

# The Relevance of Ethnomusicological Research and Theory to Music Therapy Practice, Research, Education and Policy.

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## Objectives

This poster will examine why ethnomusicological research methodologies are relevant to music therapy, practice, research and education. This approach is different to Culture-Centred/Community Music Therapy because it embraces:

1. Non-Western definitions/ models of wellbeing and 'music' (sometimes including movement)
2. Culturally appropriate research methodologies (eg. interviews are not always appropriate)
3. Practices use culturally appropriate/ context specific musics based on non-Western (uses of music to promote wellbeing.
4. Practices which do not stereotype or essentialise the cultural groups seeking to improve wellbeing.

## Useful lessons from an Australian context:

"Regardless of research recommendations for non-Indigenous populations, there has been a tendency to apply wholesale inappropriate intervention models to Indigenous Australians. At issue is the control of programs, and in particular the reluctance or inability of the state to encourage culturally-specific and culturally safe formulations of public health prevention, intervention and after-care methods and philosophies. (Phillips, 2003: 35)"

Why is this relevant to the European context and musical health interventions?

We are increasingly living in a globalised world where ease of mobility has meant that communities are becoming musically and socially diverse. Musical practices and the significance and definitions of music vary across cultures. If we are to make music psychology, education and therapy relevant to these multi-cultural contexts we must embrace a more diverse approach to musical health interventions or risk a reduction in: effectiveness of these interventions and less participation from certain cultural groups.

## Hopevale Community Choir



Figure 1: The Hopevale Community Choir at Lotus Glen Correctional Facility. Left to right: Daisy Hamlot, Dora Deemal, Mavis Yoren, Maureen Wallace, Myrtle Bambie, Violet Cobus, Marie Gibson, Phylomena Naylor, Ella Woibo, Pamela Kemp, Gertie Deeral, Henry Deeral, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005

## Methodologies

1. Applied Ethnomusicology (Sheehy: 1992);
2. Medical Ethnomusicology (Koen et al: 2008);
3. Participatory Action Research (Trotter and Schensul, 1989);
4. Culture-Centred Music Therapy (Stige, 2002); Community Music Therapy (Pavlicevic, Ansdell 2004);
5. Community Choral Facilitation (Durrant, 2003).

**Situational and situated practice:** Formulated according to location needs of the community. Applied, reciprocal, bottom-up approach based- on culturally specific definitions of music and how it relates to well-being. Definitions and practices may vary from those of the researcher/ therapist.

**Personal:** Researcher/ therapist personal knowledge, gender, social status, cultural (musical) background, and ethos, intellectual, spiritual beliefs and perceptions, emotions and commitment. These influence how cross-cultural therapy/ research sessions develop and are variables in the process.

**Social:** Encompass the social constraints and the social reality of the 'knower'. Ways in which knowledge is produced are many and varied and involve processes of inculturation and enculturation from an early age. Embracing those of the community a researcher/ therapist is working with is essential.

**Experiential knowledge:** Practical, performative knowledge shaped through multi-dimensional experiences, which depended on, for example, non-verbal and sensory feedback, musical sounds, and the personal interactions between performers and audiences. Influencing factors: acoustics, musical proficiency, different musical traditions/ preferences. Difficult to quantify and valued differently in different cultures.

**Theoretical/ Ethnographic:** The relationship between theory and practice. Ethnographically informed approaches to musical facilitation and research, which are not prescriptive, but based on local customs and attitudes to making music and its appropriateness for promoting wellbeing. Incorporating local definitions of music, (which may include movement or may exclude singing for example) and wellbeing. This may require the researcher to re-adjust their own concepts of what health and wellbeing are, based on non-Western medical/ health models not taught in the Western academy.

## Ethnographically informed choral facilitation and wellbeing

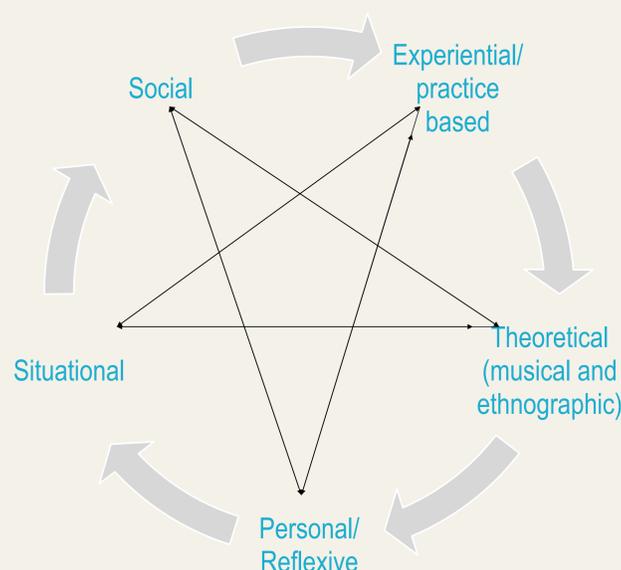


Figure 2: An ethnographically informed, fluid model of Durrant's (2003) Five Orientations of a facilitator's "craft knowledge"

## Results

By the project closure choir members had:

1. gained musical confidence;
2. gained pride in their local post-colonial heritage;
3. helped inform non- Indigenous audiences about Indigenous diversity and history;
4. shown that: "More than just drunks come out of Hopevale".
5. developed a leadership system/ local musical networks to promote continuity

**Phylomena Naylor:** It [choir singing] sort of relaxes me, you know... I could've gone down hill, just like the rest of my family, because they're all drinkers and they don't care about themselves. They still don't...like I told my children: "You never think that way. You don't...what you's doing now, you have to put a stop to it and think, what your kids and their kids gonna do. Follow you." So, it's a big, big thing really, hey?

**PN:** There's a lot of talent in our community here today. It's just that, they have to learn and pull up and look and think what they doing to themselves, you know. It's not...we can tell them, but it's up to each and every individual people, to look forward and backward. Because I've seen...I've seen a lot, you know, in front of me as I was growin'...(5<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

## Empowerment through Music



Figure 3: Indigenous singers represent their Country Jan Aird (Cooktown Events Organiser), Lyndon Terracini (Queensland Music Festival Artistic Director), Phylomena Naylor, Daisy Hamlot, Jacqui Sykes (Cooktown Events Organiser), Bob Sullivan (Mayor Councillor Cooktown), 9<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

## Conclusion

The ethnomusicological approach questions definitions, and practices de-centering a facilitator. As an atheist and classically trained singer I had to embrace local: musical aesthetics, post colonial history and Indigenous Christian practices; the wellbeing generated through kinship familial affiliations; dis-interest in gaining possessions and money; a heightened interest in local surroundings, places and names of things and persons. As a result of this approach choir membership grew. The impact on wellbeing extended beyond the community, embracing a correctional facility and Indigenous rehabilitation centre amongst other places as well as tourists and the local non-Indigenous population who subsequently formed a multi-cultural choir with the Indigenous singers.

## Contact Information

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