



## Towards musical individuation: Korean female music therapists' experiences in the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy certification training

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### ABSTRACT

Eight Korean female therapists' experiences in the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy training program were investigated using consensual qualitative research. Seven domains and 27 categories specifying the participants' experiences were generated from data analysis. The categories were then labeled as *general* (7–8 cases), *typical* (5–6), *variant* (2–4), and *rare* (1) based on the frequency found among cases. The results of the study showed that the participants' general motivation to pursue the training was not only to become competent in clinical improvisation, but also to obtain the core philosophy of the Nordoff-Robbins approach, which would allow them to use their music as therapy. During the training, the Korean female therapists experienced distress as they encountered the limits of their creative freedom, shame, evaluation anxiety, and cultural differences. However, their clinical musicianship was continuously developed through effective supervision and trusting supervisory relationships. The Korean female therapists' paths of development of clinical musicianship during the training were indeed their journeys towards musical individuation.

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### Introduction

The fundamental philosophical foundation of Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy lies in the strong belief in the power of music and *Music Child*, the innate musicality residing in each individual (Aigen, 1998, 2003; Robbins, 2003, 2005). Once activated, *Music Child* stimulates self-discovery, self-expression, and self-actualization (Nordoff & Robbins, 2007). This self-actualizing potential is most effectively awakened through improvisational music in which the individual's innate creativity is used to overcome *Condition Child*, that is, the emotional, physical or cognitive barriers that limit *Music Child's* activity (Robbins & Robbins, 1998).

Consequently, Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy is an approach that requires the therapist to obtain a high level of musicianship to improvise creatively in therapy sessions, and its certification training program is regarded as one of the most intensive training programs for music therapists in terms of its competencies (Turry, 2001). Trainees in the training program are strongly encouraged to use improvisation as a primary mode of intervention in working with clients and are advised to work to be creatively free in music to facilitate clients' change or growth through music. The training requires the trainee to work as a therapist, receive weekly individual and group supervision, participate in impro-

visation workshops, and take weekly classes about the original Nordoff-Robbins clinical research, clinical improvisation, group music therapy techniques, and music therapy song repertoire. Every therapy session is recorded and comprehensively documented (indexed). It takes at least one full year for the trainee to be certified as Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapist (NRMT).

Supervision in the Nordoff-Robbins training aims to facilitate trainees' fuller awareness of their motivations, tendencies, strengths, weaknesses, and needs in order for them to become more effective therapists through exploring their unknown qualities and their own relationship to music. The supervisor is to help the trainee become competent enough to be independent from the supervisor, trusting the transpersonal power of music and risking the unknown. Since the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy training requires the trainee to risk the unknown to become more aware of her or his own creative freedom and spontaneous expression through transpersonal experiences in music, it consequently facilitates not only the trainee's technical competencies but also her or his spiritual growth in areas such as self-awareness and acceptance (Turry, 2001). Therefore, the trainee's path of development in the training is a journey of self-awareness, acceptance, integration, and actualization—that is, *individuation*.

*Individuation* in Jungian theory refers to the state in which the entire personality is able to grow and express its own uniqueness (Stein, 1982) and it is often explained by means of Zen Buddhist *Ox Herding* symbolism (Spiegelman & Miyuki, 1987). The ox here symbolizes something essential that is to be searched for, discov-

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ered, encountered, and integrated into consciousness to achieve wholeness, the ultimate terminus of individuation. The *Ox Herding* consists of searching for the ox, discovering the ox's footprints, seeing the ox, catching the ox, herding the ox, returning home on the ox's back, forgetting the ox, and then achieving "kong (空)" or "mu (無)", the state of wholeness. In the belief that every human being has her or his own *Music Child* that represents the creative, genuine, and healthy core of the self, musical individuation refers to "individuation as a musical being, an open-ended process towards the wholeness in music" (Kim, 2008).

For decades, research in music therapy has been centered on the effects of music therapy on clients' change and growth. However, there has been little study conducted on the development of music therapists. Studies on therapists' development have demonstrated that the therapist's growth and change often parallels that of the client (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). In addition, research outcomes indicate that the therapist's ability to self-reflect positively affects outcomes of therapy (e.g., Morrisette, 2001; Neufeldt, Karno, & Nelson, 1996). The results suggested that looking into the therapist's development is desirable not only for the therapist's sake, but also for that of the client. Therefore, this study first endeavors to look into overall lived experiences of certified NRMTs during their Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy certification training as a part of professional and personal development.

Additionally, there is little music therapy research on the effect of supervision with regard to therapists' development, even though research indicates supervision is vital for promoting therapists' professional and personal growth (Holloway & Neufeldt, 1995; Nelson, Gray, Friedlander, Ladany, & Walker, 2001). Supervision in the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapist training program plays a fundamental role, as trainees work with their supervisors very closely. In addition to weekly individual and group supervision sessions, trainees are assigned to conduct most of their sessions with their supervisors. Supervisors are important companions to trainees throughout the training program, playing many roles as needed: teacher, advisor, and co-therapist. Consequently, trainees' experiences in supervision and the supervisory relationship affect the entire experience of the training program. It is, therefore, important to look at the trainees' experiences in supervision and at their relationships to supervisors as an important part of the professional, developmental path.

Moreover, it is a relatively recent development to consider the need for multicultural perspectives in music therapy training and research, despite the fact that one's individual, social, and cultural unconscious forces affect one's conscious thoughts and behavior (Burkard & Knox, 2004; Gilbert & Evans, 2000). Although cultural influences on supervisory relationship have long been evident, only fairly recently has multiculturalism begun to be considered in supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004). Many references on supervision stated that failing to consider multicultural perspectives can lead supervisors to misunderstand their supervisees (Daniel, D'Anrea, & Kim, 1999; Gilbert & Evans, 2000; Haynes, Corey, & Moulton, 2003). For example, if a supervisor is not aware that Korean culture values submissive and obedient attitudes as way of showing respect to authority, the supervisor can misunderstand the Korean supervisee's "respectful" behavior as withdrawal, resistance, or lack of self-esteem. Indeed, Kim (2009) argued that Korean supervisees expect negative rather than positive feedback from supervisors and tend to be more submissive and obedient than American supervisees. Kim therefore suggested that supervision and research on Korean supervisees should be done with an understanding of Korean culture's high regard for hierarchical order which may influence Korean supervisees.

Because multiculturalism refers to the awareness of not only ethnic but also gender differences, supervisors need to be sensi-

tive to these gender differences in supervision to understand their supervisees more in depth (Delio, 2001; Gilbert & Evans, 2000). A feminist approach to multicultural supervision suggests that multiculturalism is related to the analysis of social structures where power differences, discrimination, and oppression exist (Haynes et al., 2003). Forinash (2006) stated that since a feminist approach to music therapy supervision means being sensitive to power differentials in the supervisory relationship, it is anti-racist, anti-sexist, and multicultural.

As supervisors serve as role models and mentors to supervisees (Turry, 2001), supervisors' sensitivity to power issues and consideration of multicultural perspectives in supervision will naturally be passed on to supervisees, who will adopt similar attitudes, ultimately shaping supervisees' professional and personal development. This conclusion is supported by the result of Burkard et al.'s (2006) investigation on supervisor cultural responsiveness and unresponsiveness in cross-cultural supervision that the supervisor's cultural unresponsiveness affected the supervisee, the supervisory relationship, and client outcomes. Thus, it is important to examine trainees' social and cultural subconscious influences that affect their experiences during the training program. In order to address both multicultural and feminist perspectives, Korean female therapists trained and certified as NRMTs from the Nordoff-Robbins Center for Music Therapy at New York University were intentionally selected as research participants.

In sum, what is apparent from a review of literature on Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy, supervision, and musical individuation is that no studies yet have specifically examined the trainee's overall lived experiences in the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapist Certification Training, even though the program has been one of the most prominent and intensive certification training programs available to music therapists for decades. Few studies have in fact been carried out on the trainees' perspectives on professional and personal growth in music therapy training. In addition, multicultural issues in music therapy supervision have not yet been sufficiently investigated. Therefore, it would be significant for enhancing the overall quality of music therapy training to investigate what Korean female music therapists experienced in the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapist training program, how the experiences affected their professional and personal development, and how Korean socio-cultural norms influenced their experiences.

Integrating the needs of study presented above, the research questions generated for this study are as follows:

1. What did Korean female music therapists experience in music during the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy training program, and how did these experiences affect their professional and personal development? In response to this question, each participant's musical background and its effects on her experiences of performance/evaluation anxiety, shame, achievement and flow in music making were examined. In addition, each participant's experiences of contacting and connecting to her own *Music Child* were explored.
2. What did Korean female music therapists experience in supervision during the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy training program, and how did these experiences affect their professional and personal development? To address this question, each participant's relationship to her supervisor and its effects were investigated.
3. How did Korean socio-cultural norms influence the experiences of Korean female therapists during the Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy training program? To address this question, each participant's socio-cultural norms and expectations of hierarchy and gender roles that might have influenced her behaviors and thoughts during the training were reviewed.

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