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## Cover page

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**Paper title: Exploring the benefits of intersectional feminist social justice  
approaches in art psychotherapy**

**Exploring the benefits of intersectional feminist social justice approaches in  
art psychotherapy**

**Key words: Intersectional; feminist; social justice; art psychotherapy**

**Abstract:**

This paper charts a research and knowledge exchange project between a university and group of art psychotherapists who came together in a project aimed at better understanding the benefits of critical feminist social justice approaches to art psychotherapy. It outlines the impact of the partnership for art psychotherapy practice, practitioners' continued professional development and patients'/ service users' benefit. Drawing on knowledges of critical feminisms held within the university and art psychotherapy expertise from local health services, the project evaluated the benefit of a practice enhancement activity and resource hub as consciousness raising training in intersectional feminism for developing critical feminist social justice approaches to art psychotherapy practice. The project was designed as a qualitative participatory study. The four main salient themes emerging from the data were that the enhancement activity and resource hub provided; patient/ service user benefits, improved practitioner reflexive critical thinking; recognition from practitioners of the importance of being attentive to patient's/ service users' situatedness; and acknowledgement by practitioners of the helpfulness of likeminded collectives for sustaining critical feminist social justice praxis. Project findings suggest that critical feminist social justice approaches are beneficial to art psychotherapy praxis and that continued

engagement with current and re-emerging feminisms could continue to progressively reimagine and reshape that praxis.

### **Introduction:**

This paper outlines a research and knowledge exchange project that aimed to understand the value of a practice enhancement activity and resource hub as critical social justice continuing professional development consciousness raising training in intersectional feminism for art psychotherapists. The project intended to transfer critical feminist and social justice knowledges available within a higher education institution into the local health economy by supporting a group of local art psychotherapists to think through the resources they draw on in their practice and professional development learning; and from there to ask critical questions about the socio-cultural assumptions that are embedded within and inform the services they deliver. It also aimed at having an impact upon the culture of care provision within the services so that the art psychotherapists become more person-centred and socio-culturally aware. In the first instance this paper sets out the contextual relationship between art psychotherapy and critical social justice feminisms and secondly provides a synopsis of the project's methodological approach and the methods used. A presentation of themed data results follows, along with discussion and analysis of the results set within the context of current and relevant art psychotherapy and critical feminist literature on the benefits of a continued dialogue between them. The paper concludes with a summary of the possible implications for art psychotherapy practice and outlines the project's next steps.

### **Context:**

#### **Situating art psychotherapy and feminisms:**

Art psychotherapy has traditionally been practiced mostly by women and this still remains the case (Waller, 2003). Despite it being a predominately women's profession, feminist perspectives have not been immune from orienting round white middleclass women's perspectives and in response to this there have been calls for greater consideration for intersectionalising (Crenshaw, 2017) in art psychotherapy training and education (Hogan and Cornish, 2014). Intersectionality grew from the third wave of the women's movement where Black feminisms and women of colour feminisms exposed the inherent racism of white feminisms that privilege white women's experiences whilst silencing and disregarding those of Black women and women of colour. Back in 1991, Crenshaw first introduced intersectional analysis to explain the routes through which disempowering dynamics of class, disability, gender, race and sexuality based discriminations and oppressions flow. Intersectionality progresses the identity politics of third wave Black feminisms and feminisms of colour by acknowledging, that while identities matter, greater attention needs to be paid to their multiplicity and interconnectiveness and how those operate in relation to each other and create complex intersections at which any number of axes of power meet (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Art psychotherapy principles and values mirror critical social justice feminisms in that they aim to support and stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable, marginalised, and traumatised in society (Lykes and Hershberg, 2011). Practicing arts psychotherapies is about embodying the principles and values of anti-oppressive practice that aim to enable empowerment of the most vulnerable, marginalised, and traumatised, and work for socially just ends; that is the liberation and enfranchisement of marginalised and oppressed peoples (Baines and Edwards, 2015). Following the historical trajectory of the second wave women's movement,

arts psychotherapies have tended towards centring white middleclass experiences and worked to exclude marginalised and oppressed peoples; hence calls for a shift to an intersectional critical feminist social justice orientation (Sajani, 2012; Talwar, 2010; Cooper, 2005) in order to counter and deconstruct oppressions within the profession.

More recently feminist theories of 'new' materialisms have reinvigorated considerations of the non-human and natural world and of relational environments and spaces, and the affects (the emotional impact) that these have (Frost, 2014; Fannin, MacLeavy, Lerner & Wefei, 2014). These more recent feminist re-considerations of how bodies are affected, of how they take up and experience spaces, are affected by spaces and encounters experienced within them (Ahmed 2006). And more specifically how this can be countered, and offer a theoretical underpinning for the re-consideration of art psychotherapy spaces, so that such spaces become useful for not only reimagining, but actually reworking them as socially just spaces.

Intersectional critical feminist theory underpins the training evaluated in this paper and feminist 'new' materialisms theory provides the analytical framework for understanding the implications for practice of continued dialogue between intersectional critical feminist social justice theories and art psychotherapy practice.

### **The Project:**

This paper outlines a research and knowledge exchange (RKE) project that saw a partnership between a higher education (HE) institution and a sub-regional group of UK based art psychotherapists. RKE projects aim to share knowledge held within HE institutions beyond its borders to other organisations. The project funding was a small pot of money that came with a six-month completion deadline. Given these

constraints, it was unrealistic to embark on a project that included patients/ service users as it would have taken a considerable amount of time to process the necessary ethics applications and to recruit participants. It also seemed logical to begin the project with practitioners and to build on learning from their engagement at a later stage when benefits to patient/ service users could potentially be greater and more assured. The project is an extension of work begun by Wright and Wright (2013) that developed a feminist intersectionality informed enhancement activity and resource hub aimed at supporting art psychotherapy practitioners' learning around critical social justice as professional development.

The project purpose was therefore twofold, to exchange knowledge around critical feminist social justice theories and the practice and theories of art psychotherapy, and to evaluate the usefulness of the enhancement activity and resource hub (Wright and Wright, 2013) to art psychotherapy practice and professional development. The project also hoped that beyond the two main objectives it would raise awareness of feminist critical social justice theories, and acknowledge how they can enable more reflexive therapeutic relationships and art psychotherapy practice.

The art psychotherapists participating in the project totalled 11, all identifying as women. 9 participants identified as white British, 1 as white North American, and 1 as British. 5 participants indicated they were aged 46-55 (46%), with 2 aged 36-45 (18%), 3 aged 26-35 (27%), and 1 aged 18-25 (9%). Most, 8 in total, of the practitioners work with children and/ or adolescents and young adults, with the remaining 3 working with older adults. Practitioners worked with people living with learning and physical disabilities, emotional and post-traumatic stress from; sexual abuse, obsessive-compulsive behaviours and other anxieties and mental health

distress. 5 of the practitioners described working with patients/ service users from diverse racial and/ or minority ethnic backgrounds. The other 6 practitioners identified that they worked predominately with white service users. Those who described working with patients/ service users from diverse racial and/ or minority ethnic backgrounds also felt socio-economic disadvantages were a factor impacting the lives of those patients/ service users. All the practitioners felt they were involved in working with marginalised and/ or oppressed peoples to some extent or another, whether that was class, disability, gender, race or sexuality based, or across an intersection of these oppressions.

### **Methodology and methods:**

#### **Methodology:**

Feminist intersectionality was the methodology informing the development of the evaluated project training. Feminist intersectionality is about raising awareness of the challenges and discriminations that marginalised people experience and asking questions of how power operates in society and what inequalities arise and are sustained as a result (Hesse-Biber, 2011). Intersectional feminist approaches support recognition of the interlocking experiences of oppression across class, disability, gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality to provide an understanding of lived experiences that illuminate the mutually constitutive nature of multiple forms of oppression (Ahmed, 1998). Interfacing with this methodological approach are the principles and values of art psychotherapy that seek social justice for marginalised and oppressed peoples in a venture aimed at bringing about social transformation (Lykes and Hershberg, 2011).

Methodologically, the project itself was set in a qualitative paradigm, employing feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1993), working to enable emancipatory



participation whilst also building in reciprocity for the participants (Hesse-Biber, 2011). The project achieved this by enabling the art psychotherapists to come together with a shared goal of exchanging and questioning existing knowledges, combined with certification of having participated in a project that enabled them to satisfy regulatory body requirements around engaging in professional development and on-going learning. The methodological approach and methods used allowed for an exploration of personal experience and for different voices to be illuminated (Hesse-Biber, 2011), but also initiated critical questions of participants in terms of their own situatedness; to interrogate their own socio-cultural subjectivity and begin to critique the relationship between their experience, power and knowledge (Haraway, 1991).

### **Methods:**

This section of the paper outlines the methods used within the project. The enhancement activity consisted of a A4 poster, for display in practice, setting out a critical feminist socially just aligned criteria aimed at igniting practitioner reflection on the materials and/ or resources they use and that inform their practice.

The criteria are adapted, and transformed from a complete sentence into a series of questions, from the Bechdel Test (2016). The Bechdel test was created in the 1980s by American cartoonist Alison Bechdel to evaluate whether a movie could be considered feminist. The test was; (1) it has to have at least two women in it, who (2) who talk to each other, about (3) something besides a man.

The adapted criteria use in the project asks:

- Are the resources used reflective of women's and girls' experiences?
- And, women and girls from different ethnic, racial, age, class, sexual orientations, and disability backgrounds?

- And, do the resources used seek social justice for women/ girls? (Wright and Wright, 2013)

The resource hub is an open access online visual social media site where participants can explore, and potentially make use of, materials and resources that meet the enhancement activity criteria. Posts to the site constitute images of materials and resources alongside web links to additional information about them, including purchasing details.

Originally, the project hoped to recruit 6 self-selecting art psychotherapists from across South East England, but uptake was enthusiastic. Due to the limited project resources (financial and human) the number of participants enrolled was capped at 11. The project activity took place over a period of 6 months between February-July 2014. At an introductory workshop the art psychotherapist participants were introduced to the project and to intersectional feminist theories by a researcher working at the HE institution. This introductory workshop was important as it helped establish agreement on the interconnectedness between art psychotherapy principles and values and intersectional feminist theories and activism. Following this, training on how to most effectively use the enhancement activity and resource hub (Wright and Wright, 2013) was provided. After six weeks use of the enhancement activity and resource hub in their practice environments, the project participants were invited to attend an art making workshop where they produced a piece of visual art, in their preferred medium, that captured their experiences, learning and insights around using the enhancement activity and resource hub. The art making workshop was followed by a whole group viewing of the art making. During the viewing, participants individually presented their artwork using a guided written reflection tool to support both written and verbal articulations. The guided

reflection constituted four questions designed to enable participants to think reflexively about how their artwork reflected their use of the enhancement activity and resource hub; but also to prompt them to think about how new thinking and/ or knowledge may have had an impacted on their practice and potentially patients/ service users they work with. Whilst the presentations were individual, further discussions amongst the group also took place. The four guided reflection questions were:

1. Tell us how your art represents your experience of being part of the knowledge exchange project?
2. Describe how your art signifies/ symbolises your response to the experience of using the enhancement activity and resource hub?
3. How does your art convey what you have learnt from the experience of using the enhancement activity and resource hub?
4. How does your art express the impact on patients/ service users gained from your engagement with the enhancement activity and resource hub?

The questions aimed at eliciting the benefits of the underpinning critical feminist social justice approaches, as this in particular was what the project intended to explore. The written reflections and researcher notes, taken during the individual presentations and group discussions, constituted the project data. Note taking enabled the researcher to capture aspects of experience, learning, and insights that may only have been verbalised, not written, and/ or that could help further contextualise written reflections.

The creative act of developing and discussing the artwork aimed at supporting the practitioners, who are accomplished in visual and sensory artwork, to reflect upon their experiences of engaging with the enhancement activity and resource hub,

and provide a space in which to share those experiences with each other. It also enabled practitioners to use materials and ways of communicating and working that were familiar to them with which to engage in art making; a practice that mirrors the work their patients/ service users engage in, and which is an important part of their professional development both as artists and art psychotherapist.

Data from the guided reflections, the group discussion and the researcher's notes were cross-compared, themed, and then sub-themed to saturation point using NVivo computer assisted data analysis software. This theming method identified the most rich and meaningful data coming from the art psychotherapists' experiences and understanding. Results from the theming are presented below.

It is important to acknowledge that patients'/ service users' perspectives and experiences are missing from the data. The project aim was to engage with art psychotherapists, with the intention of including patients'/service users' experiences and perceptions if the enhancement activity and resource hub were evaluated as especially beneficial. In the 'Next steps' section of this paper there is an indication of how the project continued and grew to include experiences and perspectives of patients/ service users.

### **Data results:**

The four main salient themes that emerged from the data revolved around the following areas:

1. Patient/ service user benefit
2. Reflexive critical thinking
3. The importance of being attentive to patients'/ service users' subjective lived experiences (situatedness)
4. The helpfulness of collaboration for social justice praxis

Each of these themes in turn will be outlined with quotations from the practitioners to support the emergent theme. Italics are used within the quotes to supplement understanding, and are informed by the researcher notes taken during the individual presentations and group discussion. Practitioners have been allocated pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

- **Theme 1: patient/ service user benefit:**

Referral to practitioner perceived benefits to patients/ service users provided the richest data. Practitioners responded positively to using the enhancement activity and resource hub by saying the training offered a way of providing patients/ service users with more choice, of enabling them to be better heard and listened to, and of having their lived experiences validated. In some instances, the art psychotherapists felt their learning had supported empowerment, growth in self-esteem and enhanced creativity for patients/ service users.

Claire provided useful commentary, reporting that the experience of using the enhancement activity and resource hub enabled her to recognise patients'/ service users' socio-cultural situatedness, suggesting that through such recognition patients/ service users had their experiences and voices validated and brought front and centre.

“There isn't necessarily any solution to the problem; maybe a sense that recognising (*situatedness*) can be validation/ being heard”.

Eliza said engagement with the enhancement activity and resource hub enabled for patients/ service users:

“The facilitation of accessing and opening greater resources, possibilities, an opening up of choices, ways of being”.

Her reflections are a good example of developing critical thinking around situatedness; that there are other ways of being in and experiencing the world that need to be recognised.

Examples of patient/ service user empowerment can be seen in the words of Julia and Corina. Julia said:

“The children's confidence and self-esteem was positively impacted upon. I believe my clients are better informed, more vibrant, self-aware and effective advocates as a result of my personal participation in the project. On reflection, I would have also given children direct access to the hub and used this to further enhance their experience”.

Corina recognises the potential for the enhancement activity and resource hub to support social justice action:

“Promoting service users to engage with social issues can help them to reflect upon their own/ others' experiences and realise their potential to challenge issues and bring about social justice”.

There was also recognition from practitioners that their own growing awareness of social injustices was important in terms of understanding the challenges potentially facing patients/ service users and of how art psychotherapy practice has potential as a space/ place for social justice action.

Julia spoke of the importance of art psychotherapists' awareness around social injustices:

“My awareness....enabled me to be sensitive to what the children might need in order to feel supported in their creativity”.

Sara illustrates how the enhancement activity and resource hub have supported her in recognising better the discrimination and disadvantages patients/ service users

she works with experience. The art work she created for the individual presentation and group discussion helped her explain:

“Each mark represents a disappointment, misunderstanding, injustice, lack of opportunity, ways barred. Red for blood and sacrifice, hurt etc.”.

Sophie reflected that she was:

“Just starting to think about possibility of change/ opportunities and how the art environment supports this. Thinking about how they (*patients/ service users*) can see themselves as powerful. If society is not enabling them (*then*) psychotherapy is a place for action”.

Susie concurs with

“It only takes simple changes to enable patients/ clients to start to understand the world around them and how they can be involved and change what they see and how they see it”.

Awareness of social injustices sometimes began with a necessary reflection on their own situatedness, and both Ruth followed by Patricia recognised this:

“The impact is subtle in relation to service users...maybe I need to start with myself. I feel I have to start with myself, unpeeling and becoming more authentic, being aware of my layers and conditioned beliefs so I can be human and present with my clients”.

Patricia says of her own situated knowledge, when she offers a practice based example of working as a woman with male patients/ service users:

“Looking at own identity, and that in relation to others. How male clients view their own marginalisation and how they see women. (*This*) helped me think about how they view me and how I may challenge that. Maybe challenge by

getting him to think about what he thinks a 'girl/woman' is, and (*ask*) does that need challenging”.

The following quotations refer directly to evaluations of the enhancement activity and resource hub being supportive in enhancing practice, working to benefit practitioner, and patients/ service users.

Of the enhancement activity and resource hub two different practitioners said to following:

“The hub is varied and eclectic. You can take it or leave it (*it does not feel obligatory*). The content is richly visual and thoughtful. Thought-provoking - layered - with meaning both personal and general. Plenty of room for projection and interaction”.

“I chose to use washable children's paint to explore the idea that many of the people I work with feel paralysed. Whilst using the activity and hub I felt more able to broach this with the young people in a group session, providing them with a space to explore their feelings about being detained (*referring to a locked mental health unit practice setting*) and how bleak the future seemed”.

Victoria said the enhancement activity and resource hub:

“Gives clients opportunity for expression, to be heard, (*it*) has given me time to listen and think about materials used”.

In the group discussion, Sophie expressed of her art making that the:

“Image reflects my experience of enjoying the resource hub and enhancement activity, of regaining a political perspective, of acknowledging and changing accepted discriminations for/ with my clients and feeling myself inspired creatively”.

Olivia felt her engagement with the enhancement activity and resource hub had:



“Been illuminating and enable us to endeavour to free up and enable others”.

And Jill said of her art making that it:

“Symbolises the reality for many, which has been highlighted by the enhancement activity and resource hub. But also symbolises the simplicity of the idea, the idea that can change a person and then the world”.

- **Theme 2: Reflexive critical thinking:**

Critical thinking was the next salient theme coming out of the data. In this theme practitioners referred to development of their own ability to think critically about how power works in society to discriminate and marginalise. Illustrations of this critical insight were:

“There is still a massive struggle for women to have equal opportunities despite more personal freedom. There continues to be limited ways in which women are validated especially in the generations older than me”.

“(I) have learnt (*the*) reality of multiple oppressions for my clients”.

*(Engagement with the enhancement activity and resource hub):*

“Expanded an understanding and knowledge about social issues”.

*(Enabled):*

“Thinking through social construction and fixed determined identities and having resources that enables a questioning of that”.

Julia, who had used the enhancement activity and resource hub in an overseas practice setting said:

‘It exposed all that I have yet to learn about the country’s history and individuals’ histories. It reinforced my awareness of my own race and cultural position in my own country and how this translates when living in a different one”.

And for critical thinking to translate into transformative action/ practice, Julia added:

“Being informed by the resource hub I feel I can expand my understanding of social issues, learnt new frameworks of thinking and gained tools to stimulate the engagement with social issues and being about change”.

- **Theme 3: The importance of being attentive to patients’/ service users’ subjective lived experiences (situatedness)**

Data relating to practitioners’ raised awareness of the marginalisation and discriminations patients/ service users may experience came to the fore as the third theme. Also illustrated was thinking through how those experiences of marginalisation and discrimination could be explored and better facilitated within art psychotherapy practice and art psychotherapy spaces as an endeavour towards seeking social justice. There was an understanding of how that endeavour needs to be a collaborative practitioner/ patient/ service user project, but acknowledgment that practitioner development through reflexive critical thinking is crucial to that project being both collaborative and having patient/ service user benefit.

The data illustrates insights into the multiple and interlocking marginalisations and discriminations experienced by patients/ service users:

“(I) learnt the reality of multiple oppressions for my clients”.

“(I thought how) expectations of economic and socially deprived women within the family/ society lead to mental health problems...(and then) about how women can look for and engage in opportunities within their communities i.e. become more seen for who they are and what they want and need. Becoming who they are and not what they are told”.

Victoria said the resource hub had:

“Given me time to reflect, think of clients' differences and link these with materials”.

Julia reflected critically on her own practice by acknowledging, through engagement with the enhancement activity and resource hub:

“I was aware all the time of how women's histories have been edited out of mainstream history and wondered if I was doing the same thing. I made a conscious effort to research a female artist to be better informed”.

Explaining the application of her new knowledge for therapeutic conversations, Olivia states:

“I have learnt that by thinking about someone's situation from another point of view it can empower me to openly discuss it and think about the implications of social restrictions on clients' wider lives”.

Corina decided to take action by changing her practice when working with disabled children. Corina said she:

“Ordered paints ready made for mixed race, of colour children; otherwise they have to mix the paint which is hard for physically disabled and/ or dying children”.

Victoria also took action, talking of how she used a more diverse range of cloth dolls within her practice, rather than the usual white dolls, which meant:

“(The) mother of a mixed race child used (*had the choice of*) a brown doll”.

- **Theme 4: The helpfulness of collaboration for social justice praxis:**

There were comments about the collegial approaches needed in sustaining socially just practice and these constitute the forth-emergent theme. This theme spoke of how collaborative endeavours enabled a sense of shared purpose and a reconnection with key foundational principles and values of working for socially just

outcomes for patients/ service users, and to how that endeavour is possible through creative processes; but also recognising it is sometimes difficult to sustain, especially when working in isolated environments.

Sophie was the most vocal on this point saying the project:

“Allowed me to turn a mirror on myself and my professional practice and see (*how*) some shadows can curtail my work/ role e.g. sense of professional isolation, institutionalised confinement of practice, sense of disempowerment and resigned acceptance of status quo”.

Going on to say it is:

“About accepting reality, but seeing change is possible especially as a group project”.

And that her art making:

“Reflects, integration, growth, sense of empowerment, solidarity, and the re-connection to the creative self”.

Concluding:

“Collectives make a difference; shared experience is important to accept reality as well as moving forward and seeking solutions...the importance of ...remaining political”.

Others also mentioned similar feelings of the juxtaposing realities of work experiences with working for social justice.

- **Alternative experience**

There was one piece of standalone data that emerged which it is important to recognise as it represents an alternative experience that could potentially inform future further research. One practitioner’s experience of using the enhancement

activity was not entirely beneficial. For Julia the enhancement activity criteria were experienced as impeding at times and marginally didactic. She said:

“I think being actively aware of the criteria (*the criteria contained within the enhancement activity*) was slightly inhibiting in my own practice and directive in my planning for the sessions with the groups I lead.”

Whilst this represents a minority perspective, it is useful to acknowledge that, should the enhancement activity be more widely utilised, other practitioners may also have a similar experience.

- **Limitations of the training:**

In terms of the limitations of the consciousness raising training (enhancement activity and resources hub) the project did not have capacity for exploration of non-binary and transgender identities and experiences including within it. On this basis, it is clear that more work needs to be done to further the intersectional aspects of the enhancement activity and resource hub. The project is grateful for the reviews of this paper for pointing out this limitation.

It is also clear that whilst the enhancement activity and resource hub can ignite reflection on, and provide a starting point for, intersectional considerations, it does not automatically enable, or guarantee, an understanding of oppressions and discriminations as multiple and interlocking. In this sense it may be that the training is more useful to those coming to intersectional theories and approaches for the first time, as an introduction, a springboard to exploring greater understanding.

### **Discussion:**

The project enabled the transfer of knowledge and expertise held within the academy into the local art psychotherapy health economy through the development of a work-based learning intervention (the enhancement activity) and supportive

resource hub (online site) as raisers of critical consciousness and as reflexive leaning consciousness raising in intersectional feminism training for art psychotherapists. The project supported making it possible to realise what are often theoretical, conceptual ideas as tangible training that are utilisable within the workplace environment. This project also enabled a group of liked minded women art psychotherapists to come together for a shared purpose, and undertake continued professional learning and development. Beyond the project, the enhancement activity developed further into A0 size posters that the project participants could take away and display in their practice areas as a reflexive tool to support continued and sustained engagement with the principles of intersectional feminist socially just art psychotherapy. The online resource hub (online site) created for the project was reproduced by the participant group who wanted to take ownership for maintaining, sustaining, and continuously developing their own version of it.

Practitioners were already aligned to the values and principles of social justice, which are reflective of those of their profession, values and principles that have a strong and distinct similarity to those underpinning intersectional feminisms and social justice movements. In this sense, engaging with, and applying in practice, the enhancement activity and resource hub did not mean engaging with and applying a wholly unfamiliar set of principles and philosophies. However, the project only constituted a small scale study, and it would be interesting to see if a larger cohort study ratifies the findings. A wider study may also be helpful in mapping out intersectional feminist art psychotherapy approaches, or lack of them, used across art psychotherapy workforces. A wider-ranging study with greater access to organisational data - and in particular patient/ service user self-reporting data - could also be useful for better understanding patients'/ service users' demographics more

broadly, as this project's findings around patient/ service user demographics are premised on the practitioners' perceptions only. It is acknowledged that the project only included practitioners and not patients/ service users, and consequently the project results that speak of patient/ service user benefits cannot be fully verified until a further evaluation is undertaken that specifically explores patient/ service user experiences and perspectives.

It is important to stress the need to be aware of possible resistance to intersectional feminist and critical social justice approaches, and to the critical reflexivity exhorted by them, as some practitioners may be particularly invested in positioning themselves alongside sentiments of post-feminist, post-racist world views (Frost, 2014; Mohanty, 2013; Fannin et al, 2014; Wise, 2011). This is noted because of the researcher's own experiences of teaching critical social justice and feminist theories in a HE institution, of how it can be an on-going struggle to raise recognition and acceptance of social injustices, to illuminate the oppressive nature of dominant ways of thinking and being, and foster preparedness to unlearn neoliberal frames of references (Davis, 2016). Whilst such stances were not demonstrated within the project itself, it is important to remain vigilant of challenges that lack the fundamental will to acknowledge social injustices. Didactic orientation to social injustices (Wright & Wright, 2013) through mapping from the margins to the centre of power (hooks, 2000) - that is starting with the lived experiences of the most marginalised and oppressed in order to elucidate where power and privilege resides - is fundamental to disrupting that power and privilege towards advancing struggles for social justice (Hesse-Biber, 2011).

The project findings suggest that knowledge exchange activity can help bridge gaps between theories and practice across disciplinary fields by bringing new frames

of reference and orientation to thinking and practice. Emphasising the value of intersectional critical feminist social justice approaches to art psychotherapy praxis has supported the art psychotherapy practitioners to see more explicitly, and value greater, the importance of paying attention to patients'/ service users', as well as their own, situatedness (Haraway, 1991). Illuminating the subjectivity of lived experiences is useful for working towards more socially just therapeutic relationships and spaces. The greater attentiveness to situatedness (Haraway, 1991) and greater critical reflexivity (Mohanty, 2013) elucidates how power operates within therapeutic relationships, and is important for exposing and deconstructing power and for bringing about transformation and social justice.

Critical reflexivity (Mohanty, 2013) also offers a point from which to consider material environments (Fannin et al, 2014; Frost, 2014; Ahmed, 2006) in which art psychotherapy is practiced and engaged with by patients/ service users; i.e. what art inhabits the psychotherapy space, what is hung on the walls, what books and fabrics are present, what languages, discourses and philosophies underpin the very material stuff of art psychotherapy spaces. In other words, what dwells within art psychotherapy spaces, what philosophies are embodied and materially in action within them, what materials are used and what informs their construct. Critical reflexivity on the materialism of art psychotherapy is an opportunity to rework spaces so that they better reflect the lives and experiences of the patients/ service users who are entering them, as this can potentially enhance them as spaces and places of greater safety, and offer an opportunity to make and/ or remake therapeutic relationships of mutuality and reciprocity. Rather than an experience of automatic alienation and one of spaces dictating the orientation that patients/ service users take within them. In other words, orientations that work to shape patients/ service



users always with reference to dominant and hegemonic 'norms' and world-views. Instead such spaces could be oriented towards patients/ service users as spaces into which they step as a foundation from where they can continue reshaping and remaking themselves as radical praxis (Ahmed, 2006).

Shifting practitioners' frames of reference, so that they began to be critical and reflexive (Mohanty, 2013) - that is considering themselves in relation to both the internal (the self) and external (others) - was a key outcome of the project. Practitioners' thinking began to move beyond value judgements about theory, selves or others based on normative ways of seeing and doing towards having, what Butler (2001) calls, a virtuous purpose. Such virtuosity is about having a commitment to wilfully (Ahmed, 2014) and purposely set about deconstructing, exposing, and transforming what have been constructed 'truths' - 'truths' that constitute what have become understood as 'norms', a normative world view - including 'norms' that have been internalised, that are both within and acted out by the self. Such commitment is a progressive transformative intention to far-reaching critical thinking, a premeditation to radical purpose (Ahmed, 2014); - it is on this track that the art psychotherapists have embarked on.

Collegiality within the project was helpful in beginning a trajectory of art psychotherapy social justice praxis. A collective experience, an accord of community practitioners, provided a point of both solidarity and of potential sustainability. Making explicit the similarities between the philosophical values, beliefs, and principles of art psychotherapy and the theories and activism of intersectional feminisms and critical social justice approaches, has enabled a virtuous foundation for a collective (and potentially beyond the immediate collective) radical change project (Lorde, 2007).

A logical progression for the practitioners is as practitioners/ actors of radical praxis, as disturbers of the 'norms' of the therapeutic environment towards radical change, that is about detoxifying practice and therapeutic relationships that perpetuate and sustain dominant hegemonic structures of power that propagate and maintain social injustices. The radical practice environment change proposed here is of an intellectual, emotional, and material revisioning that works as a form of resistance to dominant and hegemonic structurally dependant spaces and relationships towards greater reciprocity for all.

**Conclusions and implications for art psychotherapy practice:**

The enhancement activity and resource hub were evaluated as useful consciousness raising in intersectional feminism training for the art psychotherapists' continued professional development, for reconnecting practitioners with the values and beliefs underpinning their profession and practice, raising and enhancing awareness of intersectionality critical feminist and social injustice theories and praxis, and suggesting how those can be better understood, critiqued, and potentially acted upon within art psychotherapy spaces. Evaluation of the enhancement activity and resource hub revealed that they enabled art psychotherapists to become more reflexive and critically conscious thinkers, that such developments in thinking have the potential to impact as more socially just transformations in practice, and that they work to continuously re-engage and challenge the direction of practice and practitioner development. Finding ways of igniting, reconnecting with, and sustaining critical reflexivity within the profession opens up possibilities for transforming, not only practice and therapeutic relationships, but also of transforming the current demographic landscape of art psychotherapy practitioners so that it is more diverse and inclusive of those from across multiple intersections. The project results suggest

that the potential impact of more reflexive and critically conscious practitioners could be more reflexive and critically conscious patients/ service users, and in addition the prospective space to explore not just thought, but also actions (by practitioners/ patients/ service users) towards greater social justice for patients/ service users.

It is important to recognise that participants occupied relatively privileged socio-cultural spaces and that the project aimed to challenge them to think about their frames of reference and how those influence their practice, and from there to consider working with a more intersectional approach. The researcher similarly occupied relatively privileged socio-cultural spaces as a white Western born working-class, but now in middle-class employment, woman. Occupying such privilege, and having a commitment to social justice and anti-oppressive research and practice (Baines and Edwards 2015), requires doing the work of speaking to others with similar privileges, of doing the education (learning and teaching) that can lay the groundwork for emerging apprentices to feminist intersectional and critical social justice theories and action towards becoming accomplices in working together to understand, resist and counter structural and systematic oppressions (Davis, 2016). For the participants and researcher, this is just a beginning, a point from which further learning and development can continue. Developing and using the project training is only commencement of awakening consciences. This initial wakening can be observed through the ways in which practitioners sometimes spoke on behalf of patients/ service users, or sometimes employed oppressive language. It can also be observed through the researcher's clumsy omission of non-binary and trans gender identities and experiences in the enhancement activity and resource hub. There is further work to be done, but that the practitioners choose to engage in anti-oppressive work is important because it cannot always be marginalised and

oppressed peoples doing, and expected to do, the work of educating the privileged (Ahmed, 2012). Privileged accomplices need to work to inform themselves about structures of power and privilege, how they operate to discriminate and oppress and how they can be challenged and deconstructed. They need to ask questions of themselves, examine their own privileges and complicity in oppressive practices, acting on what they learn so that they can be meaningful co-conspirators in anti-oppressive approaches and action.

The project has continued to evolve beyond the original research. The next step involved the art psychotherapists showcasing art marking that come out of participation in the project and/ or joining the special interest social justice and art psychotherapy group beyond the project finishing. The free public art exhibition was hosted by the project HE institution in November 2016, with the aim of supporting the art psychotherapists to further and continue their professional development towards socially just praxis, as well as sustain the research and knowledge exchange partnership developed between the HE institution and the practitioners. Some patients'/ service users' art featured in the exhibition. This illustrates the art psychotherapist' reflexivity as they account, not only for their own world views and socio-cultural privileges, but also recognise the importance of elevating patients'/ service users' voices in working towards reimagining, and potentially remaking therapeutic relationships and art psychotherapy spaces as socially just spaces.

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