

BOOK REVIEW

Intersectionality in the arts therapies (Collier & Eastwood, Eds.)

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INTRODUCTION

Intersectionality in the Arts Psychotherapies, edited by Jessica Collier and Corrina Eastwood (2022), dives into the timely and emergent topic of intersectionality, outlining applications to the creative arts therapies through in-depth theoretical discussions, self-reflections, and case examples. Coined in 1989 by Kimberle Crenshaw, *intersectionality* articulates a process of how multiple oppressed identities, most specifically the multifarious and compounding challenges around race, class, and gender, legally impact women of colour. While a relatively newer discourse in music therapy and the arts therapies, the unpacking of intersectionality across and within other disciplines outside of the field of law (where Crenshaw conceived the term) has been exponentially growing in the last several decades. This is a critical conversation for the music therapy field, which is still in the early stages of understanding the role of the sociocultural identity within the therapeutic, as well as the musical, process. Contemporarily, intersectionality is almost infinite in its complexity and constantly evolving, along with changing conceptions and expressions of race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual

orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, age, neurodivergence and other identity categories. Collier and Eastwood's book is a major contribution to not just the creative arts therapies but to this wider discourse, highlighting how intersectionality must be given nuanced consideration in each of the arts psychotherapies, as each discipline contains its own legacy, often tied to Eurocentric patriarchal values and assumptions. This is certainly true in music therapy.

Self-reflexivity is the primary tool used in this volume for exploring the various facets of intersectionality. This inner-seeking lens facilitates the examination of the authors' and editors' biases and internalised oppression, which they effectively convey with humility and vulnerability, acknowledgment and modelling of countertransference and sociocultural positionality. Interrogating one's clinical relationships publicly, with the level of self-reflective rigor demonstrated in this book, is brave work. Each chapter and case study also exposes the power dynamics, misses, and "normative unconscious processes" (Layton, 2020) that undergird therapeutic treatments. This manner of explication, accountability, and self-reflexive discipline is rare and refreshing. It is an invitation to all therapists, a form of praxis that we hope readers will take up for themselves and carry into their own work.

While this book mostly focuses on art therapy, with two chapters on music therapy and one on dramatherapy, it contains valuable discussions and modelling for the music therapy community. Refreshing nuances in thinking, comprehensive theoretical discussions, interdisciplinary citations, and important critical discussions run counter to many "how to" manuals or steps within the music therapy literature. Clinical vignettes are thoughtful and reflective, reflexive in approaches, attitudes, and analyses and discuss how intersectionality shifts basic assumptions about therapeutic processes. The clinical scope of this book is quite broad, covering topics such as sexual abuse, misogyny, intimate partner violence, chronic pain, and others in a variety of settings such as in prisons, universities, community and other contexts.

HIGHLIGHTS AND AREAS FOR GROWTH

Authors in this volume seem united in their intention of not only creating generous space for their clients' whole personhood, but also their own. This work requires openness to non-judgmentally meeting the other both externally and internally, as one encounters their own biases, prejudices, and internalised self-persecutors in relation to "others" that most would prefer not to recognise. This purity of intention and unflinching self-examination are the book's strengths, which we feel are qualities that cannot be modelled enough in the counselling and creative arts therapies field. The assembled chapters represent the sincere efforts of therapists from a variety of arts psychotherapies to heal with integrity their clients, themselves and even, ambitiously, the wounds in our troubled society. While these are lofty pursuits, the tone of the book is rooted in embodied practice, humility, and non-defensive accountability for mistakes.

Eastwood both sets and bookends a moving and vulnerable tone for the book in the opening and final chapters, deeply sharing the intergenerational wounds within her family and culture, the Gypsy, Romani Traveler (GRT) community and highlighting the need for therapists to examine their own internalised oppression, internalised shame, white gaze and white fragility. One of the book's main themes is excavated in four chapters explicitly discussing a feminist perspective. This begins

with Collier's chapters (7 and 12) on art therapy with those experiencing sexual violence, assault and rape and another addressing sexism and misogyny in work with women offenders in the criminal justice system in the UK. Chapters 8, 11 and 14 take this further with Sejal Chad providing an in-depth analysis of the MeToo movement, discussing themes of shame, victim blaming, stigmatisation, denial, and implications of therapist disclosures; Kairo Maynard unpacking the risk of stereotypes such as those of the angry Black woman; and Baum, Datlen, Eastwood and Elliston discussing the intersection of race, class and gender in clients with abuse and trauma histories. Three chapters also highlight another critical theme, the intersection of therapist and activist. Baum, Datlen, Eastwood and Elliston highlight how political action is clinical work, Chad expands the role of the art therapist or creative art therapist to the role of activist or social worker, and S.J. Langer (chapter 3) discusses street activism for therapists in trans communities.

Along with its strengths, looking ahead and thinking critically, there are a few significant areas to highlight for growth in this work. Thirty-five years since the inception of Crenshaw's (1989) terminology, contemporary society's ability to think intersectionally still seems nascent. This volume makes an excellent effort at considering social identities at play in the arts psychotherapies. However, a chapter-per-case approach seems to restrict consideration to one or two identities per chapter, thereby shaving off large pieces of the whole of one's social location and missing opportunities for more complex discussions.

Additionally, chapters on music therapy and dramatherapy were missing significant material on the arts-based nature of the work of creative arts therapists. For instance, chapter 9, a timely and insightful narrative about a music therapy project in Palestine, and chapter 13, outlining the intersection of disabled and LGBTQ+ identities, would have benefitted from the addition of Community Music Therapy and other music therapy references, and more extensive discussion of the music therapy process itself. Similarly, in chapter 11, Maynard discusses a vulnerable, humble, and authentic case study from her own positionality as a Black woman but includes very little about the dramatherapy process.

Furthermore, we wondered about the intended audience of the book and felt sensitive to how readers from marginalised identities and various locations might receive it, especially since most of the authors are cisgender women practising in the UK. For example, while two chapters are written by trans/non-binary authors, other chapters in which gender is named are deeply entrenched in the gender binary, almost as though it exists in a separate, gender-binary world. Inclusive discussions of non-normative gender identities are neglected in many chapters. This could be dissonant for readers of diverse genders expecting full representation. In addition, a few clinical examples mention self-reflexive regrets from white clinicians who neglected to consider and name racial differences and biases at the time of treatment. Giving full credit to the authors for their bravery and humility in naming these, we wondered about the impact on readers of colour of continuing to share stories of failure in this area.

In summary, the architects of the work assembled here, Jessica Collier and Corrina Eastwood, have assembled a thought-provoking set of readings which thoroughly explore identity, and encourage humility and self-examination. This work is so deeply needed in all branches of psychotherapy, and certainly the authors describe the need for this in the creative arts psychotherapies, in particular. Contributors to *Intersectionality in the Arts Psychotherapies* should

feel proud of their rigorous, vulnerable self-interrogation. By sharing their stories, their clinical work, and their calls to action for the field, they have added to its richness, modelled immense integrity, and set a fine example for practitioners, supervisors, students, and teachers.

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