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3-2020

Diversity in Music Therapy: A Treatment Model for LGBTQ+ Affirming Care

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Diversity in Music Therapy: A Treatment Model for LGBTQ+ Affirming Care

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Abstract

The aim of this paper was to synthesize available literature and research on music therapy services with LGBTQ+ to propose a treatment model for LGBTQ+ affirming care. According to data collected by the Williams Institute in 2018, 4.5% of Americans identified as LGBTQ+, and the report reaffirmed the professional responsibility of music therapy professionals and students to provide ethically sound and identity-affirming services to this population (The Williams Institute UCLA School of Law, 2018).

As of the year 2020 there is no established standardized, evidence-based treatment model for LGBTQ+ affirming care that encompasses interventions, goal domains, and assessment criteria. However, researchers and authors on this subject have proposed interventions, models for radically inclusive practice, cultural assessment tools, best practices, and reactions to the topic from professionals.

Background

- Maevon Gumble offered several suggestions for practice and insight regarding the potential of gender affirming voice work in music therapy for transgender and non-binary individuals (Gumble, 2018).
- Aronoff & Gilboa (2015) investigated the role of music during the process of coming out for seven men who identified themselves as gay, and music was identified as a companion, a means for concealing and exposing, and a means of making change.
- Ahessy (2011) expressed an urgent need for LGB approaches in music therapy and that the approaches be taught in university programs and professional training. Respondents identified the LGB topics they viewed as important to include in the curriculum.
- Wilson & Geist (2017) sent a survey to music therapy students at a university to investigate student's preparedness to work with members of the LGBT community, and results suggested that some students felt prepared and others felt unprepared.
- Goodman (2015) listed issues for ethical and professional consideration for LGBTQ+ affirming care as well as interventions and songs that were successful in conveying meaning, eliciting trust, and encouraging self expression in music therapy.
- Whitehead-Plaeux et. al. (2012) provided guidelines for best practice in music therapy with LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Boggan et. al. (2017) investigated professional perspectives on Queer Music Therapy and radically inclusive practice and included interventions that yielded success from this implementation with this population.
- Chase (2004) referenced general issues for LGB individuals and the literature available on the considerations of LGB individuals when choosing a therapist and their reported attitude towards therapy.
- Baker (2014) and Thaut & Hoemberg (2014)'s separate models informed the structure and content of this proposed model.
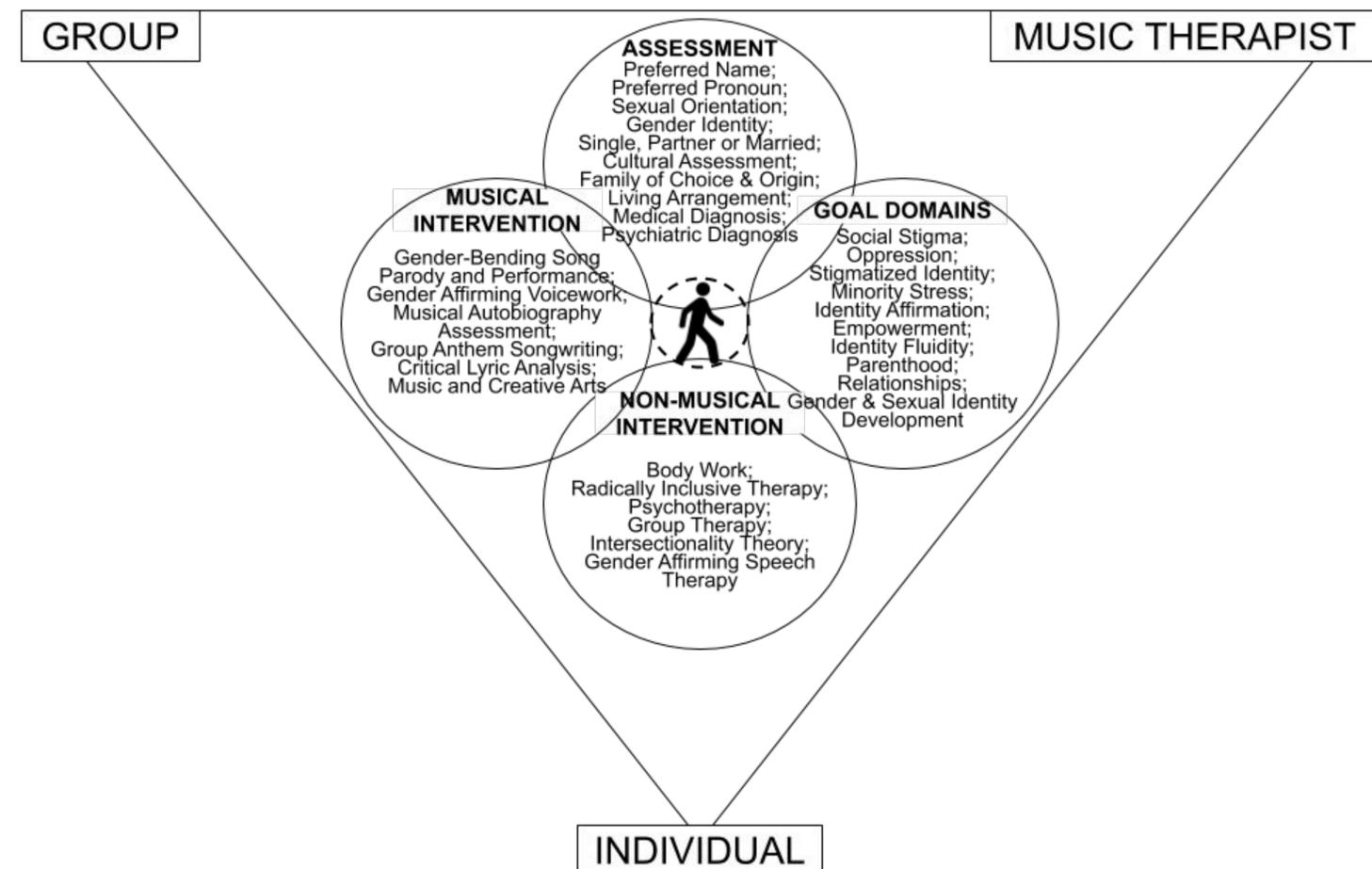
Methods and Materials

- This paper was completed in November of 2019 as a final project for a senior undergraduate music therapy course, MUTH 431.
- Information was sourced from six music therapy journals, three music therapy books, and one conference presentation. Four databases were used to collect the sources, and keywords such as 'diversity,' 'LGBTQ+,' 'LGB,' and 'LGBT' were applied. The list of results from each database were filtered by the keywords, if they were articles from the year 2000 to the present, if they were full articles, and if they were peer reviewed articles.
- Two sources posit a low amount of bias due to the lead author serving the dual role of the investigator and reporter of clinical examples and narratives.

Conclusions

- Two overarching themes are culturally centered practice informed by the individual and sociological factors in their life, and an overall need for education in undergraduate programs and professional training on music therapy for LGBTQ+ clients.
- The supportive body of research provides evidence-based interventions, and guidelines for treatment, assessment, and culturally centered practice.
- The synthesis of this information in one model may provide the opportunity to propose standardized criteria for interventions and treatment goals.

A Treatment Model for LGBTQ+ Affirming Care
Elaine Slusser

GROUP · MUSIC THERAPIST · INDIVIDUAL

ASSESSMENT
Preferred Name; Preferred Pronoun; Sexual Orientation; Gender Identity; Single, Partner or Married; Cultural Assessment; Family of Choice & Origin; Living Arrangement; Medical Diagnosis; Psychiatric Diagnosis

MUSICAL INTERVENTION
Gender-Bending Song Parody and Performance; Gender Affirming Voicework; Musical Autobiography Assessment; Group Anthem Songwriting; Critical Lyric Analysis; Music and Creative Arts

GOAL DOMAINS
Social Stigma; Oppression; Stigmatized Identity; Minority Stress; Identity Affirmation; Empowerment; Identity Fluidity; Parenthood; Relationships; Gender & Sexual Identity Development

NON-MUSICAL INTERVENTION
Body Work; Radically Inclusive Therapy; Psychotherapy; Group Therapy; Intersectionality Theory; Gender Affirming Speech Therapy

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