place undue labor on them. I feel this way to an extent in some of my relationships with white people too, but the racialized context adds a whole other layer. I wonder if it is, again, not a binary issue, but something to be constantly considered and reconsidered with each relationship I enter into.

1. What is my intention in sharing this?
2. What might my potential impact be by sharing/not sharing?
3. Am I sharing this because I want to be viewed as the ‘good ally’?

Thinking of this, I am reminded of Natalia’s sentiments of ‘quality over quantity’ and that this is a continuous, process, way of being.

Written on March 12th, 2021

From the Combahee River Collective Statement “If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression”

So, continue getting comfortable in the discomfort

Realizing [when] you are safe

Giving up power

Relinquishing need to be ‘liked’

And focus on quality over quantity as a means to enter in integrative, relational & human way of being

Natalia’s Session Reflections

Post session reflections 3/11/2021

For this session, I wrote some pointers from Nicole’s past reflection, to share as an opening for this session, and add intentional direction to it. My focus was including: somatic location of emotions; cognitive triangle depiction while utilizing intentional auditory stimuli, while focusing on body reactions; noting the importance of honoring emotions such as anger and grief, when embarking in an unlearning and deconstruction of clinical self. I agreed with Nicole, that three sessions feels like very little time, perhaps an opportunity to scratch the surface and

invite a deep dive into the complexity of layers to be uncovered and dissected throughout the journey. I encouraged her, like I do most therapists I know, to incorporate this into her personal therapy. It reminds me of the lifelong commitment to growth, as opposed to an arrival of status and knowledge.

When exploring somatic location of emotions, I was encouraged and humbled to witness and participate in the uncertainty of the process that was seemingly unfolding for Nicole. I appreciated the willingness to be within such space. When moving from somatic location, into intentional auditory stimuli for practicing such skill, I noticed some discomfort and apprehension continuing to exist in the space with Nicole. The willingness to engage in identified emotions, such as unsettled, chaotic, curious and confused, and locating such within her body, there was an opportunity for building tolerance for discomfort. It was important to note that discomfort did not equate to being unsafe within this space and context. The emotional distance that this specific intervention allows, while inviting the connection from the mind and the body reaction, can give necessary insight into not only sensory triggers, but also somatic experiences that can inform Nicole in making sense of some fragmented experiences.

Being in the space with Nicole today, I also noted the value in being able to recognize and process some harmful components of education in the field. Phrases Nicole and I had been previously taught within our music therapy training, such as “this is your therapy, not mine,” when re-directing a client who prompted personal disclosure, had the opportunity to be challenged in the framework of de-colonizing and the practice of cultural humility. The exploration of relationship, therapeutic alliance, rapport, trust and clinically intentional personal disclosure, helped the conversation provide with the important insight of disrupting power dynamics in the therapeutic relationship. For me it was yet another reminder of the importance of

allowing my humanity to authentically enter the therapeutic space, and intentionally help build such, so that the dynamic fostered is one of teamwork, rather than a separation of individuals working towards a common goal.

During this session, I also enjoyed being able to reminisce and make more of my personal connections pertaining the commonality of both Nicole and I being classically trained vocalists. I was reminded of hearing the phrase “but you don’t look like a soprano,” often and wondering what was really meant from such comment or observation. What does a soprano look like? What does classical training requirement do for gatekeeping? How am I different from what is deemed to be what a soprano should be like? All questions I used to have, and now see to be at the very least, a micro-aggression.

During the same theme of conversation, I appreciated the parallels in the process for Nicole, and noted them as an opportunity to provide herself with self-compassion and empathy at every step of this journey of deconstruction. The parallels between being classically trained and then needing to become proficient in popular style of singing, in order to be more accessible as a clinician, required significant unlearning, and an intentional and systematic removal of the performative presence. This felt like an opportunity to highlight the commonality of emotions and how as clinicians we may show up in a space where we have empathy for clients, when we do not share their exact experiences or traumas. It is in being self-aware of our own experiences and emotions, that we can intentionally use that countertransference effectively in treatment. Furthermore, these same emotions and the actions of unlearning, as well as the intentional systematic removal of the performative presence, are imperative in promoting and existing within authentic aspiring ally-ship.

Natalia’s Recommended Reading List

For session 3:

- *Black Women and Social Justice Education: Legacies and lessons*. Edited by Stephanie Y. Evans, Andrea D. Domingue, and Tania D. Mitchel
- *Twisted: The tangled history of Black hair culture*. By Emma Dabiri
- *The source of self-regard*. By Toni Morrison

Chapter 5: Relationship to Music and Sound

In this chapter, I will be providing insights and reflections related to the music of our sessions. In preparation for this chapter, I revisited session recordings and transcripts, taking notes on the music experiences. I listened to song recordings both from the sessions, and on my own. Significant lyrics, musical elements, and themes will be discussed.

I will note that while the music was an important and integral component of our therapy sessions, it is out of the scope of this paper to cover the role of music in oppressive systems, the history of the music used, and the literature regarding music used in liberation work. For this reason, I have focused on my experiences of these relational, singular experiences while connecting them to relevant personal experiences.

“I Know Where I’ve Been,” from *Hairspray*, as performed by Queen Latifah

Natalia presented this song during our first session. As we listened, she shared a text visual that read, “Little boys can’t play with toy guns or wear hoodies and keep their lives, yet here we see armed white grown men with guns storming the capitol like they have had an invitation, and living to tell the tale. Don’t ever ask me what white privilege looks like. If you don’t see it, it’s because you don’t want to.”

Texture

The texture of this song had a significant impact on my experience while listening. Texture can have many different meanings in music, depending on the context. For the purposes of this discussion, texture will be identified as “the sound aspects of a musical structure” (Grove Music Dictionary, 2001). The specific sound aspects I am referring to are the vocal parts. Throughout the song, there are moments of great contrast in vocal texture. At times the arrangement features a single solo singer, and a band. In contrast, at times there is a full-sounding choir of varied timbres singing alongside the primary soloist.

While the word soloist typically implies a hierarchal structure of importance, I would argue that all of these voices carry their own unique importance. Just as the song would be altered dramatically without the soloist, the choir is essential to the aesthetic of the recording.

After sharing this song, Natalia shared that every person has their own work to do as it relates to anti-racism work. Some people shape influence in their family dynamic, some people work as educators, and some people work in an organizing capacity. It felt significant to me that there was not one “best” way to show up. Just as in the song, work of care and liberation cannot persist sustainably without everyone showing up in their own vital role.

To Sit Still Would Be A Sin

One of the most impactful lyrics of this song for me comes towards the end of the piece. With a full chorus behind her, Queen Latifah sings, “Use that pride in our hearts, to lift us up ‘till tomorrow... Cause just to sit *still* would be a sin.” These lyrics can be understood in many ways. In the literal sense, the phrase can take on an ableist, capitalistic meaning. In this understanding, one might think that rest, pause, and stillness is indicative of a moral failing. That we must be constantly working in order to be *good*, and that if you are not able to have that production you have failed.

How I received this phrase was a bit different. This is no doubt influenced by my experiences as a nondisabled white person. Nevertheless, I took this lyric to mean that to ignore violence and oppression, is to perpetuate violence and oppression. This sentiment seemed to be affirmed by the text image Natalia chose to share with this song. If you don't notice white privilege, it's because you don't want to. It is not a pleasant thing to see and know. But just because something is not pleasant does not make it untrue. Just as notes shift to resolve tension in a chord, we must move, shift, and organize to make change in this song. It will not happen on its own accord.

That does not mean that we all need to be doing the same type of anti-oppression work, or doing "work" at all. I am reminded of the words of Audre Lorde (1988/2017), "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (p.103). I think that as we learn to radically care for ourselves, and show up in the most authentic way possible, we may be able to more effectively interrupt systems of oppression as they manifest in our day-to-day experience. Particularly for those folks residing within one or more historically and systematically marginalized identities, care for the *self* may be all the most essential, and all the more revolutionary.

I do not share this statement to provide a "self-care" pass for myself and other white folks, or those residing within multiple spaces of privilege. I share this to acknowledge that the United States has an acceptance of the inevitable burnout that is a product of white supremacist capitalism. If we do not practice deep care for ourselves, we may unintentionally center ourselves in anti-oppression work – centering our emotions in dialogue, centering our comfort in organizing spaces, centering our anxieties. If we can care for ourselves, we may then show up in allyship for others more effectively. The work of interrupting a state led project of oppression is

difficult and can be painful. While this is true, it is not the job of the folks most impacted to make white, cisgender, straight, able-bodied, neurotypical people feel better about the work to be done.

“First World Problems,” performed by Chance the Rapper and Daniel Caesar

When Natalia began to share this song, I felt some excitement because I am a fan of Chance the Rapper and Daniel Caesar. It seemed like this song held a special significance for Natalia, and I was eager to listen. As the song opened with a warm ascending progression on an electric guitar, I felt at ease, feeling familiar with the tonal and rhythmic aesthetic of the music.

Daily Processes of Disconnect

After we listened and watched the performance of this song, Natalia asked what had been going on internally for me. I paused, and realized I had no idea what was going on in my body, or mind, really. I shared that I had felt very immersed in the music, out of my body and engulfed in the performance.

The more I reflected on my response, I grew troubled. How was it that I could bear witness to such authentic expression, that I *enjoyed*, and have no embodied experience of it?

I pondered about this song, and my general music preferences. In my day-to-day experience, I listen to music primarily by Black artists. There are a number of reasons why I appreciate these artists’ work – their lyricism, their creativity, their musical styles, their expression.

What I want to address here, and what I am continuing to grapple with, is what it means to bear witness to music by Black artists, to listen to it every day, as a listener coming from a very different cultural location. Further, what does it mean to be a fan of Black artists, and be

complicit in white supremacist violence? Why am I drawn to this music, that often speaks to the particular experiences of Black folks, and not my own?

I believe that part of the answer to these questions lies in the disconnect and dissociation, I experienced while listening to “First World Problems” with Natalia. I think that when I listen to music of artists who reside in a different cultural location than my own, I am able to temporarily leave some of the anxieties and shame associated with my whiteness behind as I am immersed in someone else’s experience through their music. While this might be seen by some as a coping mechanism, I think it can be harmful. Primarily, because while I am able to momentarily “detach” from my whiteness when listening to music by Black artists, there is no option for Black folks to detach from their racialized identity. Black people do not get to choose when they would like to be aware of their blackness. Anti-Black, white supremacist violence is a constant reminder. I, on the other hand, do not have to be aware of my whiteness as a white person navigating a white supremacist state on a daily basis.

I do wonder how others experience their music preferences in relation to their worldview and their politic. This thought process has made me far more critical of when and where I listen to the music that I do. I do believe that these intrapersonal experiences have an impact on how I show up externally. If I am continuously detaching from my whiteness, denying its presence and overidentifying with the experiences of others, how can I be aware when I cause harm through enacting oppressive, white supremacist narratives?

Unfamiliar Sound Samples

As discussed in Chapter 4, the unfamiliar sound samples Natalia shared with me allowed for a very integrative sensory experience, almost in contrast to my experience when first listening to “First World Problems.”

Songs vs. Sounds

It has been interesting to note how different my reflections were with all three music experiences throughout these sessions. For me, the use of sound clips in conjunction with verbal processing allowed for me to sit with discomfort in a particularly impactful way during the last session. When I listen to songs with lyrics, I can get so wrapped up in analyzing and overidentifying that I do not really have an integrated somatic experience of my own. I wonder if this is related to my experiences as a vocalist and my learned significance of words. If I were a cellist, would I have a similar experience?

Experiences of Comfort

Nevertheless, this experience Natalia presented with sound clips continues to sit with me. I often listen to “background” sounds when I do work and to fall asleep. Some of the sounds I gravitate towards include birds chirping, rain fall, and fire crackling. These sounds remind me of my home environment, and other comforting spaces. Natalia shared during the session that the sound clip mix of rain, thunder, and windmill sounds was a favorite of hers. When I listened to this particular sound, I was very confused and curious. I had a feeling of cloudiness and haze throughout my body as I tried to decipher the sounds. In reflection, it is interesting to note that one sound which seemed to promote feelings of comfort in Natalia, promoted confusion in myself.

Discussion of Performance Training

In our final session together, Natalia facilitated a discussion around our common experience of classical performance training as vocalists. I have been processing a lot of experiences surrounding my identity as a vocalist, and performer, prior to this study, and it was very affirming to be able to share some of this with Natalia.

A Study of Detachment

I can recall lesson after a lesson from my undergraduate studies where a teacher said something to the effect of, “You’re too emotional! Your body is moving too much!”. I recognize that much of this was probably in response to my unhealthy technique. Despite this, it was affirmed time and time again that in order to succeed, I needed to detach from my feeling state.

Detachment from my emotional and somatic experiences has been a learned experience of comfort. It is easier, sometimes, to deny that they exist, than to hold them in their truth. When I think of my experience listening to the song, “First World Problems,” I see a clear example of how this learned detachment manifests.

Performative Practice

Preparing for vocal juries and performances, I learned to dissociate from myself, and embody a character in a song. Sometimes, this was actually comforting – I was able to leave my stressors behind and be a confident heroine. I learned that once you detach from your authentic self, you can *perform* in a way that will be accepted by your professors. I have had to undo a lot of that training to rebuild my relationship to music as a music therapist.

In considering how I navigate the world, most of it has been performative. My classical training only further confirmed what I had already understood to be true. As a child, I learned to perform silliness and joy to make my family smile. As a teen, I learned to perform femininity to receive attention from my peers. It only makes sense that my first understandings of anti-oppressive work have been performative. Like my reframing of my relationship to music, joy, and femininity, I must be critical and transparent in order to reframe my relation to anti-oppression work.

Nicole’s Reflections

Written on March 9th, 2021

... During the Chance song share. I felt so immersed in the song... I was enjoying the aesthetic, the art form, the lyricism. *Sidebar about guilt in enjoying music/content from Black artists*

Wondering about my own experience in listening to that song. I feel like there's something there that is unclear to me.

Written on March 18th, 2021

Been thinking a lot about dissociation this week.

I listen to mostly music by Black artists, and it's been that way since undergrad really. And what kind of dissociation does it take for me to listen to Kendrick and be able to power through a workout. Or listen to Sarah Vaughan and study her technique, use of melody... without holding the entirety of experience.

Natalia's Reflections

Written on March 11th, 2021

General reflection on music selection and images chose for the first two sessions:

The music selection and juxtaposition of some written words centered in racial justice and cultural humility, promote consistent invitation to note how chronic and intentional systematic oppression is in the United states. It often times is so engrained with the narrative of being American, that not uncommonly, anything that challenges such, is labeled as anti-patriotic. Hence, social justice, human rights, and even global warming, have been politicized in a way that serves to promote perpetual harm without accountability.

Written on April 24th, 2021

Clinical intent with music reflections from session 1 and 2 and 3

The musical elements utilized for the first session was the sound for the song “I know where I have been,” from the musical *Hairspray*, juxtaposed with a yellow image with the following writing: “Little boys can’t play with toy guns or wear hoodies and keep their lives, yet here we see armed white grown men with guns storming the capitol like they have had an invitation, and living to tell the tale. Don’t ever ask me what white privilege looks like. If you don’t see it, it’s because you don’t want to.”- Author unknown. The version of the song within this session was the voice of Queen Latifah.

There is a common thread on social media, debates, conversations, and rationales, as well as interactions, which reiterate the importance of context. When and where did this or any event/harm take place, and often times, such approach is inserted with the intent to decrease the perception of the severity of the consequences of such, or the present impact that such can or may have. This tends to invalidate emotions from the group or community that has been chronically harmed, when a small act of accountability and removal of power from a system or established entity/individual, takes place.

With that in mind, this song was intentionally included during the first session. To me, it serves as a reminder of the chronic and systematic harm from when the musical was historically taking place, the time when the musical was filmed, and the present. It promotes insight into awareness, willingness and progress, or lack thereof. It is not to sensationalize the BIPOC experience into a monolith, but rather highlight the historical fact of the common thread and denominator amongst all three time frames encompassed within this one multi-sensory musical experience. It is an invitation to use context to augment BIPOC voices and lived experiences, rather than as a weapon for silence and complicity. When I include this music experience within a session, a course, or training, it provides me with a baseline that informs how I move forward,

and the emotional energy to provide or extend to subsequent interactions. I say this because it is important to note that within the deconstruction of a clinician, especially as it relates to culture and experiences outside their own, only one of us has the opportunity to have the emotional distance or the external understanding or separation. Hence, my self-compassion is imperative for sustainability and authenticity within the process.

For session 2, I chose a live performance from Chance the rapper, featuring Daniel Caesar, titled “First world problems.” This musical experience includes ambiance in the visual, the colors presented in synchronicity with the musical sounds, the intent, the message and the musical inflections within the lyrics and the melody. The entire experience holds space for an increase in emotions, a catharsis, and a call for accountability as it closes. The elements of the live performance synchronize and provide with congruency within the complex experiences of intersectional communities, from the perspective of a Black artist.

When I engage in this musical experience, I embody emotions palpably expressed and demonstrated within the delivery of such music; the driving force of the harmonizing passages, coupled with the implication of movement through the pain. This reminds me of the importance of working towards being authentic and challenging the learned fragmentations between personal self and professional self. It is also a refreshing review of how authenticity includes boundaries and accountability. Additionally, this musical experience exists within such depths of experiences, that the engagement with such, in more than one occasion, can promote gradual increase in awareness, as the focus of the attention can be shifting amongst the different components of the whole, each time. The themes of productivity versus rest, value and worth, the American dream, and racial inequity, are just some that can be explored, discussed and inferred

from engaging within this musical experience. In the versatility of the musical experience, and the clinical focus, lies an ocean of possibilities for movement within the deconstructing journey.

Some of the themes from session 2 informed my decision to focus on mind body connection through somatic location of different sounds, utilizing such to prompt thought, feeling and body reaction identification. This was combined with the previous exploration of emotional introspection, where the intent was to listen to the body's communication of where these emotions are experienced. The importance of this specific experience can be interpreted in different ways, though one of the components in the forefront of my awareness and intent, was to shift from an intellectualizing space that can serve as a disassociation or separation tool, and into a space where empathy can be embodied, and therefore, so can connection to people. The mind body connection and strengthening, has also given me more confidence in my intuition, the presence that I carry, and the energy within the spaces I participate in. I have come to learn it to be a way of activating my protectors, the connection to those before me, and an invitation to move through the complexity of experiences, emotions, and strengths that such connection provides. This is also, for me, a life long journey. This journey informs how I engage with any given sound, rhythm, harmony, dissonance, vibration and silence, within and outside of what each individual I come across, identifies as music.

Natalia's Recommended Reading List

Additional reading recommended:

- *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America.* By Richard Rothstein
- *An African American and Latinx History of the United States.* By Paul Ortiz.

- *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma.* By Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.

Chapter 6: Discussion, Conclusions and Future Research Implications

Discussion

I am feeling overwhelmed as I type this. It almost feels impossible to begin to synthesize and summarize what this experience has meant for me. But, as I look at that sentence, I realize that while it may be impossible to package these conclusions in a neat, likeable, academically pleasing package, it is not impossible for me to share my messy truths.

Reflections on the Literature Review

Written on April 30th, 2021

It is interesting for me to revisit my literature review and observe what I thought would be relevant to the results at the onset of my research. What I now see in the literature review are reflections of my indoctrination into white supremacist culture, characteristics of *quantity over quality, urgency, individualism, and defensiveness* (Jones & Okun, 2001).

To fully dissect and critique my literature review would be another study in itself, so I will be brief. While I touch upon many different items in the literature review, I am not able to go into any of them with the depth they require. I recall feeling such pressure when writing this review, thinking things like, “I need to make sure I don’t leave anyone/anything out. People will think I don’t care about ableism or class oppression if I don’t name them.” This thought reflects a performative approach to anti-oppressive work. I was more concerned with the reader’s perception of my moral integrity than my understanding of the material in a nuanced and integrative manner that might inform an anti-oppressive practice. My concern with naming all of

the buzzwords, demonstrating expertise, and my image all are reflective of the characteristics of white supremacy culture I name above.

I am reminded that this document is reflexive in nature. Each section is a snapshot reflecting a moment of my perspective and process, filled with context. I invite the reader to revisit the literature review after reading through the results. See if you, yourself, read the literature differently having gone through the full document.

Conclusions

As I sat in my family's kitchen eating lunch, I stared at an empty notebook page. I originally had planned to comb through each chapter and look for connective themes to then elaborate on in this concluding chapter. While chewing, I had a thought. *I don't need to connect the dots for everyone, in fact, I can't do that for anyone but myself.* In this spirit, I share the following conclusions, which I feel address the research questions I set forth to examine:

1. What is my experience as a client in music therapy from an anti-oppressive lens?
 - a. What insights have I gained as a client in relation to my role in systems of oppression?
 - b. What can I, as a client, take from this experience into my future practice as a music therapist?

Challenging the Binary

This project has been an extensive exercise in divesting from binary ways of thinking. While I will speak about the binary, this topic feels very similar to the *either/or thinking* characteristic of white supremacy culture (Jones & Okun, 2001). At the beginning of this process, binary thinking had a heavy toll on my mental health and ability to show up authentically. After my initial missteps in consideration, I truly felt like a bad person. I remember

going into therapy and sharing with my therapist, “I just don’t know if there is a way I can exist without causing harm.” My thoughts circled around, *because I made this mistake, I am bad.*

It was very difficult for me to understand that all of us cause harm, and all of us experience harm, at different times in our lives. Because we are fully human, we are fully capable of beauty and violence, and there is nobody alive who has not harmed another unintentionally at one point or another. Through time, my work in personal therapy, and these sessions with Natalia, I have come to see binary thinking as a particularly harmful internalized characteristic of white supremacy culture. I am more able to recognize when I find myself in experiences of pain or anxiety as a result of binary thinking, and further, realize when I may be projecting this line of thinking onto another person.

Applications to Clinical Practice. When I envision the clients I work with, I smile at the thought of their fullness, their complexity, and their dynamic nature. I shrink when I think of the impact binary thinking may have on their experience. As a music therapist, I aspire to not only hold multiple truths, but to challenge harmful systemic binaries that may appear in my clients’ lives.

I may not always know the multiple identities and truths my clients hold. It is imperative that my understanding of the world does not place limits, suppress, or enact violence on their experience. This may manifest in the “simplest” of situations, but may cause significant damage to the therapeutic alliance, and harm my client. For example, if I am working with a feminine presenting client, I might assume that they identify as a woman. From there, I might assume that they use she/her pronouns and assume that the partner they mention is their husband or boyfriend. While these relational assumptions may seem small to some, they enforce extremely

violent binaries of gender and sexuality that may be harmful for a client to experience in their music therapy session.

I have made it a practice in my sessions to question binaries as they manifest in countertransference responses or materially in the session. This may happen outside of the session in supervision, and may happen in the moment, as I challenge my own words in real time with my clients. While I may not share the same identities and experiences of my clients, I must work to be aware of my assumptions regarding their experience. This is particularly true as a clinician such as myself, who currently resides within multiple spaces of cultural privilege. My assumptions, while they may not be intentional or malicious, can re-enact the harm my clients are experiencing outside of the music therapy session.

Shift in Accountability

I remember at the beginning of this project feeling very responsible to uphold a certain standard of research as predetermined by my academic institution. I felt overwhelmingly accountable to my school and the IRB.

Being invited into a process of accountability by Natalia so early on in the project shifted something for me. I began to question why I felt so beholden to my academic institution above all else. This is not to discredit by any means the impact my individual professors, advisors and supervisors I have been in relationship with over the course of my degree work, but to call in to question the amount of authority I had given to the university in terms of my perspective and sense of responsibility. Now, I recognize that I actually cannot be in a relationship of accountability with my academic institution, namely because it is an institution. Regardless of the important work being done by individuals within the institution, academia is traditionally a space that centers whiteness, respectability politics, and capitalist values of productivity. Further,

my worries of meeting quality standards of research demonstrated how I have internalized white, patriarchal, capitalist values.

Who I am accountable to is who I am in community with. Who am I working with on a regular basis, who is the most impacted by my choices in how I navigate the world? For the purposes of this project, I have shifted from *feeling* accountable to the institution, to *being* accountable to my research team.

Applications to Clinical Practice. Who am I accountable to in my clinical work? My institution of employment, my clients, myself? What happens when being accountable to the work required of my institution conflicts, and even causes harm, to those clients that I am in relationship with?

At the time of the completion of this project, I am working as a contractor, so I am my own place of employment. The bulk of my caseload is in home care, and so often I am in communication with not only my client, but their caregivers and family. Material I bring to supervision typically deals with my struggles in navigating accountability to my client while acknowledging and valuing the caregiver's role. For example, when working with clients who additionally see Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapists, parents sometimes will ask if I can work in alignment with the ABA therapists' treatment plan. I must pause and assess, who am I accountable to? Who will my decision impact the most? While the parent is the one handling payment for services, my client is the one who will be most directly impacted by how I approach our therapeutic relationship. For this reason, I may provide psychoeducation on how I approach my work, how it does not align with ABA practices, and why I let my clients lead as the experts in my sessions.

Importance of Authenticity

I have always struggled with authenticity. Maybe this was a learned behavior in response to being bullied as a kid, but I have always had difficulty showing up as my fullest self. I hold a deep fear in the back corner of my brain that if I show up authentically, it will be too much for those I love. If I show the fullness of my emotional experience, if I say no, if I don't show up with a smile, I will depreciate in worth.

While this experience has not resolved my deepest troubles, I am reminded of the need to strive for authenticity. In thinking of how our relationships with ourselves mirrors our relationship with others, I now hold as a truth that if I cannot allow myself to exist in my authentic, uncensored state, then I cannot allow the authenticity of another before me. I believe that this truth may speak to patterns of dominating, controlling and harmful behavior, at least at the interpersonal level. If you can suppress someone's authentic self, then you can avoid vulnerability and hide away your authentic self as well.

Natalia's authenticity significantly impacted my experience of the sessions. I struggle to name examples because I observed this as her embodied way of navigating our relational space, and not a set of specific behaviors or actions. I felt compelled to take risks and sit with the discomfort of my authenticity in sessions because of how Natalia presented, uncompromising in her commitment to herself.

Applications to Clinical Practice. This particular takeaway seems to apply very clearly, in my mind at least, to clinical work. When I practice holding myself in all of my complexities, I am modeling authenticity and free expression for my clients. If I am constantly overtaken with concerns about respectability, appearances or other's expectations, I may model for my clients a masked existence. When thinking about the goals my clients and I work towards, I cannot recall a time when I encouraged us to work towards censorship.

Additionally, when thinking about working with clients from diverse cultural locations, authenticity allows us to relinquish the need to “know everything” about the client we are working with. If I am authentic in my presence, I know that I cannot possibly have all the experiences my client has. This knowledge prevents my overidentification with clients. I haven’t had the ability to receive explicit feedback regarding this specific idea, but I could imagine that a music therapist’s overidentification with their client’s experience may lead to the client feeling invalidated and unheard. Like that friend that everyone has, when you share with them, they respond, “Oh!! The *same thing* happened to me last week!”.

Significance of Relational Work

As I hope was reflected throughout this project, this process was a unique one, because Natalia and I are two individuals, with our own nuance, wholeness and humanity. I deeply believe that this study would look completely different if the same research questions were explored by two different investigators.

As I wrote that last sentence, a voice in the back of my head asked, “*So what did you even learn then?*” That voice comes from a place that does not value relational information with the same significance as numerical data, and that is okay. But I know that this relational work, this subject, ever-changing process of knowing another, is invaluable to my ability to interrupt harm and engage in community. It is when I make assumptions, when I act from a place of expert on behalf of another, that I erase the experience of the person I am engaging with.

Applications to Clinical Practice. I believe that music therapy is relationally-based work at its core. There is so much that each client and therapist bring to the session. Music, thankfully, is an abundant container that is able to graciously hold all of this personhood, however expansive and dynamic it may be.

I find in my practice that those moments when I experience difficulty, or even stagnation in sessions, is usually when I have made an assumption about my client's experience. By doing so, I break the relational tie that keeps the therapeutic process moving. For example, I work with a client who, early on in our work together, seemed to withdraw every time I presented a new music experience. They are primarily nonspeaking during our sessions, and frequently play ostinato on the guitar for the duration of our sessions. At first, I thought that this was because I was not doing a "good enough" job at catching my client's interest musically. One day, their mom offered after a session that my client often expresses fear towards new experiences, because they do not want to get things wrong. I realized then that I had made assumptions about my client's display of withdrawal and was acting as the expert on their experience. This moment allowed me to refocus my work with this client in a relational manner and honor the possibilities of their experience. I now hold curiosity as an essential quality in how I approach my relational experiences with clients.

Limitations

As named above, this study explored a highly situational and relational experience. None of these conclusions should be used as a means to generalize truths about a group of people. Because of my cultural location, and a history of white folks homogenizing the experiences of BIPOC, it is even more necessary to state this explicitly. The experiences of Black individuals are not monolithic. The experiences of disabled individuals are not monolithic. The experiences of gender nonconforming individuals are not monolithic. I encourage readers residing within multiple spaces of privilege, particularly fellow white folks, to engage with this reading critically, and recognize that this exploration would yield different experiences for any other two people in relationship.

Future Research Considerations

For those who are interested in pursuing similar processes of research, I have developed the following considerations that may be relevant to your journey:

1. Affirming the importance of one's unique cultural location and lived experience may allow for varying facets of identity and systemic oppression to arise as a focal point from which the work is focused. This work centered around anti-racism work as a result of mine and Natalia's unique cultural locations.
 - a. Many of the reflections in my chapters have resulted from Natalia's presentation of her original therapeutic curriculum addressing topics of bias and anti-racism. The specific experiences and prompts presented in this study should not be replicated by another clinician and presented as their own therapeutic material.
2. Utilizing a PAR framework from the first stages of development may allow for the investigators to prioritize relational care, prevent harm, and develop processes of accountability from the onset of the study.
3. Allocating resources for additional therapy sessions may provide for further exploration.
 - a. This includes accounting for schedules and finances.
4. Valuing personal study outside of the confines of what may be presented in an academic journal, a conference, or a dissertation may allow for more freedom, authenticity, and thoroughness in exploration. You do not need to package your experience as anything other than it is for it to hold value.

5. Employing personal supports and coping strategies (personal therapy, naps, petting a dog, movement practices) may allow for the investigators to care for themselves while exploring what can be painful material.

Nicole's Reflections

I think that if I had understood at the beginning of the fall semester what this would entail, I would have told myself that I wasn't ready yet, because I feel like this work requires a very solid foundation in self compassion... this whole time it's been really hard to not, you know, hate myself or beat myself up throughout this process. I know that this is necessary... the introspection, the reflexivity, and the relationship of accountability, and there's nothing about what has happened in the sessions or anything that anyone has said to me to make me feel so critical about myself, but every time I realize that I have acted in a way that may have caused harm, or every time I - I see whiteness popping up in you know my actions or my writing or how I'm thinking about things, I just feel like I'm getting further and further away from where I was hoping to be by the end of this. And it's really frustrating and hard and I feel like I don't know what my voice is, I don't know what my, I don't know what my voice is. And I know that that's not helpful and I know that that's not anyone else's job to make me feel a way about myself, but I know that my relationship with myself is going to be mirrored in my relationship with others. And if I can't hold myself in self compassion then how can I expect myself to be in right relationship with other people? And so I wonder when I return to this project in five years, you know when I've hopefully grown in capacity to view myself with compassion and kindness, I wonder what will be different about this experience. I wonder where it will go.

In talking to my partner the other night, he put it pretty plainly that it's like so antithetical to have this whole process documented in a very academic scholarly way and to try and fit it into

the lines of what is required for a thesis project, and so of course I'm having all of these difficulties in figuring it out because the two ideas of the thesis and then this lifelong continuous reflexive, relational work is just so dissonant. And it's like, what am I doing this for? Like why, why did I need to make this a thesis? And I wonder if that says something about, well I don't wonder, I know that it says something about where I was at the beginning of the project in terms of performative actions and performative activism and symbolic gestures. And I really, I don't know if I had any idea what I was going to be getting myself into but if I could have seen more clearly what, what was going to happen I think I might have said that this doesn't belong in a thesis project, you know. That this maybe belongs in like, a - it doesn't belong in a project at all it's my life is just, just life it's just a part of my life and I need to engage in it as part of my life, but it doesn't need to be documented, packaged, printed, and graded, because that, it's just so tangled up in it and it's just funny to think that I'm trying to do one thing and packaging it as another.

Natalia's Reflections

3/19/2021

Throughout this process, I have found myself becoming increasingly aware of the limitations of this study. I do not say this as a way to demean or deter the work, time and effort that has been invested during this journey, by both, Nicole and I. I do say this as a way to ensure and reiterate that this type of investment is a life long commitment. I am reminded that the Black and Brown experience is not a monolith, nor should it be portrayed as such, and I encourage anyone who encounters this study, to take for what it is; a short interactional experience between two individuals within their cultural locations. I am also reminded that somatic experiences can also increase when my awareness of my personal experiences is heightened; my compassion,

empathy and sympathy towards my community and other marginalized communities, is also stored within my body. This often leads to mental and soul spaces where in order to feel the strength for the ability to continue to advocate, educate and heal, I must allow myself to rest. Furthermore, this practice must include an active rejection of the notion that such is a selfish or weak need, for it is not a luxury; it is a necessity for sustainability and continued investment in change work.

This work, in conjunction with related work and spaces I engage with, has helped me develop a personal prayer affirmation that I have included below.

May your advocacy be authentic, with the strength of today.

May you show up with your truth within spaces you participate in.

May you honor the weight and the heaviness that the present holds,

While remembering the chronic poisons of this world.

May your connection with the universe remind you that as you feel the pain,

You can fuel the courage.

May you use your introspection to promote love as an action within this battle for kindness, that

is foreign to many;

For the words “love, kindness and unity” are not to be weaponized to corner us into silence or compliance.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Document



Graduate Music Therapy Department
1000 Hempstead Avenue
Rockville Centre, NY 11570
516-323-3320

Title of Study: Deconstructing the Clinician: an Autoethnographic Study

This study is being conducted by: Nicole Moy (Principal Investigator; nmoy@lions.molloy.edu), Dr. Amanda MacRae (amacrae@molloy.edu)

Key Information about this study:

This consent form is designed to inform you about the study you are being asked to participate in. Here you will find a brief summary about the study; however you can find more detailed information later on in the form.

There is little research focused on uncovering bias in the music therapist. This study will utilize autoethnography and be guided by a participatory action research (PAR) lens to explore a music therapist's experience of and relation to internalized bias and interlocking systems of oppression, such as white supremacy, sexism and ableism. Autoethnography refers to a combination of autobiographical and ethnographic methods. PAR focuses on collective meaning making, redistributing harmful power dynamics, and societal change with a liberatory aim. While the Principal Investigator (PI) will be the primary participant and investigator in the research, a music therapist will also be recruited as a participant and co-investigator and referred to here on out as the MT (music therapist) co-investigator. The MT co-investigator will be asked to facilitate three music therapy sessions with the PI as the client and engage in a reflexive process of collaboration with the PI. Both participants will be asked to sign an informed consent document. The informed consent document will provide a thorough description of the study's purpose, inclusion criteria and expectations of the participants. Data will include recordings and transcripts of the music therapy sessions, the participants' reflexive journal writings, art, memories, and relevant research literature. Data will be analyzed through ongoing contextualization, searching for themes, and framing with relevant literature. Findings will be

presented in narrative form. This study may contribute to the growing body of research in the larger music therapy community regarding client experience, bias, and systems of oppression.

Why am I being asked to take part in this study?

You are being asked to take part in this study as a MT who specializes in anti-oppressive practice. A clinician who specializes in anti-oppressive practice is aware of and works to interrupt interlocking systems of oppression such as white supremacy, patriarchy, and ableism in their practice. Given the nature of this study, it is necessary to work with a MT who is engaged in the work of identifying and interrupting bias and the systems that construct bias.

What will I be asked to do? What does the co-investigator role entail?

During the course of this study, you will be asked to engage in a collaborative process of reflexivity, transparency and authenticity. Part of this will include facilitating three music therapy sessions. These sessions will focus on identifying, examining and deconstructing the PI participant's unconscious bias as it relates to interlocking systems of oppression. The music therapy sessions will be recorded and transcribed for data collection. You will also be asked to assess the session transcripts for accuracy.

In alignment with a PAR framework, the MT co-investigator will also be asked to engage in dialogue with the PI regarding the power dynamics present in the structure of the study. This dialogue will address aspects of identity, including race, gender, role, age, disability, etc. This conversation must happen prior to the start of the music therapy sessions and may be revisited throughout the study.

The role of the co-investigator allows for autonomy and agency while engaging in this study. As the co-investigator, you are invited to participate in a way that feels authentic to you. This may include locating yourself within the study, providing reflections on your experience, and sharing feedback with the PI.

The co-investigator may also consent to identify themselves in the study, although this is not required for participation. The co-investigator may revoke consent for identification at any point throughout the study prior to publication. The co-investigator's decision regarding self-identification will be honored by the PI.

The co-investigator is not responsible for data collection, data analysis, results, or discussion of the study's findings.

Where is the study going to take place, and how long will it take?

The music therapy sessions will take place over the Zoom video conferencing platform. There will be three sessions, each approximately 45 minutes long. The time spent reviewing transcripts is at the discretion of the participant.

What are the risks and discomforts?

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research; however, reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize known risks. If new findings develop during the course of the research which may change your willingness to participate, we will tell you about these findings.

The most significant risk is that of confidentiality. The session recordings and transcripts will be stored in an encrypted file on my password protected computer. If this is breached, individuals outside of the research team may have access to the music therapy audio and video recordings, as well as transcripts.

Should the co-investigator choose to identify themselves, they may increase the risk associated with the study. Choosing to self-identify will mean that identifiers will not be removed from the data or final data presentation and discussion. Due to the nature of the study and research questions, we are seeking to provide as much agency as possible to the co-investigator with regard to this decision of anonymity.

What are the expected benefits of this research?

Individual Benefits: The MT co-investigator may gain experience in research as a result of this study. There is no further anticipated direct individual benefit for the MT co-investigator involved in this study. This study may contribute to the growing body of research in the larger music therapy community regarding client experience, bias, and systems of oppression.

Do I have to take part in this study?

Your participation in this research is your choice. If you decide to participate in the study, you may change your mind and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are already entitled.

What are the alternatives to being in this study?

Instead of being in this research, you may choose not to participate.

Who will have access to my information?

Discussion and music from the music therapy sessions will be recorded and transcribed as data. The PI participant will have access to these recordings and transcriptions during the course of the research. The recordings and transcriptions will be protected in a locked and encrypted file on a password protected computer. All identifiers will be removed from transcripts and data presentation. The findings will be presented in narrative form.

Should the MT co-investigator consent to self-identify, their identifying information (as provided by them) will be left unaltered in the data and final presentation of the study.

How will my [information/biospecimens] be used?

The MT co-investigator's information presented in the audio/video recordings and transcripts will be used to inform the narrative constructed by the PI participant regarding their experience as the client. The MT co-investigator's information collected as part of the research will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

To ensure that this research activity is being conducted properly, Molloy College's Institutional Review Board (IRB), whose members are responsible for the protection of human subjects' rights for all Molloy-approved research protocols, have the right to review study records, but confidentiality will be maintained as allowed by law.

Can my participation in the study end early?

The MT co-investigator may be removed from the study if they fail to attend one of the three music therapy sessions without notice or communication.

The MT co-investigator may be removed from the study if they conduct themselves in a manner that is threatening, harmful to themselves or others.

Will I receive any compensation for participating in the study?

The MT co-investigator will receive up to \$375 for participating in the study - \$125 for each completed music therapy session and reviewed transcript (3 in total). If the MT co-investigator chooses to leave the study at any point, they will only be paid for the music therapy sessions and transcript reviews they completed.

What if I have questions?

Before you decide whether you'd like to participate in this study, please ask any questions that come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact Nicole Moy at 631-509-3828 or nmoy@lions.molloy.edu, or Dr. Amanda MacRae at 609-346-3995, or amacrae@molloy.edu

What are my rights as a research participant?

You have rights as a research participant. All research with human participants is reviewed by a committee called the *Institutional Review Board (IRB)* which works to protect your rights and welfare.

If you have questions about your rights, an unresolved question, a concern or complaint about this research you may contact the IRB contact the Molloy IRB office at irb@molloy.edu or call 516 323 3000.

Documentation of Informed Consent*:

You are freely making a decision whether to be in this research study. Signing this form means that

- 1. you have read and understood this consent form**
- 2. you have had your questions answered, and**
- 3. after sufficient time to make your choice, you have decided to be in the study.**

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa

Your signature

3/3/2021

Date

Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa

Your printed name

3/3/2021

Date

Consent for audio/video recordings of music therapy sessions:

Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa

Your signature

3/3/2021

Date

Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa
Your printed name

3/3/2021
Date

Consent for self-identification (may be revoked at any time prior to publication):

Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa
Your signature

3/3/2021
Date

Natalia Alvarez-Figueroa
Your printed name

3/3/2021
Date

Nicole Moy
Signature of researcher explaining study

3/3/2021
Date

Nicole Moy
Printed name of researcher explaining study

3/3/2021
Date

Appendix B

Cover Letter

Molloy College IRB
 Approval Date: December 10, 2020
 Expiration Date: December 8, 2023

DECONSTRUCTING THE CLINICIAN: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

Principal Investigator: Nicole Moy, MT-BC

This study will focus on the client's experience in music therapy as they explore their role in interlocking systems of oppression. The Graduate Music Therapy Department at Molloy College is recruiting a music therapist co-investigator (MT co-investigator) for this study. This study will utilize autoethnography and work from a participatory action research framework.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are a MT with:

- At least five years of experience with an active MT-BC credential as verified by the CBMT.
- A master's degree in music therapy.
- Familiarity with best Telehealth practices.
- An active engagement in anti-oppressive music therapy practice.

The study will utilize the Zoom video conferencing platform. Music therapy sessions will be recorded and later transcribed and used as data.

As the MT co-investigator, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Facilitate three 45-minute music therapy sessions with the PI as your client.
2. Review and confirm accuracy of transcripts provided by the PI.
3. Edit transcripts as needed to ensure accuracy.
4. Engage in ongoing reflexivity through collaboration with the PI.

The role of the MT co-investigator intends to allow for empowerment while engaging in this study. As the MT co-investigator, you are invited to participate in a way that feels authentic to you. This may include locating yourself within the study, providing reflections on your experience, and sharing feedback with the PI.

The MT co-investigator will receive \$375 for participating in the study - \$125 for each music therapy session and reviewed transcript. Payment methods and procedures will be discussed and finalized prior to obtaining consent.

If you participate, you may gain experience in research as the MT co-investigator. This study may contribute to the growing body of research in the larger music therapy community regarding client experience, bias, and systems of oppression.

If you are interested in participating in this study or want more information, please contact Nicole Moy at nmoy@lions.molloy.edu or 631-509-3828.

Appendix C

Molloy College IRB Approval

1000 Hempstead Ave., PO Box 5002, Rockville Center, NY 11571-5002
www.molloy.edu

Kathleen Maurer Smith, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate Academic Affairs
T: 516.323.3801
F: 516.323.3398
E: ksmith@molloy.edu

DATE: December 10, 2020

TO: Nicole Moy
FROM: Molloy College IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1681292-1] Deconstructing the Clinician: an Autoethnographic Study
REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: December 10, 2020

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Molloy College IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations. However, exempt research activities are subject to the same human subject protections and ethical standards as outlined in the Belmont Report.

This acknowledgement expires within three years- unless there is a change to the protocol.

Though this protocol does not require annual IRB review, the IRB requires an annual report of your exempt protocol (Expedited and Exempt Research Protocol Annual Report Form) which is available on the IRB webpage.

If there is a proposed change to the protocol, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to inform the Molloy College IRB of any requested changes before implementation. A change in the research may change the project from EXEMPT status and requires prior communication with the IRB.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Patricia Eckardt at 516-323-3711 or peckardt@molloy.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Patricia Eckardt, Ph.D., RN, FAAN
 Chair, Molloy College Institutional Review Board

Appendix D

Email Template for Participant Recruitment

Hello,

My name is Nicole Moy and I am a Music Therapy Master's Degree student at Molloy College. As part of my degree requirement, I am conducting an autoethnographic study in the hopes of identifying and deconstructing my personal bias as a music therapist.

I am recruiting a music therapist (MT participant) for this study. The role of the MT participant will be to facilitate three music therapy sessions and review session transcripts. I will be the client in these sessions. The goal of these sessions will be to identify and explore my experiences with interlocking systems of oppression and how they relate to my personal bias.

I have attached a Cover Letter and Informed Consent Document which provide further information regarding the study. If you meet eligibility requirements and would like to participate in the study, please sign the Informed Consent Document and send it to nmoy@lions.molloy.edu. By completing the Informed Consent Document, you consent to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you would like to request additional information regarding this study before, during, or after its completion, you may contact me directly at nmoy@lions.molloy.edu or 1(631)-509-3828.

Warmly,

Nicole Moy
Principal Investigator
Molloy College
Department of Music Therapy
1000 Hempstead Turnpike
Rockville Centre, NY
nmoy@lions.molloy.edu

Dr. Amanda MacRae
Thesis Advisor
Molloy College
Department of Music Therapy
1000 Hempstead Turnpike
Rockville Centre, NY
amacrae@molloy.edu

Appendix E

Molloy IRB Acknowledgment Letter



1000 Hempstead Ave., PO Box 5002, Rockville Center, NY 11571-5002
www.molloy.edu

Kathleen Maurer Smith, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate Academic Affairs
T: 516.323.3801
F: 516.323.3398
E: ksmith@molloy.edu

DATE: February 12, 2021

TO: Nicole Moy

FROM: Molloy College IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1681292-1] Deconstructing the Clinician: an Autoethnographic Study

REFERENCE #:

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: ACKNOWLEDGED

EFFECTIVE DATE: December 10, 2020

EXPIRATION DATE: December 8, 2023

Thank you for submitting the New Project materials for this project. The Molloy College IRB has ACKNOWLEDGED your submission. No further action on submission 1681292-1 is required at this time.

The following items are acknowledged in this submission:

- Amendment/Modification - Amendment Application Form (UPDATED: 02/1/2021)
- Application Form - IRB APP Final.doc (UPDATED: 12/10/2020)
- Consent Form - 2.9 Updated Informed Consent (UPDATED: 02/9/2021)
- Consent Form - Informed Consent.docx (UPDATED: 12/10/2020)
- Cover Sheet - 2.9 Updated Cover Letter (UPDATED: 02/9/2021)
- Cover Sheet - Cover Letter.docx (UPDATED: 12/10/2020)
- Proposal - 2.9 Updated Proposal.docx (UPDATED: 02/9/2021)
- Proposal - Proposal (UPDATED: 12/10/2020)
- Training/Certification - RCR Basic Course - Co-investigator Certification (UPDATED: 02/10/2021)
- Training/Certification - Social & Behavioral Research - Co-investigator Certification (UPDATED: 02/10/2021)

Please refer to Molloy College IRB Policies and Procedures for required submission process if any changes to this project.

If you have any questions, please contact Patricia Eckardt at 516-323-3711 or peckardt@molloy.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Patricia Eckardt, Ph.D., RN, FAAN
Chair, Molloy College Institutional Review Board

This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Molloy College IRB's records.