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A student music therapist’s exploration of her cultural identities in relation to music therapy practice in a specialist music therapy centre in Aotearoa New Zealand

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Music Therapy

at Massey University, Mt Cook, New Zealand.

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Abstract

This heuristic research explores a student music therapist’s (SMT's) journey of discovery with respect to her cultural identities in relation to music therapy (MT) practice with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. A review of the literature was undertaken to investigate issues of identity in relation to MT practice. In order to analyse and evaluate the SMT’s experience of working with culturally diverse clients, secondary analysis of the student’s reflexive journal was used to identify the relationships between the SMT’s cultural identities and her MT practice with clients. Four main themes emerged during the process of thematic analysis of data: experiencing strong feelings as an SMT; observing individual reactions as an SMT and interpreting clients’ reactions; making connections and disconnections with clients; and learning to adapt and refine the use of MT methods. The research emphasised how a student can learn about practice and research through reflexive self-examination, and raised awareness of the complex interactions of identities of therapist and client that occur in MT practice.
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