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Community Music Making/Therapy & Perspectives on Autism Stereotypes

In addition to learning about privilege, ableism, and the social model of disability, there are other topics we addressed this week that espouses the tools needed to create an inclusive music classroom. First, I will like to reflect on the ideas and concepts in an article about autistic people's perspectives on stereotypes, and community music-making. Last, I will respond to the articles on music therapy.

In this social world, stereotypes are defined as our impressions (knowledge, beliefs, and expectations) of each other (Treweek et al., 2019, p. 759). Stereotypes also classifies individuals in groups, which almost makes it easier for us to relate to each other. However, the negative aspect is that these group assignments remove the individual and negative stereotypes may promote negative behaviour (ex. a black man stereotyped as a criminal, places that behaviour on all black men). This is concerning, especially for those with learning disabilities. Many people have stereotypes concerning those who are on the autism spectrum. Most of it is negative, describing them as having poor social skills, withdrawn, low intelligence, etc. (Treweek et al., 2019, p. 760). There are movies that seem to point that people with ASD, have a savant like ability, however that is not always true (Treweek et al., 2019, p. 760). With all the experimentation the article explains, there are consequences to negative stereotypes. It creates a climate of exclusion and it places restrictions on how one operates in their own space (Treweek et al., 2019, p. 763). Even though those with autism are heterogenous, hence the word 'spectrum' (to explain their own diversity), people with ASD are stereotyped negatively.

Now what can I do in my music class to help remove those negative stereotypes? How can I create a more inclusive environment not only for those with autism, but those who are minority (race, gender, socioeconomic status)? What strategies can I use to help those marginalized, feel free to express themselves without pressure from dominant social groups? The community music making article provides stories with solutions to help us educators. One I found interesting is the 'Resonaari School' program. This community music making program supports all students, but it is known for aiding those with disabilities. What I find interesting is that they use a notation system called 'Figure Notes' which they created to help include students with disabilities into mainstream music class/ensembles (Baldwin, 2017, p. 18). I teach students composition, and I will like to learn the 'Figure Notes' system. I believe that this and other apps geared toward musicking can be a solution to help students with disabilities create music of their own (Baldwin, 2017, p. 19).

Lastly, the articles about music therapy are fascinating. The main goal I learned is that traditional music therapy and community music therapy have their differences. Similar to the medical model vs. social model of disabilities, community music therapy argues an element of social interaction through participation (social), vs. the older therapy focused on the individual's well-being. Moving from playing *to* people to playing *with* them (from 'receptive' to 'participatory' work) (Ansdell, 2002, p. 5), is something that Elizabeth Mitchell explored in her case study of the Coffee house. Music for mastery and critique can sometimes be a way of exclusion, especially for those with mental health issues. Elizabeth defends that participatory music making is an inclusive and safe method to help students express and learning from each other. No assessments, no trophies and certificates, just engaging with each other musically. I am not a music therapist, but I see this approach as an inclusive activity I can try in my own

program. "Where participation and sociality are the standards, rather than aesthetic or technical achievement (Turino, 2008), these performers are truly musicians of the highest quality" (Mitchell, 2019, p. 14).

References

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