

Music Therapy: A Bridge for Black People to Get into Therapy

by

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Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 3
What Is Therapy	Page 3
History of Music Therapy	Page 5
Music Therapists	Page 6
How Music Therapy Works	Page 8
Representation in Music Therapy/Therapy	Page 11
Effects of Music Therapy	Page 11
Therapy for Black People	Page 13
Music Therapy for Black People	Page 17
Conclusion	Page 20
Acknowledgements	Page 22
Works Cited	Page 23

Introduction

Black people have had a strained relationship with therapy for a long time. Music therapy appears to be the best outlet for Black people to have in approaching therapy. This paper explores the gap in research surrounding music therapy and Black people, the barriers to access for Black people, and why music therapy is an ideal form of therapy for Black people. This is particularly true for Black people who continue to hold therapy to such outdated ideas and stereotypes. These thoughts include thinking that attending therapy is a poor reflection onto family or the ones that raised you, that therapy is only for crazy people, and that a stranger cannot help with such deep rooted problems stemming from systemic racism. This appears as income inequality, discrimination, health care neglect, and zone schools to name a few. The time is not taken out or seen as necessary to take out within a day to tend to mental health needs. This all happens while at the same time allowing their mental health to become a very unstable space.

Beyond addressing the questions discussed above, this paper aims to begin to fill in the gap of research of Black people in music therapy. Another goal is to prove how important music therapy is and the dire need there is for Black people to have access to it. There are many hurdles that Black people have to face. Bettering their mental health should not be added onto the list of hurdles. Music therapy, amongst other forms of therapy, should be equal throughout people. There should not be a clear discrimination in music therapy. I believe that Black people need music therapy and I will show you why.

What Is Therapy

According to the American Psychological Association, psychotherapy is the communication that happens between patients and therapists (American Psychological Association). The goal in communicating is to help patients find relief from emotional distress,

seek solutions to problems in their lives, and modify ways of thinking and acting that are preventing them from working productively and enjoying personal relationships (“What Is Psychotherapy?”). It is known that many people in the United States suffer from mental illness, both diagnosed and undiagnosed. That is why psychotherapy exists. It was developed to cater to the different needs that people have in seeking professional help or treatment. In the United States in 2019, 20.6% of adults experienced mental illness which is 1 in 5 people. 5.2% of adults experienced serious mental illness which is 1 in 20 people. 32.9% of Black people sought treatment annually for mental illness (Mental Health By the Numbers). These demographics show not only the state that people's mental health are in, but also how important it is for treatment to be available and easy to access.

Mental illness continues to be on the rise with an increased number of people seeking treatment. Many complain about the type of therapy, the price, and the access to it. Without access to professional help, the severity of said illnesses increases sharply. In the Black community, therapy is often a taboo topic. Though 32.9% of Black people sought treatment annually, as of 2019, there is still a stigma around therapy in the Black community (Mental Health By the Numbers).

It is difficult to talk about therapy within Black families because of the narrative that you keep personal business personal. This idea hinders families from looking at the reality of the situation. Therapy is a necessary form of treatment for people to have access to. It aids in the mental health of individuals and in turn their overall well being. Considering how many people in the United States suffer from mental illness, it is safe to say that therapy is important for people to have access to. Especially, Black people who are constantly under emotional and physical stress in the United States.

History of Music Therapy

Music therapy is defined as the use of musical interventions to improve and maintain someone's overall health. It is clinical and evidence-based. This is just as effective as recreational therapy. In the United States music therapy began being used for medical purposes in the early 1900s. Two primary persons in educating people about music therapy were Willem van de Wall who, "...pioneered the use of music therapy in state-funded facilities and wrote the first 'how to' music therapy text, *Music in Institutions* (1936)" and "E. Thayer Gaston, known as the 'father of music therapy,'" who "was instrumental in moving the profession forward in terms of an organizational and educational standpoint" ("History of Music Therapy"). These men made it possible for music therapy to become recognized as beneficial and included in the education system. After their teachings, it was taken seriously that there were benefits to having music therapy be a topic of study in college.

The development of music therapy in the United States began a little before its publishing. As mentioned in an article titled "A Healing Art":

In this country, music therapy began to develop as a profession during World War I, and in World War II music was incorporated into the Army's Reconditioning Program...the first official recognition of music as a therapeutic aid by the military. And in the 1930s researchers discovered that sounds made by the ancients' drums, rattles and didgeridoos--so-called ultrasound--had huge diagnostic and healing properties (Byron).

The discovery of sounds from instruments to have positive effects on health is a large aspect of what music therapy is. At its core, music therapy is meant for people to feel better. Specifically, in high-stress situations such as the military and in war. Music therapy has since evolved past military use and is available to help the general public.

The focus of music therapy, once it moved away from military personnel, was still White-centered. There were never many Black people allowed access to music therapy. There also were not outlets for Black people to become music therapists either because of the oppression against them. According to one source, “the mental health profession has its roots in the White middle class. There exist huge ethnic and cultural disparities among service providers and their consumers” (Hadley, 121). From the beginning of music therapy, Black people were not in the spaces it was being conducted. This translates directly into the low demographic of Black music therapists and music therapy patients. According to a 2018 survey by the American Music Therapy Association, 88.4% of patients were White while only 1.8% were Black (American Music Therapy Association). This sharp contrast compliments the fact that music therapy is White-dominated and not catered to Black people. Music therapy is a field of therapy that is dominated by White people. The American Music Therapy Association also reported that 1,608 out of 1,818 people that participated in their 2018 membership survey were White. Only 32 participants were Black. The people who participated came from all over the world however, 97% came from the United States (American Music Therapy Association). The drastic difference between White and Black participants in the survey is a clear reflection of the lack of representation of Black people in music therapy.

Music Therapists

Music therapists are people certified in music therapy who use music and music-related activities as a way to treat a patient’s overall health. To become certified in music therapy, one must have a bachelor's degree in music therapy and take an examination that determines their status as, “MT-BC (Music Therapist - Board Certified) which is necessary for professional practice” (“American Music Therapy Association”). In the process of obtaining a bachelor's

degree, one must complete “1200 hours of clinical training and a supervised internship” (“American Music Therapy Association”). Many music therapy schools require an undergraduate degree in music however, some take students with degrees in other fields. This is possible if they have a strong background in music or minored in music alongside a major in something that studies people and/or the mind. This could include psychology, education, or music (“American Music Therapy Association”). Music therapists use psychological methods to not only build rapport with patients, but to also learn more about them. Through learning about the patient, their likes, dislikes, triggers, childhood, etc, the music therapist can cater to them in the most efficient way. Music therapists are there for patients to make their situations not only more bearable, but also help them to change their thoughts on their situation to more positive ones. Places that music therapists can be found working are, “...medical hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, mental health facilities, rehabilitation facilities, senior centers, and retirement homes” (“Getting Started with a Music Therapist Career”). Usually when patients are in a hospital, music therapists are treating a group of people or are called to a patient's bedside.

In all areas, music therapists are quite versatile. They can teach music to the patients as well as work on their mental state because they use psychological methods as well. It would not be a form of therapy if there was not some healing occurring. The music itself can be fun however, the element that makes it therapy is the ties to psychological treatment. In the U.S today, there are “more than 5,000 certified music therapists in the U.S., and more than 70 colleges and universities offer music-therapy programs treating everything from posttraumatic stress disorder to Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's and pain” (Byron). The use of music therapy proves to have physical effects on the body because of the range of health problems that it treats. What you think directly translates into how you feel in other aspects of health. Due to this, music

therapists are able to take better care of patients in multiple areas of their health. They are able to work on the mind and, in turn, the body. With patients participating in music activities of their liking, their health improves and the therapists use that to better help them in the next session.

This is why multiple sessions are significant. The therapist is able to know the patient better and track their overall progress and/or progress towards a specific goal. With that said, there is not a required minimum or maximum number of sessions patients need to have in order to see an improvement in their overall health or reach the goal set for their sessions. When the sessions are completed, the music therapist's goal is for the patient to have health improvements and/or reach the goal or goals that they set at the beginning of therapy. Music therapists work so that patients can have an engaging outlet to not only heal themselves in whatever health aspect, but to also have something entertaining to look forward to. Something to take their minds away from the negative energy that they could be feeding themselves and/or surrounding themselves with.

How Music Therapy Works

Music therapy comes in many different forms such as: an individual or group session, "...drumming, listening to live or recorded music, singing of familiar songs with live or recorded accompaniment, playing instruments, improvising music on instruments of voice, and writing song lyrics" (Craig). These examples of music therapy show the diversity of it which highlights that there is something for everyone. The patients are in control of how their expression will be because they can choose which means of music therapy to utilize. For example, a patient can express that the most significant form of expression to them is writing song lyrics. The therapist will then facilitate the sessions surrounding song writing. Patients also are able to explore multiple mediums as a result.

Music therapy is not something that is specifically only used in hospitals or on patients that are severely ill. This can be for anyone who feels like they need therapy and enjoys the benefits that music can bring. These sessions can also be conducted in a formal or informal space: a hospital, a home, bedside, in a studio, or in an outpatient setting. All of these options are available to make music therapists more accessible to all potential patients. If patients are in a hospital or need bedside music therapy, music therapists can be there for them. If the patient wants to be able to dance, the therapist may work on their confidence so that it feels easier to express themselves. Also, in working on their confidence, the therapist can shape the session to fit the patient's needs to see what music or form of expression would be best to complement their goals.

For patients to have the most benefits long term, it would be helpful to have multiple music therapy sessions. Similar to the way recreational therapy is, building rapport with patients is important. It contributes to the patient and therapist connection being stronger and in turn, makes the session itself flow smoother. The session benefits people in ways that they can and can not see. One session is helpful to patients of course however, more sessions mean expressing more. To build consistency, "a music therapist will then meet with his clients regularly, usually once a week" ("Getting Started with a Music Therapist Career"). This consistency is something that will help the patient to know that there is someone there for them who is working with them through whatever health situation they are going through. Consistency also helps patients to be active in between sessions. Meaning some patients prepare something for the next session or have something they want to work on for the next session. This anticipation can contribute to the engagement that the patient has with music therapy and the positive feeling they will receive from it.

Looking forward to music therapy, something positive, can contribute to the effectiveness. Doing this can change a patient's mindset to be more positive because they can work through bad health by looking forward to expressing themselves and having fun. After a session, "clients are also often encouraged by their music therapists to integrate music into their everyday lives - outside of sessions - as well" ("Getting Started with a Music Therapist Career"). Consistency can also provide patients with the stability that they could be lacking because of the health situation they're going through. In being active in the sessions patients also increase their chances of getting more well-rounded results. Patients are usually dealing with problems that affect their view of their life and music therapy can work through that. This also can give patients hope that they will get through any health problem they are facing. When patients have a therapy session that music is incorporated into, it makes them more responsive and happier despite their current health condition. When a patient is participating in music therapy, they are using parts of their brain and physical body that could have been asleep for a while. Therefore, music therapy is a form of therapy that works on patients from the inside out; it encourages them to improve their health. Music therapy benefits patients from the inside out, even from a physical health perspective. In a 2013 analysis, psychologist Daniel Levitin and his colleagues at McGill University in Montreal found evidence with scientific research to support music's healing properties. One study showed music's anti-anxiety properties. Another study revealed that exposure to music yielded higher levels of immunoglobulin A, an antibody linked to immunity (Landau). This itself shows that music therapy increases a patient's healing from the inside. Another factor that proves this is that in response to music, "a brain structure called the striatum releases the chemical dopamine, associated with pleasure" (Landau). The body naturally has positive reactions to music which makes music therapy the ideal form of therapy.

Representation in Music Therapy/Therapy

Most Black people, even if they are music therapists, are still hugely outnumbered. Meaning that until the representation increases, the demographic of music therapists and music therapy participants will continue to lack tremendously compared to White and non Black peers. I interviewed two Black women, Akeera Peterkin who is a clinical social worker and Imani Wilform who is a family therapist. They both noted the importance of representation. Though neither of them are music therapists, they do utilize aspects of music therapy in their practice. Wilform encourages some of her patients that enjoy music to bring in songs they like or write songs. Sometimes, Wilform brings in songs to prompt patients to share their feelings. Peterkin utilizes all of these methods as well, in addition to poetry. Peterkin sometimes has patients write poetry while she writes with them. Both Wilform and Peterkin utilize music therapy methods because they see the benefit of music. They also note the benefits of working off of what the patient likes. Understanding and catering to the patient is very important in this practice. Both of them said that when patients have a therapist that looks like them and understands the specific experiences that come with being Black, it's more comforting. It creates one less barrier to get past which makes the process of therapists connecting with patients faster and easier. This is spoken about in an article titled, "I'm A Black Psychotherapist And We Need More Of Us". In this article, Tanay Hudson explains how much representation in therapy matters. Hudson says, "a Black therapist and Black client can build a faster therapeutic alliance because of that unspoken connection" (Hudson). Like I mentioned earlier, having a Black therapist for a Black patient creates automatic comfort that could not be there with a non-Black therapist. This is due to the experiences that both the therapist and patient can understand without having to explain.

Effects of Music Therapy

The benefits of music therapy vary among patients. Music therapy allows health improvements to the patient's physical, emotional, and mental well being. It also allows health improvements to their spiritual health. This could mean their belief in something higher than themselves. Music therapy can be used on people of all ages and is not specific to the reason for using or needing it. Some other forms of therapy, such as physical therapy, have the possibility of something physically hurting the patient. Since music therapy is focused on the patient's mind and their engagement in music, they generally are not put in harm's way by far. The psychological benefits of this form of therapy could have physical manifestations. This could be seen in the improvement of someone's physical movement.

A research study conducted on inner-city African American adults tested the effects of vocal music therapy on their chronic pain management. The conclusion of this study was that, "...vocal music therapy may be effective in building essential stepping-stones for effective chronic pain management, namely enhanced self-efficacy, motivation, empowerment, and social engagement" (Bradt). Some music therapy patients need improvement for their physical bodies. As the therapy works on and through them, their health in other areas has the possibility of improving as well. This is because music therapy provides overall health improvement, not just improvement in one area of the patient's health. It works on the brain and its response to the patient's current health situation. An online article explains that "scientists have discovered that listening to music can cause the brain to release less cortisol, a hormone that has been dubbed the 'stress hormone'. On the other hand, listening to music can also cause your brain to release more endorphins, which are attributed to feelings of happiness and satisfaction" ("Getting Started with a Music Therapist Career"). When the brain has more positive chemicals flowing through, it is easier for patients to feel better and/or put whatever negative feelings they have away for a

while. They have something that they can look forward to participating in because music therapy can be a positive experience where patients can express themselves. One patient in an article said, “[music therapy] just brought me to a whole other place in my head. It wasn’t about being miserable in the hospital room. It was about getting better” (Roseen). For this patient, music therapy changed their focus and mindset surrounding their stay in the hospital. Music therapy causes hospital patients to have something to be happy about and not focus solely on their environment.

The goal of the therapy is for the patient's health to improve, but also for them to have a more positive view on their situation and overall life. I have not found sources that have studied the possible negative effects of music therapy. Therefore, music therapy is generally a therapy that keeps patients from getting hurt, at least physically and mentally. They could get hurt emotionally because of releasing emotions that arise through the sessions, however nothing that will harm their livelihoods.

Therapy for Black People

Therapy is a taboo topic in the Black community. Many Black people view therapy as something only for “crazy people.” Therefore, many Black people do not get the help they need and go undiagnosed with mental disorders. According to an article written by Monnica T. Williams Ph.D., “many African Americans with mental disorders are unaware that they have a diagnosable illness at all, and are even less aware that effective psychological treatments exist for their specific problem.” The extent to which not seeking treatment goes is amazing. Even when some Black people seek treatment, they do not talk to anyone about it. Talking to anyone about seeing a therapist makes one look crazy or makes their family look bad (Williams). Black people attending therapy seems like a double edged sword. If they do not attend therapy, the taboo and

unspoken trauma continues. If they do attend therapy, they will be deemed crazy and/or their family will be looked at as there is something wrong with them. It's interesting that there is shame placed on the individuals themselves or their families. In the article "The Reality of Navigating the Mental Health System as a Black Woman," Vanessa Willoughby articulates this from her own perspective. She explains that when she was 13 years old, she had her first serious encounter with depression and anxiety. In thinking about going to a therapist she "felt burdened by an immense sense of shame and embarrassment" (Willoughby). This feeling hinders people like Willoughby from getting the help they need. About her parents, Willoughby included:

At the time, however, both of my parents were susceptible to the cultural stigma surrounding therapy — in their eyes, allowing their teenage daughter to get professional help meant that they had royally failed as parents. My father, a black man who had grown up in the same town I called home, had been instilled with the mantra of "not airing your dirty laundry out in public (Willoughby).

Airing out your dirty laundry here means sharing your personal business with a stranger. This all contributes to Black people feeling like they have to do everything and have all the answers. The idea that no one can help out oneself allows mental health to deteriorate because attention is not provided to it. I believe there should not be blame placed and rather understanding. If there was more understanding to greet a Black person's decision to attend therapy, there could be more attendance and healing throughout the community.

The hesitation of many Black people to attend therapy is supported by the low demographics of Black people in the U.S that are therapy patients. During an interview with Peterkin, she spoke about the low demographics. I asked her if she has seen a lack of treatment towards Black people in this field. Her response was, "Yes. A lack of access to treatment because

of financial and/or healthcare restrictions, no therapists in their area, and very limited black therapists in the therapy field as a whole” (Peterkin). These all contribute to Black people not being able to have the same treatment that other groups of people have, such as White people. She also emphasized the difficulty in people finding a therapist who understands Black and Black queer issues. Oftentimes people have to “Choose between the two to settle on a therapist” (Peterkin). Though Peterkin acknowledges that a Black therapist is not needed all the time for a Black patient to be helped effectively, she does say that “Sometimes it helps because it is one less layer to maneuver in session” (Peterkin). It’s difficult for first time Black patients to attend therapy and even more difficult to open up to someone who they do not feel understands them.

Sometimes Black people feel like, as Peterkin put it, “If you look like me, you can relate to me” (Peterkin). This is why representation and accessibility is important for Black patients. Especially ones attending for the first time. Too many Black people continue to live while suffering from a mental illness. Peterkin echod William’s point of Black people going undiagnosed saying that they are “More inclined to talk with loved ones or a pastor” instead of seeking help from a therapist (Peterkin). These two Black women agree that Black people do need to seek help however, because of the stigma in the community, many people turn to other methods. These methods include drugs, speaking with friends or family, listening to music, etc. These methods can be quite maladaptive. Specifically because the problems are often pushed away instead of being addressed. Which in turn, means there is still a need for addressing trauma and getting professional help.

Peterkin mentioned the understanding that she has towards Black people being hesitant to attend therapy. She said she learned that “In slavery, women were put into psych wards when their children were being taken or when one was running away they were deemed crazy and

needing of psychological help” (Peterkin). This history of the relationship between Black people and psychological treatments has helped cause Black people to feel hesitant to attend therapy of any kind. It has also contributed to Black people not trusting therapists even when they do attend a session. I believe this is a prime reason why representation matters. It helps to ease the distrust Black people have towards therapists and therapy of any form.

As I reflect on the research challenges of this project it makes sense because it was very difficult to find interviewees. I put an advertisement on my instagram story twice calling for any Black therapists, music therapists, and patients to interview for my senior project. One person shared my advertisement the first time around. Both times I received no responses. I was confused because it is a social media platform. People are constantly talking about mental health and sharing a bunch of therapy memes. I expected at least a few Black people who have experienced music therapy and/or therapy to respond. I expected a therapist to see my story less than a participant. I was discouraged when I did not hear anything back after putting it out twice. I have attributed the lack of responses I received to the general lack of comfortability in the Black community to talk about attending therapy. Even those that do attend therapy are not telling everyone.

It is clear to me that there is still a level of discomfort or secrecy Black people have towards speaking about their relationship with therapy. Through the two interviews I was able to get from Black therapists, this discovery was emphasized. Black people are reluctant to share their therapy experiences because of the stigma surrounding therapy in the Black community. This stigma is surprisingly still present despite all of the strides being made by Black people to eliminate the stigma by going to therapy and sharing their experiences and/or becoming therapists. Learning this has put into perspective the lack of responses I received to my instagram

story post. There is still a lot of work to be done when it comes to therapy and the Black community.

Music Therapy for Black People

Music is a universal language. It is already a tool that many Black people use to feel better and heal. Using something that Black people created as a way to heal seems like the easiest therapy route. This way, Black people will be less inclined to think that others are crazy for going to therapy. Music therapy does not fit the classic form of psychotherapy that most people envision. It focuses on the patient through creating, teaching, listening to music, etc. I believe that music therapy could change the narrative around therapy in the Black community.

During an interview with Wilform, I learned that my belief in music therapy for Black people is supported. Wilform currently works with adjudicated youths and their families. The people that she works with are Black and Hispanic. As a Black woman, her role as a therapist to people from her community is important and needed. Prior to the music therapy elements that she includes in her practice today, she had experience with music therapy during an internship. For a year she interned at a mental health hospital in New York City. She worked with two groups; one that utilized music therapy and another that used other forms of therapy that focused on substance abuse and mental health disorders. The demographics of the groups were consistent with my ideas of music therapy. Wilform stated that the music therapy group had White and Asian people while the other group was filled with Black and Hispanic people (Wilform). This is significant because the effectiveness of treatment in the music therapy group was far more successful than the non music therapy group. In the non music therapy group, Wilform reported many coming back and relapsing. This was not the same for the music therapy group. A relapse was rare in their group (Wilform). This difference shows not only the importance of music

therapy, but the disproportionate access that Black and Hispanic people have to music therapy. Music therapy has high success rates in this case and in other studies. I believe that music therapy can lead Black people into therapy and away from therapy being a taboo topic. Specifically, because music therapy is not the typical form of therapy that is thought of. This disassociation can help Black people attend without feeling like they are a “crazy person.”

Wilform has seen first hand the effects on patients having and not having music therapy as treatment. The music therapy participants were more successful. I asked Wilform her perspective on my idea that music therapy could be the way to help Black people get into therapy. She agrees that Black people would greatly benefit from music therapy saying, “Music is something people run to, so music therapy would provide a better advantage for mental health in our community” (Wilform). She also pointed out how there are many resources for non Black people and how we, Black people, need those resources. Especially in the Bronx where there is a huge lack of resources in general (Wilform). Wilform pointed out that due to the lack of resources that Black people receive, there is more incentive to lean on substances to “Escape reality” as a means of healing because we “Do not have the tools we need to heal the traumas” (Wilform). I believe that an increase in accessibility to music therapy would benefit the Black community tremendously.

The success Wilform expressed from the music therapy group that consisted of White and Asian people could be present in the Black community as well. That is on the condition that the same access, resources, and attention is provided to Black people for them to prosper in the mental health sector of their lives. The Black community generally views therapy to be something that is taboo as mental health generally is not taken seriously. This is due to the lack of resources they have to music therapy and the notion that they need to be strong on their own.

Here that implies without professional help. This notion causes Black people, specifically youth and elders, to be more reluctant to try it or search for it because it would not be accepted around them. A source explains this further saying, “from a very young age African American and Latino boys are thought to be tough, conceal pain, hide emotion, and deal with problems on their own” (Hadley 121). This pain translates directly into the lack of attention given to therapy and/or music therapy. From a young age Black youth, boys specifically in this quote, are told to mask their full emotions and to be their own support system. This mentality in the Black community promotes people to feel like they have no one to hear them and cannot express themselves as they want to.

A Black therapist named Dr. Adia Winfrey uses hip-hop and rap music to encourage Black youth to open up during their therapy sessions. She explained how upon playing songs by Tupac Shakur for the youth, “[by the time] the song goes off they're telling me about when they had a gun to their head; or they're telling me about how they were just feeling suicidal” (Shamma). Though therapy is looked down upon in the Black community and music therapy is not easily accessible to them, it is proven that Black people can benefit from music therapy. Therefore, music therapy should be more accessible to Black people as a way to not only change the narrative around therapy, but also to heal internal matters that go unspoken.

Music therapy is a promising gateway to get Black people out of the negative rhetoric surrounding therapy and mental health. Something that Peterkin pointed out was the importance of using whatever was most comfortable to the patient. When working with art or music, she said she tells some patients who are interested to bring in songs that represent each emotion they feel. She uses music as a “Tool for connection and expression” for patients that “Struggle to verbalize in session” (Peterkin). Peterkin’s approach to having the session be led by the patient's needs is

something that all therapists/music therapists should do. Too often, music therapists work with Black patients and automatically bring in rap or hip-hop music to aid them in opening up. This contributes to the narrative that Black people are only able to relate to what is being expressed in these two genres of music that are predominantly Black represented.

In meeting with a librarian at Purchase College to find more sources relating to music therapy and Black people, the ones that came up the most revolved around rap or hip-hop music. This lack of diversity supports the narrative that Black people only relate to rap and hip-hop music in a music therapy sense. Not all Black people go to rap and hip-hop music in their efforts to sooth or understand their emotions. It's important to note here that Black people created American music. Jazz or more accurately titled, Black American music, along with country, blues, soul, neo-soul, hip-hop, rap, rnb, house, etc. were all created by Black people. These are all examples of how deeply rooted Black people are in music and music in this country. Black people have always turned to music to speak on their struggles and make themselves feel better in saddening times. This all supports why Black people can thrive in music therapy because of the roots they have in music already.

Conclusion

Music therapy is proving to be the best route for Black people to take in approaching therapy. Music therapy eliminates the default idea that many Black people have about therapy. It makes it more approachable. Black people especially are constantly under stress from being Black in this country alone. Everyday being retriggered by seeing themselves being killed by police or the justice system. It's a draining cycle. One that can be broken through music therapy. If music therapy access was provided, it could be the turning point for the Black community to eliminate the stigmas around going to therapy. As previously noted, Wilform mentioned the

different treatment that White and Asian people had in her internship experience versus Black and Hispanic people. There was greater success in the music therapy group which was consistent of White and Asian people (Wilform). The difference here can be connected to the lack of Black music therapists. Without representation of Black people in this field, there is going to be a lack of Black patients as well. As Peterkin mentioned during our interview, sometimes it is easier to have a therapist that looks like you. Given how difficult it is for Black people to pursue higher education, the reasons for the lack of representation and Black music therapy patients become clearer (Peterkin).

Music therapy is not meant for Black people to have the luxury of attending. Another example of the importance of music as a form of therapy is the Black therapist, Dr. Winfray who used Tupac's music to aid in her patients of Black boys in opening up (Shamma). The music allowed them to speak on their feelings and understand why they were feeling the way they did. In this situation, the success came from having a group of people going through similar things and having a professional guiding the session with music as a tool to get through to them. With that said, music therapists of any background have to work with the clients to see what they like and what they want from their music therapy sessions. Assuming that just because a patient is Black that they will relate most to rap or hip-hop music is inappropriate. Music therapy is such a useful form of therapy, especially for Black people that have such a strained relationship with therapy. Access to music therapy is the turning point to get people in the Black community into therapy. It is long overdue.

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