First of all, I would like to say how extremely grateful I am to have been awarded this bursary in my final year of study.

It eased the financial strain created by undertaking a Master’s degree, and thus lessened the emotional stress and worry involved.

As a working, single parent I very often had to rely on late night study. Having chosen my field of research for my final year dissertation, it soon became apparent that what scant literature already existed on the subject was either unavailable via the library system, or the books had to be sent from the British library and could not be removed from our university library.

The bursary enabled me to buy the books I needed to study at home.

The topic of my dissertation was chosen for very personal reasons. This piece of academic research marked the culmination of a three year journey towards becoming a music therapist. It seemed appropriate that the reason this journey began ought to be recognised in some way; and so the idea for my dissertation began to germinate.

For a considerable amount of time before my music therapy training began, a close friend had been experiencing debilitating headaches, and was taking a large amount of prescribed medication on a daily basis to alleviate the pain. Sometimes severe headaches can be stress-related (Nash and Thebarge, 2006; Donaldson, 2013). An interview with Jonathan Goldman ([www.nexuspub.com](http://www.nexuspub.com)), director of the Sound Healers Association, describes how a specific type of paired tuning forks can be used in the treatment of headaches. He believes that the sound created by these forks works in some way to release the blocked energy that is thought to be the cause of the pain (Goldman, 2003, Nexus Interview).

As a musician, my interest was piqued by the concept of music and sound being used in this way. I enrolled on a Tuning Forks Practitioner course, where I soon learned that there was so much more to sound healing than Goldman’s simple statement.

At a basic level I could use the tuning forks as a relaxation tool. At a more advanced level, the forks could be used to address deeper emotional issues and physical symptoms. Through undertaking case work during my training, I began to compile anecdotal evidence which seemed to support this; however, I doubted my ability to set up as a practitioner of a therapy with such an *alternative* status (Snow, 2011). Therefore, when I initially began to study music therapy, the seed of an idea had already been sown: was it possible to discover a means of integrating sound healing skills into a conventional music therapy practice?

My dissertation research was qualitative in nature, exploring the thoughts of experienced music therapists in relation to the subject. The initial intention of the research was to focus on each participant’s experience of the ways in which music can facilitate client engagement within their individual practices and to explore whether tuning fork therapy could be considered a useful addition to a music therapist’s toolbox.

Throughout the months that the study took to complete, I reflected often on what McFerran (2006) refers to as the ‘hidden’ question in my research project. Although intellectually I knew that this was merely an investigation and there was no hypothesis to be tested or proven, on an emotional level I was aware of the existence of a need for validation. My belief in the efficacy of tuning fork therapy had been the catalyst for a three year academic and personal journey that had not been easy. *What if* I was wrong?

Throughout the research journey, my feelings towards the technique of writing in the third person had fluctuated constantly. On the one hand, the degree of detachment that it provided allowed me to be more objective and less concerned as to whether the results of the research would be positive or not. At times however, I wondered whether this detachment was leading to a general feeling of disconnection with the topic. McFerran (2006, p.2) believes that “the motivation to remain focussed and excited about a research project is closely related to answering the hidden questions”. I worried that I was beginning not to care.

Luckily, at this point my unfolding interpretation of the interview transcripts led me to investigate a new avenue in the literature, and I discovered *The Body Keeps The Score* by Bessel van der Kolk (2014). This new information provided the impetus needed for me to complete my research project and has given me the desire to further investigate how tuning fork therapy, and indeed music therapy, might be of benefit in areas I had not previously considered.

The particular focus on physical sensations which tuning fork therapy allows suggests that research into its use with trauma survivors may lead to interesting findings. According to Bessel van der Kolk (2014), being aware of our physical bodies can help us to connect with our inner world of feelings. The longer a traumatised person remains afraid of *feeling,* the more he or she becomes locked in a frozen body, and the mind inevitably shuts down.

On reflection, the sense of disconnection I was feeling towards the end of my study could possibly be attributed to a type of ‘burn-out’. I was experiencing severely debilitating physical symptoms and bouts of emotional stress, which I tried to block out by ‘not feeling’.

Luckily, the bursary funds allowed me to receive such holistic treatments as deep tissue massage and acupuncture. In this way, I was able to put a self-care plan in place, which is so important for a therapist. The bursary also allowed me to continue to visit my personal therapist after graduation.

I graduated with merit in July 2017, which I am very proud of, and I am so grateful to The Music Therapy Charity for their part in this.

I have taken a year out to care for myself, and I am happy to say that I now feel ready to continue on my path as a music therapist, wherever that may lead.

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