

Review

# Music and Religion: Trends in Recent English-Language Literature (2015–2021)

Dustin D. Wiebe

Department of Music, University of California, Davis, CA 95616, USA; [dwiebe@wesleyan.edu](mailto:dwiebe@wesleyan.edu)

**Abstract:** This article reviews recent (2015–2021) English-language publications that focus on music in/as/about religion (broadly defined)—including world, folk, and indigenous religious traditions. While research related to Euro–American-based Christian music accounts for more publications than any other single tradition examined, this review intentionally foregrounds religions that are not as well represented in this literature, such as Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, and folk and animistic traditions from around the world. Recurring trends within this literature elucidate important themes therein, four of which are examined in detail: (1) race and ethnicity, (2) gender and sexuality, (3) music therapy (and medical ethnomusicology), and (4) indigenous music. Broadly speaking, recent (2015–2021) publications related to religion, music, and sound reflect growing societal and political interests in diversity and inclusion, yet there remain perspectives, ideas, and ontologies not yet accounted for. The list of references cited at the end of this article represents only those publications cited in the review and a more comprehensive bibliography is available via an open-sourced Zotero group.

**Keywords:** literature review; religion; spirituality; music; sound; ethnomusicology; indigenous; gender; race; music therapy



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## 1. Introduction

In the past six years (2015–2021) music scholars, performers, and various practitioners have produced a tremendous amount of scholarship on the dynamic relationships between religion and music (herein the RM literature). This is my best effort to arrange these related—though sometimes divergent—writings into “concrete” categories for the purpose of noting and discussing recurrent trends in the RM literature. I will review four theoretical trends as entry points to review this vast body of scholarship:

1. gender and sexuality;
2. race and ethnicity;
3. music therapy;
4. indigenous traditions.

Other topical and theoretical trends could have been highlighted, including the intersection of religion and music with media, technology, colonialism, politics, and national and nationalist discourses, to name but a few additional possibilities. My decision to focus on the above four topics stems from both their recurrence in the literature itself and their relevance in many increasingly diverse societies around the globe. This is a review of English-language literature only. RM scholarship in languages other than English should also be consulted and reviewed as necessary. Additionally, it should be noted that the sources cited in this review represent part of a more comprehensive, open-source project called the Religion, Music, and Sound Bibliography<sup>1</sup> (RMSB), which can be accessed online at: [https://www.zotero.org/groups/2662946/religion\\_music\\_and\\_sound\\_bibliography/library](https://www.zotero.org/groups/2662946/religion_music_and_sound_bibliography/library) (accessed on 30 September 2021).

## 2. Definitions: Religion and Music

In the context of this review and the larger RMSB, I offer an intentionally broad definition of religion as a socially established system of beliefs, rituals, and/or symbols that are variously rooted in supernatural, transcendental, and cultural realities. This understanding of religion is at once functional—concerned with what a religion does in society—and substantive—concerned with constituent properties, such as the transcendental, for example (ref. [Alles 2005](#), p. 7703). This includes theistic (e.g., Islam and Christianity) and non-theistic “world religions” (e.g., Buddhism and Confucianism), new religions (e.g., New Age movement and Scientology), and “folk,” “popular,” or indigenous religions (e.g., Santaria, Vodun, and paganism). The choice to employ such an encompassing definition stems not from a desire to obscure religious discourse but to draw it into greater focus by considering a greater diversity of perspectives on how humans collectively (socially, politically, etc.) experience, conceptualize, and organize themselves in relation to what King calls “a push, either ill-defined or conscious, toward . . . ultimacy and transcendence that will provide norms and power for the rest of life” ([King \[1987\] 2005](#), p. 7695).

Also related to “religion,” is the overlapping yet distinct discourse of “spirituality,” which MacDonald identifies in contemporary—mainly Western—culture as an “alternative to religion” ([MacDonald 2005](#), p. 8720). Music therapists Aldridge and Fachner propose: “spirituality is about the individual, ineffable and implicit, religion is about the social, spoken and explicit” ([Aldridge and Fachner 2006](#), p. 163). They note the distinction to avoid the common, and sometimes careless, conflation of these distinct constructs within their field dating back to the mid-1990s. Similarly, I recognize these distinctions but in a less binary and more spectral fashion than MacDonald describes. As such, the literature reviewed herein looks at spirituality in relation to religion, a discursive confluence particularly pronounced in the music therapy literature—a point I will return to.

As with “religion,” I offer a similarly broad definition of music as socially situated, produced, and aestheticized sound. This conception of music is very much in line with Small’s well-known notion of “musicking” ([Small 1998](#)—read, music as a verb, not a noun). Humans enact great musicking diversity with various methods for performing, hearing, interpreting, knowing, and sharing auditory vibrations. Of course, not everyone shares the same sensibilities and what is music to one may be dinful to another. In this way, music is not a universal, as is popularly proclaimed. However, while there are no qualities of musicking that are truly ubiquitous in historical and/or contemporary human cultures, near-universal traits exist, such as singing/vocalizing/chanting and the use of consonant tones (esp. unisons and octaves) ([Nettl 2001](#)). Likewise, the literature reviewed herein exhibits both the “universal” generalities and cultural specificities of music in religious context.

## 3. Gender and Sexuality

Over the past several years, scholars have produced a substantial body of RM literature on gender and sexuality, a constellation of topics long considered taboo within many religious communities/institutions. Several edited volumes make meaningful contributions to this growing and changing discourse, including the already well-known collection of essays *Issues in African American Music: Power, Gender, Race, Representation* ([Maultsby and Burnim 2017](#)). A short review of this work follows at the end of this section. The *Bloomsbury Studies in Religion and Popular Music* series features edited volumes and single-authored works that also elide with issues of gender and sexuality. For example, *Religion and Popular Music* ([Häger 2018](#)) and *Religion in Hip Hop: Mapping the New Terrain in the U.S.* ([Miller et al. 2015](#)) each explore these themes in considerable depth. Notable chapters from the two volumes include “Judas Priest and the Fury of Metal Redemption” ([Froese 2018](#))—an exploration of religion and sexuality in the music of this English metal band—and “Searching for Self: Religion and the Creative Quest for Self in the Art of Erykah Badu” ([Simon Guillory 2015](#))—a consideration of the Euro–American and African religious influences of this R&B/soul/hip-hop artist. *Christian Punk* is another more recent addition

to this Bloombury series (Abraham 2020). *The Hip Hop and Religion Reader* (Miller and Pinn 2015) published by Routledge deals with gendered and sexual topics throughout, including chapters such as “Rap on L’avenue: Islam, Aesthetics, Authenticity and Masculinities in the Tunisian Rap Scene” (Shannahan and Hussain 2015).

Scholarship writ large increasingly privileges those orientations and perspectives long confined to the margins of acceptable religious praxis and discourses and particularly those of members of LGTBQIA+ communities. Such perspectives—including non-binary and non-cis-gender identities—are present, though not abundant, in the RM literature. A few themes emerged in my review of these texts. First, several authors explore relationships between music and transgendered identities, including androgyny in Little Richard’s stage shows (Andrews 2020), female cross-dressers in nineteenth-century Sikh courts (Kapuria 2020), and drag in Santeria rituals (Thorne 2020; Kohfeld 2018).

Second, RM studies intersecting with themes of homosexuality are primarily focused on Christian contexts, such as Moore (2018b) (and Western Catholicism); Taylor (2018) (and Southern American Protestantism), Burnim (2017a, 2017b) (and the music of Thomas Dorsey), and Jones (2017) (homosexuality and African American Protestantism). Jones’ 2018 article in the journal *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* is a good example of juxtaposing religious music with taboo forms of sexuality such as homosexuality and masturbation. Jones’ article—“You Are My Dwelling Place”: Experiencing Black Male Vocalists’ Worship as Aural Eroticism and Autoeroticism in Gospel Performance”—is a criticism of the conservation of African American gender norms vis-à-vis the established (usually male, usually straight-identifying) Church leadership.

A third prevalent theme within this sub-section of the RM literature concerns gender norms and sexuality: Hebden (2020) (on competitive dance and femininity in Mozambique), Yearsley (2019) (on Anna Magdalena Bach and domesticity), and Owens and Welch (2017) (on timbre, aesthetics, and girls’ voices). Several studies examine issues of gender related to Hinduism in India, including Lorea (2018) (“religious transvestism” amongst Vaishnava Hindus in Bengal), Graves (2017) (gendered performativity and nationalism) and Sarbadhikary (2015) (domestic goddess worship). A book chapter by Stone—“Feminism, Gender, and Popular Music” (Stone 2017)—argues that “public evaluation of popular music is steeped in hierarchies that privilege qualities deemed masculine . . . over those deemed feminine” (Stone 2017, p. 56). Stone provides an analysis of gendered and religious/spiritual elements in the music of Kate Bush and Madonna, concluding that such “contrasts are not confined to popular music culture but are features of the Western aesthetic tradition more broadly, and indeed of the Western philosophical and religious tradition” (Stone 2017, p. 64).

Over half of the fifty-one RM publications on gender and sexually reviewed herein (26/51) consider some aspect of popular music. The ubiquity of popular music in discourses about religion, gender, and sexuality suggest that the genre is uniquely situated to engage the often-contentious confluence of these thematic materials. As in other sub-sections of this review, Christian themes are statistically best represented, with twelve of the twenty-six gender and/or sexuality related articles focused primarily on Christianity. The recent publication of the edited volume *Christian Punk: Identity and Performance* (2020) illustrates the ways gender is expressed and contested in Christian punk and hardcore scenes and through media (ref. Marchesini 2020; McDowell 2020; Myrick 2020).

Several articles/chapters on (primarily male-oriented) gender expression in Islamic contexts focus on hip hop, including Copeland’s (2017) article in the journal *Contemporary Islam: Dynamics of Muslim Life*. Copeland (2017) notes the connection between American 1990s narrative film and hip-hop culture: “As a natural feature of urban Black environments, Black Islam served as a vital force in these Black male narrative films of the 1990s, manifesting itself throughout the storylines via the presence of hip-hop culture . . . ” (p. 263). Other authors explore intersections of Islam and hip-hop including (Neff 2015) (on global resistance and politics in Senegal), Shannahan and Hussain (2015) (on the promotion and distribution of hip hop in Tunisia), and Silverstein (2018) (on Sufi spirituality in France).

Additional articles by [Cohen \(2015\)](#) and [Schweig \(2016\)](#) discuss hip-hop and expressions of masculinities within Judaism and Confucianism, respectively. Schweig concludes that “Confucian value systems, and Confucian gender regimes in particular, have retained their currency in the [Taiwan] rap scene” (p. 403). She also notes that “only the future will tell whether female artists . . . with non-binary gender identities can or will gain a foothold in the community under these inhospitable conditions” (p. 404). Schweig’s observations regarding the marginalized role of women in Taiwan hip-hop could apply to the previously discussed Christian punk and hardcore and Muslim hip-hop, as this scholarship collectively underscores and/or critiques the performance, maintenance, and transformation of primarily masculine identities in these historically male-dominated genres.

*Issues in African American Music: Power, Gender, Race, Representation* (2017)—is the second and final volume of the second edition of *African American Music: An Introduction* (2015). Religion and/or spirituality form the theoretical basis for many of the chapters in the collections making it of particular interest to the present literature review for its considerable thematic/theoretical overlap with the preceding discussion of gender and sexuality (e.g., [Harrison \(2017\)](#)—women, spirituals, and the development of the blues), and the forthcoming discussions of race and ethnicity (e.g., [Wilson 2017](#), spirituals and Western art music). That the Maultsby and Burnim text is in its second edition and that it maps so well onto these and other trends in the contemporary RM literature speaks to the (continued) timely nature of this important scholarly contribution. Religion—as defined herein—has much overlap with the “sacred” social contexts described by the editors: “this published aggregate [Second Edition, 2 vols.] seeks to capture and represent as fully as possible the collective spirit of African Americans whose creative genius was sparked and nurtured in North American contexts, historical and contemporary, rural and urban, sacred and secular” ([Maultsby and Burnim 2017](#)).

#### 4. Race and Ethnicity

The commonly associated theoretical discourses of race and ethnicity form the second sub-category of the RM literature under detailed consideration in this review. As with gender and sexuality, scholars regularly consider various points of intersection between religion and popular music. Almost fifty percent of the articles considered herein (21/43) share this topical/theoretical feature. [Stowe’s \(2018\)](#) chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Race in American History*—“Religion and Race in American Music”—is particularly noteworthy here for its breadth of scope, including discussion of a wide variety of religious traditions in American life. Broadly speaking, Stowe notes that while Buddhist, Jewish, and Christian tradition have variously adapted to the American melting-pot, “Hindus and Muslims have made few musical adaptations of their worship music,” adding that the music of these religions have “been widely sampled in American popular styles” (2017, abstract). Other authors addressing race, ethnicity, and popular music in their scholarship include [Trafford](#) on neo-Norse paganism and Viking metal ([Trafford 2020](#)), [Maloney’s](#) article on the influence of “secularized religious ideology” in disco and house social scenes ([Maloney 2018](#)), and [Gussow’s \(2017\)](#) manuscript—*Beyond the Crossroads—The Devil and the Blues Tradition*—on “the struggle against racism, and the syncretization of European and African religions” (2017, abstract). Moreover, noteworthy is the 2016 title *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States*. In it [Khabeer](#) “argue[s] that by establishing connections to specific notions of Blackness” that his interlocutors “configure a sense of U.S. American Muslim identity,” which are at once critical and contested ([Khabeer 2016](#), p. 15).

Many of the publications reviewed focus on musical aspects of African diasporic religions, including those influenced by, for example, Amerindian traditions (particularly in Central and South America, e.g., [Dempsey 2017](#); [Gidal 2016](#)), Euro-American missions/Christianity (e.g., [McCormack 2017](#)), and globalization (e.g., [Sterling 2015](#)—Rastafarianism in Japan). [Gidal’s](#) study of localized religious traditions stands out for its nuanced examination of musical traditions amongst “multi-faith Afro-Brazilian communities” that at once “may observe a religion considered more African and a religion

considered a Brazilian hybrid" (Gidal 2016, p.10). Booker's (2015) publication thoughtfully critiques the often-unintended consequences of gendered and racialized representations in Duke Ellington's musical work for stage and film. The author concludes that through such critical inquiry "we may be able to understand better the forms that racial and religious representations take and how they propagated for wider audiences" (Booker 2015, p. 27). Snyder looks at the life of another major—though lesser-known—African American composer, Harry T. Burleigh (1866–1949), who is best remembered for his "elevation" of the African American spiritual to the status of art song. Snyder also maintains a companion website (<https://www.friendsofharryburleigh.com>) (accessed on 30 September 2021), which she envisions as a place where "other interested persons can exchange information and continue the search for deeper understanding of Burleigh's work . . ." (Snyder 2016, p. xv). Other publications on the music of the African diaspora include Bridgeman (2019) (religious plurality in Beyoncé's *Lemonade*), Harvey (2018) (Jamaican "Gumbay play" in North Carolina), and Hayward and Hill (2016) (creole culture in New Orleans).

Recurring discourses emerged in the review of this literature. Most prevalent amongst them being "racism" and variations thereof, including racial (in)justice and anti-racism. Karkabi writes of the racialized systems that prevented the Israeli pop singer Nasreen Qadari—who is of Arab–Palestinian heritage—from overcoming colonial segregation based on distinct, racial groups. Karkabi refers to the Qadari case-study as paradigmatic in that "it elaborates on interconnections between race, religion, gender, language, and nationalism in settler colonial theory" (Karkabi 2021, n.p.). Another recent article by Moore—"Addressing Whiteness in Congregational Voicing" (Moore 2021)—challenges the frequent assumption of "race neutrality" in white-churches and points toward systems of racism based on vocal timbre. Several other authors pick up the varied discourses of racism, including Genet (2016) (white supremacy and Rastafarianism), Pieslak (2015) (white supremacy) and Dempsey (2017) (racial justice). Unsurprisingly, discourses built around "freedom" also prevail in this literature (e.g., Pyon 2019; McCreless 2021; Muir 2019), as do discussions of ceremony/ritual (e.g., Tsai 2016—Chinese processions in Australia; also, Harvey 2018), ethnicity (e.g., Harris 2019—Uyghurs in China; Johnson 2018a—in African American mega-churches), and interculturality (e.g., Johnson 2018b—American/Japanese choral collaboration; Sterling 2015).

## 5. Music Therapy

Several prominent themes emerge in recent music therapy publications including frequent efforts to engage—phenomenologically and empirically—the varied discourses related to religion or spirituality. This frequent intersection of metaphysical and scientific concerns makes these inter-related sub-streams of music scholarship of interest to an interdisciplinary audience of humanistic scholars, scientific researchers, and practitioners. Almost half of the publications reviewed (23/48) identify "spirituality" as a relevant aspect of the respective author's work. Central to this topic is a tension between the dichotomous yet interrelated conceptions of spirituality and religion. Authors such Pek and Grocke (2016) and Salas (2019) recognize theoretical distinctions between the two constructs but stop short of selecting one over the other, even suggesting interchangeability at times: "Spirituality and/or religion and music are essential and universal features of human life" (Salas 2019, p. 226). Lauzon, on the other hand, seeks to cleave spiritual and religious discourses from one another, seemingly to avoid connection with religious violence: "Concerning spirituality, the violations [of violence] generally manifest in the context of culture-bound religions" (Lauzon 2020, p. 36).

Numerous researchers/practitioners consider expressions and/or experiences of the spiritual within religious traditions. Considerations of Christianity are best represented in this literature (e.g., Boyce-Tillman 2016; Koivisto 2016; Kim and Dvorak 2018; Thomason-Smith 2020). Other religions are more sparsely represented, including Muradoglu's article on the place of saz performances in intra-Muslim communication in Turkey (2017). Clarkson writes on the "spiritual dimensions" of "guided imagery and music [GIM]," using the

case study of a GIM-trained Buddhist chaplain resident working in hospice care (2017). Healing and music in the context of indigenous and localized religions is also considered, as in, for example, Queiroz's research amongst adherents of the Umbanda cult in Brazil (Queiroz 2015), and Hämäläinen et al. on dementia care amongst the Sami of Fennoscandia (2021). Seri and Gilboa consider music therapy applications for Jewish boys raised in "ultra-conservative" environments in Israel (2018). They note: "We found that these boys had different musical backgrounds than we did, and more disturbing, that the concept of music was different for these children and we did not quite know what it meant" (Seri and Gilboa 2018, p. 190). Though less representative of the broader literature, these publications provide much needed diversity of religious perspective in the field of music therapy. As indicated tangentially by Seri and Gilboa, practitioners and researchers must continue to consider the ways that methods of music therapy can be adapted to the needs of diverse global societies.

This medical/therapy focused literature covers a wide variety of ontological and/or philosophical approaches to care and practice, including empathy (Davidson 2017; dos Santos and Brown 2021), interfaith/interethnic dialogue (Boyce-Tillman 2018; Gilboa and Salman 2019), equity and conflict transformation (Gottesman 2016), and inclusion (Boyce-Tillman 2016). Some of these and other studies report on the usefulness or prevalence of a particular therapeutic ontology. For example, Gottesman reports on the positive outcomes of Heartbeat—a non-profit that uses music to transform conflict between Palestinian and Israeli children and youth: "Transferable learning, in the form of learning for and about peacebuilding, coexistence . . . and resilience, when interwoven into the process of learning music . . . can create an opening of spaces and perspectives in which youth can build equal social relationships" (2016, abstract). The work of other authors is more critical/aspirational. Dos Santos and Brown, for example, conclude that "while attempts to employ empathy were used at times as a strategy to offer a therapeutic relationship characterized by acceptance, participants were not always aware of how their own R/SO [religious/spiritual orientation] infused their attempts at perspective-taking and their understanding of experiences of shared emotions" (dos Santos and Brown 2021, p. 13). The discourse supported by this literature illustrates a continued disciplinary shift within music therapy toward increasingly empathic models of care; however, cutting edge research—like that of dos Santos and Brown—illuminates ways of supporting ever-better client/patient outcomes. Beyond interest in disciplinary praxis, recent publications identify spiritual/religious-focused musical modalities as efficacious in an array of therapeutic and medical treatments, including those for addiction (Stamou et al. 2016, 2017), mood disorders (Kaelen et al. 2018), cancer care (Elwafi and Wheeler 2016), autism (Clarkson 2017), and abuse (Boyce-Tillman 2018).

Five therapy-focused journals account for nearly half of the sources reviewed here (22/48):

1. *Music Therapy Perspectives* (2);
2. *Music and Medicine: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (3);
3. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy* (5);
4. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* (6);
5. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* (6).

Collectively, these and other periodicals provide RM scholars with a framework to consider the ethics and implications of spirituality and/or religion in more clinical/therapeutic settings. Herein, the study of music in thanatological (end-of-life) settings emerges as a recurring theme (Potvin et al. 2020; Salas 2019; Potvin and Flynn 2019; Kim and Dvorak 2018; Schroeder-Sheker 2017). Potvin et al. (2020) "recognize that the scope of [their] analysis is heavily influenced by Judeo-Christian and agnostic/nonreligious backgrounds," but also "encourage future explorations situated from additional intersectional vantage points." Based on the present literature, however, it appears such scholarly calls to action have yet to achieve a critical mass of published research necessary to support better therapeutic/medical outcomes for adherents of many minor religious/spiritual traditions.

## 6. Indigenous Traditions

The varied discourses of indigenous musical traditions and the religious and spiritual connections intertwined therein are increasingly well represented in recent scholarly publications. Most of these sources can be categorized according to a particular geo-political region or continent. Scholarship focusing on music and indigeneity of Canada and the United States account more than one-third of the fifty-seven sources cited (21/57). Traditions in Oceania (7/57), Latin America (8/57), Africa (9/57), and Asia (10/57) are also well represented. Amongst the journals publishing literature on the topic *African Musicology Online* is most prolific. Since 2015, the journal has published no fewer than seven articles on topics of indigenous musical traditions in Africa, including àgídígbo music of the Yorùbá in Nigeria (Adekola 2018), the kamabeka cultural dance of the Babukusu community in Nigeria (Kusienya and Masasabi 2019), and the influence on Luhya musical styles on the Anglican hymns in Kenya (Omulupi and Masasabi 2020).

Several recurring themes and discourses emerge within this literature, including identity/identity-politics, indigenous spiritualities and religion, and intercultural syncretisms (especially in the context of Euro–American Christianity). Many of these and other discourses intersect with notions of cultural purity and the overarching institution of Western colonialism, which significantly impacted indigenous peoples (and music) throughout the world, particularly over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ingalls et al. propose “musical localization” as an alternative to other syncretic discourses—namely, indigenization, contextualization, and inculturation—to better address “the complex ways music-making becomes locally useful” (Ingalls et al. 2018, p. 13). The recent RM literature indicates a continued engagement with these, and other related discourses concerned with historical and contemporary encounters between entities deemed “indigenous” and “foreign,” respectively. Recent studies of Native American hymnody continue a long line of research in this sub-field (e.g., Marshall 2018; Goodman 2019; Wheeler and Eyerly 2017; Wigginton 2021). This recurring trend is a point of recent critique by Diamond (2019) when she asks, “but why hymnody?” (Diamond 2019, p. 252), a question these contemporary authors appear prepared to answer, or at least confront. For example, Wheeler and Eyerly propose that “paying attention to the development of Native hymnody at Moravian mission communities illuminates the ways that Native peoples navigated the conditions of colonialism . . . ” (Wheeler and Eyerly 2017, p. 24). This work highlights the active role of First Nations people in their own cultural development during early contact with Europeans. Other research examines similar themes of religious self-determinism in other parts of the world including Indonesia (Poplawska 2020; Wiebe 2018), Nigeria (Adedeji 2017), and South Africa (Bethke 2016).

The impact of foreign (Euro–American) missionization on beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples throughout the world are specifically examined by several scholars. For example, Clare Chan (2015) writes about significant impact of the “tourist gaze” (neo-colonialism) on Mah Meri musical customs in Malaysia. Guillermo Wilde (2018) employs archival research methods to explore the Jesuit missions to South America during the colonial period. He notes systemic efforts on the part of missionaries to dissociate indigenous music with all corporal/erotic associations. Similar colonial-era cultural manipulation and erasure is described by Rakena (2019) and Swijghuisen Reigersberg and Lloyd (2019) amongst Māori in New Zealand and indigenous peoples of Australia, respectively. As an anti-colonial practice, Swijghuisen Reigersberg suggests that non-indigenous researchers “conceive of practice as research (PaR) in music as a method that is able to increase the participation of Indigenous people in the shaping of our communal understanding of Australian history.” Several other authors document historical and contemporary encounters between indigenous peoples and missionization/evangelism in the United States (Love 2018; Charles 2019), Norway (Harrison 2019), and Ecuador and Peru (Waisman 2020).

Nearly fifty percent of the publications reviewed in this category consider some element of indigenous music cultures in/as ritual, liturgy, and/or ceremony (28/57). This reflects the importance of and growing interest in indigenous ritual cultures. This research

includes Lebaka's analysis of music and religion in Bapedi society in South Africa (Lebaka 2020), and Yoon's article on ritualized *urtyin duu* ("long song") amongst nomadic herders in Mongolia (2018). Several sub-themes emerge within this literature including the association of indigenous music with rites/ceremonies based on "indigenous ontologies" (Diamond 2019), including ancestor veneration and cosmology (So 2015; Adekola 2018; Bell 2018; Lepofsky et al. 2020) and healing (Clark 2017; Hämäläinen et al. 2021). Discourses related to "spirituality" and the musical sub-discipline of ecomusicology also emerge within the literature on indigenous ontologies (Ryan 2016; Yoon 2018). This includes Hachmeyer's study in *Ecomusicology*, in which he notes that "in Kallawaya cosmology ... musical practices [rituals] are closely related to the social, natural, and spiritual environment," and in certain contexts are understood as "communications with ancestors" (2018, abstract).

While the effects of colonialism remain a source of social and economic challenges for many indigenous and non-indigenous peoples throughout the world there is substantial scholarship on the place of music in ameliorating indigenous/settler relations and processes of social justice and reconciliation between indigenous and colonial elements of social discourse. This ongoing dialectic emerges in an array of interrelated terminology, each aiming to describe processes of "decolonization." For example, in their study of the Standing Rock protest, Johnson and Kraft (2018) explore the employment of certain terms as signifiers of a global indigeneity movement. They propose a "globalizing indigenous religious formation" that could further unite global indigenous peoples to challenge colonial power and authority. The terms "reconciliation" (Bartleet 2019), "reciprocity" (Rakena 2018), and "intercultural relations" (Diamond 2019), are all used to variously address the impacts of colonization, its continued influence, and to implement anti-colonial ideologies and practices.

## 7. Conclusions

Broadly speaking, recent (2015–2021) English-language RM literature reflects growing societal and political interests in a diversity of perspectives, particularly those that have been historically under-represented. The above analysis highlights this privileging of diversity through four recurrent trends. In RM literature on gender and sexuality there are many publications that articulate marginalized perspectives, such as those of LGBTQIA+ communities (e.g., Jones 2017; Kohfeld 2018; Lorea 2018; Moore 2018a; Taylor 2018; Kapuria 2020; Andrews 2020; Thorne 2020). Other authors focus on themes of race and ethnicity, with topics and peoples situated throughout the globe (e.g., Khabeer 2016—Muslim hip-hop in the U.S.; Harris 2019—Uyghurs in China; Karkabi 2021—Israeli pop), including a large sub-set of the literature dealing specifically with music of Africa and the African diaspora (e.g., Booker 2015; Sterling 2015; Gidal 2016; Snyder 2016; McCormack 2017; Dempsey 2017; Bridgeman 2019). The review of music therapy literature reveals the disciplinary complexities of defining spirituality and religion (ref. Pek and Grocke 2016; Lauzon 2020), and especially in relation to clinical approaches to managing death and dying (e.g., Salas 2019; Potvin and Flynn 2019; Potvin et al. 2020). Christian traditions are best represented in those music therapy publications dealing with religion (e.g., Boyce-Tillman 2016; Koivisto 2016; Kim and Dvorak 2018; Thomason-Smith 2020) but other traditions are also present such as Islam (Muradoglu 2017), Buddhism (Clarkson 2017), and Judaism (Seri and Gilboa 2018). Literature pertaining to indigenous religious traditions include a range of geographic and cultural perspectives from across Asia (e.g., Wells 2015; Diao 2021), Africa (e.g., Adekola 2018; Kusienya and Masasabi 2019), Latin America (Hachmeyer 2017; Newson 2020), and North America (e.g., Love 2018; Diamond 2019).

For a more comprehensive bibliography of recent RM literature please visit the open-source Music, Religion, and Sound Bibliography project at: [https://www.zotero.org/groups/2662946/religion\\_music\\_and\\_sound\\_bibliography/library](https://www.zotero.org/groups/2662946/religion_music_and_sound_bibliography/library) (accessed on 30 September 2021).

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The RMSB currently consists of over 650 fully searchable bibliographic entries for scholarly work published from 2015–2021. Most of these citations include tags, abstracts, and other searchable keywords and text. In its current form, however, the bibliography is still incomplete in many ways, including its over-reliance on English-language sources. As an open-source project, the bibliography will continue to grow and, in doing so, may better represent the entirety of RM literature in the present and moving forward.

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