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Book Review:

Sabah Choudrey, *Supporting Trans People of Colour: How to Make Your Practice Inclusive*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London, 2022; 203 pp.: ISBN 9781787750593, £16:99 (hardback)

Reviewed by: Francis Myerscough.

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It is perhaps becoming a familiar refrain to hear about an increased interest in Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) within the Music Therapy community in recent years. Discussions have continued since the publication of the BAMT Diversity Report (Langford et al., 2020). Colleagues in the profession are speaking, writing, and supporting one another in relation to experiences including – but not limited to – being racialised in a profession centred on whiteness, and being trans (Myerscough, 2022; Swamy & Webb, 2022; Vencatasamy, 2023; Wong & Vencatasamy, 2022). As Music Therapists, the interventions we make to address problems we (or our colleagues) meet due to marginalisation and discrimination are often organised around one issue at a time, with less regard to the intersectionality of experience (though this is not unique to music therapy). There are reasons why we may choose to concentrate our learning on one axis of oppression, for example to prioritise giving ourselves time to understand this aspect in depth. However, this may leave gaps in our awareness and understanding, and preclude thinking about the complexity of lived experience. Collier and Eastwood's (2022) volume on intersectionality in the arts therapies is timely in introducing the concept and practice of intersectionality to the arts therapy modalities. *Supporting Trans People of Colour: How to Make your Practice Inclusive* concentrates more specifically on a particular set of intersectional experiences. While not a music-therapy-specific text, the detailed insights and challenges afforded by this specificity are highly relevant for music therapists to consider.

Choudrey advocates for inclusive practice not as a tick-box exercise, but as an ongoing journey: in their conclusion they explicitly state that 'this is not the complete guide on how to make your practice inclusive. [...] Be curious about what's missing here and in your own practice and community' (p.184). Choudrey underscores that none of us are going to get it right all the time, and that what might seem right now may in future seem wrong. However, I do think the title could make this attention to inclusivity as an ongoing process clearer; when combined with a very linear cover design, for me personally the title of the volume does not reflect this view of inclusivity as

ongoing practice rather than tick-box exercise, and I wonder how such a first impression might influence readers' approach to the text.

As a music therapist practising in a co-produced organisation with others from trans and nonbinary communities, I found this book, and the view of inclusivity *as process*, both challenging and reassuring. I knew my organisation, too, was disproportionately white, and reading Choudrey's text I continued to sit with this observation and to further consider why, based on the information they share. This was uncomfortable, but it was also reassuring to know that this is not a unique failure of myself and the other white people involved in this specific organisation. At the same time, we are all implicated and share a responsibility in the journey to being more truly inclusive: the challenge remains ongoing. Readers with different life experiences and working in different professional settings may find different sections of the texts more helpful. For example, Choudrey includes introductions to terminology and ideas which are clear without being simplistic for those to whom these might be unfamiliar.

While reading with a Music Therapist readership in mind, I gave attention to ways in which Choudrey addresses matters beyond the verbal, thinking about how we might apply learnings and reflections gained through interacting with the text to our particular modality. While Choudrey does not consider music specifically, the "Celebrate and Commemorate" chapter (pp.148-165), focusing on celebration and awareness days, presents a potential springboard for learning about, engaging with, and supporting cultural events of minoritised communities – in this case particularly Trans People of Colour (TPOC). The chapter considers ways in which organisations can make plans that will meet the needs and wants of the communities concerned, rather than simply bolstering the image of the organisation. The example calendar provided of cultural, historical and social events may also be a useful resource for individuals wanting to learn more. By looking out around these days we potentially stand a better chance of connecting with marginalised communities on their own terms, rather than trying to force a conversation at a time which suits us. These could be times when we are introduced to music and other creative practices we might not have encountered previously, be this historical or a practice of the present day.

As a Music *Therapist*, I found the presentation of reflective questions for the reader helpful. These were often set apart from the main text in "Reflect On" boxes, making them easy to return to. An early example, in a chapter introducing terminology, asks '[w]hat makes it difficult to adopt a new

language?’ (p.37). However, these ‘Reflect On’ boxes were more common in some sections than others, and I did find myself wishing for the reflective sections to be sustained throughout; a more sustained structure of reflexivity would be supportive for therapist readers, who are named as one of the target audiences.

I want to end with a quotation from the introduction in which Choudrey argues for the centrality of looking at intersectional experience if we are to understand any aspect of community identity or oppression. I suggest their analysis is as true for music therapy as elsewhere:

Existing research and information that I have found on LGBTQ POC communities overwhelmingly only represents gay men and lesbians, despite the use of the acronym LGBTQ, which implies trans people are included when they are not. Trans research is overwhelmingly white. Finding research that reportedly represents trans POC people has been disappointing; we are often an afterthought, an exception, a minority. Our community is not a minority, and when we are excluded, the trans, LGBTQ and POC community is not wholly included. (p.22)

This passage reminds me of the importance of being open about our imperfections – in practice, in research, in life. If we are not acknowledging where we are, how can we journey onwards?

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