

In Tune with Cultural Sensitivity:
Exploring the Effectiveness of Culturally Informed Music Therapy Interventions for
Children Coping with Trauma

UNDERGRADUATE CAPSTONE RESEARCH

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“I have neither given or received, nor have I tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid.”

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Abstract

Music Therapy, guided by a board-certified music therapist, utilizes musical elements, techniques, and clinical strategies to facilitate interventions tailored to individual client needs, concentrating on achieving therapeutic objectives that address cognitive, communicative, emotional, physiological, psychosocial, and spiritual domains. Within this framework, cultural sensitivity and competence are crucial for a music therapist, as it is one of the first steps in fostering a positive developmental journey for a client. Specifically, for children coping with trauma, music therapy can cultivate a more structured environment of treatment and regimen. Magnifying the scope of trauma through the lens of racial, environmental, and interpersonal influences allows music therapists to examine the severity of these experiences further to ensure proper treatment and development of the child. For that purpose, culturally informed music therapy interventions can yield a greater positive impact on childhood trauma compared to non-cultural interventions. Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis, this study evaluates interventions utilized in trauma-informed music therapy sessions and contemplates the limitations of non-cultural interventions in addressing traumatic experiences that are rooted within a child's cultural community. Existing research shows that adapting standard music therapy interventions to align with cultural values, traditions, and music results in openness and safe vulnerability expressed by the child. Implications for further research developments include expanding comparative and longitudinal studies, more individualized case studies, and creating effective standardized models. Therefore, this study strongly advocates the importance of purposeful exploration and integration of more substantial culturally informed music therapy interventions to utilize for child trauma treatment.

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I. Introduction

Childhood is a period of exploration and positive development for the mind, body, and spirit. It is a delicate experience as it sets the foundation for learning skills, behavioral patterns, personality development, and many other characteristics that make one a well-rounded individual. This positive development becomes disrupted when a child experiences any form of trauma. An initial feeling of fear, stress, and confusion elicits psychological, physical, mental, and emotional responses that the brain may not fully develop. This can structurally and functionally change the brain, disrupting a child's normal development process. These effects are often long-lasting well into adulthood and affect how one can interpret, react, and digest stressful interactions throughout their everyday lives.

Trauma manifests itself in many different forms and situations. From acute trauma to chronic trauma to complex trauma, categorizing these three main types can help one see a more specialized view of the issues and solutions. According to the medical professional database, Complex Trauma Organization, Acute trauma is an individual traumatic experience that happens suddenly and is focused in nature (e.g., *physical assault, displacement, and accidents*). Chronic trauma is a broad term that encapsulates ongoing exposure to one or more types of trauma (e.g., *community violence, domestic violence, and discrimination/racism*). Complex trauma is an integrative term that encompasses both the exposure to multiple, chronic, or recurrent traumatic experiences and the wide-ranging and long-term impact of these experiences (e.g., *chronic interpersonal trauma, institutionalized trauma, intergenerational trauma*). For children experiencing complex trauma, the Complex Trauma Organization categorizes it as Developmental Trauma Disorder (DTD), which expresses the primary emotional, physiological, behavioral, cognitive, self-image, and relational effects of complex trauma on children and

adolescents in different stages of development. There are other ways to categorize trauma; however, these are the most common types.

In BIPOC (i.e., *Black, Indigenous, and People of Color*) communities, trauma is generally overlooked and downplayed for a multitude of reasons. According to the National Alliance on Mental Health, “One study showed that 63% of Black people believe that a mental health condition is a sign of personal weakness...it can be incredibly challenging to discuss the topic of mental health due to this concern about how others may perceive them” (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.). This is just one insight into the many stigmas surrounding mental health that infiltrate the minds of these populations and have become passed down with each passing generation. With this being the overarching mindset in not only the Black American community but the Latinx community as well, children are usually the most susceptible population in going through traumatic experiences that heavily impact growth in developmental, emotional, social, and interpersonal areas. If the adults in their lives don’t address their traumas and mental health issues, they tend to overlook and be oblivious to the issues surrounding children.

Exploring these experiences through racial trauma, interpersonal trauma, and environmental trauma can be distinctive incidents, as each cultural community and ethnicity holds different perspectives on the situations. According to the Complex Trauma Organization, “racial trauma can be conceptualized as a specific form of complex trauma” (Foundation Trust, n.d). There are more ambiguous layers to delve into because they involve past and present trauma that overlaps in creating these long-lasting traumatic experiences and feelings. Within this framework, the transgenerational trauma theory also comes into play, as research has shown that trauma from one family ancestor can genetically be passed down throughout generations and

cause an epigenetic change (Valeii, 2024). Interpersonal trauma is psychological trauma that occurs between two or more people, usually when one or more people cause harm to others (Foundation Trust, n.d.). Environmental trauma is an emotional, physical, or psychological response to an event or series of events that has lasting adverse effects on an individual's functioning (Foundation Trust, n.d.). It encapsulates not only the physical space around us but the digital space as well, as children's access to online social media platforms has increased significantly.

Addressing the traumatic experiences that children undergo is the first step to “rectifying” the issues. In 2023, The CDC created a fully government-funded program, Essentials for Childhood: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences, that spread nationwide to help foster positive childhood experiences (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Adverse Childhood Experiences (*ACE*) is defined as potentially traumatic events (e.g., experiencing or witnessing violence, abuse, or neglect, discrimination, unstable housing, etc...) that occur in childhood (0-17 years) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adolescence and adulthood. ACEs can also negatively impact education, job opportunities, and earning potential. By implementing these programs it helps to provide medical and other therapeutic services to prevent and nurture children and adolescents who have experienced trauma in any way.

Music Therapy is just one of the treatments that can effectively treat childhood trauma. According to the American Music Therapy Association, music therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals. Interventions are intentional actions that help clients achieve their goals or implement problem management. As a music therapist, being aware of the stigmas and discriminations, especially if one is not a part of

that culture, is crucial to effectively providing more comprehensive treatment. Creating an inclusive and culturally sensitive environment for the child to therapeutically transition promotes resilience and rebirth of their identity after traumatic experiences. The healing process is not linear for everyone and must be tailored specifically for that individual's experiences. Cultural interventions are essential to understanding the client and establishing a deeper connection. Feeling comfortable in their culture through music, activities, or values opens a gateway to more effective treatment, therefore, culturally informed music therapy interventions can yield a greater positive impact on childhood trauma compared to non-culturally informed interventions.

II. Literature Review

Cultural interventions in trauma-based music therapy is a deeply unexplored area, even though showcasing cultural sensitivity and competence is an essential trait for music therapists to have. Specifically when dealing with childhood trauma, it is vital to be gentle yet methodical in how to approach the treatment process, as it is a delicate and vulnerable time in the child's development that has been disrupted and altered. Utilizing culturally based interventions could possibly impact results more positively than non-culturally specific interventions. It gives back a chance that children once harbored before their traumatic experiences affected them in a stagnant way. Reviewing and analyzing existing literature helps to refine one's theories by allowing further conceptualization to structure facts and frameworks effectively. It also provides a more contextual understanding of studies, methods, and developments currently being researched. It also helps build the knowledge base to further the research already being used. This literature review aims to provide an understanding of the sources and studies presented by evaluating and analyzing their importance and how they've effectively addressed the issues and provided solutions to further the advancement of cultural-based music therapy for traumatized children.

Culture and Trauma have always had this intersectionality, as many different cultures and subcultures have varying beliefs, values, and social standards surrounding traumatic experiences. So exactly, what is culture, and how does it affect trauma? Adapting Merriam-Webster's definition, culture is customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group (Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2024). These cultural experiences and values help develop one's perspective on life, identity, and responses to positive and negative experiences. For this research paper, we will focus on the relationship and impact of culture and trauma for Black and Hispanic/Latinx populations in America.

Interpersonal trauma and culture intersect because culture influences how individuals cognitively and emotionally experience, perceive, and cope with traumatic events. In an article titled "Healing Interpersonal and Racial Trauma: Integrating Racial Socialization Into Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for African American Youth" by Metzger et al., the researchers explore how African-American youth experience more interpersonal and racial trauma than other races. Integrating racial socialization into Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT) can help positively with trauma coping strategies. According to Metzger et al., "RS has been successfully integrated into treatments seeking to reduce internalizing and externalizing problems in African American children and families, reduce abusive parenting, and increase positive parent-child interactions (Coard et al., 2004), no treatment enhancements exist for TF-CBT for African American youth who have experienced interpersonal trauma and are at risk of encountering racial trauma" (Metzger et al., 2021, p. 18). To combat this lack of resources, they recommend utilizing techniques such as *relaxation* skills, *affective expression and modulation*, *trauma narration*, and *processing*, and *in vivo mastery*, which emphasizes the importance of racial pride, promotes awareness of racial barriers, and incorporate culturally

relevant coping skills by slowing uncovering the clients traumatic memories to liberate them of their negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors surrounding them.

Cultural dynamics are the foundation of racial and ethnic identity, it is deeply intertwined in influencing and setting the foundation for an intricate interplay between systemic racism, lack of adequate resources, cultural attitudes against therapy and trauma responses, and personal identity within the broader context of a person's racial community. In “Culturally Relevant Parenting Approaches Among African American and Latinx Children and Families: Toward Resilient, Strengths-Based, Trauma-Informed Practices”, Emilie Phillips Smith et al., examine the importance of addressing socio-economic needs, cultural values, and racial-ethnic socialization in a therapeutic environment for these populations because it highlights the unique necessities and circumstances that need to be challenged and systematically improved. They identified how “children and adolescents suffering from traumatic stress or race-based stress are rarely identified with accurate and systematic assessment methods. Thus, they are also not targeted to receive mental health services” (Phillips-Smith et al., 2022, p. 211). Undermining the impact of racial-ethnic trauma on a population that is still growing and particularly vulnerable is a huge disparity. It continues to incidentally sustain issues that ultimately impact them well into their adult lives. The review results informed that “Research demonstrates that parenting and family-based programs that incorporate attention to linguistics, worldviews, and contexts not only improve positive parenting, but also reduce stress, and improve health and mental health for parents and children alike, supporting the efficacy of culturally relevant adaptations for racial discrimination and trauma (Anderson et al., 2019; Brody et al., 2021; Murry et al., 2021).” (Phillips-Smith et al., 2022, p. 216). This is why it is imperative to cultivate and develop safe, affordable, and structured environments for children and adolescents to receive consistent and

professional therapeutic services, and foster inner-community healing with their parents/caregivers.

The intersectionality of environmental trauma and culture reveals the dissonance and influence of ecological/digital systems on racial diaspora narratives, perspectives, and perceived behaviors. Elizabeth Batista-Pinto Wiese's, "Culture and Migration: Psychological Trauma in Children and Adolescents", explores how the migration process is a traumatic experience because it is attributed to acculturation and identity changes that cause psychological distress, familial estrangement, and other mental health issues. These issues extend beyond the beginning of a child's life into this world as, "...trauma can affect the attachment basis, bringing direct consequences to the child's life and development. A consequence of the parents' trauma can be the development of disturbed affective parent-child communication. In these cases, the parents often are unable to deal with the child's needs, and can behave in a frightened/anxious way toward the child." (Wiese, 2010, p. 147). This transfers a state of vulnerability to the child leaving them developmentally disrupted and in distress in many aspects of their lives. Wiese asks readers to consider two factors for refugee and migrant children, "vulnerability and risk of psychopathology in a critical period" (Wiese, 2010). Utilizing those cultural factors helps to maintain the integrity of what they are most familiar with in a new environment that can be scary, violent, and unpredictable.

Beyond the natural environment, more adolescents are being exposed to the digital world at a very young age, further exposing them to digital media that is too vast to cognitively process. According to Dr. Bethany Rose Lamont's article, "From raped childhood to ruined childhood: Developing an aesthetic of childhood trauma in digital culture from 2001 to 2018", she provides a definition of childhood rape/trauma in digital culture as "A melodramatic

expression that is used by oversensitive millennials who become unduly upset when certain media properties that they enjoyed as children are co-opted in ways that they do not personally approve of” (Lamont, 2022). Although these spaces seem to be occupied by most adults, any children’s media gets turned into this expression of violent acts, thoughts, and behaviors. As apps try to desensitize this type of content to children, since the original media is marketed for children it directly exposes children to violent and disturbing content. Which can ultimately lead “to the desensitization or normalization of trauma, perpetuate harmful stereotypes, and potentially impact mental health” (Lamont, 2022).

In the context of music therapy, there are many different methods for treating types of childhood trauma. Among the different care approaches and methods of music therapy, Trauma-informed music therapy offers more comprehensive training and methods for dealing with clients coping with trauma. In “Trauma-Informed Care in Music Therapy: Principles, Guidelines, and a Clinical Case Illustration” by Dr. Annie Heiderscheit and Dr. Kathleen M. Murphy, they provide a strong foundation for understanding the trauma-informed care approach. From the importance of building a safe therapeutic environment for client empowerment to utilizing music therapy methods such as improvisation, song discussion, and composition techniques to understanding how a client’s cultural background will affect the psychological responses they elicit to trauma. Throughout this review, they conduct a study utilizing the trauma-informed model throughout the therapeutic process. The client had to attend weekly appointments, with a primary therapist, dietitian, and physician, and monthly appointments, with the psychiatrist, for review and management of pharmacological treatment (Heiderscheit, 2021). This multi-disciplinary approach also allows the clients to receive more tailored support through a diverse network of professionals and yields more positive outcomes. As the music therapist

was her primary care, during the sessions they worked on developing adaptive coping skills, selecting music based on Angie's needs, interests, strengths, and music preferences through music therapy interventions such as directed music imaging, music relaxation, toning, and chanting, just to name a few. Implementing this model helps build a strong foundation of coping skills to enhance emotional regulation, self-empowerment, and understanding inside and outside the session. Thus, leaving a long-lasting routine for the client to utilize when faced with difficult situations, making the trauma experiences a bit easier to work through. In other medical therapy model approaches, such as Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), there have been similar techniques utilized, and modeling this professionally recognized method is a significant start to developing the standards and methods for an officially recognized approach to trauma-focused music therapy.

In "Encountering Transgenerational Trauma through Analytical Music Therapy," Brian Adams delves into the topic of transgenerational trauma and how it impacts the psychological and emotional distress of the victims and is passed down from generation to generation. He mainly focuses on using his Jewish background and how the atrocities of the Holocaust are prevalent throughout the community, however, he also mentions the historical context and impact of transgenerational trauma of slavery and racial injustice for African Americans. His research methods include personal vignettes, shared stories from his ancestors, and trauma-based analytic music therapy methods (e.g., *memory recall and music improvisation*). It exposed the anxiety and fears of how the Jewish genocide not only physically displaced their ancestors, but how it emotionally, developmentally, and psychologically affected their community at large. Utilizing the Analytical Music Therapy (AMT) method helps to peel through the wounds that never quite healed, exploring the innermost aspects of a person's life and insights to boldly confront the

issues at hand. This enhances client well-being and gives solace in how their current and historical cultural perspectives fit into the greater environment around them.

In “Music Therapy with children who have been exposed to ongoing child abuse and poverty: A pilot study” by Jinah Kim, she determined the viability of the outcome that music therapy had on children in abusive and poverty-stricken situations, specifically in South Korea. This study utilized individual music therapy trial sessions that featured random selection for 4 out of 42 children who were experiencing ongoing trauma to receive treatment. She focused on three types of child abuse within an intimate setting - physical, emotional, and neglect. This allowed Kim to provide a more tailored experience for the children and see how their experiences were similar and different from one another to cultivate a specific intervention for each child within the same culture. Some of the interventions she used were song-based discussion, songwriting, free and structured improvisation, and instrument playing. She recorded her results using standardized measurements and behavioral observations to obtain credible results. In the study results, the mean for the group was generally positive as supporting music therapy methods; however, the individual results were variable to the group size. There are implications to conducting this study with a larger group size and to tweak the interventions a bit more. Nevertheless, as the effect sizes indicate a medium-to-large scale, the overall findings and client-resulting behaviors indicated that music therapy interventions positively impact children exposed to abuse and poverty.

In “Effectiveness of creative arts-based interventions for treating children and adolescents exposed to traumatic events: a systematic review of the quantitative evidence and meta-analysis,” Linda Morison et al. analyze 40 studies to examine the impact that creative arts-based interventions have on trauma symptoms and other psychological responses. There was

a lack of substantial evidence that arts-based interventions were effective in alleviating psychological distress in response to traumatic experiences of the client. Morrison utilized a systematic literature review, adhering to PRISMA guidelines, with a focus on controlled trials and pre-post-intervention studies. Some results from the review revealed much variability in the quality and consistency of the results; however, the overall effectiveness was very positive, and the ability to express the trauma was increased in the trial groups. The authors advocate for more controlled trials, and higher-quality studies must be explored to deepen the understanding of how creative arts-based interventions can effectively yield positive outcomes for trauma-exposed children and adolescents. This is due to many studies yielding inconclusive results, heterogeneous quality, and the lack of controlled trials. Further promoting “Creative arts-based interventions also generally require the child or adolescent to be active and it is argued that this activity taps into the sensory memory of the event and may help bridge implicit and explicit memories.” (Morrison, et al., p. 239)

“From uprooting to replanting: on post-trauma group music therapy for pre-school children ” by Rivka Felsenstein, highlights the outcome of short-term music therapy methods for three groups of preschool children. Delving into the post-traumatic growth and emotional impact the children faced through the displacement of their homeland. Some methods utilized were Group Songwriting and Improvisation, Breath and Voice Work, Projective Movement to Music, and many other techniques. This creates a safe and fun environment for children who have lost everything and are facing instability hoping to cultivate more resilience, self-expression, and cognitive development. Rivka offers a structured framework for future music therapists to utilize in research and sessions, including the Uprooting to rePlanting (UP) model and the broader Basic Ph model of Group Coping, developed for dealing with community stress. Creating these models

is a great development for research in this area because it not only positively impacts the individual but also looks at the environment around them and sees how it can impact them. Utilizing these techniques resulted in a reduction of vulnerable states and builds a more cognitive understanding of post-traumatic processing and resilience.

Mackenzie K. Conner, in “A Proposed Music Therapy Protocol for Trauma-Informed, Culturally Aware Practice with Migrants at the US-Mexico Border”, proposes a culturally aware and trauma-informed music therapy protocol specifically aimed at empowering and providing a safe development space for migrants at the US-Mexico border. When POC migrants come to the U.S., they face an array of challenges such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, acculturation, discrimination, and many other stressors in this new environment. For Conner’s proposed protocol, she plans to “design, implement, and evaluate an innovative program combining music therapy and trauma-informed therapy to help children and families recover from traumatic experiences or cope with adverse life experiences” (Conner, 2020). The protocol combines TF-CBT and CPT, techniques along with music therapy interventions such as group music-making, musical storytelling, music improvisation, and music games, to name a few. (Conner, 2020, pg. 21) There could be some skepticism and deep-rooted cultural biases that hinder migrants from wanting to utilize this therapeutic protocol and other mental health resources. Conner plans to involve tailored advertisements to spread awareness about the benefits of music therapy services and seek out grant funding and partnerships with nonprofit and community organizations. Since this protocol has not been tested, the results are only implied and not concrete, however, it gives promising research and methodologies to test with experimental groups in the future.

Edgar H. Tyson's "Hip Hop Therapy: An Exploratory Study of a Rap Music Intervention with At-Risk and Delinquent Youth" explores the potential and power of Hip-Hop Therapy (HHT) interventions. Some youth in the study were exposed to trauma in the various forms of abuse, from alcohol, drug, sexual, and other environmental stressors. This led to them being involved in criminal and violent activity, further suppressing those initial traumas. HHT encompasses a combined framework of hip-hop, bibliotherapy, and music therapy. During Tyson's study, "The sessions began with an introduction to HHT, the development of group rules and goals, then the remainder of the sessions involved listening to part of a rap song and discussing the groups' reactions, thoughts, and feelings about the lyrical component of the song. All songs discussed had themes relevant to improved self-identity, peace, unity, cooperation, and individual and (ethnic) group progress." (Tyson, 2002). Young Black Americans, as well as Hispanic youth, are frequently stigmatized and exposed to more traumatic experiences than most, and utilizing Hip-Hop music was a clever and influential method because it is used to unify, strengthen, and free the voices that experienced centuries of oppression, violence, and injustice. Utilizing a pretest-posttest control group experimental design with randomized assignment helped the researchers control any confounding variables, enhancing the study's internal validity and leading to a more decisive conclusion. Receiving feedback from the HHT groups was also great, as many of the youth within the study perceived rap music not as a weakness or detriment but as a symbol of strength.

Karen R. Sanchez, "Development of a Community-Based Trauma-Informed Music Therapy Program for Post-Trauma Recovery for Children and Their Families" focused on creating a trauma-informed music therapy program to treat PTSD addressing the psychological and neurological impacts in children and their families. Sanchez found that the traditional CBT

approaches may be challenging because of lower level education and cognitive limitations that impact the ability to understand concepts or do homework assignments” (Sanchez, 2017, pg. 7). Utilizing the TI-MT provides the clients a safe and structured environment to connect with their emotions, thoughts, and physical responses from their traumatic experiences. It also aims to “foster healthy self-regulation, social and emotional development and improved performance in school...increasing mindfulness in daily life, reducing level of perceived stress from pre-treatment to post-treatment” (Sanchez, 2017, pg 44). As children are exposed to these adaptive coping strategies that will follow them well into adulthood and can be used to reduce and combat the negative impacts of future traumatic experiences.

The first step to effectively utilizing these interventions is ensuring that certified music therapists and music therapy studies are provided with adequate training surrounding the trauma-formed care model, and cultural competency. Some culturally informed interventions in the music therapy session that yielded significant improvements in the client's mental health and emotional well-being included *community and family group-based interventions*. This allowed clients to tune in with their environmental culture, as many others shared the same background or similar experiences. It helped clients gain unity and self-confidence, which better developed cognitive skills, collaboration, and connections with others. Another popular intervention was utilizing *cultural music lyrics and instruments*, which provided a strong connection to their cultural heritage and stronger validity in their self-expression, confidence, and vulnerability. Utilizing music that provides firsthand knowledge of a client's culture empowers them to emulate what is being sung or expressed in that song. Lastly, *intersecting religion and personal spirituality* techniques gave clients powerful reinforcement, as religious views overlap and influence cultural practices by utilizing spirituals, hymns, and rituals. It continued to shape the

client's perspective of the world, providing resilience and strength by serving as another way of communicating their trauma.

Some non-culturally informed music therapy interventions featured in the reviews included *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* techniques including imagery, extensive assessment testing, and cognitive reframing. These techniques provide mental clarity and stimulate positive coping techniques for stress. CBT often requires clear and concise instructions, as this poses limitations for language barriers. It is also deeply rooted in Western medicine ideology, and does not integrally include cultural aspects, only considers them occasionally within this framework. Therapists could have adopted a “color-blind” perspective, which undermines and overlooks cultural nuances, experiences, and views of the client.

Another non-culturally informed music therapy intervention was *Music and Movement* providing physical stimulation to release stagnant energy, allowing positive energy to flow throughout, promoting further development. However, depending on the types of movements the therapist deems appropriate for the child, the impact can be restricted. Certain movements can have specific cultural meanings, and misunderstanding or reinforcing them as “inappropriate” can cause barriers between clients, their families, and the therapist. Lastly, *free and structured improvisation* provided more space for safe self-expression and empowerment, nonverbal cues, and encouraged social interaction with others who are experiencing similar symptoms. However, it does not take into consideration the cultural cues, gestures, or behaviors that may have impacted the meaning and results of the healing experience. Thus, impeding a child’s perception of what is socially appropriate and desirable in an external environment outside of their cultural environment.

In effectively addressing culturally specific issues, it's important to not just be aware of the client's attachments to their cultural values, perspectives, and history, but also how the session's overall goals and activities aid in retaining that heritage. The approaches used in both the cultural interventions and the non-cultural interventions still help the development of the client. However, non-cultural interventions and music therapists can overlook the importance of uplifting and understanding the client's cultural background by having a lack of resources and proper training, language and communication barriers, and the foundation of knowledge and education rooted in the dominant Western culture. Nonetheless, based on the results, when utilizing that personal connection to the client culture through interventions, it hits an extra target that delves deeper into the unspoken and integral aspects of their culture.

III. Methodology

Many research designs can be utilized to see the outcome of the effectiveness of culturally informed interventions in trauma-based music therapy. This paper was a systematic literature review, providing a comprehensive and detailed document that can help guide future research directions. Make informed decisions on the further development of standardized procedures and protocols to effectively treat children coping with trauma. There is an ever-growing development in the research for children's trauma, not just in the context of music therapy but also in psychology and other sectors of medicine.

In selecting the studies I focused on studies, papers, and journal articles that discussed topics: trauma-informed care, childhood, racial, environmental, and interpersonal trauma. These studies featured vignettes and experiments within specific marginalized cultures and communities. Although my focus was specifically on Black and Hispanic/Latinx communities, it was also important to include other POC cultures as well to gain a better understanding of how

similar these issues were and what were some similarities and differences in their approaches and results. Many of these interventions intersected (e.g., cultural play, family group sessions, community programs, etc.) and showed the strong potential for officially recognizing and examining these techniques further to provide a more nuanced understanding. I used a literature review matrix to extract relevant information from the included studies. The matrix included age and cultural background, study design and duration, outcome measures, and key findings. My analysis highlights cultural interventions that can become officially integrated with trauma-informed music therapy care but critiques the effectiveness of current and past research in the field. Within the selected studies, many of the researchers employed a data extraction process that included: a literature review matrix, questionnaire, standardized medical assessment scales, and much more. They analyzed their findings with both quantitative and qualitative data. Many of these included participant feedback, which further validates the outcome measures in the treatment effectiveness. Beyond this, it informed the researchers on how to improve the study for further testing with other groups. Some methods proved to show more statistically significant data than others. For example, a pretest-posttest control group experimental design with a randomized assignment or the tested originally designed protocols (e.g., Uprooting to rePlanting (UP) model). In analyzing their data, all the researchers made sure to note some confounding variables within the study and report any adverse effects that may have impacted the results.

IV. Analysis

Many of these studies and experiments have shown significant positive effects on coping skills and psycho-emotional behaviors of children and adolescents. There is still much potential for further research in this area, some strengths to notice during the review were that culturally informed interventions provide more identity affirmation, in the aftermath of a traumatic

experience, it leads to a loss of self-control and acceptance, which reinforces negative aspects of oneself. Cultural interventions help reassess, reform, and reinforce positive influences, providing a strong foundation for self-awareness. Utilizing healing rituals specific to cultural practices can help further develop one's spiritual perspective. Some say children possess that inner spirituality that continues to evolve positively in their maturation if nurtured. It creates a sense of belonging within themselves, the community, and the greater world. It further promotes community healing, engagement, and safety instead of just focusing solely on the individual. As a whole, when traumatic events occur, affecting children the most, having a safety net that is aware and responsible can help not only prevent further trauma but extend treatment growth beyond the session.

Some limitations in the current research include the focus on addressing diverse cultural backgrounds and their impact on therapeutic results. This can include having standardized methods and techniques centered around culturally tailored trauma-based interventions. Furthermore, while all music therapists should undergo cultural awareness training professionally as part of their continuing education, having a music therapist of the same background as the client is just as important. According to a 2021 statistical review from the AMTA, approximately 2.39% of licensed music therapists in the US are Black/African-American, and only around 10% are Hispanic/Latinx (American Music Therapy Association, 2021). These gaps also include disparities in access to music therapists in public and private schools, wellness programs, and other places where children can access this care. The amount of resources and funds allocated to the arts, specifically arts therapy, needs to be improved, as the importance is placed on other areas for children, such as STEM, sports, and other activities. Although these are important for children's development and can be a positive

outlet, implementing licensed therapeutic methods could benefit children's overall well-being and mental/emotional development. Even further, there are ethical and legal considerations when conducting empirical and experimental studies to provide further context that cultural-based music therapy interventions can work for adolescent children. Children are among the most vulnerable populations, so informed consent and transparency are important when involving experiences that could potentially harm them. There are also changes in children's physical, cognitive, and emotional developmental processes. This can bring varied challenges in the structure and outcomes of the study that affect the data. Especially in conducting a longitudinal experiment, this would be very exhaustive of resources, time, and mental capacity of all parties involved.

Some researchers included further implications for clinical practice and policy within the reviews. Many of these showed feasibility in working, especially as more trials and experiments are to be conducted in the future. Some of these included proper cultural competency training for certified music therapists and music therapy students, integrated cultural interventions with the TF-CBT/TF-MT hybrid framework, and starting more formal community and family group programs that address those environmental and deeply-rooted cultural issues through leading culturally informed activities creates a safe space to become vulnerable and heal the root causes of their trauma.

Some initial recommendations I have for future research include utilizing more comparative studies between standard music therapy methods and indigenous healing practices in trauma treatment for children. This can give music therapists a better insight into how to respectfully incorporate and retain cultural practices for the child while also seeing how to bridge gaps from a cultural standpoint. Another recommendation is utilizing more longitudinal research

for sustainable methods for positive trauma healing in underrepresented communities. This could be done with childhood trauma survivors and those who are in later adolescence since concerns for ethical standards in utilizing younger children are ambiguous and could prove to be more unstable in structure and efficiency. One last recommendation is exploring a possible collaboration between board-certified music therapists, ethnomusicologists, policymakers, and community and school programs to develop a standard for culturally sensitive interventions for effective trauma treatment for children. This would be an ongoing project that takes time to effectively implement, as it involves a lot of legal and ethical considerations. I think that enacting an initiative like this would be beneficial in the long run as it doesn't just focus on the individuality of trauma but how it is something that many children experience; there is much solace and development to be made in that regard. Going forward, I would like to create an originally proposed framework for specific interventions and models to test within the chosen demographic. However, there have been many promising studies and experimentations in further solidifying the effectiveness of culturally informed interventions in music therapy for children coping with trauma.

V. Conclusion

Culturally informed therapeutic interventions help children regain the innocence that was once stripped away from them through no fault of their own. As music therapists and music therapy students continue to learn about clients every day, it is imperative to consciously and consistently advocate for children's and adolescents' mental health. Though review of available literature for children and adolescents trauma-informed care, it is still underrepresented in the broader conversation of mental health and trauma healing. Utilizing and conducting more testing of those interventions fosters safe and deliberate methods for children to experience a positive

trauma-healing transformation. Especially as many of these testing models involve group and family programs, it's important to understand the clients and their family's role in their cultural heritage and practices to gain a comprehensive understanding of how to proceed in treatment. Magnifying the impact of one's trauma can be a very strenuous process, but it doesn't have to be. Through analysis and critique, the effectiveness of culturally informed interventions positively influences the development of children coping with trauma. As each person responds and digests their trauma experiences differently, it's important to be mindful and incorporate safe and standardized cultural interventions. Blending those personal experiences and cultural experiences helps to solidify a strong and positive lasting impact in the development of the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions for children coping with trauma.

VI. References

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