Proposal for Faculty of Education Graduate Student Research Symposium, University of Manitoba

Research topic: Music therapists’ experience of family-based music therapy: An interpretative phenomenological analysis

Submitted by: Lee-Anne Adams

Advisor: Dr. Glen McCabe

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Early attachment relationships have been shown to be extremely important to a child’s healthy development. Family-based music therapy, with attachment relationships as a focus, is an emerging area of practice that can be used to address challenges in the parent-child relationship. Although some theoretical literature and research exists in this area of practice, there is still much to learn about how family-based music therapy works.

The purpose of my proposed thesis research is to generate a description of music therapist’s lived experience of providing family-based music therapy, using semi-structured interviews within a qualitative, phenomenological approach to inquiry. The central research question proposed is: What is the expressed experience of music therapists who practice family-based music therapy?

It is hoped that the results of this research will inform music therapy practice by deepening the understanding of the therapist experience in family-based music therapy, illuminate possible areas for future research, and inform policy makers and government agencies seeking effective preventative and treatment interventions for families.
This study will employ the protocols of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA goes beyond traditional phenomenology in that it moves past understanding participants’ experiences, and into interpretation of how participants make sense of their experience. The IPA method is influenced by hermeneutics: the study of text to discover how the words work to create meaning. Hermeneutic phenomenology primarily investigates how participants make sense of an experience through investigating their verbal representation of said experience. The research will take aim at understanding how music therapists experience family-based music therapy and how their verbal representations of this relate to theory.

Although the research is still in the proposal stage, I hope to have obtained approval and have started data collection by the time of the symposium, and would appreciate the opportunity to present the groundwork for the study and discuss the process of interpretative phenomenological analysis. I am open to presenting in an alternate format, such as a round-table.