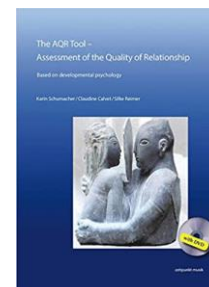


BOOK REVIEW

The AQR tool – Assessment of the quality of relationship (Schumacher & Calvet)

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Title: The AQR tool – Assessment of the quality of relationship **Authors:** Karin Schumacher & Claudine Calvet **Publication year:** 2019
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REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

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This book refers to the most updated English version of the Assessment of the Quality of Relationship (AQR) tool. The AQR is a tool that helps assess the quality of the relationship between the client and the therapist. The assessment can answer whether the therapist's intervention is appropriate to the client's stage of development from a developmental psychology point-of-view. The AQR is applied mainly to children with autism spectrum disorder. There is a further development of the AQR for use with people with severe multiple disabilities, dementia, borderline personality disorder, and in psychosomatic medicine and neurorehabilitation. This tool was created in partnership between music therapist Karin Schumacher and psychologist Claudine Calvet.

The current version of the AQR (published in 2019) also involves collaboration with music therapist Silke Reimer, who provided the opportunity to further explore studies related to the attunement phenomena between client and music therapist. It is possible to see a substantial improvement in terms of theoretical development as well as minor modifications that facilitate the application and understanding of the AQR when comparing the current version to previous versions published in 1999 (Schumacher & Calvet-Kruppa) and 2007 (Schumacher & Calvet).

The current version of the AQR provides more detail on the construction of the instrument, as well as on the theoretical background that supports the rationale as well as understanding of different concepts and developmental milestones of the tool. These developments facilitate the interpretation of the different scores for each scale. This current version contains several excellent features, including a detailed manual on applying and interpreting the different AQR scales and scores, and a DVD with a book that contains the forms for the four scales of the AQR. The DVD includes video

examples (referring to different cases) to explain how to interpret the four AQR scales and their scores considering the different levels (modus) of the quality of the relationship.

One of the main differences in this new book version is the graphic visualization of successful attunement, which is assumed when both child and therapist act on the same relational modus (level of the quality of the relationship) referred to as an AQR match, which is rated as 1 = match or 0 = mismatch. Also, the book discusses essential considerations about the AQR training. The book does not state whether the training is offered in languages other than German, nor does it explain clearly how a therapist would apply or interpret the four AQR scales without the training. The authors clarify that the training is essential but do not detail precisely how therapists are limited in using the AQR if they do not take the training.

As with any manual or guide that includes a music therapy assessment tool, there are strengths and weaknesses (just a few points to consider) in this current version of the AQR. One of the main strengths of this book is the accessible language used to explain the assessment tool and each of the scales and instrument scores. The book lays out a chronological order of contents that allows the reader to become familiar with the instrument in general, going through a deepening of the different concepts related to the construct "relationship quality" to analyse the different scales more through their respective scores. As the Modi (levels of the quality of relationship) are practically the same for all the scales, the music therapist has a more direct understanding of what will be assessed, analysed (explored) and interpreted (understood). Similarly, the accompanying videos provide explicit knowledge of each Modus with regards to their interpretation in applying the different scales. In other words, there are specific ways to interpret each modus when considering a particular AQR scale. All assessment tools in music therapy should have videos that explain each score variation within the same scale. The videos on the DVD are straightforward and clear in what they intend to communicate to the reader. Another strength is the proposal of graphical visualizations for each of the different scales, which would allow a clear and objective analysis of what was assessed throughout the application of the AQR.

A few possible weaknesses include the absence of data on the instrument's validity and reliability, the lack of a case description applying the AQR, and the difficulty of interpreting the existence of attunement by the match or mismatch of music therapist and client in the same Modus. The authors do not clearly state information on reliability or evidence of the validity of the AQR compared to other assessment instruments. Although the studies by Mössler et al. (2019; 2020) were underway at the time of publication of the book, it is important to note that these are probably the first studies to show any evidence for the use of the AQR in comparison to other instruments. Validity evidence is fundamental to verify the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical foundations support the appropriateness and adequacy of any conclusions drawn from the use of a particular type of assessment tool (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014).

Regarding the absence of a case study, it would be interesting to see how the AQR is applied in practice, with examples of possible difficulties and strengths in applying the instrument to facilitate concrete insights on how the tool is used. Some assessment tool manuals such as the Individualized Music Therapy Assessment Profile (IMTAP) (Baxter et al., 2007) and Music Therapy Social Skills Assessment Documentation Manual (MTSSA) (Rook et al., 2014) include different cases to exemplify the use of the assessment tools.

One last gap I identified refers to the interpretation of attunement by the presence of a match or mismatch considering the level of the quality of relationship presented by the music therapist and client. According to Mössler et al. (2020), the interpretation of a match or mismatch concerning the different Modi in the AQR scales might reduce the understanding concerning the attunement between music therapist and client. In this study, Mössler et al. (2020) showed that in less than 50% of the assessed sessions, 101 children with autism spectrum disorder aged 4-7 years had a match where music therapist and client were in the same Modus. Thus, the understanding that attunement only happens in this situation of "matching the same modus" might reduce or underestimate the relevance of the AQR scores. Agreeing with Mössler et al. (2020), I understand that being in the same Modus (level of the quality of the relationship) does not represent a certainty about the level of attunement. The therapist may be experiencing a different Modus than the client because the therapist might have a clear intention or objective to help the client achieve different kinds of interactions or responses. In this example, mismatching could potentially be needed. Thus, the criticism here is not in comparing the level of relationship between the client and the music therapist but in how this comparison is interpreted.

In summary, I strongly recommend music therapists who serve clients with different neurodevelopmental conditions use this book as well as all those interested in familiarising themselves with an assessment tool in music therapy that presents a consistent and high standard of quality. This standard of quality is reflected in the construction and presentation of the instrument, in the characterization and detailing of the construct presented, and in the explanation of how to apply and understand the different scores of the scale. Also, this book is recommended because it presents relevant possibilities for both quantitative and qualitative analyses and interpretations regarding the various qualities of the therapeutic relationship in the music therapy process.

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