

How Can I Identify and Mitigate the Ways in Which I Contribute to Ongoing  
Inequalities and Oppressions in My Music Therapy Practice?

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An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment for the degree of  
Master of Music Therapy

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## **Abstract**

This action-based research has focused on my practice as a student music therapist working across several placements with a broad range of clients. The research question is: “How can I identify and mitigate the ways in which I contribute to ongoing inequalities and oppressions in my music therapy practice?” Across the first two cycles of an Action Research process, I saw that if I was going to be causing harm it was in areas where I hadn’t thought to look and had unidentified assumptions, so I found practical areas of focus. I identified potential sites of ongoing oppression and inequality in my unexamined ableism and privilege. Via an examination of physical touch in my practice, and by connecting with my Pākehā identity, I found various ways of mitigating these unintended harms. In Action Cycle Three I embraced my creative process, discovering new and novel elements within the familiar, repetitive, and predictable dimensions of my practice. I developed an awareness of the importance of context around my learning and was able to scrutinize my practice more fully. In my music therapy practice I want to urgently address the ever-present danger of systemic oppressions and inequalities creeping into my thinking and practice. I acknowledge that the limited scope of this research could not include examinations of gender, class, and other domains of possible harm, and that due to the highly reflective nature of this research, these findings apply to me alone. Yet I am excited to investigate how exploring creative research techniques might aid us in mitigating the perils of unintended harm for music therapists and students.

*Keywords:* music therapy, oppression, harm, culture, race, inequality.

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## Glossary

Te reo Māori language words are defined by the Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary (Moorfield, 2021).

**Atua** – (noun) god

**Karakia** – (verb) incantation.

**Mahi** – (noun) (verb) work, perform, do, accomplish.

**Pākehā** – (noun) New Zealander of European descent - probably originally applied to English-speaking Europeans living in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

**Pīwakawaka** (noun) – bird: fantail.

**Pūkeko** (noun) – bird: swamp hen.

**Pūtōrino** (noun) – large traditional flute.

**Taonga Pūoro** – musical instrument.

**Tauīwi** (personal noun) – person coming from afar

**Tauīwi-tanga** – non-Māori identity

**Te Reo** – the language.

**Waiata** (noun) – song, chant, psalm.

**Wairua** (noun) – spirit, soul.

**Wāhi Tapu** – sacred site.

## Context and Background for the Research

### Why do I Want to Research this Issue?



**IMAGE 1 COMIC STRIP DEPICTION OF BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH**

The of murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020, and the exposure of systemic harm in the New Zealand music industry's own Me-Too moment in January 2021 (Mau, 2021), clarified for me the need to urgently examine unearned privileges bestowed on me due to the colour of my skin and my gender. In examining this privilege, I began to realise that I am advantaged by virtue of arbitrary conditions. Ableism, genderism, and racism are just some of the currents in my culture that I am largely oblivious to, thanks to my relatively normative physical and neuro/biological functioning, my gender, my sexuality, and my skin colour. It behoves me then to better understand how I participate in these dynamics within our culture, so I may begin to appreciate the challenges people that I meet in music therapy practice are facing, and to extricate myself from unknowingly contributing to these challenges. This exegesis is a report on the action research I undertook in 2021 to explore my experiences of uncovering how I contribute to ongoing inequalities and oppressions in my music therapy practice as part of my second year Master of Music Therapy qualification.

### Setting – Music Therapy Placements and Participants

The setting for my action research took place across two placements between May and November of 2021, which I will refer to as Placement One and Placement Two. Between these two settings I experienced a diverse range of contexts in which music therapy is



practiced in New Zealand. The lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic meant that online settings were a part of my placements. These settings were where I had the opportunity to plan and implement sessions and where I could reflect on my thinking and ways of doing things. During the course of placements, I found and was recommended various readings to enhance understanding of my practice, and these covered some issues relating to my topic. Some examples are as follows:

- physical touch between able bodied and disabled bodies, and cultural background to attitudes around touch (Hewett, 2007)
- Discovering approaches to anti-oppressive practices (Baines, 2013; 2021)
- Indigenous world views and de-colonisation (for example, Kenny 2006; Te Punga Somerville, 2020)

### **Placement One**

Placement One was based at a music therapy service in the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, doing music therapy with a diverse range of people in a range of settings. At the home-base, in well-resourced studios (upright piano, guitars, drumkit and percussion, harp, fabrics, and recording facilities) I conducted both one-to-one and group sessions, with young children and adults, both on my own and as a co-therapist with a registered music therapist. I also experienced outreach placements, travelling to a private residence for one-on-one sessions, and to a secondary school for both one-on-one and group sessions, often with teachers and teacher aids accompanying the students. Zoom sessions were offered to all under lockdown conditions due to Covid-19, and some were able to take up this opportunity.

### **Placement Two**

Placement Two saw me working under the supervision of an independent registered music therapist across two contexts. The first was part of my supervisor's private music therapy business, offering music therapy to groups in two church halls on a Saturday. These groups ranged from preschool age to teenagers and adults. The younger children were accompanied by parents or carers, and the older participants were a mix of independent attendees and being supported. There was also a young adult to whom I gave one-on-one sessions in their private residence. Zoom sessions were offered to all these people during lockdown, though not all took up this opportunity.

The second part of Placement Two was as part my supervisor's employment at a school catering to extremely high needs students, where I ran sessions for intermediate aged students. The same school ran outreach classes on other school premises, where I was

involved in running group sessions at two primary schools and a secondary school, initially as a co-therapist with my supervisor and then on my own. In these school placements I worked alongside teachers and teacher aids.

## **Personal Position as a Musician and Researcher**

### **Early Musical Background**

I began playing music as a young child, inspired by a natural affinity for music I saw modelled by my father and maternal Grandfather. I was exposed to the guitar, piano and piano accordion, but it was the drum set that captured my imagination. I was playing in school bands by the age of 12, and a course towards a life in music was set.

A sense of inquiry has had a place in my musical activities almost from the beginning, especially regarding figuring out how to get better at being in music. Early on I experienced a curious relationship between myself and music, noticing that modifications in one produced change in the other, and that new musical skills were also assisting my navigation of life more generally.

I acknowledge the privilege of my upbringing. I was offered opportunities to thrive – for example weekly drum lessons. My upbringing was also complex. To make sense of the divorce of my parents, constantly shifting homes and schools, racism, mental illness, abuse, and addiction I witnessed playing out around me, I turned to music as both a personal refuge and a critical tool. Music provided a solace from the conflict, confusion, and racism of my surroundings. For example, I observed that some Māori were being written off, and yet I experienced Māori I encountered as brilliant musicians and sensitive collaborators and teachers. Music seemed to “prove” that creative agency, intellect, and brilliance was a *human* birthright. I came to view music as my true home, both in the drum set’s physicality and the sonic imaginal spaces I was discovering. I remain grateful I had music to support me through those times.

Another of my responses to the complexities of my childhood was to cultivate an intensely independent viewpoint. My rebellion to the pervasive racism in my upbringing, and my drive to pursue music as a livelihood, often made me feel different from my family. Music was becoming a crucial part of my identity, and I remember fiercely proclaiming (to myself) that I would be informed by what I learned from *music*, rather than from the racist, prejudiced, and emotionally deregulated behaviours coming from the adult world.

## Early Career Work as a Musician

Through my 20's and 30's, after graduating from the Wellington Conservatorium of Music as a jazz major, my attention turned to non-idiomatic freely improvised music, free jazz, and ethnomusicology. My research into freely improvised music modalities (via free jazz and non-western music, extended techniques, multi-instrumentalism, creative engagement, cross disciplinary collaboration) as well as the social, historical, and political contexts of musicking (Small, 1998) was having a massive impact on my music making across many genres. An extended sonic and intellectual palette and increasingly improvisatory approach was emerging in my music and thinking, and I noticed I became increasingly in demand as a creative collaborator.

Looking back over my career to date, I see that research has been central. In thinking about my positionality as a creative musician, the recurring themes of improvisation, authenticity, independence, and refinement stand out. I am excited to join the dots between Action Research (AR) and the research processes that are a part of my music practice, and to feed this into my understanding of the research aspects of my student music therapist practice.

## Research Question Journey

“Initially, research begins with a burning question.” (Kenny, 1982a)



**IMAGE 2 COMIC STRIP DEPICTION OF MY "BURNING QUESTION"**

I was provoked, especially by my female colleagues in the music industry (*NZ Artists Release Open Letter To Music Industry*, 2021), to seriously consider whether I was contributing, despite my best intentions, to the systemic injustices being brought to light all around me. The point seemed to be that one can participate in oppression without intending too. I also observed in my growing experience as a practitioner, that I was increasingly

becoming aware of subtle assumptions I held as an able-bodied Pākehā person, and these held a place in my thinking. My burning question was how do I extricate myself from participating in these systemic oppressions within my student music therapy practice?

### **Layout of the Exegesis**

Following this introduction, the research report continues with section two – a summary of related literature, section three – research methodology, section four – ethical considerations, and section five – action research method. A summary of the findings from the action research cycles appears in section six, followed by a discussion and conclusion and references. I have provided a glossary of the translations of words in te reo Māori I have used, in the front of the exegesis on page iii, following the table of contents and acknowledgements. Copies of the information and consent forms and examples of analysis process and some recordings of artistic works appear in the Appendices.

## **Relevant Literature**

In this next section I will touch on some of the literature that laid the foundation for this research. I searched the VUW data base Te Waharoa, and Google Scholar, for articles using the following terms: music therapy, oppression, harm, culture, race, inequality. The literature review is brief, focusing on my readings leading up to the formulating of my research question and first action cycle. I was consulting and using responses to literature throughout the later action research cycles.

## **Critical Considerations of Culture**

Notwithstanding some early pioneers (Kenny, 1982b, 1989; McIvor, 1988), it has only been in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that music therapy has begun to seriously acknowledge the importance of cultural considerations in how it sees itself. One of music therapy's main cultural inheritances is humanistic theory and practice (Abrams, 2018; Ansdell & Stige, 2018; Hadley & Thomas, 2018). In examining the culture of music therapy with a critical humanist lens (Hadley & Thomas, 2018), we see that humanism has tumbled down to us through history as part of a culture that, at different times and places, has also denied humanity to women, children, the disabled and indigenous people the world over (Hadley & Thomas, 2018). It is contended by the various and intersecting "critical humanisms" (Hadley & Thomas, 2018) that ongoing oppression is facilitated by hegemonies of Western capitalist, imperialist, and patriarchal culture (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). In music therapy both clients and therapists suffer from this. Because of their systemic nature, these harms can be difficult to notice, especially by members of the dominant cultural group. There is a growing recognition of the harms that can be perpetuated despite a music therapist's best intentions. Indigenous music therapists continue to lead the way in bringing a cultural lens to their practice (Hadley & Norris, 2016; Kahui, 2008; Swami, 2018; Swamy, 2014; Whitehead-Pleaux & Tan, 2017). I am inspired to bring an awareness of my own cultural situatedness to my practice.

## **Humanism and Music Therapy**

Traditional humanism seeks to understand the nature of personhood and humanity, and humanistic music therapy could be generally considered as the use of music for the well-being of the whole person (Abrams, 2018). But what is a person, and what is a human?

Humanism tumbles down to us through history with ideological binaries: human and non-human, the subjective psyche and the objective world, civilised and savage, the sick and the cured, and many others (Abrams, 2018; Ansdell & Stige, 2018; Hadley & Thomas, 2018). These notions of the ideal human (independent, able-bodied, European, and male), have marginalised others because of their race, sexuality, gender, (dis)ability etc. “Blind spots and unwitting oppressions” (Ansdell & Stige, 2018, p. 179) are folded within humanism, and therefore within Humanistic Music Therapy, by virtue of their situatedness within an imperialistic and colonizing history.

As a member of the dominant colonial culture in Aotearoa New Zealand, I acknowledge that I am not required in an everyday way to navigate oppressed cultures in the way they are forced to navigate mine (Kiddle, 2020; Solly, 2019; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). Yet for music therapy to be effective, a music therapist needs to understand the impact of their individual culture and their client’s culture on the therapeutic relationship (Grimmer & Schwantes, 2018). This nuanced cultural understanding is central to developing a cultural competency where a truer understanding might be reached between a therapist and their client (ibid). In today’s global context cultural humility and cultural safety needs to be sustained as an ongoing, lifelong journey (Baines, 2013; Swamy, 2014).

The cultural landscapes music therapists are required to navigate are increasingly complex (Whitehead-Pleaux & Tan, 2017), and intersect in many ways. Intersectionality, especially the way domains of oppression may overlap, is a notion with its roots in critical feminism, and is crucial to understand in this regard (Seabrook, 2019). Intersectionality, introduced by Crenshaw (1989) into critical feminism in the late 1980s, recognises that the conditions of peoples lives can be better understood by the unique and complex intermingling of multiple axes of oppression. For example, a person may experience race discrimination as Māori and gender discrimination as a woman, but also experience discrimination as a Māori woman.

To understand how inequality and oppression are present and intersect in music therapy, I need to touch on a range of critical discourses, which reflect the increasingly diverse populations music therapists work with. I have found this to be a very complex tangle of issues and discourses to unravel.

## **Colonisation and Harm**

In Aotearoa New Zealand we have ongoing harm resulting from colonization, manifesting in continuing poor health and economic outcomes for Māori (Kiddle, 2020;

Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). Therefore, oppression and inequality are ongoing issues, and my Pākehā identity binds me to these harms whether I am aware of this or not (Kiddle, 2020). The release of *Te Ao Mārama* in August 2021, a companion to the popular music artist Lorde's album *Solar Power*, is an interesting example. Lorde is a young Pākehā global pop music megastar. *Te Ao Mārama* features five tracks from *Solar Power*, sung in te reo Māori (Hayden, 2021). The release of *Te Ao Mārama* was timed to coincide with Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori (Māori Language week). *Te Ao Mārama* was also framed by the context of "Waiata Anthems", an ongoing project spearheaded by Dame Hinewehi Mohi, documenting the recording of te reo versions of popular New Zealand songs by iconic New Zealand musicians, "celebrating te reo Māori through the power of waiata" (WAIATA / ANTHEMS, n.d.). Lorde's release was seen as a huge opportunity to celebrate te reo on the world stage. Despite Lorde's good intentions, a team of brilliant Māori translators, advisors and mentors, the precedent of other non-Māori artists' involvement with the Waiata Anthems project, and lots of support (Godfery, 2021), there was a good deal of hurt stirred up by her release as well (Jolley, 2021). Some felt, for example, that the language was being appropriated by a Pākehā musician and exploited by the music industry. Some experienced a resurfacing of their feelings of loss around lack of access to the language, discussed in Jolley's article (ibid). While my singing of waiata in a music therapy session cannot compare with Lorde's reach, the risk of hurt arising from this complex bicultural context is present.

I needed a better understanding of New Zealand history. It has not been taught in any systematic way in public schools in New Zealand (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). The contrast between the cultural sophistication of the peoples that first settled these lands (Anderson, 2016), versus the mistreatment Māori were subject too with colonisation (Buchanan, 2018) and its ongoing impacts (Te Punga Somerville, 2020) are confronting for me as Pākehā to acknowledge. My ancestors, generally speaking, stole the land upon which we live, work and learn today (Buchanan, 2018).

Initial research on Māori by early colonisers is deeply flawed by cultural incompetence (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). Rich and sophisticated cultural practices, the use of taonga pūoro (musical instruments) for example, were infantilised or demonised (Buchanan, 2018; Nunns & Thomas, 2014; Solly, 2019). Through the mid to late twentieth century there was an increasing distrust by Māori communities of outsider researchers (Bell, 2016; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). This led to Māori being excluded from research, as there were still very few indigenous researchers in New Zealand (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021), and Tauīwi (non-Māori)

researchers were becoming increasingly reluctant of working with Māori (Citizen, 2020; Eketone & Walker, 2015; Hotere-Barnes, 2015; Tolich, 2002). Today there is a continuing call for non-indigenous researchers world-wide to step back from the conversation to allow BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Colour) researchers a more central position in their own discourses (Whitehead-Pleaux & Tan, 2017).

### **Other Harms and Developing Anti-Oppressive Practices**

Music therapy, in its close relationship with humanist discourse, is framed by the politics of ableism (Shaw, 2019). Ableism is defined broadly by Bogart and Dunn (2019) in a special issue of the *Journal of Social Issues* on this subject, as “... stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and social oppression toward people with disabilities.” (p. 651) Understanding how to dismantle ableism in my music therapy research and practice is an important dimension to addressing my research question. Emphasising a person’s relationality to communities rather than idealising ourselves as independent whole bodies is important (Mingus, 2010; Shaw, 2019), and resonant with Māori health models like Te Whare Tapa Whā.

Te Whare Tapa Whā was developed by Sir Mason Durie (1998) as a simplified Māori health model that Pākehā might easily understand. In this holistic model the four walls of the whare (house) are taha tinana (physical health), taha wairua (spiritual health), taha hinengaro (mental health), and taha whānau (social health), and all are integral to our wellbeing. The foundations of the whare in the whenua (land) further emphasise that wellbeing is connection to place and belonging (Hazou et al., 2021).

Early in my music therapy training I was exposed to an article by Sue Baines on anti-oppressive music therapy (2013), and her work became an important touch stone across my research. I became aware of how mindful I had to be around my behaviours – subtle things around the spoken phrases I used, the ease with which I would take space - asking questions, sitting at the front, contributing to group discussion - are some examples. Baines had similar burning questions to my own. “Is the dominant oppressive paradigm creeping into the way I practice music therapy? Is my music therapy approach an act of white patriarchal supremacy?” (2013, p. 1). In her recent update on the state of Anti-Oppressive Music Therapy, Baines again emphasises the need for music therapists to “recognize and acknowledge unearned privilege and commitment to address personal resistance to change” (2021, p. 1). Baines’ unflinching examination of her own practice, informed by Critical Theory and Feminism, was inspiring to me.



From my initial readings I learned that the cultural underpinnings of harm in music therapy is increasingly being acknowledged and talked about (Baines, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; Murakami, 2021; Scrine & McFerran, 2018). But more than talk is required. The populations with which I would engage in as a student and newly graduated music therapist, marginalised in ways I am not, include people subject to ongoing systemic oppressions of which I may be only dimly, if at all aware. Aspiring to extricate myself from unknowingly participating in these ongoing harms, I realised I needed to exercise scrutiny and self-monitoring (Dileo, 2006) to fortify my practice against culturally systemic oppressions and inequalities.

## Methodology



**IMAGE 3 COMIC STRIP REPRESENTATION OF DIVING INTO THE QUESTION**

This is a qualitative study and uses an action research methodology. Action research was an exciting methodology for me to take up as it closely resembled a mode of creative engagement I had employed in my music practice - critically observing what I'm doing with an aspiration to improve it. My research question is concerned with looking at my emerging practice of music therapy, which is a new facet of my musicking (Small, 1998). I want to keep this new practice aligned with my values, and action research is considered an ideal methodology for this kind of inquiry (Bradbury & Divecha, 2020; Kolenick, 2017; McNiff, 2010; NCRMUK, 2016).

## Theoretical Frameworks

I am bringing a Critical Humanist (Hadley & Thomas, 2018) lens to my research. The relationship of music therapy to humanistic theory and practice is intimate, and critical humanism, with its roots in critical theory, offers clues for locating cultural biases that could be responsible for ongoing oppressions in my music therapy practice.

### Action Research



**IMAGE 4 COMIC STRIP DEPICTION OF ACTION RESEARCH**

“Action research is a term which refers to a practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be” (McNiff, 2013, para 9).

The term Action Research (AR) was coined by Lewin in 1934 to describe cycles of action characterised by a repeated process of planning, acting, and reflecting geared towards helping a person improve their practice (Rickson, 2009). Jean McNiff outlines the basic steps of an AR process, constituting an action plan:

- review our current practice,
- identify an aspect that we want to investigate,
- imagine a way forward,
- try it out and take stock of what happens.
- modify what we are doing in the light of what we have found,
- continue working in this new way (try another option if the new way of working is not right)
- monitor what we do review and evaluate the modified action (McNiff, 2022)

AR has an emphasis on “improved learning to improve action” (McNiff, 2010, p. 23). Pragmatic AR emphasizes a transformation in the practitioner's relationship to their practice, while critical AR helps practitioners recognise and critique the broader cultural and political

contexts of their practice (Rickson, 2009) Participatory Action Research (PAR) is especially concerned with social justice, where action researchers focus on working with particular people in particular contexts. Participants are active collaborators with researchers, and are valued as experts of their own lived experience (Rickson, 2009) This emancipatory approach means there is an opportunity to render positive change on a community level (Kolenick, 2017).<sup>1</sup>

### **Suitability**

AR is a reflexive practice emphasising an ongoing improvement of research processes, and has been enthusiastically taken up by music therapists (Hunt, 2005; K. McFerran & Hunt, 2008; K. McFerran et al., 2016; Molyneux, 2012; Rickson, 2014). The focus on questioning ‘what it is we are doing’, makes action research a suitable method to address the *how* aspect of my research question, and the aim for improvement aligns it with ethical elements in my aim of wanting to mitigate ongoing oppressions and inequalities that may turn up in my music therapy practice. Researcher situatedness is an important aspect of qualitative research (Berger, 2015). As a student music therapist, and as an able-bodied, Pākehā male, aged late 40s, I am at the beginning of a journey of sustained examination. I acknowledge there are many areas that I can improve upon. Action research is an ideal method for this kind of aim.

As a creative artist who has journeyed a fair way down the path of improvement in certain areas, I can see how similar my processes have been to Action Research.

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<sup>1</sup> After conversations with my examiners, I note that a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach would have been more suitable for my research. Time constraints and Covid-19 limitations on placements severely hampered my scope to include PAR.

## **Ethical Considerations**

I undertook this project in the dual role of practitioner and researcher, a stance consistent with the tenets of Action Research. As a student music therapist enrolled in the Master of Music Therapy program at Te Kōkī (New Zealand School of Music), Victoria University of Wellington, I committed to conducting myself in accordance with the Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Policy, and the Music Therapy New Zealand Code of Ethics (2020). My research proposal was approved on 4.5.2021. The approach I took was in line with the Human Ethics Approval template applied for by my lecturers for NZSM 526, under the ethics application number 0000029426, in which action research applied to student placements is included.

While Action Research is a reflexive method by which to examine the context and particularities of my own practice, I was also collaborating jointly in my practice with the participants I was working with. The informed consent of participants (and/or their caregivers) was sought in order to include case vignettes where they elucidated important aspects of the research. All case notes of sessions are the property of the facility, so informed consent was required from my clinical liaison and facility manager to include data from case notes in my research. Using data from conversations with my co-therapists at the facility and my clinical music therapy supervisors required informed consent. Examples of information and consent forms, and faculty consent for research are included at Appendix 3.

Discourse on decolonisation and indigeneity is an historical and ongoing concern in Aotearoa. While my research was not focused on working with Māori specifically, there was a chance I could be working with Māori participants in my music therapy practice. I was also drawing on the work of several Māori researchers, as well as other Indigenous-informed researchers. I consulted with Māori cultural advisors (local to the music therapy service in Placement One) in order to appropriately situate myself, as a Pākehā student music therapist, within the discourse.

In order to maintain confidentiality for the participants who are included in the case vignettes, their real names are not used in the research. To further protect the privacy of participants, the facilities in which the research took place have also been kept confidential. I acknowledge that the music therapy community in Aotearoa is small, and so the risk of

identification may not be prevented by the above measures. All participants, clients, and facility workers have been informed of this risk.

### **Valuable Learning Regarding Research Ethics**

Towards the end of my research, I received a call from the deputy principal (DP) from the school where I was on Placement Two, around my request that information forms (see Appendix 3) outlining my research be sent to the parents of the children I was doing music therapy with. The DP called to discuss some problems that had arisen. The teachers I had been working with felt it was not appropriate to present the parents my information and consent forms. They felt the way my research question centred oppression and inequality would be too triggering for the parents of young and vulnerable children. The deputy principal also expressed that because of Covid-19, the school was experiencing more distance than usual from the families. With less connection and relationship between the school and families, the teachers felt this was another reason why it would be inappropriate to send out the information and consent forms I had put together.

While it was disappointing that I could not include any of the wonderful work we did on this placement, my conversation with the deputy principal and reflection around it resonated strongly with my research question. I expressed thanks and gratitude for the time staff had spent in working through the issues raised by my request. I expressed relief to not be adding to the stress load of families at a stressful time of transition with the covid-19 response, the changing landscape around school access, and school summer holidays on the horizon.

When devising my research question, I had not considered the impact of my research questions upon families in this way. This highlighted how attempts to avoid harm can contribute to further harm occurring in unexpected ways. In even discussing oppression and inequality, those ideas are invoked and suddenly operative in ways difficult to foresee. In discussion with my supervisor, I attempted to rewrite my information sheets to be less triggering. But my inescapable research question revolving around oppression and inequality was still a sticking point. It was an insightful negotiation between my wielding of research ethics protocols as a novice researcher, and the real-world lived experience of high stakes vulnerability and ongoing hurt.

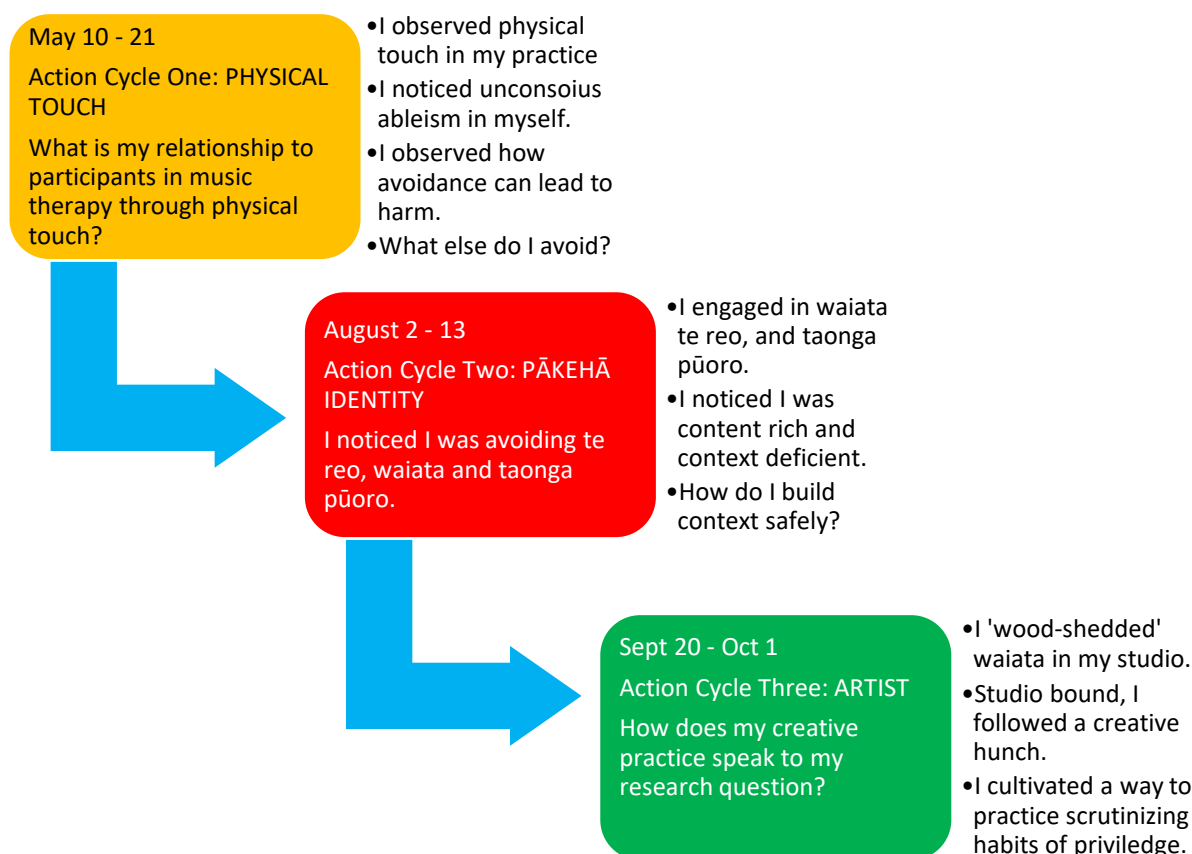
## **Action Research Method**

I used Action Research to unearth possible answers to my research question. Action Research is a qualitative, reflexive method used by practitioners to discover more about their practice, to better align their practice with what we would really like it to be (McNiff, 2013). Action Research uses an iterative, cyclic method that offers opportunities for research questions and practice to evolve in response to what is discovered.

### **Design**

I employed three action cycles across my research, that developed from what I was experiencing on placement and each focused on a particular aspect of my practice, where I was noticing some lapses in awareness. The actions cycles were responsive to both what emerged from my research and practice, as well as the changing and uncertain conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. I began in Cycle 1 with a consideration of ways I use physical touch in music therapy, as I had been thinking about music making as a very physical task, instruments, handling, articulating, sounding, and moving to create the sound. This coincided with a fascinating discussion with a teacher about the importance of physicality and touch in teaching – how meaningful this can be in learning support environments (Hewett, 2007) - but also how touch can also be misjudged and used inappropriately. I explored my own challenges with touch in this cycle. This led to wondering what else I might be misunderstanding or avoiding and in Cycle 2, I was concentrating on playing more waiata and traditional Māori instruments, taonga puoro, in my practice and began to notice lapses in my awareness on various levels here. In Cycle 3, I was locked down in my studio because of the pandemic restrictions, and I began to explore some creative solutions to my question through my own art practices.

The diagram below shows the emergent flow from one action cycle to another.



**DIAGRAM 1 ACTION CYCLES**

## Data Collection

In this Action Research I examined data from the following sources:

- clinical notes and reflections
- supervision notes
- music and art works
- reflexive journal

As data was gathered across each cycle of the research, it was reviewed, coded, sorted for meaning and then analysed for themes, using NVivo as a tool to support this process. In action research the generation and analysis of data can occur simultaneously across the research. (McNiff, 2010). After each cycle the data was reflected upon and analysed and insights for the next cycle were brought forward. The timeline outlined in the diagram above, with portions of project time dedicated to reading, clinical practice, and analysis, was devised to allow for dedicated periods of time to research each of these areas.

## **Reflective Summaries**

I wrote reflections on my readings, clinical notes, experience from sessions, and my conversations with supervisors. I had discussions with staff at placements, and fellow music therapists. I engaged in music and sound making at my studio in response to questions and provocations that arose from my sessions and readings. I recorded, then listened and watched back to this music and sound making, extending my reflections further through manipulating these recordings.

## **Developing Arts-Based Methods**

As my research progressed, I drew increasingly on my creative practice to create and examine data. Looking into Arts Based Research (ABR) was relevant for me to understand how to bring my creative work into this research. ABR draws upon the arts in the study of human life, and is considered both a facet of qualitative research, and its own special methodology (Finley, Messinger & Mazur, 2020). ABR can be used across the spectrum of research, floating above both quantitative and qualitative methods as its own creative methodology (UBAM Musicoterapia, 2021), generating data, analysing data and representing findings (Ledger & Edwards, 2011). While my research is framed within Action Research and is not formally considered as Arts-Based Research, I did become increasingly informed by the arts in the way I understood and analysed my data. Beginning in Action Cycle Two, in my playing taonga pūoro and practising waiata I was beginning to use my creative practice in these ways. This continued though Action Cycle Three with ongoing experiments with waiata and the stair experiments (see Action Cycle Three).

## **Analysis Method**

I analysed my data after each of the three action cycles, using a thematic analysis approach. The coding and organising methods of Clarke & Braun (Braun, 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2019) for thematic analysis in qualitative research were the main guides for this analysis. The amount of data I collected became overwhelming at times. Coding the data, and developing themes was a way of working in research that was unfamiliar to me, and I became anxious at different points that I was not doing this correctly (Braun, 2022). Some codes were developed from many data points, others from much smaller sources. It was reassuring to learn that the importance of a theme is not derived by numerical frequency relevant codes, but by its relevance to the research question (Braun, 2022).

Having developed a range of codes for each action cycle, I collated, compared, and contrasted the codes, and sorted them into related areas. After reviewing the research



question and the grouped codes, I then developed themes which expressed the main findings from each cycle. The themes helped me to weave narratives through the research that were connected with the data. Appendix 1 shows examples from Action Cycle One of the coding and thematic grouping used in the analysis process.

## Findings

In this section, after a brief introduction, I will share my findings across each of the action cycles, exploring each one in turn using diagrams of my thematic analysis process, and discussing vignettes of important moments that emerged in each cycle. I utilised thematic analysis techniques to explore my data, coding my data to produce themes which in turn were grouped together into higher level themes.

### Beginning Action Cycles



IMAGE 5 COMIC STRIP REPRESENTATION OF BEGINNING ACTION CYCLES

My reading leading into the beginning of this action research presented me with a number of different domains to look at. Where to begin? I had anticipated a few possibilities in my notes from readings and in discussion with supervisors. At this stage I had a discussion with the Deputy Principal of one of the schools where I was on placement. As I explained my research question to him, he presented me with David Hewett's article *Do Touch, an exploration of physical contact and people who have severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties* (2007). In this article, Hewett expressed concern that disabled people endure long periods of no touch, or merely functional touch, which can contribute to a sense of alienation. He also identifies the importance of documentation to both make visible and justify touch in practice. When physical touch is not explicitly addressed within documentation, a "hidden curriculum" (2007, p. 121) around touch in practice will develop that often results in unofficial 'no touch' policies. As I was focusing on my immediate practice, observing how physical touch was happening in my practice seemed a great way to begin.



## Action Cycle One – Physical Touch



IMAGE 6 COMIC STRIP DEPICTION OF ACTION CYCLE ONE

### Personal Interest

Exploring physical touch in my music therapy practice resonated strongly with me. In my drumming practice, the notion of touch has been of critical importance. In George L Stone's seminal drum instructional textbook *Stick Control*, "touch" is singled out as an important aspect to consider and refine, alongside control, speed, power, and rhythm (2013, p. 3). How I touch a drum, with finger, palm, stick or mallet, is the crucial element in both sound production and timing. It is so important that much of what is magical (or not) about a drummer's sound and feel can be boiled down to the way they touch their drums.

There is a touch element to how we describe drumming and our response to drumming. We "feel" drumbeats, which are often referred to as "drum feels". I feel music in my body and am moved to dance. Listening and responding to music becomes a whole-body activity, beautifully expressed by the profoundly deaf orchestral percussionist Evelin Glennie in her presentation *How to Truly Listen* (2007).

### Grounding in Literature

During my placement I was inspired by Associate Professor Daphne Rickson, in conversation with Luke Ainsley on his podcast *Music Therapy Conversations*. Rickson tells of a breakthrough made when a musician and her physically disabled participant, hold hands. The pair were able to deepen their shared musical experiences via touch (Ainsley, 2021). I

found this story very compelling. It revealed to me the possibilities of communicative touch to enrich our music experiences.

As well as Hewett's important article (mentioned above), I drew on the work of Marcus Hughes - *The use of touch with older adults in music therapy sessions* (2017). Hughes looks to the standards of practice documents of the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) and finds no direct references to physical touch, echoing the issue of the invisibility of physical touch raised by Hewett. Dileo also speaks to this lack of guidance in music therapy ethics documents from a feminist ethics perspective, noticing that expected behaviours are set to minimum standards, and guidance on more nuanced trainings are rarely specified (Dileo, 2006). In his survey of ethical documents, Hughes identifies the phrase "non-verbal communication" as being used, presumably, to address instances of physical touch in practice.

In the document *MUSIC THERAPY PRACTICE IN NEW ZEALAND: Guidelines for Practice* (2020), physical touch is alluded to in similarly indirect ways, in several areas.

- "Registered Music Therapists must: d) be able to manage the therapeutic setting including boundaries of time and physical boundaries;"

The phrase "physical boundaries" could allude to physical touch, framing it as a part of the "therapeutic setting" implying a careful consideration and management of physical touch by the music therapist, for the people participating in music therapy sessions.

- "Communication 8. Registered Music Therapists must: a) be able to use a range of communication skills flexibly and monitor their own ability to observe subtle, non-verbal client cues and to respond to these appropriately;"

The phrases "range of communication skills" and "non-verbal client cues" would presumably include physical touch. Physical touch here forms a part of the music therapists non-verbal vocabulary. A working knowledge of communicative touch is hinted at, but as Dileo observes (2006), there is no guidance around how this is acquired.

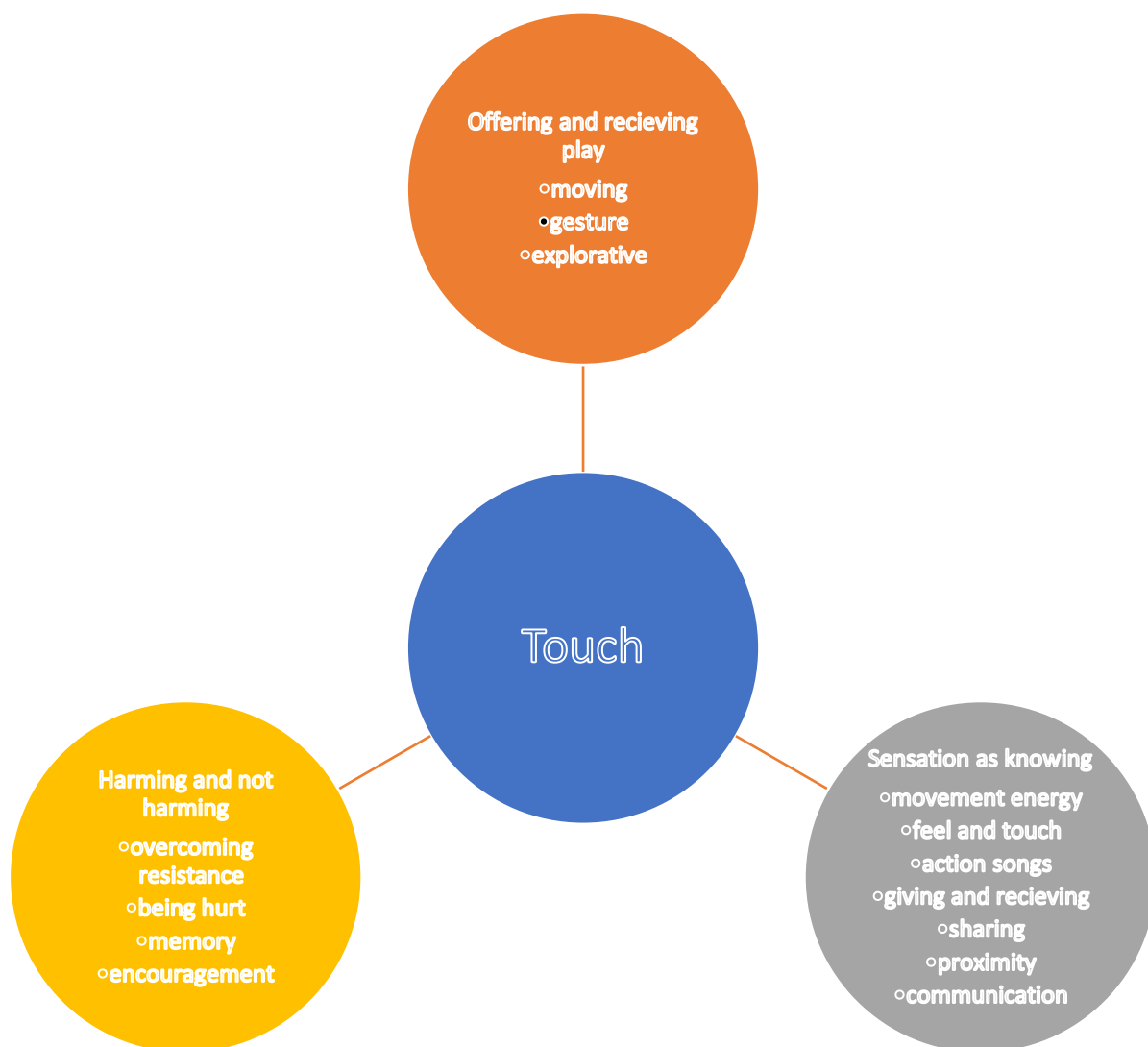
- "b) be prepared to manage difficult situations and respond to unexpected client needs;"

I have directly experienced how “difficult situations” and “unexpected client needs” can involve physical touch. Across my placements, as a student music therapist, I have been well supported by teachers, teacher aids and co-therapists in these instances.

Despite touch being an important concept for me in playing and listening to music, and an ever-present eventuality on sessions, physical touch remained a relatively unexamined aspect of my music therapy practice. Hewett declares that problems of not touching may outweigh the potential difficulty of touching (2007). Benefits of physical touch he lists include communication learning, sense of connectedness with others and the world around them, sense of psychological and emotional wellbeing, improved and enhanced quality of life. In the next section I explore my thematic analysis of Action Cycle One.

### **Themes and Data**

I generated three themes from the coding of my data, based on observing physical touch in my practice. In this section, below each theme heading, I briefly detail some of the data points underlying my coding. A fuller account of the data points used in my thematic analysis can be found in Appendix 1.



**DIAGRAM 2 ACTION CYCLE ONE THEMES AND CODES**

### **Theme One - Offering and Receiving Play**

Paying close attention to how touch is happening, I've connected playfully with participants in touch-based dance with the action song Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes. I have engaged in gestural play exploring different ways of exploring sounding on instruments, in manipulating instruments (see Vignette One) and with the song Going on a Bear Hunt. Explorative play has taken place in the context of instrument selection, improvisational explorations on new instruments and creative responses to the call and response song Catch the Beat.

### **Theme Two: Sensation as Knowing**

I noticed the importance of touch for some participants in getting to know instruments (see Vignette One), myself, and each other. I noticed the different ways physical touch has occurred between myself and participants, for example when we are playing the same drum or sharing a piano stool. I have been sensitized to the ways movement and proximity frame touch.

### **Theme Three: Harming and Not Harming**

I noticed how physical touch can be beneficial and harmful to me, participants and instruments. There is a place for encouragement, to assist a person to push through their resistance, as well as respecting boundaries and accepting that someone is not ready to play. Touch evokes my feelings and memories, and I need to be mindful of this for participants as well. Noticing touch sensitised me to my ableist assumptions (see Vignette 2).

### **Vignettes**

Two important learning moments happened for me in this action cycle, that I will now explore in Vignettes One and Two. They were key moments which generated significant reflections around previously unexamined aspects of my thinking, that could have been harmful. There were multiple codes generated in my analysis from these events. They are both stories that speak to my unexamined ableism and the assumptions therein. Vignette One is based on negotiating a moment of vigorous touch between a young client and my harp. Vignette Two presents a pivotal moment where I was presented with an instance of myself committing a microaggression, induced by having some unexamined ableist assumptions challenged in a session.



### **Vignette One – Martin and The Rocking Harp**

I spend Fridays in the supported learning unit of a secondary school. The students range from 13 – 17 years of age. I see four groups across the day, each going for about 50 minutes. Martin is a 15-year-old boy living with Autism and ADHD. He is a very enthusiastic member of the group, often entering the room with high energy and quickly selecting an instrument to play, usually a hand drum, though he has explored a range of instruments across our sessions together. There is a good selection of instruments at the school that students can access – guitars, hand drums, chimes, maracas and other shakers, recorders, ukuleles, and a violin. I would often supplement this collection with instruments from my own collection – my guitar, a doumbek (Arabic goblet drum), bodhran (Irish frame drum), and a harp. On one occasion Martin took a keen interest in the harp.

The harp is a 26-string fully levered Celtic harp, standing on four little wooden feet at the corners of its base. It is heavy enough to be stable in its standing position, but light enough to easily manoeuvre. Martin walked up to the harp and placed a hand at the top of its neck. He gently tilted the harp forwards onto two of its feet, feeling the weight of the instrument, before rocking it back down. It made a gentle clunk as the two wooden feet met the ground, and the strings resonated slightly. We both noticed the resonance, and I commented on the interesting sound.

Not finished with his examination of the harp's manoeuvrability, Martin angled the harp now towards him, lifting the other two feet off the ground, and clonked it back down. The sound of the wooden feet meeting the thinly carpeted floor and gentle resonance of the strings was satisfying for us both. He repeated these motions back and forwards, clonk clunk clonk clunk. Growing more confident in his ability to manoeuvre the harp, and perhaps becoming interested in exploring the sounds, the movements became more vigorous. He seemed to be working towards increasing the volume of the clunking sounds, and I began to become concerned for the safety of my harp. The sound got louder as the rocking got faster and more extreme, and soon I intervened, expressing to Martin that while I was enjoying the sounds he had discovered, we should be careful not to damage the instrument. Martin did not object to this, and we moved on to other instruments and music.

### **Vignette One Discussion**

I came into music therapy with an idea that it was important to expose the people I do music therapy with to beautiful instruments and tones. I soon discovered that I grew nervous when the play became rough and damage to the instruments seemed imminent. This moment

with Martin and the rocking harp showed me that sometimes it might be that physical interactions with an instrument are more important than its sonic attributes.

I have had instruments damaged over the course of my placements this year. Guitars and ukuleles and drums have been thrown, dropped and stood upon. Beaters, mallets and shakers have been chewed. I've noticed that actions are not always done in a deregulated way. I have had the distinct impression that even when an instrument is being treated roughly, there can be a curiosity and exploration at play, as seemed to be the case with Martin and the harp. This event inspired me to reassess my attitude to musical instrument quality in music therapy. Perhaps there is a place for "low quality" instruments in music therapy where non-normative playing, even when it ends in the destruction of the instrument, is being explored.

I wondered if my aversion to inferior quality instruments was an extension of my ableism centred on the functionality of instruments (rather than bodies). A ukulele that can't be played in tune because of poor intonation could still be appropriate for a different kind of exploration. I reflected on my own explorations of "non-normative playing" (Shaw, 2019), as an improviser and creative sound artist. I was reminded of a performance I participated in some years ago where my task in the composition was to gradually destroy an upright piano (bonehead696, 2012).

### **Vignette Two – Asking for Help**

I would like to begin with a reflection written quickly after the session that is the focus of this vignette:

*Something happened. I didn't panic, but somehow I fell asleep and a kind of automatic tape response rolled out of my mouth. I made a comment about how I needed help sometimes too, in an attempt to make a connection. But looking back on that moment, I feel the comment leaked out of some shadowy complex upstream. I say this because the comment feels like it minimizes something of gravity and import. Especially after Terry put me straight on the matter. He explained that, for example, he needed help cooking his own dinner. Before my unconscious state could blather that I needed help with my cooking too (I think I do!), Terry told me point blank that he can't cook his own dinner. Maybe my offhand comment, and the shadowy realm it issued from, is a great example of ableness leaking into practice, under the guise of keep things fun or making a connection.*

Following is an excerpt from my reflexive journal, where I had time to go over the incident in more detail.

*I ran a session with a group of adults who came to the MT studio where I was on placement. The group was made up of five people, three men and two women. They knew each other well. The group was diverse, with a wide range of musicality and confidence levels, and so it was an ongoing challenge for me to meet the needs of all the group members in any one activity. Everyone in the group was verbal, and many discussions and communications were threaded through our musicking together. During the session, having established a friendly rapport and wanting to understand more of their context, I asked about their living situation. Did they all live together in the same residence like flat mates? Terry, an articulate man with Down's Syndrome, explained.*

*"No we live in different places. I live in a place where I can get support, because I need help with different things."*

*"Oh cool," I replied, "I need help with things sometimes as well."*

*I did not understand or see it in the moment, but I was making light of Terry's need for help. Terry proceeded to paint a clearer picture.*

*"Well I can't prepare my own food, so I need someone to help me cook my dinner."*

*I almost blurted out, "I need help cooking my dinner too!", but thankfully stopped myself! I was feeling uncomfortable, put in my place. What was going on? Why was I minimizing Terry's need for help? Why was I feeling so uncomfortable?*

### **Vignette Two Discussion**

Reflecting back on this interaction, I realised I had been triggered by Terry's discussion of needing help. My comment of "I need help with things sometimes as well," minimized the importance of help for Terry. I recall acutely the laughing and friendly manner with which I delivered this comment, intending to ease an uncomfortable conversation, actually my own discomfort. I am uncomfortable asking for help, like many able-bodied kiwi males my age. When Terry further explained his situation in the face of my trivializing his comment, my discomfort increased, and I almost dug an even deeper hole for myself. Something in me sensed this would be a mistake, and I stopped myself from commenting further— but it was a close thing. I wonder if the presence of my research question, hovering over my music therapy activities, played some part in alerting me to this slip into what I see now as an ableist-induced micro-aggression. This was a crucial moment early in my research. I'd spotted myself doing the very thing I was seeking to avoid.

### Vignette Connections to Themes

The vignettes revealed aversions I carried that are rooted in my unexamined ableism, and sites for possible ongoing harm in my music therapy practice. The table below shows how the events illustrated in Vignettes One and Two are constellated across the themes of Action Cycle One.

Theme One: Offering and receiving play	Theme Two: Sensation as knowing	Theme Three: Harming and not harming
Martin's playful manipulation of the harp and my going with it	Martin's exploration of the harps weight, balance and sounds	My intervention to prevent possible damage to the harp.
My playful, yet misguided response to Terry's disclosure was declined.	My gut sensation that something was amiss initiated an important learning curve.	My aversion to help triggered my ableism potentially harmfully minimizing Terry's disclosure.

**TABLE 1 VIGNETTES 1 AND 2 WITH AC1 THEMES**

### Action Cycle One Discussion

Through my readings, my thematic analysis of data collected, and via my observations of crucial moments on sessions (as illustrated by two vignette examples), I observed that with a careful consideration of how my relationship with touch is framed by our differently abled circumstances, I can lean into opportunities for physical touch being of benefit in my music therapy practice.

The connection of physical touch to ableism and power relationships, and the interesting ways that physical touch can be referred to indirectly, suggest that the possibilities of harm arising from physical touch increase when I avoid engaging directly and transparently with my responses to it. Direct and transparent engagement with what I am avoiding seemed to be an important part of mitigating harm in my music therapy practice. When I ask myself what is an element of my practice that is triggering for me and what can I engage in more directly despite the uncomfortable feelings that arise, it is around my identity as Pākehā.

## Action Cycle Two – Being Pākehā



IMAGE 7 COMIC STRIP DEPICTION OF ACTION CYCLE TWO

### Personal Interest

I grew up in, and still largely inhabit, a Pākehā world. It has always been through my musical activities – singing at school, learning instruments, jam sessions, teaching music, playing shows at different venues, collaborating with musicians, and now music therapy, that I have had the most opportunities to interact with Māori.

In the early 2000's, I was privileged to be a player involved in many collaborations between the late Richard Nunns, a prominent exponent of taonga pūoro (traditional Māori instruments) and the freely improvised music communities in Wellington (Nunns & Thomas, 2014). Playing and touring with Richard in New Zealand and abroad was my first deep dive into the sound worlds of taonga pūoro. It is important to note that I was hearing the sounds of taonga pūoro in the novel context of post free-jazz improvised music settings. This was new ground for all of us, and far removed from the reemergent traditional contexts of taonga pūoro within te ao Māori (the Māori world).

After my time playing with Richard, I have familiarised myself with the catalogue of albums made by Hirini Melbourne and Richard Nunns and have added to my love of taonga pūoro an appreciation of the waiata (songs) composed and sung by Hirini Melbourne. The music resonated deeply with me, and I have always aspired to learn and sing these waiata. I have intermittently performed and record in collaborative contexts involving Māori musicians, where karakia (incantation) are often used to frame creative and performative events. In my training and practicing of music therapy, waiata, te reo, and taonga pūoro are making a resurgence in my life. There were several pūtorinō (large traditional flute) at a

placement facility, there were Māori clients and teacher aids and work colleagues to be with, and waiata were becoming a regular part of my repertoire for sessions. Learning and speaking more te reo was actively encouraged.

For this action cycle, my research was primarily concerned with how I might engage with the language, songs and instruments of Māori that have been an ever-present backdrop in my musical life, and increasingly present in my music therapy life. I reflected on why I had yet to take a closer look. There is discomfort here, and it is something easy for me to avoid, a result of belonging to the dominant culture of colonized Aotearoa New Zealand (Baines, 2021; Eketone & Walker, 2015; Hadley & Thomas, 2018; Kiddle, 2020; Pack et al., 2016; Roorda, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). There are risks, challenges, and rewards in bringing my Pākehā identity and the harm this tethers me too, to the conversation (Nolte, 2007).

As a Pākehā, in the context of the colonial history in New Zealand, there is harm bound up in me playing taonga pūoro, speaking te reo and singing waiata. How do I do this work and minimize the real potential of harm in my engagement? The challenges Richard Nunns faced as a Pākehā whose research took him deep into Māori worlds, were much greater than mine. My focus is on my own backyard. Waiata, te reo and taonga pūoro are in my life. The ball is in my court. What do I do about it? How do I “do the mahi (work)” safely, for myself and others? In this I take a cue from Richard Nunns who reflected that “the only way that one can allow oneself, or persuade oneself, that the journey is correct is that one attempts, in all humility, to do it as carefully and sensitively as one can.” (2001).

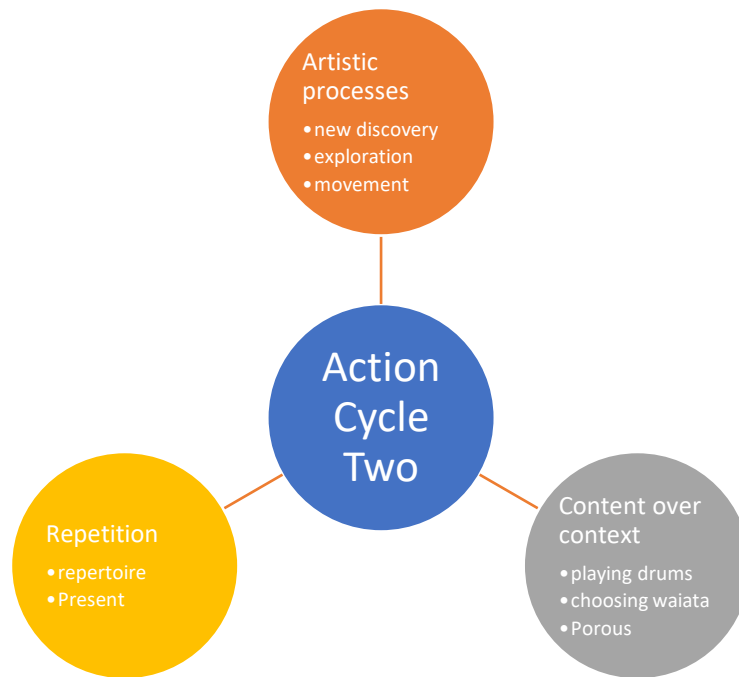
### **Linking to the Literature**

I had been reflecting on my finding from Action Cycle One, that in trying to avoid doing harm, we can cause more harm. I was in a bind when it came to learning te reo, playing taonga pūoro, and singing waiata. I connected this with a reflection made by Hewett who identifies a kind of paralysis around touch, stemming from a fear arising out of multiple factors, many which are emotional and cultural e.g., “Britishness” (2007, p. 121). Britishness is a major aspect of Pākehā culture (Te Punga Somerville, 2020). There is a cultural reluctance to be intimate, a cultural fear of the strong feelings that arise from intimacy and confrontation. The sorts of effects in practice that emerge from this that Hewett identifies, and the stories that are woven around it to justify “not-touching,” resemble something which Tolich (2002) identifies as Pākehā paralysis. In research this can result in Pākehā researcher’s reluctance to include Māori populations in their research in reaction to the justified criticism of the quality of past research done by Pākehā researchers on Māori populations. Importantly,

Tolich points out further harms this omission perpetuates, and reveals a solution is to be found by Pākehā researchers finding their own solutions to this dilemma (2002). Hotere-Barnes (2015) pays attention to the emotional layers of Pākehā paralysis - the discomfort at not being in control of the terms of engagement, the shame of feeling responsible for the racist actions of our ancestors, or the continuing systemic racism of our institutions. My own cultural position as a Pākehā in Aotearoa is bound up in colonisation and the intersection of privilege and whiteness (Gray et al., 2013). There is a growing amount of literature in music therapy research addressing the negative systemic impacts of colonisation (Kahui, 2008; Kenny, 1989; Solly, 2019). Engaging in this literature has aided me in registering the presence of systemic flows of power in my practice that may disadvantage indigenous peoples. Tuhiwai put it very succinctly by stating that the “instruments or technologies of research were also the instruments of knowledge and instruments for legitimating various colonial practices” (2021, p. 69). Additionally, my survey of literature drew from discourses around indigeneity and decolonisation (Aigen, 1991; Sepie, 2017; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021), especially in relation to music therapy (Hodgson, 2014; Kahui, 2008; Kenny, 1989; McIvor, 1988; Solly, 2019). It was timely for my study and research that the New Zealand Music Therapy Symposium in 2021 focused on issues of privilege, whiteness, and diversity in a very direct way with attendees.

### **Themes and Data**

The data for Action Cycle Two was collected from clinical notes of sessions conducted online, recordings of artistic processes engaged in with taonga pūoro and waiata (see Vignettes Three and Four), conversations with my supervisors, and reflections on all the above. The following themes related to my research question emerged. Three themes were generated from the analysis of data. Below each theme heading I detail some of the data points underlying my coding



**DIAGRAM 3 ACTION CYCLE TWO THEMES AND CODES**

### **Theme One - Repetition**

I noticed that the forms my sessions took, and the repertoire I used, especially certain action songs (Going on a Bear Hunt and Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes), were being repeated a lot across sessions. I grew concerned at this and brought the issue to supervision. We discussed that as a student music therapist, it was reasonable that I would settle on a workable session plan and repertoire. In the intensity of sessions, a good chunk of my processing was taken up with keeping the sessions going. It was much more difficult than I initially imagined introducing new material into my playing repertoire and new approaches to sessions.

Because of this, I was having to practice new material (a new waiata for example) much more than I thought I would have to before I could easefully employ them in sessions. Here was another manifestation of the repetition theme. I know, as a performance artist, that material needs to be thoroughly assimilated before it can be easefully executed under the pressures involved in performance. I found this to be even more the case in preparing material for a therapeutic context. I wondered how this repetition mitigated or contributed to ongoing harm in my sessions.

### **Theme Two - Content Over Context**



Data from sessions revealed I was not considering certain kinds of contexts, especially cultural contexts, in my approach and thinking around sessions. For example, I use a variety of percussion instruments from a diverse range of cultures. Log drums and rattles (Pacifica), bodhran (Ireland), darbuka (middle east), djembe (West Africa), bongos (Cuba), triangles (Europe). My thinking of their use in sessions was geared around how accessible they might be to participants in terms of their size and weight, and the qualities of their sound. I rarely considered the cultures of participants when choosing instruments to bring to sessions.

In the vignettes I noted that my approach to taonga pūoro and waiata was also lacking important contextual elements. My exposure to taonga pūoro through working with Richard Nunns had been in an improvised music context, and so it was largely from this way of working that I continued in my own playing. My learning of waiata was similarly self-generated, learning on my own from audio recordings. As far as the instruments and waiata's contexts within te ao Māori, I must admit to being largely ignorant. My use of music from Māori and other cultures not my own in sessions is further hampered by a concern that my use of said material is appropriative, or forced, and perhaps may contribute to further hurt. Here is where another kind of "Pākehā paralysis" (Hotere-Barnes, 2015) can set in, as discussed above.

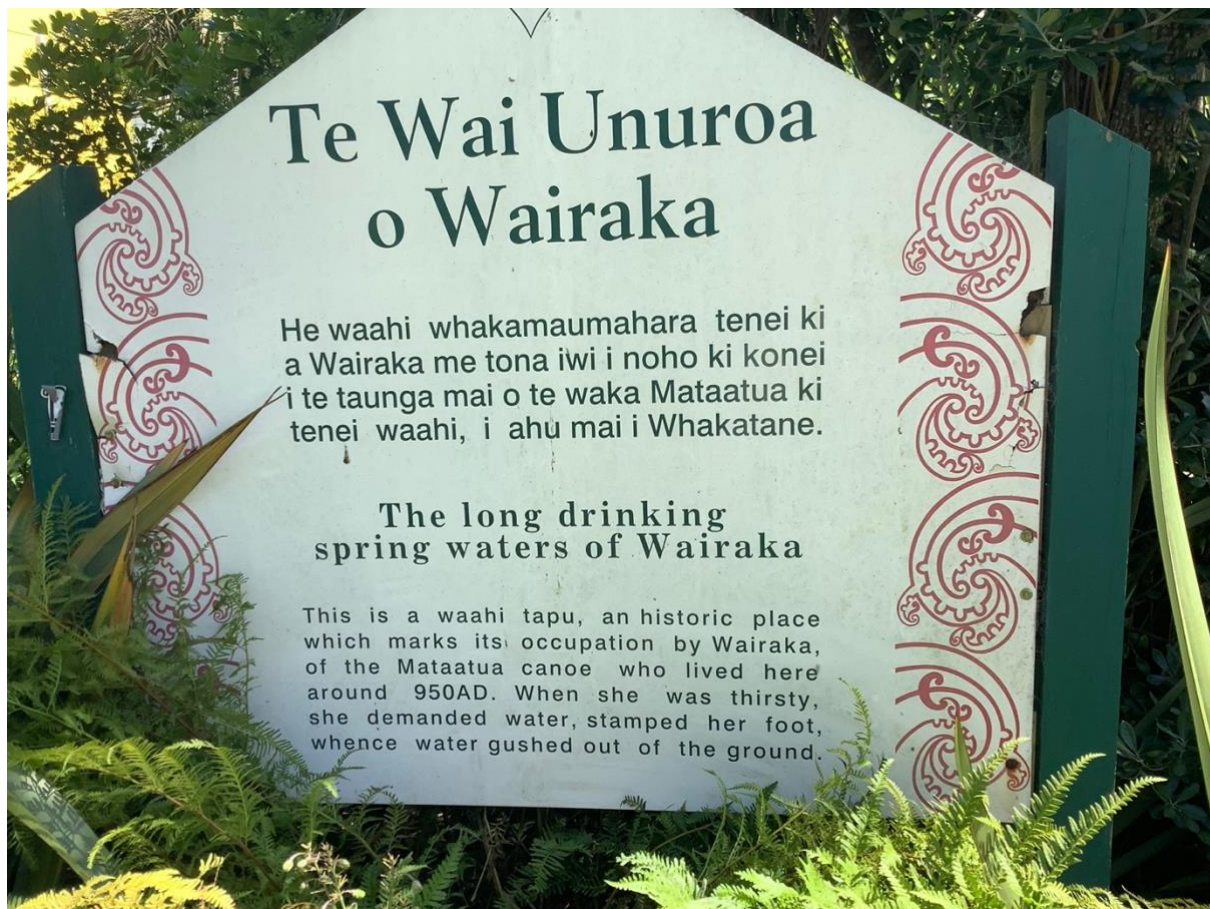
### **Theme Three - Artistic Processes**

I was reflecting on ways to use my practice studio. It is a secluded place where the public are not subjected to the sometimes-tortuous processes involved in exploring new instrumental techniques and deeper musical knowledge. I found this was a place where I could work to safely explore building my own relationships to taonga pūoro and waiata, without having to subject others to this process. I found myself instinctively utilising practicing techniques I had developed in my creative music practice, exploring artistic processes, conducting experiments and being playful with the material. I realised this creative approach could have an important part to play in addressing my research aims.

### **Vignettes**

In the following two vignettes I detail my engagement with playing kōauau (a small cross blown flute), and learning the waiata called *Rongomai*, composed by Hirini Melbourne. You can view to a recording of the scene described in Vignette Three [here](#). An example of the experiments described in Vignette Four can be found [here](#) and more in Appendix 2.

### Vignette Three – Kōauau in a Natural Setting



**IMAGE 8 SPRING AND SITE OF KŌAUAU RECORDING**

I like to visit a natural spring that is also a wāhi tapu, a sacred site. The story attached to the site (written up on an information placard, pictured above) is of a prominent ancestor who is said to have lived in the area over 1000 years ago. She was thirsty, stomped down with her foot upon the ground, and the waters gushed forth.





**IMAGE 9 THE SPRING W SURROUNDING BUSH AND BOULDERS**

I have been visiting the site for many years on and off, as it is on the grounds of a tertiary institution where I worked in both the dance and music departments. Despite its designation as a sacred site, there is a bench beside the glade, inviting people to sit and find some respite from their studies and work. It is a beautiful and peaceful place. As I was renewing my playing and exploration of kōauau during this action cycle, I was drawn to the area again, this time to play.



**IMAGE 10 BONE KŌAUAU CARVED BY OWEN MAPP**

I sit by the waters trickling out of the ground into a pool, then over a rocky shelf into a small stream. There are large boulders about the banks and vegetation overhanging. I spend a good deal of time holding the kōauau and listening to the music of the environment - the waters, the breeze in the trees and bush around me, birds singing and rustling in the underbrush. There are pūkeko and pīwakawaka going about their business. I play when I am moved to. I recall conversations with Richard Nunns about his playing and approaches to taonga pūrō. Sliding between pitches and microtonal bends. Harmonics and overtones. Vibrato and diaphragm support. Birdsong. Improvisation. Richard said these instruments are cell phones to the gods (personal communication, 2000). In the meantime I will play and listen and wait.

### **Vignette Three Discussion**

Reflecting on this vignette, I observe myself attempting to build a relationship with place, but somehow it still seemed to be about content. Kōauau? Check. Beautiful and sacred natural setting? Check. Open mind to animist ontologies? Check. Best intentions? Check. These components are quickly put together as bits of content, but I can see that the long work of forging relationship is only beginning. For this to bear fruit, I will need to keep turning up.

### **Vignette Four – Rongomai Deep Dive**

‘Rongomai’ (Melbourne, 1991) is one of my favourite waiata of Hirini Melbourne. The track is a recording of Hirini singing and accompanying himself on acoustic guitar. As the chords are within my skill range on guitar I decided to learn it. Initially I played along to the recording, learning the melody and phrasing, and listening closely to the reo, mimicking as best I can the unfamiliar words and pronunciation. I gradually found my own way with a guitar picking pattern, though I am not in Hirini’s league when it comes to playing guitar. His style is a combination of muscular and sensitive, a result of many decades of playing. Eventually I was able to find my own way, though still glued to a lyric sheet. The reo took longer for me to remember than if it were in English. After much searching I came across an English translation of the text in a remote corner of the internet (*Tauihu : Te Reo*, n.d.).

Wherokiroki nei e	Blurring/shining
te whānau mārama i te rangi e -	the stars in the heavens -
kia rere noa au	I will fly
i ngā parihau o te waka atea	on the wings of a space craft (the stars)
rere takiwā	flying to all areas (planets)
huri ai e amiorangi. (x2)	orbiting always. (x2)
TiraMārama nei e	Glittering/sparkling
te auahi turoa i te rangi e -	the comet in the heavens -
kia rere noa au	I will fly
i tona puhiri, hune toroa	on its whiskers, dune albatross
kia mihi noa au	so I can mihi
ki te hunga wheturangi.	to the multitude of stars/galaxies.
Aiō ana mai	Peace continues
te marino i te rangi e -	the tranquillity in the heavens -
kia rere noa au	I will fly
i te raukura o Rongomai	on the feathered plume of Rongomai
rere mata ao	fly over the face of planets
ki te hono i te rongo. (x2)	to join through listening/smelling/experiencing. (x2)

**TABLE 2 ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF RONGOMAI**



I was delighted to have some of the meaning revealed to me. Based on this translation, I interpreted this waiata as celebrating access across a full range of experience, from the whiskers of an albatross to stars and galaxies. I enjoyed the imagery of the story, a revelation of *accessible* cosmic vistas and intimate details – comets and galaxies, whiskers and feathered plumes. There are wonderful themes of the power and freedom of flight - flying in a spacecraft to the stars, flying comets, the wings of the albatross. These meanings seemed wonderful for a song I aspired to use in a music therapy setting, and added to my enjoyment of singing it. It was a great match up with my own values.

I began to work out an arrangement for the English translation, noting how the form and structure changed in order to accommodate the different rhythms of English. The line “smelling” took the longest to imprint. I kept hesitating before singing this line – perhaps because it is low on the list of my enculturated hierarchy of sensory appreciations.

In working towards memorizing a piece of music in two languages, I found it helpful to explore many different approaches, for example honing in on particular sections, trying it in different keys and time signatures etc. I found it revealing to play with the text and song form structure. The following experiment yielded new insights and directions for the song, focusing on the phrases starting with “I will fly”. You can hear an example [here](#).

Kia rere noa au i ngā parihau o te waka ātea (VI) <i>I will (V)fly .....on the wings of a (IV)space craft the (I)stars</i>
Kia rere noa au i tōna puhiihi hune toroa (VI) <i>I will (V)fly .....on its (IV)whiskers, dune alba - (I)tross</i>
Kia rere noa au i te raukura o Rongomai (VI) <i>I will (V)fly.....on the (IV)feathered plume of Rongo – (I)mai</i>

**TABLE 3 RONGOMAI FORM EXPERIMENT**

#### **Vignette Four Discussion**

I began to wonder if I was being disrespectful by messing with the order and structure of this waiata. Was it appropriative of me, or presumptuous, to submit this song to my poking and prodding? I don’t know the context of the song. I noticed, especially in the beginning of my working with it, this was another bit of content for me to play with, a waiata I liked. I questioned whether I was doing this as a show piece to demonstrate my cultural competence. While this scrutiny is important, I could not give up and succumb to “Pākehā

paralysis”. At least, in the privacy and safety of my studio, I would not subject anyone else to this at “warts and all” process.

I have documented many versions of this song, in both English and Te Reo, at different speeds, in different keys, in different locations with contrasting acoustics. It was interesting to submit this waiata to processes and techniques I had utilised in the acquisition of instrumental skills. See Appendix 2 for some examples of this work. Structural experimentation and access to an English translation revealed new layers of meaning in the waiata for me, illustrated by the three contexts for flying in my example above. Also, the last line – “ki to hono i te rongo” has three different interpretations in this translation: hearing, smelling, and experiencing. This was both a completely new way for me to imagine configuring my experience, as well as an affirmation to the primacy of hearing, which is also top of my list.

### **Action Cycle Two Discussion**

During the sessions I undertook in Action Cycle Two, I became aware that I was unable to quickly implement any planned actions from observations I made in Action Cycle One. As a student music therapist finding my feet, I was concerned with keeping the sessions going and dealing with music and circumstances as they emerged in the moment. However, I was able to observe what was unfolding during these sessions with a sensibility informed by the first action cycle, especially around an increased sensitivity and assuredness in how touch was unfolding in the sessions, and an increased reflexivity around how my responses to what might emerge related to my situatedness, and to my research question.

Looking back over my session notes, coding, and thematic analysis process for this action cycle, I grew concerned that the content of sessions seemed not to be too different from sessions in Action Cycle One. My practice had not changed as quickly as I thought it might. In conversation with my placement supervisor, I was encouraged to focus more on my evolving thinking around the work. A new lens through which I could view the similar content in sessions was a valuable development, and this learning that new insights would take time to transform practice is also a valuable finding. From my second action cycle two tiers have emerged.

Largely in response to my research question, these new lenses have been directed towards my own responses, my emotions and thinking, around what is transpiring in sessions. For example, I have observed myself being triggered in different ways, and the trigger seems to

be constellated around my situatedness within systemic power dynamics that are undeniably the site of ongoing oppression and harm. Some examples have been:

- Ableist triggers around asking for help and feelings of aversion towards presentations I am confronted by (from Action Cycle One)
- Pākehā Identity - concerns around cultural appropriation, questions about the appropriateness of certain songs or ways of implementing their use on sessions.
- Privilege, being a state where I have not *had* to encounter the obstacles and challenges that my clients meet. Acknowledging my privilege as an obstacle to a more nuanced way of thinking through my practice. And acknowledging the emotions bound up meeting this obstacle – doing the work.

The reading I have done, the supervision I have received, and the co-therapy I have participated in across the year have been three important and clear sources of new scaffolding for expanding my thinking around what I bring and how I respond in sessions. A reward for acknowledging privilege is a glimpse into a previously unseen realm, an expansion of perspective and possibilities. Habitual behaviours stemming from unexamined privilege, like any limiting habits, can sneak in if one is not diligent, so constant practice is helpful. Yet to be constantly meeting limitations, obstacles and habits in practice can be disheartening. It is important that this work, of forging new techniques, contexts, and habits, be it for music making or thinking about my music therapy practice, take place in a safe environment where experimentation and playfulness can mitigate disheartening feelings that can arise. In Action Cycle Three, I explore my creative process in more depth, to see what light it may shed on my research question.



## Action Cycle Three – Arts Practice

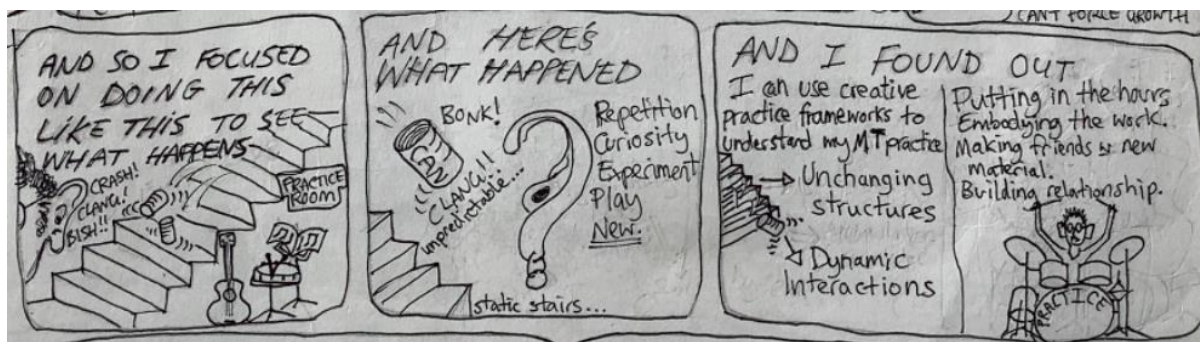


IMAGE 11 COMIC STRIP REPRESENTATION OF ACTION CYCLE THREE

### Introduction

In Action Cycle Three, I continued reflecting on themes that arose from the previous action cycles, as well as new data arising. For the first two action cycles I was engaged outwardly, interacting with clients in person on sessions, with fellow MTs on placements, and with instruments in outdoor spaces. For Action Cycle Three, however, I was largely confined to my own practice studio due to Covid-19 restrictions. I embraced my creative practice, trusting artistic hunches and processes to understand my research process, research question and reflect on data and my music therapy practice. In using my creative practice in this way, generating, and thinking around data, in finding themes, and in producing artistic findings (the comic for example), I was beginning to draw more on my artistic practices (Ledger & Edwards, 2011).

### Influence of Previous Cycles

The finding from Action Cycle One of staying alert to noticing what was previously invisible to me, is taken up in a creative exploration I have called the Stair Experiment, which I explore in the vignette below. The stair experiments (they were numerous) also provided a metaphorical space I could inhabit, interact, and play with. I will discuss how this play spoke directly to my research and practice. The finding of Action Cycle Two around doing the work of developing my relationship with the content of my practice, to build context, continued to be explored throughout Action Cycle Three. This involved more experimentation and development of waiata and other repertoire I aspired to weave into my play with clients on sessions.

### Comic Strip

In Action Cycle Three, where I explored how my creative, artistic practice might feed into my research, I began a comic strip style drawing to storyboard the journey through my research. The full strip is below. Qualitative research and thematic analysis are a messy process (Braun, 2022). I had several options for pathways through the data and themes emerging from the research. Creating this comic was important at this point to help orient my thinking, and I have used frames from the comic strip throughout this exegesis to illustrate this. Drawing pictures allowed me to process the information and access it in new different ways – visually, kinaesthetically, and semantically (Fernandes et al., 2018)





IMAGE 12 COMIC STRIP REPRESENTATION OF A PATH THROUGH THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

## Themes and Data

The data for action cycle three was collected from clinical notes of sessions conducted online, recordings of artistic processes engaged in at my studio (the stair experiments), conversations with my supervisors, and reflections on all the above. Five themes emerged from the coding of this data. Below is a diagram showing the relationship of codes to themes. followed by a discussion of each of the themes.



**DIAGRAM 4 ACTION CYCLE THREE THEMES AND CODES**

### **Theme One - Learning Through Play**

The data from sessions revealed moments of play where I observed participants exercising agency and connection with others. Agency and connection figure prominently in my clinical goals. For example, Rupert was able to find musical expressions and increased connection with me around his aversion to day 11 in the Christmas carol 12 Days of Christmas. Previously he would skip over this day, expressing his dislike of day 11 briefly with his words, “I don’t like day 11!” But when I offered a playful, musical interpretation of aversion, Rupert increasingly participated with me, opening a space where he made novel choices around how to articulate *his* aversion, and connection with me in his responses to my musical play. Here I learned how play might be helping Rupert engage in his aversion to day 11.

My playful exploration of the waiata ‘Rongomai’ continued through this action cycle, as I experimented with playing it in the highly reverberant space of the stair well, and the much dryer acoustics of my studio. I also experimented with incorporating drums with the feet (hi hat and bass drum pedals) for a “one-man-band” style accompaniment. These different treatments aided in my learning of how this waiata responded to different acoustic and instrumentation contexts.

In the stair experiments, I played with dropping different objects down the stairs, and processing the video footage in different ways, for example using a saturated black and white filter, and slowing down the footage. Varying the objects I dropped, and transformations of the footage, revealed unexpected new atmospheres, strange movements, and new sounds.

We learn through play (Besio et al., 2017; Densem, 2000). Tuning into play through music can both contribute to learning opportunities and foster a therapeutic process (Austin, 2020). It was through active playing that Rupert discovered new ways to navigate his Christmas carol. The waiata ‘Rongomai’ was activated in different ways by my persistent experimentations, and I increase the likelihood this waiata might seamlessly segue into a scenario on session, reducing the likelihood of it feeling unnatural or forced. Playing around with the stair experiments helped me discover new things that sat invisible behind a layer of predictability. I was also able to unpack some of the ways that its form and content could be mapped onto my research journey.

### **Theme Two - Intentional Repetition**

The analysis revealed how I brought different kinds of intention to framing repetitive elements in my practice that had come to my attention in Action Cycle Two. In the online

sessions I ran during AC3, I continued to use two action songs, *Going on a Bear Hunt* and *Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes*, a great deal. Sticking with this routine of repeating songs across sessions seemed to echo the containing effects of “rhythmic grounding” (Wigram, 2004, p. 91) in therapeutic improvisation, especially during the uncertainties of the shifting Covid -19 restrictions. Repeating songs was also important for finding points of playful departure for participants in sessions. I found that revisiting this material in multiple ways across sessions allowed for more possibilities of landing on the right ingredient to spark a participant’s playful engagement. For example, pausing in an unexpected place in a song or suddenly using a very low voice. Lots of repetitions gave me many opportunities to support and affirm clients and strengthen their relating to the material. I had more opportunities to adapt the materials to ingredients introduced by participants. This increasing mutuality via repetition mitigated inequality in our sessions. As the clients got to know the material and contribute to it, we were on a more equal footing.

Repetition is a big part of my music practice. As a musician, and particularly a drummer, the intentional use of repetition lies at the heart of playing “riffs” or “grooves” (J. K. Kennedy et al., 2013). In my exploration of ‘Rongomai’ across Action Cycles Two and Three, I recorded at least 20 versions and played it literally hundreds of times. In the snare drum method textbook *Stick Control* (Stone, 2013), each exercise should be repeated 20 times. Boredom is a real danger, and my work in these ways has equipped me with different intentions I can bring to stave off boredom. An appreciation of the massive impact small variations in how a technique is executed is a good example. Bringing intention to repetition mitigated the anxiety I was feeling about my music therapy practice evolving too slowly and becoming boring for me or my clients.

The stair experiments were also a place I explored repetition. It was by virtue of having to walk the stairs with every visit to my studio that my curiosity was aroused to engage with them in a creative way in the first place. Here is another creative use of intent to stave off a feeling of monotony. I conducted multiple can drops from the same spot on the stairs to explore the variations of the results.

Repetition also challenged and motivated me to stay curious in my practice. In terms of my research question, the challenge of facing the same clients and structures and songs week after week was well met as I cultivated more curiosity and play and brought this intention to repetitive aspects of my music therapy practice. Cultivating curiosity lessened the



sense of oppression for myself. Reflecting on intentional repetition through the lens of curiosity helped me to repeatedly scrutinize my practice for the creep of unconscious bias.

### **Theme Three - Valuing Experimentation**

Running sessions online had a highly experimental feel at times, as there were many elements beyond my control. In the case of one-on-one sessions with a client online, the sound was consistently poor, and I was forced to rely on almost purely visual information, sometimes to gauge when they were playing or not. I was surprised that despite the poor quality of audio information, both myself and the client still felt it worth pursuing for the sake of making a connection. The technical difficulties and poor sound seemed to highlight the importance of the act of turning up. This experiment of online music therapy sessions was paying off for us.

In the case of ‘Rongomai’, I continued to experiment with different ways of playing the song, in different acoustic settings and with different orchestrations, in order that this might enrich my connection to the waiata, and embed it in my musical being to such a degree that it might emerge in an authentic response to a musical or therapeutic need. I continue to value these experiments as they increase my connections to the waiata. This work is going a long way to relieving my anxiety around using this waiata in a clumsy or forced way.

The stair experiments began as a creative hunch. I felt that the stairs, the objects I dropped down them, and the sounds that emerged from these experiments had something to offer my music therapy practice. I decided to put my wondering around how this might speak to my research to the test in Action Cycle Three. I recorded many “drops” to see what would happen. I noticed that within the predictable cacophony, unique moments were capturing my attention – unexpected rhythms and silences. As I experimented with processing the footage, this act of transformation produced more novel material, strange movements that seemed to defy gravity, and cavernous rumbling tonalities. The stair experiments were a place where I could cultivate new lenses with which to view what I was doing.

An experimental lens helped me see more variation in what I was engaging with. The findings of Action Cycles One and Two showed how oppressions and inequalities can persist unchallenged in behaviours stemming from unexamined privilege. Being able to see more variation and novelty in what I do, especially in an area I am tempted to assume is predictable, may help to shine light on the shadowy areas of my practice where oppression and inequality remain comfortable.

### **Theme Four - Cultivating Curiosity**

I created opportunities for participants to contribute, for example in accepting their requests for songs. Keeping curious about participants in music therapy allows me to stay agile in sessions and follow participants in unpredictable directions. I was often surprised by the offers of participants in sessions, revealing aspects of themselves that previously had been invisible to me.

My experiments in devising new musical frames for the waiata ‘Rongomai’ were driven by curiosity around how different treatments might lure out different responses and reveal new layers of meaning. In the privacy of my studio my trepidation in engaging with te reo and waiata had abated, but I continued to question how this work of building connection would translate in the more exposed domain of music therapy sessions.

The stair experiments were where I let my creative curiosity run full throttle. How is repeatedly dropping objects down a stairwell relevant to my research? How can I approach my creative practice as research, view creative artifacts as data, construct findings and communicate them to a wider audience (Ledger & Edwards, 2011)? How can I keep curious in the face of repetitive elements in my music therapy practice? I found that bringing a sense of curiosity to the arduous work of self-scrutiny (Dileo, 2006), is important in keeping up my moral.

### **Theme Five - Care for the New**

I realised I was valuing new elements in my practice. In music therapy sessions online, I encountered new ways of reading participants responses when the audio quality was poor. The emphasis on reading body language and posture was new for me, and a valuable source of information. As my understanding of ‘Rongomai’ deepened, there was a realisation that here were the beginnings of my journey in learning te reo. I wanted to exercise as much care as I could with this. Caring about what is new is a central value in my creative practice, and perhaps lies at the base of my interest in improvised music. I wondered if exposing an outmoded habit in my practice, and uncovering an unconscious bias, is to discover something new for me to be aware of and cultivating a sense of care for the new may make this process a little easier.

In the next section I present Vignette Five, where I share details and some atmosphere around the exploration and development of the stair experiments conducted in Action Cycle Three. Following a creative hunch, I had taken to dropping objects down the stairs near the start of 2021. I enjoyed the clattering reverberant rhythms and textures, and the unexpected movements of the falling objects. I began to sense that this exploration had something



specific to offer my music therapy studies and research question. You can view the video recording of this experiment [here](#). Links to footage of other experiments are in Appendix 2.

### **Vignette Five – The Stair Experiment.**

I am standing halfway along a flight of concrete stairs that descend to the subbasement of the building where my practice studio is located. The stairs are painted green, with a white strip at the edges clearly defining their width. The concrete of the stair well makes for a loud and reverberant space. It is late at night in Auckland, deep into a level four lockdown, and all is quiet. On the edge of the steps sit a row of three empty tin cans. I am holding my camera over the cans. The steps on which they are placed are large in the shot, while the stairs on the flight below appear smaller, and a finer subdivision of space is revealed below them. The perspective reveals a strong rhythmic quality in the image, a metronomic subdivision of space.



**IMAGE 13 STAIR EXPERIMENT PART 1**

I slowly move my foot towards the cans, so that it is parallel with them. Continuing this gentle movement, I send the cans falling from the edge to the stairs below.



**IMAGE 14 STAIR EXPERIMENT PART 2**

The cans bounce from the stairs beneath, and the reverberant space erupts in a clattering mash of sounds as the cans tumble down the stairs.



**IMAGE 15 STAIR EXPERIMENT PART 3**

The cans eventually bump and roll out of sight, though the sounds continue as they settle into stillness, and the echoes fade away. My foot remains in the shot, caught in the act.



**IMAGE 16 STAIR EXPERIMENT PART 4**

### **Vignette Five Discussion**

Over the course of these experiments, I filmed many objects being dropped, pushed and rolled down the stairs, including a metal platter, a plastic bucket, a golf ball, and a cluster of tin cans. In processing the audio-visual footage of these experiments, many unique qualities in the form and sound of the descent opened up to me. I was intrigued by how what I was hearing was both a predictable cacophony of an object tumbling down concrete stairs, and yet made up of unique rhythms, textures and movements.

The following diagram illustrates how I zoomed in to various micro details of the sound on close listening. I reflected that these details could resemble unique moments unfolding within predictable areas in my music therapy practice. I was reminded of the indexing of recorded sessions conducted by Nordoff-Robins Music Therapists (Nordoff & Robbins, 2007), though I have not been trained in this way.

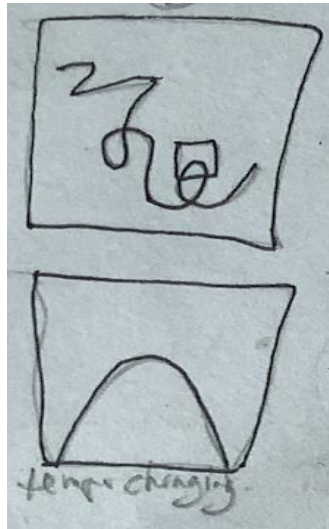


IMAGE 17 CLOSE LISTEN - TEMPO CHANGING

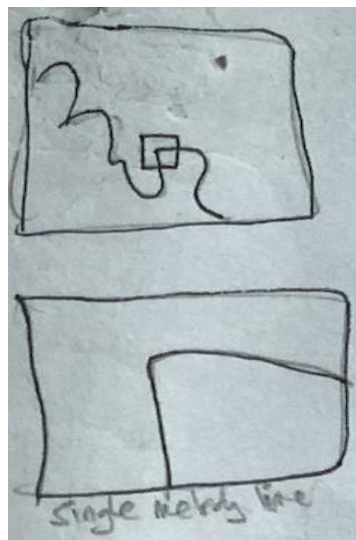


IMAGE 18 CLOSE LISTEN - SINGLE MELODY LINE

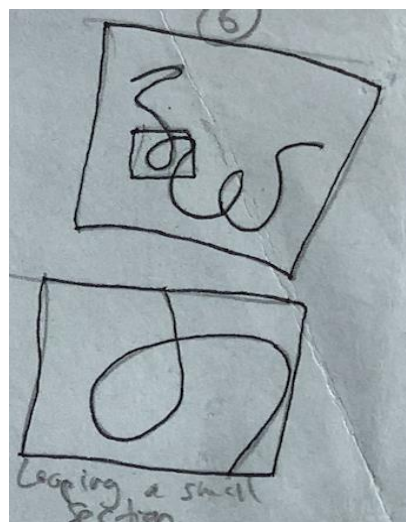


IMAGE 19 CLOSE LISTEN - LOOPING A SECTION



The top box in each image represents an entire descent. A portion of the journey has been framed and zoomed into in the bottom box. Image 17 imagines on a moment of tempo change, where the tempo surges up before receding back to its original speed. Image 18 focuses on a single melody line with an angular interval structure. Image 19 could represent a looping or repeated riff.

The stair experiments had their own repeated form, of which I noticed three parts - the stairs, the can/object, and the descent. I could see these three aspects cropping up metaphorically in different ways in my music therapy research and practice. I realised that what began as an unconscious hunch at the beginning of 2021 was a creative instinct helping me with processing my music therapy research and practice. The table below shows some of the connections between my music therapy practice and research to form of the stair experiments.

<b>1. <u>THE STAIRS</u></b>	<b>2. <u>THE CAN</u></b>	<b>3. <u>THE DESCENT</u></b>
Static, repetitive, familiar, predictable.	an interchangeable element to be dropped down the stairs.	partly predictable results, with always unique events.
Thematic analysis, coding using NVivo.	Data that I subject to this process.	Themes that emerge from the analysis.
The same client every week.	A new instrument for the client.	Their response to the new instrument.
A consistent song e.g. Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes	Trying different tempos, pausing at different moments.	New responses to the song, variations in following along to the actions.
Consistent session structures.	Different clients.	Changing emphases on different aspects of sessions.
Consistent instruments in sessions.	Different clients.	Different instruments being selected for play.
My research question.	Me.	Expansion of awareness.

**TABLE 4. RELATIONSHIP OF STAIR EXPERIMENT FORM TO ASPECTS OF MUSIC THERAPY RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

The stair experiment framework was a container to explore and compare different elements emerging from my research in an embodied way. Being in that stairwell, dropping things down the stairs, and being saturated by the acoustics, helped me connect to this action research process, especially in the light of the objective to discover something previously unseen by me in my practice (McNiff, 2010).

## Discussion

In today's global context cultural humility and cultural safety needs to be sustained as an ongoing, lifelong journey (Baines, 2013; Swamy, 2014). I find joy to be excellent fuel for this sustain, and joy seems more easily cultivated in a humble and safe environment. In Action Cycle 2, the voice of my kōauau required the safety of my humility and respect to emerge. A sustained engagement in the kinetic and sonic properties of the stair well in Action Cycle 3 pointed to ways of listening and observing that allowed for new understandings. While a sustained art practice has challenging dimensions, the humility of a receptive ear and the safety of well-known material allows for the possibility of creative joy. A sustained creative engagement in my awareness and “doing” of culture and (dis)ability, grounded in humility, safety and creative joy, seems a good way to proceed.

### Bringing Together Art and Research

As this research progressed, I spent more time in my studio, and increasingly brought my creative resources to bare on my research. It was important for my artistic self to contribute to finding solutions to the complex cultural and ethical challenges thrown up by this research. I began to see how my “aesthetic sensibilities” (Viega, 2016a) have shaped my values and I discovered a foundation for an axiology, my connecting of aesthetics, values, and ethics (Viega, 2016b). An arts informed approach to research was bringing all these parts of myself – artist, musician, photographer, researcher, music therapist, producer etc, together (UBAM Musicoterapia, 2021). I would like to develop this in future arts-based research projects.

I came to value my studio space for its research laboratory qualities, wherein I can conduct and document research and quickly initiate experiments and actions and learn new material. My studio activities, sometimes being forays and experiments into new territories, can be safely undertaken and developed without risk of harm to anybody else. I am reminded of the relationship I have cultivated between certain kinds of practice and performance as a musician. “Don’t practice on stage!” is a classic piece of advice in this regard. I have learned from my creative practice that to keep growing, constantly testing the limits of my approaches, be they technical or conceptual, is helpful. Yet in performance mode, especially as an improviser, I prefer to steer clear of “deciding” to implement pre-conceived methods, as this can feel forced. Attempting to try something I am still developing can be to the detriment of being present in listening. In striving to respond to the moment, on stage or in the music therapy room, I have preferred to draw rather on more familiar techniques, methods, and

approaches, and deploy them in playful and new ways in response to the moment. I don't want to have to be thinking self-consciously about how I am executing specific things, for example pronouncing te reo. I can mitigate harm in different kinds of performative contexts thorough focusing my attention on listening, being present and responding with authenticity and playfulness, human to human (Nachmanovitch, 2019).

## **Being Pākehā**

The journey of understanding my place in Aotearoa as a Pākehā will continue and needs to be undertaken with all the care and necessity I can muster. Because the ongoing oppression and inequality resulting from colonization is systemic, my contributions to their mitigations are necessarily small and localised. This year I have attended workshops on:

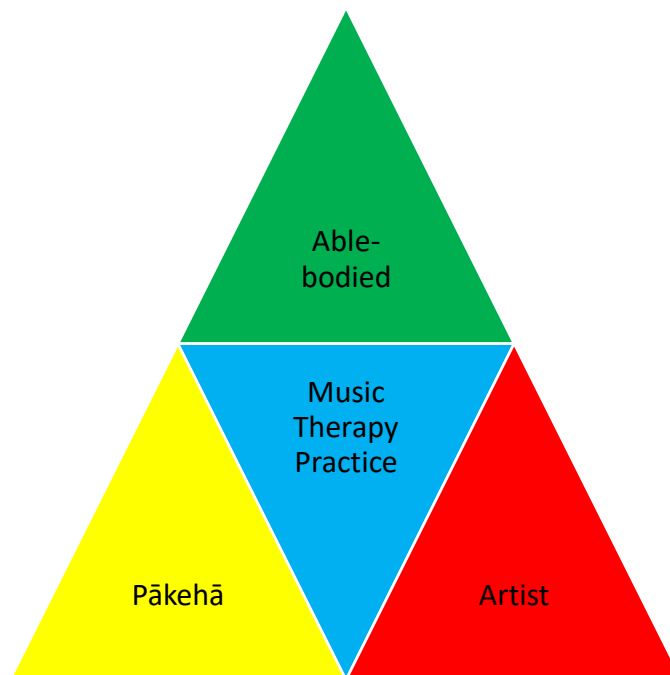
- the connections between wairua (spirit) and waiata (song), given by Wiremu and Leslie Nia, and situated my experience within their writings (NiaNia, Bush & Epston, 2017).
- an online discussion called Supercharge Your Tauwi-Tanga, hosted by Action Station (*ActionStation Tautoko / Supercharge Your Tauwi-Tanga*, n.d.).
- A discussion on biculturalism and engagement with Te Tiriti at the New Zealand Music Therapy Symposium

I can continue to deepen my knowledge of Aotearoa's history, attend workshops and talks, and study te reo. But to what end? Certainly, it is not to wield my cultural competency as an accomplishment. In Action Cycle Two I learned that for me this work of assimilating knowledge is done to facilitate a natural emergence of action *in context*. I am happy to step out of the limelight and work quietly at the periphery. I am inspired by an aspect of Hineraukatauri's story (Nunns & Thomas, 2014). Hineraukatauri is the Māori goddess of flute music, whose abode is the woven cocoon of the case moth. The female case moth does not leave her cocoon, but gently calls out to attract her mate. I have always been struck how this subtle call, the gentlest of sounds, is given such important status. To me it provides a clue in how Pākehā and Tauwi music therapists might proceed in this fraught bicultural space – gently.

## **Situatedness**

Looking back at my research across the three action cycles and surrounding reflections, and in devising the comic strip narrative of my research journey, I saw an exploration of three important ways that I am situated.





**DIAGRAM 5 SITUATEDNESS**

Being able-bodied, Pākehā, and an artist all inform what I bring to relationships in music therapy contexts, and impact how I respond to the complexities of these relationships. The apparent solidity of this diagram does not reflect the fluidity of context. As discussed, there can be no fixed blueprint for how this is navigated, but it helps when there is more awareness around what we bring.

By addressing my privilege and power, I am more likely to be aware of the unexamined ways I intersect with systemic oppression. I have a deeper appreciation that there is no end to this journey, and that in confronting my mistakes, I at least will be better equipped to integrate new information. And in answer to my research question, from this position I will be better equipped to participate in a mutual flourishing with the people I do music therapy with. I also saw that it is important for music therapists in New Zealand to reflect on how we deploy our power and privilege in the context of who we are, and where we are, so that music therapists and the communities where they play can work together for systemic change.

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come here because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together”

– Lilla Watson (McCarthy, 2010)

## Looking Back at the Research Question

Feedback from teachers I sent information and assent forms to has been that the emphasis of “inequality and oppression” in my research question is potentially too triggering for parents. This has revealed more complex spaces around ethics, transparency, and consent, where harm might occur in music therapy practice.

The action cycles have revealed many more questions. Generating questions is key to my creative method, based in music and listening, and I am struck by how an ear resembles a question mark. Some of the questions that have emerged across my research provide clues to alternative articulations of my main research question or topic. Where might harm unintentionally occur in my music therapy practice? How might I contribute to systemic oppression in my music therapy practice? If I do not mean to be harmful, how is harm still happening in my music therapy practice?

To take a different tack, inspired by not desiring to trigger stressed parents, I can replace the terms “mitigate,” “oppression,” and “inequality” with words that point to positive outcomes. For example, how can I identify and cultivate the ways in which I contribute to ongoing *empowerment* and *agency* in my music therapy practice? How can I reveal and increase *benefits* in music therapy practice? If my intent is to be of *benefit* in music therapy practice, how I can be sure this is realized?

## Limitations and Future Research Exploration

A limitation of this paper is that I confined my creative research to my own studio and my own practice. This was in response to the ongoing Covid-19 lockdowns across the time of my research. Making room for creative participation with others in the research is the next step. Just as play in sessions evens the playing field between therapists and clients, perhaps bringing creative play to the centre of our research could even the playing field amongst all research participants. There is a reciprocity in creative play that could make participation in research more appealing for marginalised participants.

Arts-based research was not the initial focus of this study. The evolving nature of qualitative research saw me utilising a more creative orientation halfway through the process. A more systematic exploration of how arts-based research can contribute to answering my question is required. Other music therapists are interrogating ways to do this with rigour and meaning (Vaillencourt, 2009, 2011; Viega, 2016a, 2016b). It is exciting that we may be able to integrate our training and skills as artists as powerful ways to develop meaningful and communicative research. “The worlds of ABR and clinical practice are intertwined in ways

that can inform each other” (Viega, 2016b, pg 12). The values and ethics strand of our axiology, informed by a critical humanist lens, can alert us to the creep of systemic oppression and inequality into our practice.

### **Ongoing Actions**

It is important that my thinking in relation to my research question is not limited to the time frames of this research (Bradbury et al, 2020). After all, the harms experienced by oppressed communities do not stop, and my situatedness within the systems that perpetuate these oppressions do not stop. It is also important to recognise that contexts are fluid. Ongoing trainings are not one stop visits to tick off a checklist. They require regular updating and vigilant navigation as I change and as our collective knowledge responds to ever-changing circumstances. Future actions could include:

- Training in cultural competency.
- Training in gender and neurodiversity/takiwātanga.
- Trauma informed trainings.
- Continued supervision as a practicing and registered music therapist.
- Continued artistic collaboration with Māori and disabled creatives.
- Continued research and reading into ABR in qualitative research areas.
- Continuing to practice Action Research and qualitative, reflexive thematic analysis.

## Conclusion



IMAGE 20 COMIC STRIP CONCLUSION

The central question of this research paper focuses on identifying areas of my practice where I am contributing to oppression and inequality, in order that I may mitigate these occurrences. The main areas identified are unexamined areas in my practice where unconscious biases may be triggered e.g. ableism, and systemic cultural issues that bind me to ongoing harm e.g., colonisation. Through an increasing use of creative processes in my navigation of the research, I came to value the role of my artistic identity in meeting my research question and supporting being aware of what I bring. As Baines (2021) suggests, this ongoing vigilance is necessary for health care workers/education professions – it is ongoing, cyclic, continuous, and needs brave self-aware approaches.

I used an action research methodology to look closely at my music therapy practice. I conducted three action cycles, gathering data from clinical notes, supervision conversations, reflexive diary entries, and artistic creations. I created codes and themes from the data using thematic analysis. I employed a critical humanist lens to better understand the levels of scrutiny I would need to bring to my practice in order to answer my research question. I engaged in creative play to both generate data and new themes, as well as process and make sense of the whole research experience. I created a comic strip summary of my findings, which helped me find clarity in the research. I was struck by how helpful it was to use the artistic “tools of my trade” to understand the layers and meaning of my study.

I found that cultural biases prevailed in how we might be shy of using physical touch to communicate, but I needed to stay watchful and reflective as I used touch in my practice. I found I could be triggered during sessions when unexamined aspects of my work, or presumptions I had, were challenged. Here was when harm, for example in the form of microaggressions, could occur. As I leaned into the unexamined areas of my practice, especially the cultural aspects, I learned that I tended to be more focused on content, and that

this was not serving the growth into increased cultural competency that comes through a more nuanced understanding of context. As the research progressed, I discovered my creative practice was an important tool for building context around my practice and making sense of the research. Learning through play, bringing intention to repetition, valuing experimentation, cultivating curiosity and caring for new ideas were themes that emerged from my creative engagement that I could apply to my music therapy practice.

Through discovering the connections between my values (manifest in my aspiration for an ethical music therapy practice), and my aesthetics (informed by my creative process), an axiology emerged that could potentially generate new and creative responses to critical research. Aesthetics and values are at the core of a music therapist's search for beauty and meaning (Aigen, 2007; Kenny, 1999). Systemic oppression and inequality in my practice jars against my aesthetics, impacting my ability to see the beautiful and the new in the work, myself and other participants. A methodology rooted in creativity could be a way to systematically explore hitherto neglected areas in our practice and research, where oppression and inequality sit unexamined. My research showed me the importance of taking the time to build context and cultural competency around the material I share with participants, in order that I may deliver it with mutuality, sensitivity and appropriateness. And I realised the central role that my creative artistic practice has in this process of connecting, both in the preparatory stages, and when it comes to participating in music in sessions.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Example of Data Coding Theme Process in Action Cycle One

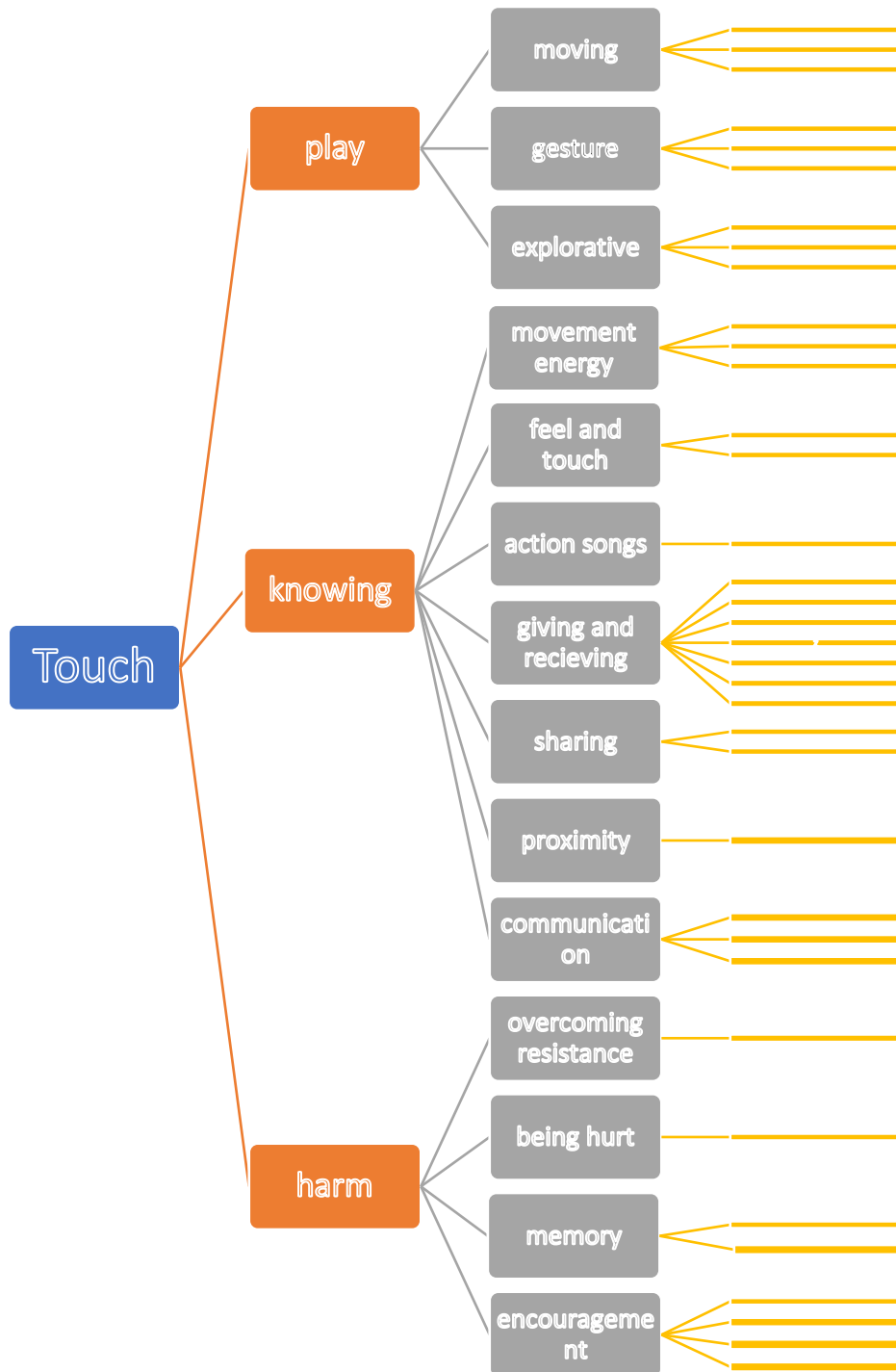


DIAGRAM 6 ACTION CYCLE ONE THEMES CODES AND DATA

The diagram above is a representation of my thematic analysis for Action Cycle One, including indications of the data (left out of the diagram above due to space considerations). Below I show an example of my data coding, the data points indicated with roman numerals.

1. Theme: offering and receiving play.

a. Code: moving to the music

- i. The song Going On A Bear Hunt encouraged diverse movement to accompany the various ways of moving through the landscapes of the narrative.
- ii. Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes with the ingredient of different tempos. Clients often had to really concentrate to move through the story of the song at unfamiliar tempos.

b. Code: gestural play

- i. A client played a trick on their helper. An instrument was moved in proximity to their hand to aid their playing of it. The client quickly moved their hand away from the instrument, clearly indicating “No”, but with a smile – this was repeated when the instrument was moved to the new hand position, and a sense of play was in evidence.
- ii. The song Going On A Bear Hunt involved gestural play, where the terrain of the story, say “mud!” or “river!” or “long grass!” inspired gestural approaches to sound making.
- iii. In the song Catch The Beat, I might encourage a participant to mirror my gesture and texture on an instrument. A participant who may struggle with articulating a rhythm in a precise way, could in this way meet success with mirroring the gesture and sound of my call. For example, scratching the textured skin of a drum, using “fish hands”, flopping them around on a drum, or walking spider fingers up and down a guitar fret board...

c. Code: explorative play

- i. A client chose from a selection of drums, and spent time arranging and rearranging their set up, playing it to test it out, until it was just right. From here the rest of the music making could proceed.

- ii. In a call and response song called Catch the Beat, a client taking their turn to be the caller, would weave new instruments into their call to challenge and surprise me.
  - iii. Clients improvising on the harp, often playing it for the first time, exploring the feel of the strings, the interactions of their physicality with the resonance of the instrument.
- 2. Theme: sensation as knowing.
  - a. Code: the feel and touch of instruments
    - i. A client explored holding the djembe in a variety of ways.. the instrument seemed to me like a small animal being cradled and petted, or a doll being cuddled and stroked.
    - ii. Clients exploring instruments “non-musically”, discovering their cavities, playing with their weight, finding their edges and balance points, even finding new sounds – see the Harp Rocking vignette.
  - b. Code: action songs
    - i. Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes - a client loved show his skill and virtuosity with this song, singing and moving through it very fast!
  - c. Code: participant initiated touch
    - i. playing an instrument with a client who moves close to me, brushed shoulders. A sense of trust and comradery.
    - ii. Greetings with hi fives, elbows and fists, physical connection.
    - iii. A friendly atmosphere seems to help the musical play.. but also is something I prefer – possible red flag here..
  - d. Code: SMTh initiated touch
    - i. Physically intervening to prevent harm of instruments.
    - ii. Holding a child’s hand as we make our way to the music therapy area.
    - iii. Touching a clients shoulder to get their attention.
    - iv. Supporting a participant to hold or play an instrument.
  - e. Code: building relationships through sharing instruments
    - i. A client holding the steel tongue drum for others to play.
    - ii. A client helping with passing instruments.
  - f. Code: proximity through instruments
    - i. sitting side by side on the piano stool.

- g. Code: communicative touch and non-touch
  - i. the group of adults who didn't want to touch instruments until given permission, maybe conveying how well behaved and respectful they could be.
  - ii. The client who moved her hand away from the instrument as a playful trick.
  - iii. Shy clients not yet ready to play, still warming into it.
- h. Code: energetic movement in sessions
  - i. Full strokes, big physicality on the drums.
  - ii. Moving between instruments with enthusiasm and excitement.
  - iii. Freely exploring the instruments in the room.
- 3. Theme: harming and not harming
  - a. Code: overcoming resistance
    - i. I began the Hello Song, and no one went to play along at first. I had to coax them into it. This initial resistance felt related to the no touching vibe. This was overcome quickly and enthusiastically, especially compared to the first session.
  - b. Code: being hurt
    - i. A client hurt themselves on an instrument, striking it forcefully and catching their hand on an angled surface.
  - c. Code: memory of earlier touch
    - i. To be touched by a client is often meaningful for me
    - ii. I hear my body respond, and it is with good news, and I relish these moments full of memory from a younger time more involved with others' bodies.
  - d. Code: encouragement.
    - i. Encouraging J to look at his drum and hand when playing.
    - ii. Heads Shoulders Knees and Toes, racing through the routine. I tried to encourage him to follow the music.
    - iii. She was enthusiastically helped by fellow participants, who helped her with instruments at different points.

- iv. He had a drum, but was reluctant/shy to play it. I offered him opportunities to participate in Catch the Beat and Drum Circle, but he declined.

## **Appendix 2 Links to Video Recordings**

Links to audio and visual recordings. Included are links to examples discussed in the Vignettes Three, Four and Five, plus other examples to illustrate the variations explored in this creative practice.

### **Action Cycle Two Video Footage Links**

#### **Vignette Three**

[Kōauau at the Spring](https://vimeo.com/663630870/4216f2d30c) - <https://vimeo.com/663630870/4216f2d30c>

#### **Vignette Four**

[Rongomai deep dive: \(Te Reo\) stairs](https://vimeo.com/663633523/ec4ebc1619) - <https://vimeo.com/663633523/ec4ebc1619>

[Rongomai deep dive: \(English\) I Will Fly example](https://vimeo.com/663629297/105c2c697a) - <https://vimeo.com/663629297/105c2c697a>

#### **Other Explorations of Rongomai Deep Dive Actions**

[Rongomai deep dive: \(English\) form experiment](https://vimeo.com/663628727/85587cd6bd) - <https://vimeo.com/663628727/85587cd6bd>

[Rongomai deep dive \(English\) stairs with spoken verse.](https://vimeo.com/663623686/61756826fc)  
<https://vimeo.com/663623686/61756826fc>

### **Action Cycle Three video footage links**

#### **Vignette Five**

[Stair experiment: vignette example](https://vimeo.com/663621413/2bac647f81) - <https://vimeo.com/663621413/2bac647f81>

#### **Other Explorations of the Stair Experiment Actions**

[Stair experiment: golf ball](https://vimeo.com/663627005/d8af5356de) - <https://vimeo.com/663627005/d8af5356de>

[Stair experiment: slow motion platter](https://vimeo.com/663627327/84a833945f) - <https://vimeo.com/663627327/84a833945f>

[Stair experiment: \(processed\) extruded tetrahedron](https://vimeo.com/663627773/862b9003f9) - <https://vimeo.com/663627773/862b9003f9>

[Stair experiment: bucket](https://vimeo.com/663625340/47c2889f7c) - <https://vimeo.com/663625340/47c2889f7c>

## Appendix 3 – Information, Consent and Assent Forms

### Information Sheet for Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA) or family member



TE KŌKŌI NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON, PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand  
Phone + 64-4-463-5369 Email [music@nzsm.ac.nz](mailto:music@nzsm.ac.nz) Web [www.nzsm.ac.nz](http://www.nzsm.ac.nz)

#### How Can I Identify and Mitigate the Ways in Which I Contribute to Ongoing Inequalities and Oppressions in My Music Therapy Practice

#### Information Sheet for Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA) or family member

3 November, 2021

Dear family member/carers,

#### Who am I ?

My name is [REDACTED], and I am a second year Master of Music Therapy student at the Victoria University of Wellington. I have completed my clinical placement experience at [REDACTED]. This year, I have been providing Music Therapy services to your family member at [REDACTED]. I am required to research about music therapy as part of my training.

#### What is the aim of the research?

The aim of my research is to take a close look at my practice of music therapy, so I can be sure that I am not causing any harm to the people I am working with. This is important because I am likely not as aware of the many challenges the people I work with face in their daily lives, and I want to make sure that I am not adding more difficulties, however small, to the lives of those participating in music therapy sessions with me.

My research question is: How Can I Identify and Mitigate the Ways in Which I Contribute to Ongoing Inequalities and Oppressions in My Music Therapy Practice?

#### How can you and your family member help?

I would like to ask you to give written permission for some of the materials written in my notes and reflections to be included in this research. This information contains specific musical and personal experiences with your family member during music therapy sessions. I will not use names or other information that could potentially identify them in any publication or presentation of this research.

**What will happen with the information from my records?**

All the records and consent forms for this research will be stored on a password protected computer and/or in a locked cupboard for five years by my supervisor at New Zealand School of Music. However, there is a possibility of your family member being identified, as music therapy is a small community in New Zealand, which does pose a greater risk to the confidentiality of anyone written about. I will make every attempt to protect privacy and confidentiality.

**What will the project produce?**

I will be writing up my research for publication in the Victoria University Library, and we may publish a journal article or present the findings at a conference. Please note that this study may not be ready for publication until later in 2022.

**What are your and your family member's rights?**

You do not have to accept this invitation for your family member if you do not wish to. There will be no changes to the ongoing music therapy even if you decide not to give your permission, and rest assured that I can approach other families if you do not feel able to give consent. I will provide a summary of the results of the study to you if you wish to see the findings of this project. I will be happy to discuss with you about this study during and/or after the study. If you feel you have obtained sufficient information about this research and happy to give permission, please sign the enclosed consent form.

**If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?**

Please feel free to discuss with my clinical liaison from [REDACTED], or me about my research and/or giving permission to use the music therapy materials in the research. You can also contact my research supervisor [REDACTED] if you have any concerns or questions relating to this research.



**Student**

[REDACTED]

Student Music Therapist

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

**Research Supervisor**

[REDACTED]

New Zealand School of Music

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: + [REDACTED]

This project has been reviewed and approved by the New Zealand School of Music Postgraduate committee. The VUW Human Ethics Committee has given generic approval for music therapy students to conduct studies of this type. The music therapy projects have been judged to be low risk and, consequently, are not separately reviewed by any Human Ethics Committees. The supervisor named below is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact the supervisor or, if you wish to raise an issue with someone other than the student or supervisor, please contact the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Convenor [REDACTED]

Thank you for time in reading and in responding to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Dr Judith Loveridge. Email [hec@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:hec@vuw.ac.nz) or telephone +64-4-463 6028

## Information Sheet for Participants



TE KŌKŌI NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON, PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand  
Phone +64-4-463-5369 Email [music@nzsm.ac.nz](mailto:music@nzsm.ac.nz) Web [www.nzsm.ac.nz](http://www.nzsm.ac.nz)

### How Can I Identify and Mitigate the Ways in Which I Contribute to Ongoing Inequalities and Oppressions in My Music Therapy Practice

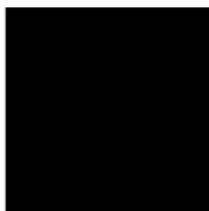
Information sheet and consent forms for participants and family.

How Can I Identify and Mitigate the Ways in Which I Contribute to Ongoing Inequalities and Oppressions in My Music Therapy Practice?.

### Information Sheet for Participants

3 November, 2021

Dear group member,



My name is [REDACTED] (in the picture), and I am a music therapy student on placement at the [REDACTED] and at [REDACTED], where I have been doing music with you in Auckland. I have been doing this for university, towards my 'Master of Music Therapy' at the New Zealand School of Music.

For my degree, I have been researching how I identify and reduce harm in my practice of music therapy, for both myself, and the people I work with. This is because I believe from my own experience that despite my best intentions, sometimes I might cause harm without realising it, and I really would like to prevent this from happening.

This letter is to ask for your permission to write a story in my research book which describes our music sessions together. I will use this story to show what I have learned during my research. I will not include your name, or the name of [REDACTED] or the [REDACTED]. This is to protect your privacy. You are more than welcome to read the story if you would like, however it may not be finished for another three months.

If you have any more questions about the story or my research, please ask the person who is reading the letter with you, or ask me, at any time. You can talk with Sarah, my supervisor at the University, if there is anything you are worried about.

Thank you for the time you have taken to read this letter.

Please sign the consent form attached by November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Student Music Therapist

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Supervisor:

Dr. [REDACTED]

Research Supervisor at the New Zealand School of Music

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: + [REDACTED]

## Visual Assent Form for Participants



TE KŌKŌI NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON, PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand  
Phone + 64-4-463-5369 Email [music@nzsm.ac.nz](mailto:music@nzsm.ac.nz) Web [www.nzsm.ac.nz](http://www.nzsm.ac.nz)

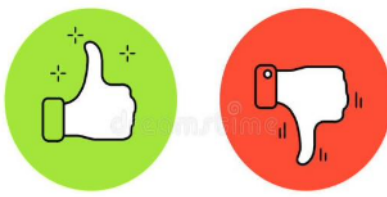
### How Can I Identify and Mitigate the Ways in Which I Contribute to Ongoing Inequalities and Oppressions in My Music Therapy Practice

Information sheet and consent forms for participants and family.

#### Visual Assent form for Participants

- I know what the information letter says, and it makes sense.
- I know that my name, and the name of [REDACTED], will be changed, so that I am more anonymous.
- I know that I will get a copy of the story once it is written.
- I know that I can say “no” if I would like. I also know that I can change my mind if I say yes, up until December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.
- I have had enough time to make this decision.
- I know that I can ask more questions from [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] at any time.

I give [REDACTED] permission to write about our music sessions in her research, as explained in the information sheet.



Full name/s printed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Written Assent Form for Participants



TE KŌKI NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON, PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand  
Phone + 64-4-463-5369 Email [music@nzsm.ac.nz](mailto:music@nzsm.ac.nz) Web [www.nzsm.ac.nz](http://www.nzsm.ac.nz)

### How Can I Identify and Mitigate the Ways in Which I Contribute to Ongoing Inequalities and Oppressions in My Music Therapy Practice

Information sheet and consent forms for participants and family.

Written Assent form for participants.

- My family member has read the information letter to me, and it makes sense.
- I know that my name, and the name of the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] will be changed, so that I am more anonymous.
- I know that I will get a copy of the story once it is written.
- I know that I can say “no” if I would like. I also know that I can change my mind if I say yes, up until December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.
- I have had enough time to make this decision.
- I know that I can ask more questions from [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] at any time.

I give [REDACTED] permission to write about our music sessions in his research, as explained in the information sheet.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full name/s printed: \_\_\_\_\_