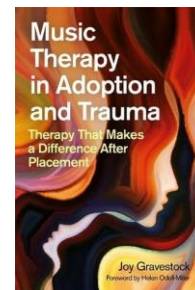


BOOK REVIEW

Music therapy in adoption and trauma: Therapy that makes a difference after placement (Gravestock)

Reviewed by Francis Myerscough

Polaris Children's Services & Phoenix Song Project, UK



Title: Music therapy in adoption and trauma: Therapy that makes a difference after placement **Author:** Joy Gravestock **Publication year:** 2021
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REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

Francis Myerscough is an HCPC-registered music therapist with experience working with children, young people, and families in adoption support, education and local children's services settings, currently as a therapist in a harmful sexual behaviour service for young people. Francis is the founder of Phoenix Song Project, a music therapy project for trans and non-binary people, which they now co-manage with others from trans and non-binary communities. Francis is passionate about trauma-informed therapy work, biopsychosocial integration, and about communities' voice and leadership in shaping the structures and systems that support their health and wellbeing. [fmyerscoughmusictherapist@gmail.com]

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As a single-author volume, this book represents a first in the field of music therapy and adoption. Joy Gravestock's writing is engaging and she maintains clear intelligibility without scrimping on the precision of specialist and theoretical language when appropriate.

The prologue and first four chapters provide detailed context, illuminating various aspects of the adoption landscape in which music therapy takes place. In the prologue, Gravestock describes the professional background that led her to this field, and introduces Weick's (1995) sensemaking as one theory that has informed her approach to research involving lived experience. The first chapter concentrates on the value of music therapy as a non-verbal modality when working with pre-verbal trauma. Central to what the book adds to the field, Gravestock next examines the contemporary adoption process in the UK, and the wider narratives around this. In the third chapter Gravestock outlines the theoretical background to her practice. She names a broad base of influences, and gives particular attention to writings by Stern (1998, 2004), Winnicott (1971), and Bion (1984). This chapter may be particularly useful for therapists without experience working in adoption support, as the links with these authors could aid in orienting the reader if they are already familiar with this psychodynamic literature. The last contextual chapter outlines the history and structure of the Adoption Support Fund, a UK national framework which funds therapeutic work for adoptive families. This is a thoughtful inclusion that will equip therapists with the practical knowledge to fund therapy work in the area. The historical overview also enriches the reader's understanding of how experiences of adoption have changed over time.

Clinical vignettes are embedded throughout the volume, but become more prominent after this extensive contextual exploration. Chapters explore referral presentations, therapy approach, how music therapy supports the family and what changes might be seen, the therapist's lived experience of the work, and how music therapy provision may be co-constructed with the adoption community. Gravestock also includes a collection of clinical vignettes related to key themes, and a chapter dedicated to a single case-study. The latter is welcomed for examining an example over a longer period, adding further context to the micro-moments encapsulated in shorter vignettes.

I was particularly interested to read the chapter considering the significance of therapists' lived experiences, reflecting my own interest in what therapist subjectivity brings to our work. Gravestock presents a strong argument for the relevance of this factor, alongside acknowledging the pitfalls we may encounter and potential solutions for these. This is one chapter where I wished for further examples, and for a more detailed analysis of those presented; what might be going on that enables a child to recognise of their therapist that "you have scars too"? At the same time, neither I nor any other reader is entitled to details of personal significance that the author chooses to keep private. Developing my own practice I carefully consider what areas of subjectivity I share with whom, how, and why; I am curious how others weigh these decisions, but also aware of the sensitivity of speaking about therapist subjectivity that can make speaking of it at all seem to be off-limits.

I have described the chapter exploring the process and narrative of adoption as central to what this volume adds to the field for two reasons. Firstly, the link with broader adoption narratives including but not limited to social care, legal, and media narratives is invaluable in joining up our understanding of the therapeutic work with broader lived experiences of the adoption community on a socio-cultural level; these narratives are keys families are given to understanding themselves, and while they illuminate some parts of lived experience, they obscure or ignore others. Second is the extent to which Gravestock examines the particular loss inherent to adoption, the loss of birth family, and the totality of this as encapsulated in adoption law; these people are no longer your family. Many previous texts that explore music therapy, adoption, and trauma employ a wider focus, such as attachment, complex or developmental trauma, work with families, and inclusion of foster and kinship care as well as adoption. With these broader, less adoption-specific reference points to hand, it is relatively easy for many of us to identify some point of shared experience with adoptees. Personally, I have found it much harder to name where our experiences differ in a way that is both clear and acknowledges the magnitude of said experiences. Having read this book, I feel better equipped to recognise when and how experiences differ. It is a valuable addition to my understanding of the children and young people I work with.

While Gravestock makes clear the greater specificity of her writing, I was nevertheless surprised not to find references to writing by other contemporary UK music therapists working and publishing in the field, if in a broader sense. Two examples are Hendry and Hasler (2017), and Swanick and Jacobsen (2019). For readers new to music therapy work in the adoption field this context would have been useful. While those readers with more familiarity will be able to make our own comparisons and note where authors meet and where they differ, I would have been interested to read a Gravestock's view of this professional landscape. In the spirit of fairness, I feel it is worth noting that this lacuna appears to be shared by the other authors given as examples. I have no wish to cause conflict, and I wonder what valuable insight we may gain through dialogue between styles; my initial question would be if we

can establish a fuller understanding of what works for different people in different circumstances. Following on, what modulations might therapists make in light of this on a case-to-case basis?

Overall, I found this a remarkably enjoyable read. Gravestock makes clear links with existing theory, provides a thorough grounding across several contexts underpinning adoption experience, and challenges the reader to better identify, and understand the variety of parallels and divergences in experiences of therapist and client.

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