

Art Therapy Online: ATOL

Connecting with the image: how art psychotherapy can help to re-establish a sense of epistemic trust

Elizabeth Taylor Buck and Dominik Havsteen-Franklin

Abstract

The International Centre for Arts Psychotherapies Training (ICAPT) was established by CNWL NHS Foundation Trust in London in November 2011. The centre was set up to further research and advance clinical practice within NHS mental health settings. At the launch of the research arm of ICAPT in July 2012, Professor Peter Fonagy spoke on the subject of the future of research in arts psychotherapies. This paper is a response to Professor Peter Fonagy's presentation (The ICAPT 2012) on the potential arts psychotherapies have to enhance the development of the therapeutic relationship. During the presentation Fonagy suggested to a group of arts psychotherapists that: *'the future of research is trying to understand what you guys do that actually helps re-establish in our patient a sense of epistemic trust, a sense that human knowledge and human communication, as communicated by fellow human beings can be trusted, can be relied on...'* A recording of this presentation is followed by a discussion section in which two art psychotherapists explore and expand upon the ideas presented by Fonagy. They explore his question about what the processes of making and reflecting on images in a therapeutic context can add to the development of 'epistemic trust' within the therapeutic relationship. It is suggested that creative arts have the potential to enhance the development of epistemic trust within the therapeutic relationship by offering opportunities for contingency and joint engagement. Individual, group and dyadic art psychotherapy allow for the creation of an external object which is congruent with the maker's

internal world. The art making process and the art object itself can create an additional channel of communication which helps the art psychotherapist to understand the client's inner world. This greater understanding can support the psychotherapist's capacity to respond in an attuned way to the client. The authors explore the idea that joint engagement in art making can lead to opportunities for enhanced mentalizing and that with sufficient research and theoretical underpinning, this type of model could help to define clinical practice for arts psychotherapies in mental health.

Key Words: Fonagy; mentalization; contingent communication; mechanisms of change; joint engagement.

Introduction

Professor Peter Fonagy was asked to offer a talk on the future of arts Psychotherapies research to an audience of arts psychotherapists because of his relentless interest in discovering 'what works for whom'. A book of the same title was one of the landmarks in his career; however this is amidst countless other achievements that led him to hold simultaneous positions of Freud Memorial Professor of Psychoanalysis, Chief executive of the Anna Freud Centre and Head of the Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology at University College of London. His background as a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst has also provided a clinical platform from which to engage with arts psychotherapies.

Addressing the group of arts psychotherapists in July 2012, Peter Fonagy described how establishing a sense of epistemic trust may be a key agent of change within the psychotherapeutic process. He described interactional patterns and processes that can lead to the re-opening of the 'epistemic superhighway' re-establishing 'a sense that human knowledge and human communication, as communicated by fellow human beings can be trusted, can be relied on' (quotation from presentation).

Key mechanisms include the use of 'ostensive cues' such as eye contact, greeting by name, and emotionally congruent or 'contingent' communication (i.e. when the response 'matches, fits, or resonates' with the emotional

experience (Wallin and Johnson 2007, p.106). Fonagy predicted that the future of research in the field of arts psychotherapy will be concerned with understanding which factors are key to re-establishing epistemic trust.

A recording of Fonagy's presentation is posted below. After the video there is a discussion section in which two art psychotherapy researchers explore further the potential art psychotherapy has to enhance the development of epistemic trust. The discussion also focuses on clinical models of art psychotherapeutic intervention that utilise a stance that underpins epistemic trust and joint attention. These principles can inform the psychotherapists' knowledge of timing and types of intervention and linking image content with pragmatic clinical methodologies as has been illustrated in a number of recent papers. (Franks & Whitaker 2007, Isserow 2008, McFerron & Stephenson 2010, Tuffery 2011, Vaiouli & Schertz 2012).

Video recording: see contents page

Discussion

The following discussion section arose from a pooling of ideas between two art psychotherapists, Elizabeth Taylor Buck and Dominik Havsteen-Franklin both of whom, as well as being practicing art psychotherapists, are working on art psychotherapy based research projects. The discussion explores the potential art psychotherapy has to enhance the development of 'epistemic trust' by offering additional opportunities for contingency through: the presence of an emotionally contingent external art object; offering additional channels of communication; opportunities for joint engagement in art making. Implications for future clinical methodologies are also outlined.

The image: externalising the internal

Fonagy suggests in the presentation that one key mechanism for change in therapy is the opportunity for offering contingent responses to '...individuals whose history of inter-relations with other people led to a closure of that epistemic superhighway' (direct quotation from presentation). Clients or patients may no longer be able to learn from others as they have become

inflexible and rigid so that despite their experiences they will not change. This, says Fonagy, is what we struggle with and he wonders what, as psychological therapists, do we do? His answer is:

‘We put them in a range of different situations where the experience they have is someone who is interested in them, who is responding to them contingently, in a range of different ways ... They feel for a brief time that they actually matter... and that frees that epistemic superhighway’ (quotation from presentation).

Controversially perhaps, Fonagy postulates that we may in the past have been misled about the mechanisms of change in therapy: ‘We don’t cure them, we like to think that our metaphors cure them (but) I have to disappoint you, it may just be that it’s actually not us’ (quotation from presentation). Instead, Fonagy says that what can be achieved for our clients in therapy is:

‘a change of mindset in them so that they are once again open to be influenced by others... in their relationships, by people who have actually been benign and benevolent towards them before but they were unable to see it because that learning path was closed to them...’ (quotation from presentation).

Clearly, Fonagy sees contingent relating as a key mechanism of change. However, art psychotherapists also work with the possibility of another contingent therapeutic relationship: the relationship between the image and the maker. Art psychotherapists often write about images created in art psychotherapy as reflections, depictions, or externalisations of feelings and the inner world (Albert-Puleo 1980, Muri 2007) and of art making as a process of ‘externalising internal representations of reality’ (La Nave 2010). If an art object can become an externalised representation of the internal world then the maker of the object or image may finally be able to look at and reflect on something that is, at least to some extent, congruent with their own inner world. The nature of the art object is a form to represent feelings, thoughts and somatic responses to interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics. This is relevant not only to art psychotherapists, but to arts psychotherapists generally.

Personal experience and clinical observation indicates that artists and makers often have a fascination with objects they have made, perhaps particularly those that are seen as reflections of the internal world. This fiery absorption can be short lived fading sometimes in a matter of days, perhaps as the internal landscape shifts slightly and the contingency diminishes. Schaverien explores this shifting relationship between the image and the maker in some detail. She identifies some stages in the life of the picture starting with *Identification* which is: 'The state immediately after the picture is made ... (when) there may be a sympathetic connection' (Schaverien 1992 p.106).

The term 'sympathetic connection' is perhaps another way of describing a feeling of congruence as the maker looks at the image or object and thinks that it has to some degree captured something of their own internal world. The second stage Schaverien identifies is *Familiarisation* during which: 'The picture is viewed and begins to become familiar' and 'is seen as outside' (IBID. p.106). This may be important, so that although the maker is the originator of the image, it now exists as an external object which has a degree of resonance to the maker's internal world.

There is some experimental research that suggests that the use of images as communicative devices can increase the potential for generating alternative perspectives, unique insights and new ways of perceiving the world (Piaget & Inhelder 1971). We do not know if a sense of congruence with non-human objects can have the same impact on the epistemic super highway as does the presence of a contingently related person. However, it does seem possible that reflecting on a physical externalisation of one's own inner state could help contribute to more flexible and less rigid ways of being.

Communication: the third instinct

Fonagy's presentation focuses on the importance of communication reminding the audience that there are three broad classes of instinct: eating

and procreation; attachment and relationship building; and human communication.

One idea that is often presented is that art can be used to enhance other modes of communication or as an alternative channel of communication with unique expressive qualities. Paivio (1981) describes images as being effective communicators of concrete events, objects and the spatial development of an abstract concept. In the development of the capacity to learn and communicate, verbal language is said to be built upon the foundation of what has been described as 'image schemas' (Johnson & Malgady 1980, Lakoff 1987, 1993).

Whilst there is insufficient space to cover the research on communicating perceptions through the external image, it is worth noting evidence from cognitive science that suggests in normal development the use of images is more likely to produce symbolic associations than words alone (Paivio & Csapo 1973, Paivio 1981). This is important given that the image as an aid or channel of communication must necessarily provide something different to or extra to the verbal domain. The capacity to make associations to the image more readily may be to do with the close relationship between perception as an internal representational system and the externalised image (Finke 1989).

It has also been observed that in normal development the mismatch between perception and image created by the novice sketcher can cause a reduced cognitive capacity, meaning a greater difficulty to logically think through the links, associations and relationship between the image forms (Kavakli & Gero 2001). Therefore, reflective verbalisation that uses the image may also be limited at the time of making the image and this can be observed in sessions. However, this seems to be compensated for by the resulting difference of perception and externalised image creating an ambiguity that has a higher possibility of creating associations. In other words, whilst there may be a struggle to effectively communicate the preconceived internal representation, often commented on by the patient through saying 'I don't know how to draw',

the nonverbal implicit communication of representational content is not necessarily compromised. In this way, the image can be used as a place to revisit expectations and to offer new perspectives to both the patient and the art psychotherapist that may be partly dependent upon the difference of the form of the image made to their expectations. This suggests that the image making process may also entail a communicative mentalizing activity, as well as the final product.

The idea of art as an alternative channel of communication may be one reason why art psychotherapy is often thought to be useful with people who have specific communication difficulties, with young or pre-verbal children or with adults who are for a myriad of other reasons struggling to put their thoughts and feelings into words. Meyerowitz-Katz in her exploration of art psychotherapy with a four-year old writes: 'Communication in the art therapy setting is multilayered and complex' and 'can be both conscious and unconscious' (Meyerowitz-Katz 2003, p.60). She describes how: 'Qualities inherent in the art materials and art process' can function 'as vessels of containment, as channels for communication' (IBID. p.68).

Evans writes that art is about communication:

'The environment in which the art therapy is taking place, the art materials, the child and the art psychotherapist are intimately involved in emerging expressive and cognitive communication' (Evans 1998, p.22).

She clarifies that:

'communication does not reside just within the finished product, but within the emerging and shifting dynamics of the whole art therapy process and its context' (IBID. p.22).

Nowell Hall writing about her work in a therapeutic community explains:

'The official language of the therapeutic community was words - with the expectation that patients would explore and share through talking.

But for some there was a need for another form of expression and communication' (Nowell Hall 1987, p.167).

She quotes a member of the community who explains, 'Some things are beyond words ...Painting gave me something definite and concrete to hang on to'(IBID. p.167). Nowell Hall describes how art gave this woman:

'a way to communicate something of her feelings' and how for some 'making an image can create a bridge and a way of 'speaking' out of states that might be described as the depth of despair' (IBID. p.171).

Within the context of art psychotherapy the image is seen as having significant potential as a mode of interpersonal communication. However, the relationship with the psychotherapist has a reflexive, bidirectional quality. The psychotherapist is not just someone to whom thoughts and experiences are communicated, the psychotherapist is also someone who responds to the communications of the client and the image, striving to respond in a 'marked contingent' manner and to create a sense of attunement and therapeutic containment. The process of creation and reflection within the context of this supportive relationship allows not only insight but also a 'new evaluation of the nature of symbolic exchange between people (including symbolic exchange between people and things they create and which they have shared appreciation of)' (Fonagy, personal communication, 2012)

Art psychotherapy offers the possibility of making a powerfully communicative or congruent image within the context of a therapeutic relationship. The three-way relationship between the image, the artist and the art psychotherapist has often been often conceptualised as a triangular relationship (Wood 1990, Wood 1984, Schaverien 2000, Case 2000, Skaife 2000). The nature of this triangular relationship has been explored in terms of the dynamics, focussing not just on the real relationships between artist, art psychotherapist and image, but also the transference and counter-transference relationships (Schaverien 1992). However, the fluctuating levels of attunement or congruence within each of these relationships are also important, as well as the opportunities for reflective interpersonal conversations and relationship

repair which arise when one of the relationships become misattuned or incongruent.

Joint engagement in art making

There is another highly significant element that art making can bring to the table. This is something that comes about during the process of making something alongside another person. It is something that perhaps group art psychotherapy, family art psychotherapy and the emerging practice of parent-child dyadic art psychotherapy are well placed to exploit. Nowell Hall quotes one of the people she worked with as saying: 'Doing something was important, and doing something together' (Nowell Hall 1987 p.165).

The side-by-side approach to art therapy has been explored by Greenwood and Layton (1987) and again recently in a new paper by Greenwood (2012): 'We refer to our stance as "side-by-side" therapy. By this we mean there is a sense of equality between the patient and therapist, addressing something outside themselves' (Greenwood and Layton 1987 p.14)

The idea that doing something together might be developmentally or psychologically beneficial is currently being explored by researchers who are looking at the developmental significance of joint parent child engagement and in particular the importance of *symbol-infused* joint engagement (Adamson et al. 2004).

Recent research (Nelson et al. 2008) has shown the impact that joint parent-child engagement has on the acquisition of 'theory of mind' which is the ability to attribute states of mind (such as beliefs or wishes) to other people. The construct of theory of mind is closely related to mentalization, indeed some developmentalists have started to use the term mentalizing as an alternative (Fonagy et al. 2007). Nelson et al explain that:

'...periods of symbol-infused joint engagement may provide children with opportunities to interweave symbols into shared activities in ways

that have been shown to facilitate the development of theory of mind'
(Nelson et al. 2008, p.848)

The longitudinal study demonstrates that early shared experiences with a caregiver can provide a foundation for the development of a theory of mind because when participating in joint engagement tasks the child will pay attention both to the task and to the person they are sharing it with. This triadic pattern of attention may help the child to see the activity from the adult's perspective as well as their own. It is this process that the researchers believe might contribute to the development of theory of mind.

The research indicates that when engaged in joint parent-child activities the toddlers are not only in a position to compare their own feelings about an event with the adult partner's emotional reaction to it; they can experience their adult partner as an intentional being, able to react to the toddler's actions and also to initiate new actions. The researchers conclude that

'Both observing a partner's actions on and reactions to shared objects during periods of coordinated joint engagement and discussing shared objects during symbol-infused joint engagement may provide vital information about other people's mental states.' (Nelson et al., 2008, p.851)

If it is the case that the joint engagement of parent and toddler in shared task can foster theory of mind and help the child to understand that the parent has his or her own internal processes, thoughts and feelings, then one could hypothesise that joint making activities with older children and their parent or carers could also foster important and potentially therapeutic processes in the child and also perhaps in the adult. One of the premises of dyadic parent-child art psychotherapy is that parent and child working together on a joint task can encourage both discussions of the shared task as well as an appreciation of the other person's perspectives.

Similarly, joint engagement tasks in family art psychotherapy and in group art psychotherapy could potentially increase both communication and

mentalization between individuals, an idea expanded on by Greenwood in her description of the “side-by-side” approach in art therapy groups :

‘Showing the art work and looking and talking about the pictures together provide additional opportunities for development of self in relation to others and sharing and modifying anxieties... this facilitates mentalization and furthermore the therapists’ participation in art work models their continuous reflection on what goes on in their mind’ (Greenwood 2012, p.10).

The joint process of encouraging mentalization can also be reflected in how the arts mediums are used. In recent clinical discussions between senior arts psychotherapists within a large NHS organisation there was a surprising overlap between the clinical interactive techniques between music therapists and art psychotherapists. As a parallel process of music therapists making music in collaboration with the patient, it was stated by a number of senior art psychotherapists that they had independently adapted their approaches to working with adult mental health patients where work was sometimes made in parallel or in collaboration with the patient. In one example the art psychotherapist was instructed what to make with some clay. The clay making process evolved into a shared exercise. In another example an art psychotherapist said that she used image making in the session to describe a shared sense of ‘stuckness’ in the therapy that enabled the patient to explore what had led the art psychotherapist and patient to be at that juncture.

Even if there is no shared task, and the art psychotherapist does not engage in the physical work of making images, there will often be a joint focus of attention of the art object. Isserow explores the idea of looking together in art psychotherapy and concludes:

‘As looking together at the physical art object is such a ubiquitous and distinguishing feature of art therapy, it seems important to begin to integrate some of this research into our own theoretical thinking and understanding of the art therapeutic relationship’ (Isserow 2008 p.41)

But how do we formalise this theoretical thinking in a pragmatic way that addresses the changes being proposed? As Fonagy states, the capacity to

have *'a change of mindset in them so that they are once again open to be influenced by others'* (quotation from presentation). How do we extend the principles of 'joint attention' from being a passive activity to one that elaborates on the active co-creation of a new situation that will generate epistemic trust? What techniques do we build upon that will maintain integrity, authenticity of response and allow for intuition?

Arts Psychotherapies: Our Future Clinical Methodology

There is evidence to suggest that there is significant learning that could happen about how we use our different sensory mediums within the clinical contexts (See Karkou & Sanderson 2006). Arts therapies share the commonality of using arts mediums for the purposes of establishing communication and bringing the poetry in communication alive – the 'as if' quality of which symbolisation and metaphor are often established through the use of an arts medium rather than through words alone (Dissanayake 1988, McNiff 2004, Maclagan 2005, Learnmouth 2009). And yet Fonagy says that it might not be the metaphors themselves that are the most important change agents, suggesting instead that in successful therapy what should be the primary interest as both an outcome and a change mechanism are changes to perceptions of intentional states of mind.

The process of determining agents of change is dependent upon a number of variables, including which outcome measures are used and the accepted definitions of 'change'. How do we qualify and quantify the change process? And who determines the framework for the definition of change? The NHS has attempted to take a number of perspectives into account; including the patient's perspective upon which the recovery approach has been built and a medical perspective that holds symptom change as the most significant change factor.

However, it may be that art therapy affects not only symptomatic change with specific disorders (See Franks & Whitaker 2007) but also areas of the patient's experience that involve adaption to the psychosocial environment,

the domain of interpersonal communication and contingent schematic responses (See Fonagy et al. 2002, pp.5-13). Perhaps central to this is the use of symbolic verbal and non-verbal communication to reflect on intentional states of minds.

It is arguable that in individual and group arts therapies, the 'as if' quality can foster contingent interpersonal communication and enhance the possibility of mentalizing by powerfully communicating one person's experience to another; in which case the development of epistemic trust could be seen as dependent upon the communicative potential of the 'as if' quality of the image. The patients' capacity to imagine another perspective behind the opaque behaviours of the other parallels exploring the interpersonal content of image making and is integral to developing a sense of self-other in the therapeutic relationship.

Vignette: Abeba

Abeba was of Afro Caribbean origin. She had had a very troubled early life that included severe physical punishment and emotional abuse. She was referred to an art psychotherapy group due to a relapse into a psychotic episode. The art psychotherapy group had been established for patients diagnosed with schizophrenia and the other patients who were attending the group had enduring mental health conditions. Abeba was a large, emotionally expressive lady who presented as quite tearful, preoccupied and responding to visual and auditory hallucinations.

Abeba noticed other people using art materials, often making stories through their work, but she had struggled to draw at all, and often there was simply a bold mark. The therapist felt these marks to be a wound or cut in the paper. The pen was used in a jerking and uncoordinated way often jabbing at the paper. Early in the sessions circles were drawn and then a circle on a circle, something of similar form to a snowman and eventually a face. But her feelings of desperation and disconnectedness often overwhelmed her and at times there was barely an utterance to the group. Occasionally she smiled in

response to group members but was quickly preoccupied by her hallucinations. The group members were interested in her and curious about what was happening. They had known each other for some time and felt that they had been through similar experiences, and felt some optimism that she would recover. Occasionally the curiosity appeared to be condescending or reinforcing of her position as the 'unwell one'. Abeba was unable to respond to the group interest for very long. However, one day in a style very different from her usual work, she drew a rudimentary figure in a boat and handed the image over to the group. This drawn image was more detailed than her previous work. The person appeared to be animated and securely placed in the middle of the boat. An oar was held in each hand of the person. She was unable to verbally articulate its importance to the group members but her non-verbal communication through gesture, eye contact and facial expression gave an indication that this was connected to her experience in the present.

The art psychotherapist tried to keep an 'openness' in the group about what was happening. The responses were quite mixed, perhaps because this new image put Abeba in a different position, and this meant that she shared some capability of connectedness with the group members. In some senses this wasn't taken very easily; two of the group members liked to feel responsible and on top of things and so the emergence of a new way of communicating sat quite uneasily with one of them. Whilst questions about the boat seemed to stimulate some anxiety, the art psychotherapist picked up on the image of the person in the boat, and linked it with something that she had said on first entering the room, 'it's nice to be back again'. Using warmth in her tentative 'offering' the therapist said, 'Perhaps being back, it feels like a supportive place, a bit like the image perhaps?' The group members subtle undermining of her through being patronising subsided and the atmosphere in the group became warmer. The use of the boat as a description of herself in a different condition brought an 'as if' quality of her experience to the group members, which revealed a different side of Abeba.

The intended communication is unclear; however it appeared that through group members responding in a way that was contingent to her connection

with the group as a supportive place, there was a mind-mindedness exchange that was initiated through the sharing of the image and the joint attention to the image. This brief encounter echoed smaller prior exchanges with the group, however on this occasion the use of an image assisted with revealing something of her experience that appeared to be afloat rather than beneath the waves of her traumatising hallucinations. This concise example gives a sense of the role of the pre-linguistic image in forming a different perspective on the development of epistemic trust through communication, also known as mentalization.

Although there may be a tendency to reify the concept of mentalization, Fonagy has arduously tempered a theoretical approach to understanding psychodynamic and cognitive processes, which leaves scope for practitioner's individual imagination and therapeutic leaning. He patently is not saying anything new, quite the reverse: Fonagy is taking note of what happens in normal development, framed in terms of pedagogic attention and the implications of research illustrating early forms of empathy and the mechanisms that generate trans-generational learning about being human with each other.

At the same time, Fonagy is drawing a curtain on the days of interpretative-insight led therapy. This of course harks back to Freud's dilemma: is the 'new science' (Freud 1938 p.159) simply research into disorders or is the research methodology a treatment in its own right? (Freud 1933 p.151) A 'new science' such as psychoanalysis is not reigned in to empirical research in the ways that the 'old science' must be. This dilemma is very much alive in today's psychotherapy community and was at the heart of the 'great Health Professions Council debate' (Reeves & Mollon 2009) where state registration was seen as condemning psychotherapists to the restraints of standardisation. We can only listen to our patients, understand the analyses of the randomised controlled trials and develop theory and concepts that cogently reflect causal relationships in technique and practice. Any research in this sense has to be clinically pragmatic to be viable in the health services.

It is arguable that the use of arts to form representations of self and other states of mind offer a preliminary stage to enable the other to have a place in the world in relation to the patient and vice versa. It is arguable that the 'as if' encountered in the image making process facilitates the possibility of alternative perspectives and narratives. This process appears to parallel early developmental processes for the acquisition of verbal language (Piaget & Inhelder 1971, Dornes 1994, Rosenbaum 2003) where image based schemata are generated before the occurrence of verbal symbols.

The technique employed to establish mentalization is necessarily explorative and collaborative. What Fonagy suggests is that the quality of the interaction is not about interpreting the transference, passive containment, cathartic expression, or promotion of 'negative capability' (Reed 2011). Actually Fonagy is saying that the biggest impact on changes to health will be driven by a quality of communication, something CBT therapists have known all along – the capacity to generate a sense that the problem at hand is a shared issue. Likewise, the mentalizing art psychotherapist is open to talk about the impact of the patient on them: the struggle for understanding, the gaps in logical connections and explicit empathy in times of emotional distress are some of the tenets of a collaborative stance. In essence, the mentalizing art psychotherapist models epistemic trust in an analogous way to how a parent might respond to an infant with the gentle words and special pitch and rhythm sometimes known as "motherese". In this sense arts psychotherapists are specialist communicators that focus on a wide range of verbal and non-verbal methods, as Fonagy put it, we contribute to a 'range of situations' where the patient can feel that another is interested in them. Bucci (1985) delineated modes of communication as a categorical system in itself. This is a step away from communication being delineated according to the topological models of the mind; for example, id, ego, conscious or unconscious communication. Bucci describes a verbal – non-verbal system of communication, stating that,

'Music, dance, and art therapies are all designed to access the subsymbolic system directly...If we take seriously the endogenous organization of the subsymbolic and symbolic nonverbal systems, we

need to examine the degree to which the multiple nonverbal modes of communication themselves may be sufficient to bring about therapeutic change' (Bucci 2002 p. 789)

Bucci (2002) describes the mutative change as being not necessarily based on the clever articulation of verbal language in a well timed interpretation, but instead she takes as much interest in delivering an attuned or congruent response, focusing on the non-verbal communication as having a highly influential effect in talking therapies and arts psychotherapies. All of these factors can offer evidence that the psychotherapist is engaged in joint attention generating the communication necessary to bring about the mutative change.

This method of enquiry and shared responsibility is also marked by timely transparency. This being one of the tenets of the mentalizing stance is as much an 'art' of encouraging joint attention as the image making itself. There needs to be some degree of shared understanding between art psychotherapist and patient in terms of the difficulties they are facing. As such, mentalization based practice is a set of collaborative clinical procedures that change according to the patient's presentation. This treatment methodology has been well documented in the *Handbook of Mentalization* (Allen & Fonagy 2006) and it is easy to see the scope for using two avenues of joint attention, each of which informs the other: that of the interpersonal image and that of the interpersonal dialogue.

Conclusion

Fonagy's presentation can help arts psychotherapists to conceptualise how the creative art making process can enhance the development of epistemic trust within the therapeutic context. Fonagy's presentation may be useful to psychotherapists and researchers in the ongoing process of specifying and clarifying the key agents of change inherent to art psychotherapy. In response to his presentation, we have suggested that these may be: the opportunity to create images and objects that are resonant and contingent symbols of the art

maker's inner world; the availability of alternative channels of communication; opportunities for joint engagement which can lead to enhanced appreciation of the other and thus aid the process of mentalization.

Fonagy is not only talking about how we prevent mental health disorders from being transmitted in the course of re-enactments through the generations, but also how we open up the potential for greater levels of imaginative discourse, the increase of communication on the epistemic superhighway. Conceptually he is not simply describing good therapeutic outcomes in terms of symptom change; he is also describing the creative, evolving dialogue within a trusted place.

The clinical experience of art psychotherapists indicates the potential art making has to bring a unique additional channel and resource to the process of psychotherapy, particularly to mentalization-based approaches which emphasise the importance of contingency in the process of establishing epistemic trust and re-opening the epistemic superhighway. Fonagy's recent presentations suggest that communication is at the heart of the therapy. This focus on communication offers arts psychotherapists a greater chance to push forward some of the important principles underlying arts psychotherapies' treatment and the added value of alternative channels of communication. However, it is not enough simply to hypothesise and refer to clinical experience: further research is needed to investigate these mechanisms of change and studies need to be designed to demonstrate their effectiveness.

Biographies

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Dominik has been employed by CNWL NHS Foundation Trust as an art psychotherapist and Clinical Lead since 1999. He is currently responsible for developing and implementing clinical training for internal arts psychotherapists

and providing training packages external to the trust. He is leading on the research arm of ICAPT. His research interests centre on severe mental health disorders and psychological therapies in the NHS. He is currently engaged in doctoral research studying the occurrence of metaphor in art psychotherapy.

Elizabeth Taylor Buck

Elizabeth Taylor Buck is an art psychotherapist who has been working with children, young people and families for 16 years, initially for the NSPCC and more recently as part of an NHS CAMHS team. In 2009 she was awarded a Clinical Doctoral Research Fellowship from the National Institute of Health Research. Her research focuses on dyadic parent-child approaches to art psychotherapy.

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