

Institution: Anglia Ruskin University (ARU)		
Unit of Assessment: Unit 33		
Title of case study: Improving music therapy for children with autism and their families by developing and embedding an innovative interactive approach.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Amelia Oldfield	Professor of Music Therapy	01.09.1996-17.09.2019
Helen Odell-Miller	Professor; Director of Cambridge Institute for Music Therapy Research (CIMTR)	01.08.1994-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact Research into music therapy with children with autism and their families at ARU's Cambridge Institute for Music Therapy Research (CIMTR) has enhanced clinical practice through the development of Oldfield's specific interactive approach used by her with over 160 families. Music therapists trained by her (over 500) in the UK, Europe, the USA, Canada, and Australasia are using this new approach with families. Oldfield's 2017 documentary Operation Syncopation, directed by an adult on the autistic spectrum, who previously had music therapy with Oldfield as a child, has impacted music therapists and the general public, improving life for children with autism and their families.		
2. Underpinning research There are two areas of Oldfield's research which have developed simultaneously and have contributed to the effects of, and impact made by, music therapy with children with autism and their families. These are: "music therapy with families" and "music therapy with children with autism". Music therapy with families Before 2001, music therapists did not often work with children with their families in the room. When Oldfield faced a clinical dilemma of a two-year-old boy with autism who refused to enter the room without his mother, work started with both the mother and the child. This clinical work was so successful that it led to the development of a new music therapy approach, developed through several ARU research investigations (Ref 1, pp.157-185 and Ref 2, pp.123-156). Oldfield showed that through including parents in the music therapy room, progress achieved in music therapy sessions generalised more quickly to other settings. Through mainly non-verbal musical exchanges, parents could be supported to rediscover the fun of playing with their child and regain confidence in their parenting skills. In 2008, Oldfield & Flower edited and wrote the first book about music therapy with families, bringing together publications by 11 music therapists (Ref. 3). Since then, Oldfield has contributed a chapter to the Oxford University textbook of music therapy (Ref. 4) and a chapter to an international textbook on the subject (Ref. 5). These recent texts reflect a development of the approach with Oldfield now supporting families in small group settings, and increasingly using video feedback from music therapy		

sessions to review the work with parents and enable them to identify strengths in their musical interactions with their children.

Music therapy with children with autism

Music therapy with children with autism is not a 'new' subject and has been written about since the 1960s. Oldfield, however, has developed a specific interactive music therapy approach with children with autism, which improves children's communication and resilience. Between 2001 and 2004, Oldfield carried out research at ARU, investigating clinical work with young children with autism and their parents (Ref.1). Oldfield demonstrated that her music therapy approach with children with autism was characterised by eight specific points: the importance of using music to motivate children to be engaged, providing clear structures within the music making, the therapist alternating between following and initiating, using improvised music making as basic forms of communicative exchanges, being aware of issues of control in musical improvisations, combining music with movement, incorporating play and drama, and working in partnership with parents in the room (Ref 1). In another project, Oldfield trialled music therapy diagnostic procedures for primary-aged children with a possible diagnosis of autism. She demonstrated that her newly developed Music Therapy Diagnostic Assessment (MTDA) could serve a useful and distinctive purpose in helping the psychiatric team to diagnose children with autism (Ref. 2).

Between 2012 and 2016, the ARU Music therapy team led the UK arm of the international TIME-A RCT trial, with Odell-Miller as Principal Investigator and Oldfield as Clinical Supervisor. Music therapy treatment given once or three times a week was compared to standard care without music therapy. 364 children were recruited to the trial in total, including 120 from the UK, making this the largest non-pharmacological RCT investigation into autism (Ref. 6). The music therapy approach investigated was 'improvisational music therapy', a global term, which also describes Oldfield's work. As a result, new research and knowledge were generated by researchers at ARU on how music therapy helps develop the resilience of children with autism, and how parent counselling alongside music therapy helps parents with children living with autism.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Ref 1, 2, 3, and 5 available from the HEI on request.

1. Oldfield, A. (2006a) *Interactive Music Therapy, A Positive Approach – Music therapy at a Child Development Centre*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
2. Oldfield, A. (2006b) *Interactive Music Therapy in Child and Family Psychiatry – Clinical practice, research and teaching*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
3. Oldfield, A. and Flower, C. eds. (2008) *Music Therapy with Children and their Families*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN 9781843105817. (Submitted to UoA35 in REF2014).
4. Oldfield, A. (2016) Family approaches in music therapy with young children in: *The Oxford Handbook of Music Therapy*, edited by Jane Edwards, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 158-175. DOI: [10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199639755.013.25](https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199639755.013.25)
5. Oldfield, A. (2017) Music Therapy with Families in a Psychiatric Children's Unit in: S. Lindahl Jacobsen and G. Thompson (eds) *Models of Music Therapy with Families*, Jessica Kingsley Publications, pp. 72-91.
6. Bieleninik, Ł., Geretsegger, M., Mössler, K., Assmus, J., Thompson, G., Gattino, G., Elefant, C., Gottfried, T., Igliozi, R., Muratori, F., Suvini, F., Kim, J., Crawford, M., Odell-Miller, H., Oldfield, A., Casey, Ó., Finnemann, J., Carpentier, J., Park, A., Grossi, E., Gold, C. (2017) Effects of Improvisational Music Therapy versus Enhanced Standard Care on Symptom Severity Among Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The TIME-A randomized controlled trial, *JAMA* 318(6) pp. 525-535. DOI: [10.1001/jama.2017.9478](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2017.9478); in REF2.

4. Details of the impact

Oldfield's music therapy approach for children with autism and their families has had an impact on the families receiving treatment, the music therapists providing the treatment, and the training of music therapists. The approach was recognised by the profession in 2014 when Oldfield was awarded the first Clinical Impact Award for Music Therapy by the World Federation of Music Therapy.

Introducing Oldfield's music therapy approach with children with autism to families in the Cambridge area

Between August 2013 and 2019, Oldfield successfully used her approach in her NHS work with around 80 families. Three music therapy colleagues in the Cambridge area who trained with Oldfield and received clinical supervision from her, have each treated similar numbers of families using this approach during that time.

In 2017, following treatment using Oldfield's approach, a father of a 5-year-old boy told us: "I can't imagine having made this kind of progress, even in other areas of his development without having had this sort of experience and this kind of opportunity ... It's so clear that he responds well to this kind of therapy. You really see him coming alive during these sessions" (Source 1).

In 2019, a mother of a 5-year-old boy wrote: "He enjoyed the sessions so much and they have helped with his speech and communication. We are able to communicate with him better and hearing him sing is a joy!" (Source 1).

Oldfield's music therapy diagnostic assessments (MTDAs) have been continuously used at the Croft Child and Family Psychiatry Unit (Cambridge), impacting on multidisciplinary overall diagnostic assessments given to all the children attending the unit. Between August 2013 and 2017, Oldfield carried out MTDAs on approximately 120 children at the Croft Child and Family Unit in Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT), and her successor continues to carry them out up to the present day. MTDAs improve service provision, with many children finding it easier to engage with MTDAs than with conventional standardised assessments (Source 2).

Research assistants employed by ARU in projects described in section 2, have used Oldfield's clinical approach and their work has led to the creation, in 2017 and 2018, of five new music therapy posts, in Cambridge and Peterborough, enabling more families to benefit from treatment.

Transfer of skills and competencies

Oldfield's work has impacted music therapy by enhancing music therapy clinical practice and influencing the teaching of music therapy students both in the UK and internationally.

Between August 2013 and 2019 Oldfield's approach has been taught to around 105 MA music therapy students at ARU. Music therapists have commented: "In adopting Amelia's 'positive' and supportive approach [...] we have received much appreciative feedback from families [...] [and] have secured additional funding in order to continue the music therapy intervention for families." (Source 3.a) "Her book [...] inspired and encouraged me in the development of my own music therapy approach and [...] the development of the music therapy service at the Child Development Centre" (Source 3.b).

Oldfield's music therapy training DVD about this music therapy approach, produced at ARU, has been on YouTube since 30/07/14, and has been viewed 93,916 times (15/12/2020) (Source 4).

All seven UK music therapy training courses use Oldfield's books and videos on music therapy with autism, and music therapy with families, in their teaching (Source 5). One course head has

observed “Oldfield’s approach has had a significant impact on the way in which Music Therapists in the UK conceptualise and deliver music therapy interventions in these clinical areas” (Source 4). Another notes “her approach to working with children with autism and their families shape[s] how we encourage music therapy learners to practise and think about their work. This in turn influences the work that they have gone on to do” (Source 5). A third describes Oldfield’s publications as the ‘core of the UK literature in this area’ noting ‘our teaching in this area makes extensive use of these publications’ (Source 5).

Between August 2013 and 2019, Oldfield taught her approach to approximately 315 music therapy students at Montpellier University, France, and 130 students in Würzburg University, Germany. The heads of these courses have confirmed the importance of her research and teaching in her specialist areas of autism and families (Source 6).

Between August 2013 and 2020 Oldfield ran and planned 9 specialist workshops and courses on music therapy with children with autism and their families for music therapy students and professionals in Singapore, Poland, Spain, Italy, Taiwan, Thailand, Canada and Finland. Testimonials indicate that her work has had an impact on both music therapists and their clients in these countries, becoming embedded both in education and practice in the field (Source 7). They describe Oldfield’s research as ‘extraordinary and influential’, ‘a cornerstone of the [Finnish] program’, as being ‘highly inspiring’ and ‘having influenced Polish music therapy in many contexts and aspects’. Other testimonies confirmed that Oldfield’s research has ‘widely impacted the music therapy work for children with autism and their families in Singapore’; that it has influenced ‘all Taiwanese music therapists, many of whom have incorporated her Music Therapy Diagnostic Assessments (MTDAs) and her family approach in their practice’; and that ‘many music therapists in Finland have been using Amelia’s approach and methods with children and autism and with families for the past 7 years’ (Source 7).

One director from Ontario, stated that Oldfield’s “‘Integrative Music Therapy approach’ is exceptionally well received here in Canada and has garnered wide acceptance of our music therapy community.” Similarly, the head of a music therapy training programme in Poland, commented that Oldfield’s research-led contributions “undoubtedly enhanced the development of music therapy” in Poland (Source 7). An assistant professor at Khon Kaen University, Thailand explained how “children’s communication skills have improved” as a result (Source 8).

Between August 2013 and 2020, Oldfield remotely supported her Thai colleague, to develop her music therapy practice with children with autism and their families, and to teach students on this subject. As a result, Khon Kaen University has set up their first MA music therapy training course, due to start in 2021 (Source 8).

A new documentary film, changing understandings of music therapy

In 2017 Oldfield interviewed the families of the children with autism who received music therapy between 2000 and 2002, creating a full-length documentary film: “Operation Syncopation” (Source 9). The film director was a patient who received treatment from Oldfield as a child. The film received the Silver Punt Audience Award for Best Documentary at the 2017 Cambridge Film Festival and, in 2018 and 2019, was shown at six International music therapy conferences, and cinemas in Montpellier and Katowice. Subtitles in Mandarin, Thai, French, German, Spanish, Polish and English are available.

In 2019, an evaluation of the film was made by 109 viewers, in Italy, Slovenia, Denmark and Spain. 90% indicated that they would change the way they worked with children with autism; 70% wrote that their view of autism had changed; and 92% said they would recommend the film to others (Source 10). The film has been available on YouTube since 06/09/2019 and has been viewed 4,847 times (15/12/2020). Along with Oldfield’s training videos, the film (Source 4) has been cited by course leaders (Sources 5, 6 and 7), as an important resource for teaching music therapists. As one commented: “There are very few such resources that are suitable for

supporting the development of knowledge and skills in this applied discipline, so these are especially valuable” (Source 5).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Parents’ feedback from 2017 and 2019.
2. Testimonials: from Croft Child and Family Unit in Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust.
3. Testimonials: from music therapists working with child development centre families.
4. Training videos: Links to training videos available on YouTube since 2014.
5. Evidence from UK music therapy training courses: testimonials and screen shots from course documents.
6. Testimonials: from course leaders in France and Germany.
7. Testimonials: from music therapists in Canada, Singapore, Poland, Spain, Taiwan and Finland.
8. Testimonial from assistant professor at Khon Kaen University, Thailand.
9. Operation Syncopation; Long Term Follow-Up Study on Previously Successful Music Therapy Interventions, full length documentary available on YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaVtUHOOk_RM
10. Results of 2019 evaluation of Operation Syncopation film.