

Music, Health and Policy

Child-focused and music therapy-based health research to meet European challenges for migrant minors – a qualitative field study



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Abstract

Recent research indicates that music can promote mental health, welfare and human rights of minor migrants. Since music is a resource that is available across contexts, even in situations of poverty, disadvantage and disability, it can be a significant resource for health and development. Based on the principles of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, the proposed study will focus particularly on the life world and experiences of minor migrants in the Spanish enclave Melilla in Northern Africa. The aim of the project is:

- A. To learn more about the context of minor migrants in Melilla, including what arts and education activities they have access to and how they experience their own situation.
- B. To learn more about minor migrants' experience of their own coping strategies.
- C. To learn more about how minor migrants experience participation in music and music-related activities.
- D. To develop theoretical concepts and insights based on themes from the three empirical studies.

A selection of child-focused research strategies will be employed, with a focus upon qualitative music therapy, social science, and health research.

The Collaborating Partners

Three research centres will be involved:

1. GAMUT¹ – The Grieg Academy Music Therapy Research Centre (Faculty of Fine Art, Music, and Design).
2. Centre for Research on Discretion and Paternalism (Faculty of Social Sciences)
3. Centre for International Health (CIH) (Faculty of Medicine)

¹ The student will be invited to Grieg Research School for Interdisciplinary Music Studies for PhD training. It will also be possible for the student to visit PhD research training provided the two other centres.

The project builds upon existing collaborative relationships and will build a basis for future expansions of cross-faculty and international networks and collaborative relationships.

Researchers: 1. Viggo Krüger + Brynjulf Stige (Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design), 2. Marit Skivenes (Faculty of Social Sciences), 3. Ingunn M.S. Engebretsen (Faculty of Medicine).

Objectives and Research Foci

Scientific primary objective: To learn from the voices of minor migrants in order to develop a better understanding of how one can develop child-focused policy and arts-based practices, in line with UNCRRC values.

The selected site for the study is the city of Melilla, a Spanish enclave in Morocco and as such a gateway to Europe. Here, a large number of unaccompanied minor migrants find themselves “stuck in limbo” until they turn 18. The project will through head of Department of Social Work/Faculty of Law, associate professor Sagrario Segado, be connected to UNED (The National Distance Education University, Spain).

Secondary Objectives,

- A. To learn more about the context of minor migrants in Melilla, including what arts and education activities they have access to and how they experience their own situation
- B. To learn more about the minor migrants’ experience of their own coping strategies
- C. To learn more about how minor migrants experience participation in music and music-related activities.
- D. To develop theoretical concepts and insights based on themes from the three empirical studies.

The selected PhD student will do a PhD by publication. The secondary objectives A.-C. correspond to the foci of three research articles. The secondary objective D. will be central to the extended critical introduction (kappe) of the dissertation.

Methods

Qualitative research methods based in a combination of grounded theory and hermeneutic meta-theory will be employed, inspired by arts-based participatory action research (Charmaz, 2006; Flewitt et al, 2018; Jones, et al, 2018; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Yin, 2018). Prolonged participant observation in the setting will be the main research method for article A.

The ethnographic account will include concrete observations as well as appropriate quotations of spontaneous dialogues. Recordings will be used if and when appropriate. Field notes will be used for documentation as well as for development of ideas for the analysis. Reflexivity will be a major requirement in the process, both when it comes to cultural differences, the researcher’s preunderstanding of the context, and the researcher’s role in the setting (Atkinson, 2015; Jerolmack & Khan, 2017). For article B and C, a group of 6-8 minor migrants from the “Nana” described below, provided by our international collaborative partners, will be invited to a series of 4 subsequent focus group events. i) exploration of music therapy-based issues such as music listening, dance or visual arts, ii) exploration of issues through verbal discussion, iii) exploration of issues *through* activities such as dance, song-writing and music making, iv) multi-modal meta-reflections on the process.

Ethical considerations: Standard procedures for ethical approval will be adhered to. The population in question is vulnerable, so ethical challenges in the research process will be monitored very carefully. All researchers in the project have extensive experience working with sensitive data and vulnerable individuals.

Each Collaborating Partner’s Contribution to the Proposed Project

The collaborating partners will contribute by linking perspectives from music therapy, human rights, and global mental health.

1. *GAMUT* investigates relationships between music and health in diverse contexts. The centre is in the international frontline in music therapy research. Several studies conducted by *GAMUT* researchers have focused upon the experiences and the human rights of young people in challenging situations (e.g. Helle-Valle et al., 2017; Krüger & Stige, 2016; Roaldsnes, 2017).

2. *Centre for Research on Discretion and Paternalism* has a large portfolio on children's rights and participation (e.g. Archard & Skivenes 2009; Magnussen & Skivenes 2015; Skivenes, 2018). Through the centre's international networks, the selected PhD student will be provided with support from *The European Research Centre in Policies and Action on Minors and Migration* (CEIPAMM/ERCPAMM). The support will consist of: **a.** help regarding possible funding and accommodation of the student when visiting Melilla/UNED², **b.** recruitment of participants from "Nana," a non-profit association in Melilla, providing arts-based activities and training for minor migrants from North Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

3. *Centre for International Health (CIH)* is doing research, teaching and capacity building in Global health in close collaboration with partners. The main focus of the work is on poorer populations and inequity, which is central to the proposed project

The Global Challenges Addressed by the Project

The project focuses upon the global challenges of migration, health, and inequality. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals address both migration, inequality and health, directly and indirectly (UN SDG, 2016).

Minor migrants constitute an especially vulnerable group of migrants, and their situation represents an important human right challenge for contemporary states and societies (Majumder, Vostanis, Karim & O'Reilly, 2018). It is well established that young people in this group typically experience severe and complex stress factors, suffer from numerous somatic health conditions and mental health challenges. Unaccompanied minors are particularly vulnerable (Chase, Rezaie & Zada, 2019; O'Higgins, Ott & Shea, 2018).

Migration is linked to democratic challenges, identity, human rights and legal issues. According to The UN Refugee Agency, the number of people displaced from their homes worldwide came at a record rate in 2019, and migration is one of the main global challenges of our time (United Nations, 2019).

How the Project is Related to the Research Activities of the Supervisors

Associate professor Viggo Krüger has been a pioneer of music therapy and child welfare practice in Norway, and his PhD showed that young people living in foster- and residential care, including unaccompanied minor refugees, are motivated by music therapy activities and able to use this service as an arena for participation (Krüger, 2012). Continued post doc research conducted by Krüger has demonstrated that music therapy can help adolescents in the child welfare system both emotionally and socially, *and* nurture processes of citizen participation (Krüger, Nordanger & Stige, 2017). These qualitative studies are supported by reviews of the evidence in the area of music therapy and adolescents (Gold et al., 2018).

Professor Brynjulf Stige is the leader of POLYFON Knowledge Cluster for Music Therapy, which links user-involved research and knowledge-informed practice development. His own research concentrates on qualitative, participatory, and community-oriented methods.

Professor Marit Skivenes is director of Centre for Research on Discretion and Paternalism, and she has numerous publications on children's rights, developing the theoretical

² In addition, the student will be guided in applying for funding from POLYFON (*GAMUT's* knowledge cluster for music therapy), Grieg Foundation, Trond Mohn Foundation, and GC Rieber foundations.

understanding of children’s participation and child centrim, as well as examining how children are participating in public administrative decision-making proceedings.

Professor Ingunn Marie S. Engebretsen is leading the research group Global Mental health and has a strong interest in child health. She has been involved in child health studies embracing child growth, development and mental health for almost two decades with a strong focus on Africa.

How the Collaboration Builds upon Existing Collaborative Relationships

The proposed project builds upon existing collaborative relationships in multiple ways.

The two GAMUT researchers Viggo Krüger and Brynjulf Stige have co-authored several research articles (Krüger & Stige, 2015, Krüger & Stige, 2016; Krüger, Nordanger & Stige, 2018, Krüger, Bolstad & Stige, 2016) focusing on music therapy, human rights, and community participation.

Viggo Krüger and GAMUT/the Grieg Academy have collaborated with Marit Skivenes and the Department of administration and organization theory about seminars, conferences, excursions, and applications.

Ingunn Marie S. Engebretsen and Brynjulf Stige are currently co-supervising a UiB-registered PhD student focusing on the qualitative study of psychosis and the use of non-medication treatment in Norway. The research is multi-disciplinary, embracing provider and user perspectives in addition to having a strong expert by experience involvement.

How the Proposed Project Contributes to UoB’s Research on Global Challenges

To the existing UoB research on global mental health, human rights, and young people’s participation in challenging situations, this project adds and integrated the dimension of arts-based practice. The relevance of doing so is supported by previous research (Andemicael, 2011; Rubesin, 2016), including studies that indicate that participation in groups can help minor migrants cope better with everyday challenges such as attending school (Ahonen & Desideri, 2014; Zharinova-Sanderson, 2004), and that work on cultural identity might be particularly relevant (Marsh, 2012; Storsve, Westbye & Ruud, 2010). There is also evidence suggesting that young people use music as an arena not only for cultural, but also democratic participation (Comte, 2016; Krüger & Stige, 2016).

To integrate the dimension of arts-based practice is in line with recent WHO initiatives, including the recent publication of a scoping review of research into the effects of the arts on health and well-being (Fancourt & Finn, 2019).

The theoretical constructs, research foci and methods employed in the proposed project are truly interdisciplinary. This is also in line with WHO’s recent report, which calls for more interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration in this area (Fancourt & Finn, 2019).

Children’s experiences of health-related arts practices are under-researched, and the proposed project aims at contributing with new knowledge about the experiences and perspectives of minor migrants.

Plan for Dissemination

We propose an article-based dissertation with three empirical articles published in international peer-reviewed journals that will suit the objectives outlined above. The PhD student will also be invited to join national and international research conferences in order to present main findings from the study.

	H2020	V2021	H2021	V2022	H2022	V2023
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Grieg research school/planning for data collection and site visit	X	X				
Data collection (site Melilla)		X	X			
A: submitted to Journal of Music Therapy, level 2				X		
B: submitted to Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health, level 2					X	
C: submitted to Nordic journal of music therapy, level 1					X	X
D						X



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