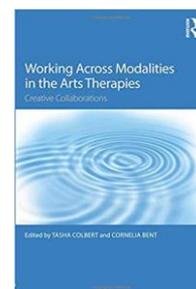


BOOK REVIEW

Working across modalities in the arts therapies: Creative collaborations (Colbert & Bent, Eds.)

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Title: Working across modalities in the arts therapies: Creative collaborations **Editors:** Tasha Colbert & Cornelia Bent **Publication year:** 2018
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REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

Karen Twyford, MA (Music Therapy), RMT (AMTA). Karen is a Registered Music Therapist who has worked in the UK, New Zealand and Australia. Karen's special interest in professional collaborative working approaches led her to research and publish on the subject. She is co-editor with Tessa Watson of *Integrated Team Working: Music Therapy as Part of Transdisciplinary and Collaborative Approaches* published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers in 2008. Karen currently works at Perth Children's Hospital with children and young people with acquired brain injuries, spinal and neurological conditions. She also undertakes other freelance music therapy work in health and special education. [Karen.Twyford@health.wa.gov.au]

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The value of collaboration across health care sectors worldwide has been increasingly realised as vital for effective clinical outcomes. It is evident in the existing literature that when clinicians allow themselves to learn from the skill sets of others, their professional thinking and attitudes are broadened, and their approaches are strengthened. Collaboration and co-working are therefore one of the most effective ways of fostering mutual understanding and successful team working (Miller, 2008).

Working Across Modalities in the Arts Therapies: Creative Collaborations provides a captivating collection of collaborative working examples across the art therapies. While the editors acknowledge that the theme of collaboration has been explored increasingly, they maintain that the subject remains underrepresented in arts therapy literature. The aim of this book is to outline, encourage, and expand interdisciplinary work within the arts therapies and between other psychological and health care disciplines.

The editors, Tasha Colbert, a UK registered dance movement therapist, and Cornelia Bent, a UK registered music therapist, have a wealth of collective experience working in their respective disciplines and hold a shared commitment to working collaboratively. Both Colbert and Bent had worked collaboratively with other arts therapy disciplines and allied health professionals before working together in an acute mental health setting. This experience inspired them to document their work and collate this volume to gain a deeper understanding of cross-modality and transdisciplinary work.

The book is arranged into two parts: 1) cross-modality practice in arts therapies, and 2) transdisciplinary practice and research in the arts therapies. Colbert and Bent define cross-modal practice as art therapists from different modalities working together collaboratively in joint client interventions. The term transdisciplinary practice in this volume is used to refer to an art therapist collaborating with a practitioner from a different discipline such as psychology or systemic family therapy.

The preliminary pages include contributor biographies and a foreword by Tessa Watson. In the introduction, Colbert and Bent detail the aims, terminology, and definitions of art therapy modalities represented in the book and provide an overview of the chapters. The book comprises 13 chapters which detail a variety of collaborations in a range of settings, by a broad range of qualified and experienced arts therapists. The therapy modalities represented include dance movement psychotherapy, music therapy, dramatherapy and art therapy. The chapters provide international examples from the UK, USA and Syria, across a range of clinical areas including mental health, learning disability, and forensic settings. Examples of work with refugee children and veterans recovering from homelessness are also included. Illustrations are used throughout the book to provide specific working examples and illuminate the text.

This book adds to a growing body of literature and highlights the importance of collaboration to best meet the needs of the subject client group. Diverse examples detail the methods used by art therapy practitioners when developing effective cross-modal and transdisciplinary approaches to achieve effective outcomes for complex groups and hard-to-reach individuals. Many of the chapters provide description of the process taken by practitioners to combine their specialities, and the professional outcomes achieved by doing so. Importantly, the chapters from this book provide insight from the practitioners regarding the benefits and difficulties of working together and how these may be fostered and contained to maintain safe working practice. Several themes emerge from the book, illustrating fundamental professional and client-focussed rationale for collaborative approaches and hence strengthening the validity of the text.

The first theme relates to the new learning that professionals gain through collaborating, and how a deeper understanding of other's modality or profession can be achieved through this process. Collaborating with other modalities and professions aligns therapeutic aims and objectives (Charles and Sanoon, Chapter 7), maximises resources and thinking skills, and provides colleague support (Maguire and Mindang, Chapter 1; Rothwell and Henagulph, Chapter 10; Peacock, Chapter 13). Working collaboratively enables professionals to build on their core skills by illustrating existing differences and de-mystifying roles. This ensures client-focused partnerships and leads to professional trust and respect, and opportunities for new adaptations of the work (Wilson and Rose, Chapter 9; Rothwell and Henagulph, Chapter 10).

It is evident when reading this book that working collaboratively provides professional support for clinicians involved in difficult and challenging work (Maguire and Mindang, Chapter 1; Goodwin and Ramm, Chapter 4; Guney, Atik and Lundmark, Chapter 8; Allen, Chapter 11). Working collaboratively also provides support for clinicians to value the differences and uniqueness of their working methods, and reaffirms their professional value. This is particularly pertinent to arts therapists, who often express that they feel the need to prove themselves professionally (Downie and Witshire, Chapter 6). However, working collaboratively requires specific skills and poses several professional risks,

including exposure of professional self, helplessness, projection, transference and splitting (Rothwell and Henagulph, Chapter 10; Matthews, Chapter 11). The importance of taking collaborative approaches to joint post session debriefing and supervision is paramount to gain a deeper understanding of underlying issues related to the work.

A third theme relates to the benefits of cross-modal and transdisciplinary approaches for clients. Working collaboratively offers a reflective function for practitioners, which ensures flexibility and adaptability to client needs (Rothwell and Henagulph, Chapter 10) and provides a deeper understanding of and insight into clients (Charles and Sanoon, Chapter 7). Multi-modal approaches offer increased creative opportunities to express a wide range of feelings through alternative modes of expression (Maguire and Mindang, Chapter 1; Burrell and Cohen, Chapter 2; Colbert and Bent, Chapter 3; Downie and Wiltshire, Chapter 6) and provide a multi-sensory approach to trauma which allows for individual client preferences (Guney, Atik and Lundmark, Chapter 8). Further, an integrated approach provides the development of verbal and non-verbal narratives for clients, which enables a strong containing and reflective therapeutic space (Burrell and Cohen, Chapter 2; Wilson and Rose, Chapter 9).

The importance of relationship forms an integral part of the work described in the book. Modelling a joint therapeutic relationship of secure and trusting attachment is a fundamental aspect of and reason for collaborating. Several authors detail how a collaborative approach provides opportunities to model aspects of relationship to clients. This includes making associations, cooperation and establishing shared aims (Butte and Whelan, Chapter 5; Charles and Sanoon, Chapter 7), mutual respect (Matthews, Chapter 12), the broadening of interpersonal skills (Charles and Sanoon, Chapter 7), and the fostering of stability and empowerment (Peacock, Chapter 13). Client trust can be gained by modelling a secure, trusting and containing relationship (Allen, Chapter 11), which also provides the opportunity to enhance the 'stretching' of client emotions, sensations, thoughts and imagination by taking risks in a new modality (Downie and Wiltshire, Chapter 6; Colbert and Bent, Chapter 3). The collaborative partnership also provides opportunities to model diversity and the acceptance of differences to clients, and the possibility to reflect on this in the therapy space (Wilson and Rose, Chapter 9; Matthew, Chapter 12), as well as highlighting the value of working alongside clients as 'non-experts' (Colbert and Bent, Chapter 3).

Arts therapists share a common understanding of the value of creative processes and psychotherapeutic foundations in their respective approaches. Whilst I appreciate that the book concentrates on therapies with a psychotherapeutic focus, I would have welcomed a possible expansion of the transdisciplinary section to include contributions from other allied health disciplines. Such collaborations highlight similar themes to those described in this text but broaden the exposure of creative art therapy programmes within the wider mainstream health care framework. One last thought relates to the focus on collaborative examples with adult populations in the book. I would love to have read further examples of collaborative approaches with children and those in later stages of life to provide a comprehensive perspective on the subject. Perhaps these thoughts may offer inspiration for another edition.

Working Across Modalities in the Arts Therapies: Creative Collaborations highlights collaborations between professions with a psychotherapeutic focus and illustrates the ways in which creative mediums can be combined for effective outcomes. As such, this adds innovative and exciting breadth

to the existing literature as the reader learns how these related disciplines can engage in new learning from each other. The book is a timely addition to the arts therapy literature in a climate where interdisciplinary engagement is essential and is part of student education. It is an engaging read, detailing a variety of examples of creative collaborations across a range of arts therapies and psychotherapeutic professions. The book will resonate strongly with experienced practitioners who have an interest in working collaboratively, and will provide insight and inspiration to arts therapists and related professionals who may be considering working collaboratively, or those currently in training.

REFERENCES

- Miller, C., (2008). Music therapy and collaborative working in adult mental health: Creative connections and destructive splits. In K. Twyford & T. Watson (Eds.), *Integrated teamworking: Music therapy as part of transdisciplinary and collaborative approaches* (pp. 124-153). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.