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BOOK REVIEW

Music therapy in neonatal intensive care: Influences of culture (Shoemark & Ettenberger, Eds.)

Reviewed by Katie Rose M. Sanfilippo

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Title: Music therapy in neonatal intensive care: Influences of culture **Editors:** Helen Shoemark & Mark Ettenberger **Publication year:** 2020
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REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

Dr Katie Rose Mahon Sanfilippo is currently a postdoctoral fellow in psychology at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is also an associated lecturer in music at the University of Cambridge. Her overall research interests concern the perception, function and application of music. Her PhD investigated the potential of a community-based music intervention to reduce anxiety and depression symptoms in pregnant women from the Gambia, West Africa. Her current research is exploring the application of music-based interventions to support maternal mental health across different cultural contexts in Africa and the UK. She worked for two years as a research assistant in the research team at Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy Charity. [k.sanfilippo@gold.ac.uk]

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Edited by Helen Shoemark and Mark Ettenberger, *Music Therapy in Neonatal Intensive Care: Influences of Culture*, takes the reader across various geographical areas to explore, using ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), the role of culture within established and emerging music therapy programs within Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs). This book is a collection of 14 chapters, 10 of which cover different cultural contexts within Europe (including German-speaking Europe, Italy, and Nordic countries), Australia, the United States (including Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, Southeast and Southwest regions) and South America (including Colombia and Brazil). The chapters are authored by a total of 26 expert music therapy researchers and clinicians working within each of these different cultural contexts. The editors state that the “purpose of the book is to explicate the issues of culture in real world settings where music therapy has become established in NICUs” (p. 4).

Throughout the book, Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological systems theory is used to discuss the influence of the chrono, macro, exo, meso and microsystem levels of culture on music therapy practice in neonatal intensive care. While some chapters draw on this ecological theory more consistently than others, the uniformity in the chapters’ section structure helps the book feel coherent and assists the reader in exploring the differences and similarities in music therapy practice, programs, and the influence of culture across different countries and regions. Within the concluding chapter Shoemark and Ettenberger tie all the chapters together by highlighting some of the “common ecological threads” (p. 289) that elucidate the influences of culture on music therapy in the NICU.

Each chapter starts by considering the role that music generally plays within each context. This helps situate the reader within the musical culture of that country or region. The chapters then discuss how health care is organized and delivered within these different contexts and how this can influence music therapy within the NICU. Throughout the book, a distinction between countries and regions with socialized health care systems (Europe and Australia) and those with privatized systems (United States) is evident. The amenability of these different systems to include family members within the NICU and music therapy sessions is highlighted across the chapters and within the concluding chapter written by the editors. All chapters emphasise family-centred care (Gooding et al., 2011) as the current standard model within the NICUs the authors are working in. Even though this standard seems to be universal across all geographical regions discussed in the book, the way it is realised across these contexts is different. The influence of health care systems and differences between collectivist (e.g. Brazil and Colombia) and individualistic cultures (e.g. the United States) on the involvement of the family within infant care is considered within the concluding chapter. These distinctions in health systems and cultures illuminate most clearly the influence of culture on music therapy practice, such as what methods are used or developed in the NICU.

Finally, through the presentation of research, experience and case studies, each chapter discusses the music therapy services and programs established within the specific hospitals or country or region in which the authors work. They discuss the models of music therapy used within these specific settings, the potential outcomes, and give some specific examples of the way in which culture influences their music therapy practice and services. The music therapy models (e.g. First Sounds: Rhythm, breath and lullaby (Loewy et al., 2013) or creative music therapy (Haslbeck, 2014)) and methods used (e.g. improvisation or song writing) seem to apply across many of the cultural contexts. However, there is some inconsistency in how the evidence of the potential benefits of the models or methods is presented. Some chapters focus on the account of an author's specific experience within one context (e.g., Chapter 2: Establishing a Place for Music in the Italian NICU), while other chapters present a range of evidence (research and personal experience) which offers a more comprehensive overview of music therapy in neonatal intensive care within a specific country or region (e.g. Chapter 9: Music Therapy in the NICU in Columbia: An Overview of Current Practice and Development). Additionally, the amount of critical discussion around the role of culture varies across the chapters. A few chapters lack a comprehensive and critical presentation of research or a clear explanation of how culture has influenced their own personal practice or the music therapy programmes within their region. Nevertheless, overall, the authors are successful in describing the state of music therapy in neonatal intensive care within their countries or regions offering the reader a clear indication of the international reach and potential of music therapy in NICUs.

Preceding the concluding chapter, there are three chapters which discuss other aspects of culture and their influence on music therapy in NICUs. The first, by Helen Shoemark, describes how different types of NICUs (Paediatric versus Perinatal) impact music therapy research and practice. This chapter ends with a call for more research investigating a wider range of NICU settings and infants. As a researcher, not a clinician, there were other interesting areas of future research brought out in the discussions throughout the book which merit mention. First, is the difference in culture, experience and access between rural and urban areas, especially in the United States. Future work could investigate how music therapy practice and models used in urban areas might be better adapted

to the needs of families within rural communities. The role of siblings and grandparents as caregivers is also discussed within many of the chapters. Therefore, future research could investigate the role these family members might play in music therapy sessions within the NICU and the extent to which the surrounding culture facilitates their involvement. Finally, there is one continent, Africa, that was not mentioned at all within the book. Music therapy is practiced in South Africa (see Dos Santos 2005 for a discussion around the role of culture in music therapy in South Africa) and within many countries across Africa music plays a key role in traditional healing ceremonies (Vontress, 1991). Future work could explore the potential of music therapy, or music-based interventions more generally, for neonatal intensive care within different regions in Africa.

The second chapter in the book's final section is written by two male music therapists, John Mondanaro (USA) and Mark Ettenberger (Colombia). In this chapter they explore the role of fathers in the NICU through two case studies. The role of fathers is a significant area of interest in child development (Lamb et al., 1985) and perinatal mental health (Ramchandani et al., 2013). In fact, the changing role of the father has been investigated across cultures (e.g. Lamb, 1987). As suggested by the chapter authors, the influence of culture on the role of fathers within music therapy in the NICU is certainly a topic that could be developed further within future research.

The final chapter in this section, before the concluding chapter, provides helpful insights about the challenges of establishing new music therapy programs in NICUs and how to address them. This chapter draws upon the experiences of music therapists from Argentina, Israel, Japan, Poland, Spain, Taiwan and the United Kingdom and is applicable to music therapists thinking about starting a music therapy program or research study in their particular locale.

The book ends with a challenge to "resist the notion that music is one thing and to embrace all that it can be" (p. 301). However, to truly resist this notion, the book could have been further strengthened if it included more reference to research from other related disciplines or approaches, for example, music medicine, music psychology, or ethnomusicology (this was briefly done by the Vianna et al. in their chapter on Music Therapy and Culture in Brazilian Neonatal Units-Research and Clinical Practice). Moreover, a future edition of this book could benefit from the inclusion of additional voices such as other clinicians working within the NICU. I appreciated the forward from Professor Rod Hunt, a director of neonatal medicine, and believe that the inclusion of similar voices and experiences would ensure that this book draws a wider audience beyond music therapists, potentially allowing for the formation of more allies internationally. In fact, this addition would be in line with the last section of the book where the editors call for a more transdisciplinary approach towards music therapy programmes in NICUs. There has been some recent work looking at the challenges and opportunities gained from interdisciplinary collaboration and research (e.g. Choi & Pak, 2006; Tsisiris et al., 2016) and more specific examples within the specific context of music therapy in neonatal intensive care could have been useful to include.

Overall, the structure of the book brings the reader on a journey across the world highlighting how the influence of different levels of culture are important to consider when implementing music therapy into neonatal intensive care. The book is an excellent addition to the wider conversation about the importance of culturally appropriate approaches to music therapy practice more generally (e.g. Stige, 2002; Whitehead-Pleaux & Tan, 2017). This book is a compelling and broad look into the connections and differences in music therapy for neonatal intensive care across cultures and has

useful practical advice for those, especially music therapists, who are looking to start or further develop music therapy programmes in NICUs within their communities.

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