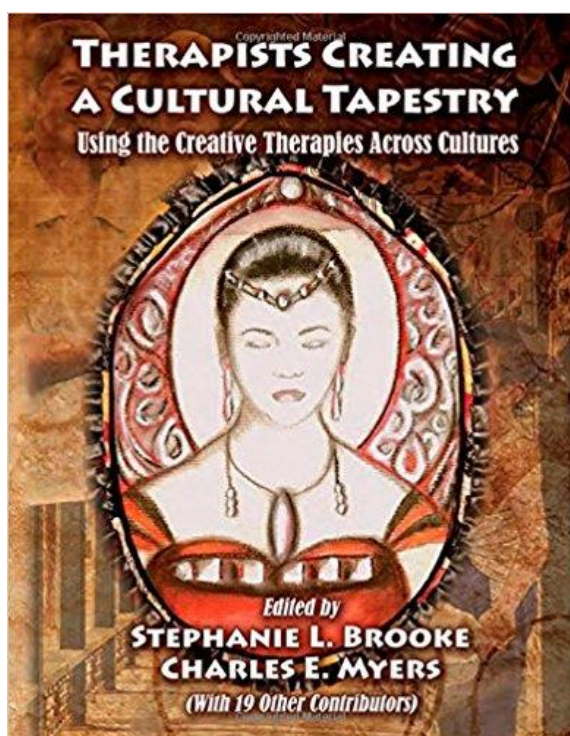


Book Reviews

Therapists creating a cultural tapestry: Using creative therapies across cultures.

Editors: Stephanie L. Brooke, Charles Myers and 19 contributors
C.C. Thomas, Springfield, USA (2015).



In publishing this collection, *Therapists creating a cultural tapestry: using creative therapies across cultures*, editors Brooke and Myers have tackled issues that are important and topical for the creative arts therapies in a world of growing cross-cultural contact. These questions include: how can therapists engage effectively across and between cultures? How can therapists work sensitively and supportively with people whose life experience is very different to their own?

The book's 18 chapters provide a range of approaches to these issues, mostly descriptions of therapeutic approaches and practice. Contributors come from diverse practice and cultural backgrounds. While most seem to be US-based, there are also authors from Israel, the UK, Australia, Canada and India, as well as others working outside their own cultures in Holland and Mongolia. The volume includes a predominance of chapters on visual arts therapy, with others about play, music, dance movement and drama therapies, set in different contexts and with a great diversity of client groups.

The introductory chapter by editor Myers offers a basic overview of cross-cultural competence and how current understandings of this can relate to creative arts and creative arts therapy. Hogan's chapter exploring art therapy across cultures offers a telling example of the challenge of different perspectives between therapist and client as a result of different cultural understandings. In a quoted article, a therapist (Lofgren, 1981) reports her dismay at what she judged as a 'pathological' and 'impoverished' drawing by a Native American client. For the client, however, the image of an open square with one symbol at the start and end of the line offered a very meaningful representation of important cultural concepts. Therefore, while both parties in this instance were experts in reading symbols and they both applied this to the same image at the same time, the meaning they derived from this reading was entirely different.

One chapter that seemed particularly valuable was Ferris-Richardson and Demaine's exploration of the relationship between creative arts therapies and traditional Chinese medicine. If we are to be truly culturally competent therapists, we need to be mindful and informed about ways of healing that are outside the models of training that have been mostly devised in western individualistic societies. This article provided an interesting juxtaposition between the different modalities, including the significance of movement and other artforms in Chinese medicine. This indicated that this traditional practice seems closer to creative arts therapy than it is to western medicine. Bethel's chapter offers a well structured and theoretically sound discussion of play therapy in the Appalachian culture. It is illustrated by two very compelling photos of sandplay drawings that show astonishing positive change over a period of four weeks.

As a dance movement therapist, the chapters of most interest to me were the three by my fellow movers: Amber Gray, 'The broken body: somatic perspectives on surviving torture'; Catherine

Kmita's 'Alternate views of a shamanic circle dance: the inner Mongolian dance', and Orit Sonia Waisman's 'Dancing with the other: intercultural encounters in a Jewish teacher's college in Jerusalem'. Gray's work is nicely written, well substantiated by theory and illustrated by a strongly documented case study of clients who have survived the most extreme human experiences; Kmita offers some very interesting material about Shamanic healing through dance in the exotic context of Mongolia and its relationship to dance movement therapy; and Waisman documents her experiences and some reflections on her work in Israel to teach movement for special education with female Arab students.

The book offers great strength in diversity – approaches, authors, locations and client groups. This diversity also provides a minor weakness. The articles and approaches are so different that I am left without a strong sense of pre-dominant theoretical or practice approaches, nor much idea of common trends that might help orient me towards shared understandings amongst creative arts therapists.

There are other significant weaknesses in the book, mostly due to under-developed editing. Therapists with diverse client-based experiences can provide rich detail related to practice and compelling case studies. However, if this is not supported by strong writing skills or thorough editing, the text can be weaker than is desirable in a contemporary textbook. Several chapters seemed poorly conceptualised and organised, with some offering no introduction or overview to orient the reader. Many articles offered literature review, case studies, reflections and theoretical information mixed throughout the whole. Practices that are common these days in similar publications were absent from this volume, notably the pedagogical aids of learning objectives and discussion points.

While cultural competence was the focus of the book and authors were working to advise their readers on how to develop it, several of them showed one telling weakness in cultural competence themselves. One comment that seemed most inappropriate, given the book's theme, was that 'it remains true that the majority of therapists are European Americans'. We might guess that the author meant that this is true of therapists in America, but in not qualifying this statement and perhaps assuming that her readers are all where she is in the USA, she makes the same mistake she is writing to help address.

Several bios do not mention the author's own cultural or country context, or provide ambiguous details. As a non-American reader, I don't automatically assume a place is in the USA, nor can I identify institutions when just their name is used, without a locational reference. Two exceptions to this are Gray who clearly articulates her cultural heritage, influences and preferences, providing the reader with an understanding of her culture and the way it might shape and bias her practice. Reynaga-Abiko articulates her identity as a grandchild of Mexican migrants who also names her gender identity and professional interests and expertise, thus assisting the reader to 'place' her culturally.

I am not sure that authors telling us in their preface that their book is a 'rich tapestry', 'informative' and 'comprehensive' and will be 'very useful' is actually reasonable. No doubt the authors intended and hope this to be true, and perhaps their readers will find it so. The recommendation of an expert in a Foreword would have been more convincing.

While the enthusiasm and conviction of the authors for the value of their therapeutic work was heartening, this is not strong enough evidence that their work is a contribution. A contemporary profession is not serving their clients well enough in assuming that, because a program is offered and clients participate, they are benefitted. One article's list of claims about creative arts therapy programs include that they 'assist individuals to become integrated and connected', 'spark energy and processing', 'help clients to establish a new sense of self' and 'provide insight... come to see a situation in a new light'. However, stating this without offering any qualification of which clients, for which purpose, and under which circumstances this would occur, indicates insufficient critical thinking and analysis. Another article's statement that a trademarked visual arts process provides 'a vivid road map to reach goals', a method to 'manage depression', 'develop insight', 'express content from the inner world' and 'change relationships to problem' without any evidence to substantiate these claims was concerning. Such ambit claims potentially reflect more the author's faith in their own methods than the client's successful processes of change. Lack of evidence from methodologically sound evaluation practices was the most significant omission for me.

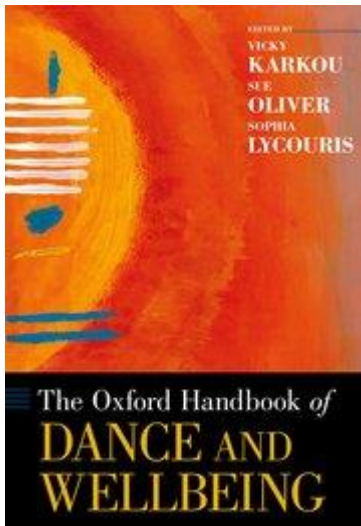
If the professions of creative arts therapy are going to be accorded equal status in health and wellbeing services and funded to support clients,

as their practitioners and trainers would likely wish, then more critical and reflective thinking is needed than is demonstrated in many sections of this book. Nevertheless, it provides an interesting read and an excellent opportunity for the contributors to document their work.



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The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Wellbeing



Edited by Vicky Karkou, Sue Oliver, and Sophia Lycouris

As referred to in *Australasian Moves*, this book has just been released (August 2017). At present, it is only published as an E=book, with the hard copy version available later in 2017 from bookshops.

It has more than 1000 pages, 50 chapters, and over 90 contributors, and is expected to become an important textbook. Three of the chapters in the book are written by Australians, Heather Hill, Elizabeth Loughlin, and Sue Mullane with Kim Dunphy.

The following information is from the publisher, Oxford University Press:

Oxford Handbooks

- Unites perspectives on dance and related practices to promote a broad understanding of wellbeing
- Topics covered range from neuroscience and spirituality to medically unexplained conditions
- Addresses dance forms within the context of dance movement psychotherapy
- Companion Website features accompanying video content demonstrating applications of global research methodologies

Publishers Description:

In recent years, a growth in dance and wellbeing scholarship has resulted in new ways of thinking that place the body, movement, and dance in a central place with renewed significance for wellbeing. *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Wellbeing* examines dance and related movement practices from the perspectives of neuroscience and health, community and education, and psychology and sociology, to contribute towards an understanding of wellbeing, offer new insights into existing practices, and create a space where sufficient exchange is enabled. The handbook's research components include quantitative, qualitative, and arts-based research, covering diverse discourses, methodologies, and perspectives that add to the development of a complete picture of the topic. Throughout the handbook's wide-ranging chapters, the objective observations, felt experiences, and artistic explorations of practitioners interact with and are printed alongside academic chapters to establish an egalitarian and impactful exchange of ideas

Section E. 'Dance in Health Care Contexts' contains:

44. *Dance: An Aesthetic Experience to Foster Wellbeing for Vulnerable Mothers and Infants*, from Elizabeth Loughlin.

45. *Dance Therapy and the Possibility of Wellbeing with People with Dementia*, from Heather Hill.

From the section on Dance in Education, Chapter 27, from Sue Mullane and Kim Dunphy, is entitled *Dance Movement Therapy, Student Learning and Wellbeing in Special Education*,

Information and descriptions from:

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-handbook-of-dance-and-wellbeing-9780199949298?cc=us&lang=en&#.WZ7GpalzGWw.facebook>