Therapeutic Holding Spaces: a response to young people experiencing trauma through community displacement

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Tributes and acknowledgements

This research is dedicated to my father Lynn Davies Bevan, who understood the Celtic spirit of sacred landscape and tribe.

> "Do not forget that the earth belongs to all and that the land belongs to no one".
>
> *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 1762.

I acknowledge with gratitude:

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And the many friends who have listened to me.

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Presentation features

My research follows a 'heuristic' reflective mode, and in alignment with acknowledged

practice within contemporary qualitative research, I will write in the single personal 'I' form.

My reflexive commentaries will be in italics and black font.

Comments from practitioners are identified in italics and blue font.

Young people's voices are in italics and brown font.

Publications

This thesis makes reference to the following publication written in the researcher's former surname, Gauci and presented in full in Appendix 1:

Gauci, J. and Sealey, C. (2017) 'Youth Matters? Social Work Responses to the Trauma Experienced by Young People Displaced in Contemporary Community Context,' Perm State University, Perm, Russia, pp. 13-23. ISBN 978-5-7944-3018-9.

Glossary of Terms

International Social Work: a collective body of individual practitioners and Schools of Social Work across nations.

Reflection: considering and reviewing thought, actions and circumstances to develop new ideas (Jones, 2016:171).

Reflective practice: considering and reviewing influences of perception in the "interplay between theory and practice" (Jones, 2016:171).

Reflexivity: the purposeful consideration of personal actions, attitudes and behaviours (Johnston *et al.,* 2016:1).

Relational / therapeutic social work practice: a term used historically in forms of psycho-therapeutic social work in community contexts (Megele, 2015).

Social Work: identification of a registered professional organisation of Social Work..

Trauma: a psycho-social process which "develops longitudinally in time and dominates individuals' mental states" (Megele, 2015: 84).

Young People: in the UNCRC a child is ratified as being a person up to the age of 18. Kehily (2009) notes that definitions of 'youth' in Western societies usually refer to the life stage between childhood and adulthood, the transitional period between being dependent and becoming

independent. In this research, I will consider young people in the chronological age group 16 – 25 to acknowledge youth in transition as defined above.

Core terms used in the thesis

Displacement and youth trauma: a specific type of displacement and trauma experienced by young people where there is conflict over land or separation from land: ancestral land. It incorporates the experience of young people who are displaced as flight from land due to conflict or oppression; or, where young people dwell in their ancestral land but are part of a community destabilised by conflict.

Social work and community development: aware of the breadth of models and approaches in social work practice generically, I restrict my use of the term social work practice to two models – in community development, and in community therapeutic practice.

Transcultural teams: a broad term to include professionally trained community workers such as social workers, youth workers, community psychological health and education practitioners

Abbreviations

C & YP – children & young people.

I.F.S.W. – International Federation of Social Work.

N.G.O – Non-Governmental Organisation.

PAR - Participatory Action Research.

TC – transcultural team of therapeutic community practitioners.

Social Work – Social Work as a professional body.

IASSW – International Organisation of Schools of Social Work and Social Development.

UASYP – Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People.

UNCRC – United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child 1990: An international human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of C & YP.

YP – young people.

PYT Project - The Palestine Youth Trauma project.

Researcher reflexive language developed through thesis

Attunement

Existential trauma

Cognitive and intuitive awareness

Holistic awareness / holistic attunement

Holistic health awareness

Restorative therapy

Therapeutic attunement

Eco-sociological justice

Psycho intuitive social work

Therapeutic holding space

Therapeutic circle

List of figures

Abstract

This PhD seeks to define how community professionals create trauma-informed listening spaces as a form of therapeutic groupwork for young people experiencing family and community displacement. My research connects with an emergent debate about how social work and allied community therapists respond to young people who experience physical or psychological displacement due to socio-political violence in their communities. It is a heuristic inquiry; exploring how 'essence and meaning' (Moustakas, 1990) in relational forms of therapeutic response address the psychological aspects of dissonance and restore composure.

Acknowledging the heritage of social work as a profession in response to family and community conflict, I sought to define contemporary forms of psycho-social therapy used with young people in times of deep crisis. I held the premise that this type of disturbance is raw and unchartered requiring precise therapeutic approach. My research suggests the 'essence' of social work strives to rebuild the person's sense of self in the face of social, economic and political conflict by drawing them back into the circle of humanity. My research vision was the ancient standing stones, representative of indigenous expression of community speaking into the past, the present and the future of the memory of sacred space and belonging. I believe this formation is echoed in the therapeutic groupwork circle used across generations and cultures as a form of inter-relational space and connection.

In my research, I elevate the focus on the young person's spirit as the primary point of intervention, developing understanding of their reaction to the notion of the therapeutic circle as a transformative formation with potential to combat the sense of disconnection they carry. This shifts the traditional focus of service formation on the 'displaced child' to a more holistic circumference which acknowledges the eco and human environment comprising natural energies of nurture and regeneration. Prioritising psycho-social and holistic responses within social work practice, my research develops conceptual understandings of these approaches in response to forms of trauma which cause 'disrupted harmony' of body, mind and spirit (Heron, 1998).

Empirical evidence in my thesis is drawn from the formation of a 'therapeutic circle of inquiry' (Heron, 1998) developed in a youth and community project in Hebron, Palestine supporting young people who experience displacement in circumstances of enduring community siege. The project supports my research definition of the nature of transcultural practice formations in forms of contemporary community therapeutic relief. My discovery is that the therapeutic circle, when achieving a sort of 'mutually enabling balance' (Heron, 1998) allows young people to 'restory' (Adams *et al.,* 2005) the experience of trauma within their own framework of discovery. In the moment of relationship, all is open and new and the therapist's skill is to uncode the imposed and release the spirit within.

Research Question: What does social work contribute to the formation of therapeutic holding spaces as a therapeutic response to young people experiencing trauma through community displacement?

STAGE ONE: INCUBATION

Chapter 1 Introduction to the research inquiry, & foundational premises

This introductory chapter gives an overview of the complete thesis, presenting a critical account of my inquiry, rationale and contribution, and identifying the initial research premises and seminal influences.

Stage 1 outlines the research question and aims, the heuristic approach and the conceptual foundations of the inquiry.

Stage 2 identifies the approach to knowledge, the structure of the thesis, and the three phases of heuristic inquiry.

1.1 Introduction: The vision and the narrative

The vision

In my research I seek to convey an essence of social work practice which has developed in statutory traditions of child and family welfare and guides practitioners in response to the changing contexts of social life that cause complexity and disruption for young people. My specific inquiry is into how social work responds to features of trauma affecting young people who experience displacement as a result of community destabilisation, whether within a community under siege or displaced from it through oppression or violence.

The research intention is to develop a new form of practice response, a 'therapeutic holding space' for use by transcultural teams working in contexts of community conflict with groups of young people. Social work literature recognises a concern for the impact of external conflict on family life and was influential in the initial formations of 'family therapy' as therapeutic groupwork with family circles experiencing crisis and conflict (Higgins, 2017). My vision of the therapeutic groupwork circle, echoed through traditions of social work and youth work, is its connection to the standing stone circles which call humanity back to the earth as a 'memory' of belonging.

I have been a therapeutic social worker and academic both in UK and international practice since 1987. In the last 15 years my professional roles as researcher and community therapist have taken me into different parts of the world in transcultural team formations responding to communities in crisis. My activity in the International Federation of Social Workers (I.F.S.W.) developed as the Syrian War unfolded causing the profession to seek new ways of responding to the critical global crisis of emergent human displacement. My research enters this debate at a time when all share consciousness of a world with 14 conflict zones and more displaced persons than ever previously.

BBC World News (2019) identified that 35,000 people were forced to flee their homes every day in 2018 taking the world's displaced population to a record 71 million. This report identifies the largest group as 'internally displaced persons' (IDPs); the second largest group as refugees compromised of 25.8 million by the end of 2018, of whom half were 'minors'.

My work is committed to the participation and representation of those most marginalized, most affected by the face of local conflict and the influences of global geopolitics which serve the interests of the powerful. My thesis uses this awareness to consider how the heritage of social work translates into contemporary contexts of youth displacement, and how it guides the practitioner sitting alongside the young person to make meaning of experience when sense of self and belonging is disrupted by community conflict. I feel that this sustained exposure to complex experience requires a more fundamental or 'existential' form of response. It is more elemental; all are affected by the sound and scent of trauma pervading land and people. Those displaced from it carry the echo of it in their journeys. The impact is both universal and profoundly personal.

The inquiry that unfolds is influenced by my sense that there is a true 'essence' of social work, intuitive and responsive to community need and social injustice; my vision of response is the therapeutic circle. It honours the collective spirit of community located in landscape and ancestral sense of belonging. My inquiry is how this can be recreated as a 'therapeutic holding space' for use by social workers and allied community practitioners supporting young people in refugee camps and war zones affected by contemporary forms of community displacement.

The narrative

My stance as researcher is 'heuristic' (Moustakas, 1990); my aim through my thesis to make a connection between my own sense of awareness and the lived experience of those I seek to support. My work is influenced by my own practice in local, national and international community development, but equally invites the accounts of others working with displaced youth in conflict zones and IDP camps. Finally, it moves to the heart of the debate with understandings expressed by young people in conflict contexts (Youth Trauma Project, Palestine 2015).

Heuristic inquiry stems from the process of discovery or *heuriskein* (Moustakas, 1990: 9): a form of internal research which attempts to discover "meaning through internal pathways of self" (Bryman, 2008:12). There are central processes of heuristic inquiry: 'self-dialogue', 'tacit knowing', 'intuition', in-dwelling', 'focusing' and the "internal frame of reference" (Moustakas 1990:16). The research question and methodology "flow out of inner awareness, meaning and inspiration" (Moustakas 1990:11). Moustakas describes how the process requires a "passionate disciplined commitment to sit with the question intensely and continuously until it is illuminated" (1990: 15). My thesis reflects this reflective cycle of thought and feeling and the illumination that unfolds in processes of "self-dialogue and self-discovery" (Moustakas 2001:263). This guides me to present my thesis as the narrative of an inquiry, in which I and others develop an 'awareness' of the therapeutic capacity to nurture healing and transformation.

Moustakas elevates the sense of the 'new consciousness' of the researcher (2001); this I term 'awareness' in my research. Moustakas' (1990, 2001) work on heuristic research lays greater

emphasis on the intuitive than the interpretative and the process rather than the outcome. It invites me as researcher to "swim in an unknown current" (Moustakas, 1990:13), to step aside from certainties and observe the meaning drawn from unchartered experience. It invokes the 'liminal' (Land, 2011) as the twilight zone of human experience (**1.6**). The guide to a more critical mode of interpretation is through "intersubjective reflection" (2001: 215) and "discursive deconstruction" (Moustakas, 2001: 222).

This alliance with the reflective 'awareness' of others is central to my research. It shapes the thesis through encounters with groups of practitioners, and in engagement with young people in the context of siege to form data based on the principles of participatory encounter and radical democratic expression (Heron, 1996). It is also central to my inquiry into the relationship between reflective awareness and the capacity to restore sense of self. At the core of heuristic discovery is the "power of revelation in tacit knowing" (Moustakas, 1990:20). Polanyi's (1974) primary work on 'tacit knowing' elevated the process of drawing attention to the moment of experience; Moustakas acknowledges an alignment to Polanyi in his development of the inquiry into the "essence of being, realized through perception" (1990: 20). This is the essence of both researcher intuition and of therapeutic practice that I strive to express and define in my thesis.

Heuristic inquiry has a distinct focus on the developing self and the 'psycho-emotional self' (Moustakas, 1990:12); this holds congruence with my central interest in the processes of psycho-therapeutic response to people with acknowledgment of the shift in awareness through traumatic processing. The heuristic method of inquiry prioritizes the 'self-actualizing' nature of people (Neuman & Kreuger, 2002) which guides the researcher to acknowledge the "deepest currents of meaning and knowledge" formed through self-directed search and "inter-relational dialogical processes with others" (Moustakas, 1990: 15). The primary interest of the heuristic researcher is therefore not with validity but the 'purpose' of encounter, with emphasis on the meaning formed and realised through interaction between self and others. This fluid, reflexive, interpretive sense of self as researcher will change the nature of the thesis, as I seek to convey the sequential experiential stages of reflection and knowledge, and to hold as primary evidence that which emerges from the encounter (**1.9**).

1.2 Research problem, inquiry and contribution

Research Aims:

To understand the psychological impact of contemporary forms of youth displacement.

To trace the contribution of social work as a therapeutic community practice with young people in conflict contexts.

To define features of the 'therapeutic holding space' and its contribution as a model of trauma response.

To develop therapeutic forms of participatory engagement with young people experiencing trauma in community contexts.

To define the impact of collaborative research action in community destabilisation.

I held two foundational research premises: firstly, that trauma has to be understood therapeutically with practice responses informed by psycho-intuitive 'awareness' of the impact of trauma on the composure of the young person. My second premise was that the therapeutic conceptualisation of holistic practice contributes a precise understanding of loss and healing within definitions of mind, body and spirit. These understandings influenced my emergent debate, tracing the traditions of social work in family and community welfare where practitioners form a distinct essence of engagement at points of complex transition (Brandon *et al.,* 1998; Ferguson, 2016). I wished to explore how these intrinsic social work skills guide response to the complexities young people face in contemporary conflict cultures. I anticipated that this required a new understanding of 'resilience', formed by listening to the accounts of young people and practitioners conveying emergent psychological needs in displacement.

I recognised it would take a leap of consciousness and vision to articulate, with integrity, the nature of this cutting-edge practice, and to define the capacity to restore and heal in such complex circumstances. The heuristic design of my research would allow me to observe and learn from participative and emergent accounts of research and therapy in direct communication with young people, their community leaders and therapists in communities under siege (**1.8**). It would also guide me to sit with silence in the presence of others in acknowledgement of the pain of bewilderment and unresolved grief (Kohli & Mather, 2006).

Usborne and Sarblonniere express that to "understand my culture means to understand myself" (2014:1). The practitioner, whilst acknowledging local context, must also promote a transcultural awareness and humanitarian instinct which can transcend cultural definitions. I sought to define this as a reflexive yet tangible approach to human need which can be formed in the critical moments of heightened experience. I recognised that international humanitarian social work responses require critically aware and precise practice formations to hold a therapeutic stance in the uncertain realities and complex politics of life in conflict environments. I wished to draw on emergent practice accounts to determine how the psycho-social approach informs contemporary 'trauma aware' responses (Brown, 2018) to young people in conflict zones where the harshness of displacement breaks boundaries, understandings of global and local 'bonds' and 'territories' (Shapiro & Hayward, 1996).

My inquiry included how cultures of war and the threat of invasion affect the young person's psyche and spirit. I sought to define the influence of 'tribal and cultural governance' (Shapiro, 1996) in holding sense of self, sense of place and community despite residual 'outsider' threats. I suggest the contribution of psycho-social social work, within this context, is to support the natural community environment as healing infrastructure, and to nurture those who are deeply affected by conflict (Sen & Broadhurst, 2011).

This is my vision of the 'therapeutic holding space'. This approach guides practitioners to create a form of therapeutic retreat from the external disorder, and to echo rhythms of childhood nurture and security based on the vision of a natural sustainable environment or 'community'. I intend to explore the accounts of social work in community partnerships creating forms of "therapeutic alliance" (Baylis, 2011:79) within conflict zones. I will trace the accounts of participatory community research as a form of participation and social action in conflict engagement to establish the relevancy of my contribution and define its purpose and nature.

1.3 Conceptual foundations that influence the inquiry

Three underlying concepts supported by Moustakas seem relevant to my research inquiry: human experience is complex; is instinctual as much as rational, and is grounded in the context of the experience. In my thesis, the sources of data are "within me" (Moustakas,1990:13); this foundational sense of awareness and identity guides my sense of the importance of cognitive and intuitive awareness in addressing the dissonance that external trauma will cause in the natural development of inner composure. My vision of the 'therapeutic holding space' as a restorative community circle requires a critical understanding of forms of relationship and relational practice (Timor-Shlevin & Krumer-Nevo, 2016) which can hold young people facing psychological disturbance in a destabilised environment. The importance of the "use of strategies to handle the risk and uncertainty" (Shapendonk *et al.,* 2015:52) felt by young people in conflict environments has been raised by a specialised field of research and therapeutic practice promoting new approaches to primary therapeutic care based on the 'lessons of war' (Ursano *et al.,* 2012).

The indigenous concept of community is woven within a sense of connection to the land and to each other (Ruiz, 1997). In my view, this acknowledgment of individuals, families, groups is intrinsic to the systemic framework of residual social work practice with families and communities (Ferguson *et al.,* 2005; Dominelli, 2008; Four Arrows, 2008). My research vision was the need for a framework which would create a circle around the young people, a 'community' of therapeutic practitioners skilled in knowledge of the psychological condition caused by conflict zone trauma. My research therefore promotes the concept of 'therapeutic landscapes' (Townsend & Pascal, 2012) which rekindle a sense of connectedness to land and people. This prioritizes focus on the sustainable energy within this conceptualisation of culture and sense of place (Usborne & Sarblonniere, 2014) to aid restoration of youth composure and sense of worth.

Papadapoulos, 2002, Goelitz & Stewart-Kahn 2013 and Shappendonk *et al.,* 2015 identify that social work responses to humanitarian crisis tend to be pragmatic relief services which limit responses to emotional distress. I wished to both highlight the relevancy of social work's therapeutic tradition with young people in complex transition, and also to hold an awareness of the residual connection with tribal sense of community belonging which, in my view, influences the systemic-holistic frameworks of social work in psycho-social response. This is increasingly reflected in emergent accounts of 'eco social work' (Payne, 2014; Boddy, 2018) outlined in chapter two (**2.7**) which connect conceptualisations of human and environmental sustainability (Dominelli, 2010; Payne, 2014).

My research concern, therefore, guided me to investigate the following:

- The psychological impact of displacement from the land of belonging, and how this affects the young person's sense of identity, human worth and deservingness.
- The connection between external and internal conflict and how young people, in particular, carry the trauma resulting from communities in conflict and crisis.
- Social work's traditions in therapeutic encounter as a psycho-social approach connecting the inner psycho-emotional world with an ability to reframe the external environment of experience.

The tensions for this research inquiry include the complexity of defining a form of therapeutic response in situations of conflict and destabilisation; and my awareness of the multi- faceted nature

of the profession of social work which challenges linear definitions. I aimed to focus on social work's heritage in a specialized form of 'soft therapeutic' community practice which seeks to help children and young people make sense of the complicated and disrupted lives caused by social disorder and oppression (Brandon *et al.,* 1998; Boyd-Webb, 2006). I wanted to differentiate between local community social work response within national frameworks, and the emergence of international social work responses to localized community need within a framework of social justice and human rights (Lyons *et al.,* 2006; Cox & Pawar, 2013). Within this international social work response, I outline specialized response to the needs of indigenous peoples where there is conflict over land, creating community segregation, injustice and hardship (Dominelli, 2012). Burkett and McDonald suggest this is a "different space" in which social work declares a "socially just and sustainable moral vision" to guide "theoretically informed critical frameworks" of practice (2005:173). In a war zone, being alongside a local community in a time of need causes the risk of internalizing the trauma vicariously or destabilising the fragile social order. I felt the need to more precisely define the nature of transcultural team responses influenced by the primary causes of social work as a profession, whilst working in a contemporary way across allied community professions and with local community infrastructure in youth support (Ferguson *et al*., 2005; Dominelli,2012).

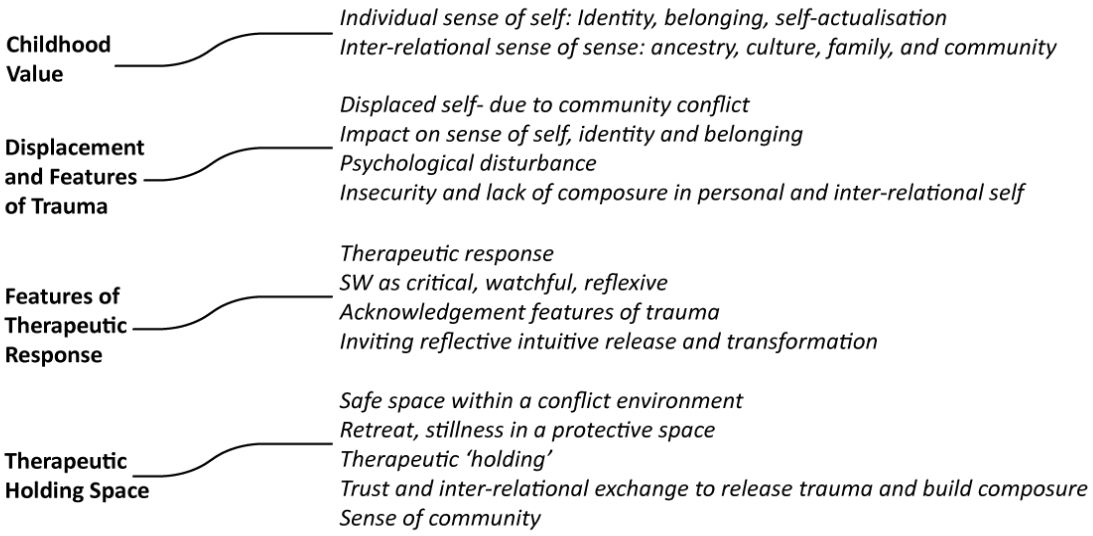
The impact on local communities of divisive, competitive geopolitics will displace the most vulnerable; the young who are developing sense of self, and self-resilience. Bowlby's theory of a 'secure base' (1988) suggests the importance of interpersonal relationships as a foundation for belonging, security and well-being. These premises, in my view, contributed to the development of a distinct psychological instinct in social work practice, enabling an engagement with the young person in a way which recognises the impact of complex transition on their sense of security, composure and worth. International Social Work is framed in terms of human rights, social justice and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child 1990 (Hugman, 2013). My research reinforces this focus of childhood value, suggesting that the experience of displacement creates a potential traumatic reaction which threatens the young person's sense of self, identity and belonging at a critical developmental stage.

The practice response consequently requires a type of engagement based on 'valuing' and restoration of 'sense of self' (Lee, 2005). Lee's work (2005) on childhood and childhood separation is a primary influence on my work. Lee acknowledges 'sociological' (Bourdieu, 1977) and 'anthropological' (Levi-Strauss, 1983) research indicators by which "human communities create value by dividing into categories" (Lee, 2005: 21*);* the *'*binary' thinking and practice attributed to the Western world (Fook,2007; Laird, 2008). This way of thinking creates the 'other', as a lesser moral claim. This separating dynamic is relevant to my research context where young people have been denied human and civil rights, to land, home, and sense of belonging.

I discuss and seek to substantiate my claim of the contribution of social work as a 'critical reflexive watchful' presence in war zones as my inquiry develops. I consider its fundamental awareness results from professional knowledge of the effects of complex social realities on the child's 'inner world' (Furlong, 2013; Megele, 2015). The social work instinct of therapeutic engagement is claimed in the psycho- social model which explores the internal psyche within the external environment (Howe, 2009; Megele, 2015). This is a form of 'holistic awareness' which recognizes the impact of external forces on internal well-being; as a generic practice approach with marginalised young

people this is a presence in social work and youth work literature (Fook, 2012; Bruce, 2013; Harris 2011). I wished to identify its contribution within contexts of community conflict and war.

Fig 1. Initial research premises: Youth trauma and displacement



1.4 Research contribution: the vision of the 'therapeutic holding space'

My search was for a practice model which supports "therapeutic engagement" (Di Croce *&* Preyde, 2016:259) with young people at critical transition points. The term 'holding space' would be unique to my model, although influenced by Lowe's 'thinking space' (2013) as a way of acknowledging psychological 'feeling' states, Waddell's work (2002) on the 'holding place', and Lishman's work on 'practice space' (2018). These authors reflect the psycho-dynamic and psycho-therapeutic conceptualisations of 'use of space' in practice with children and young people in complex attachment transition.

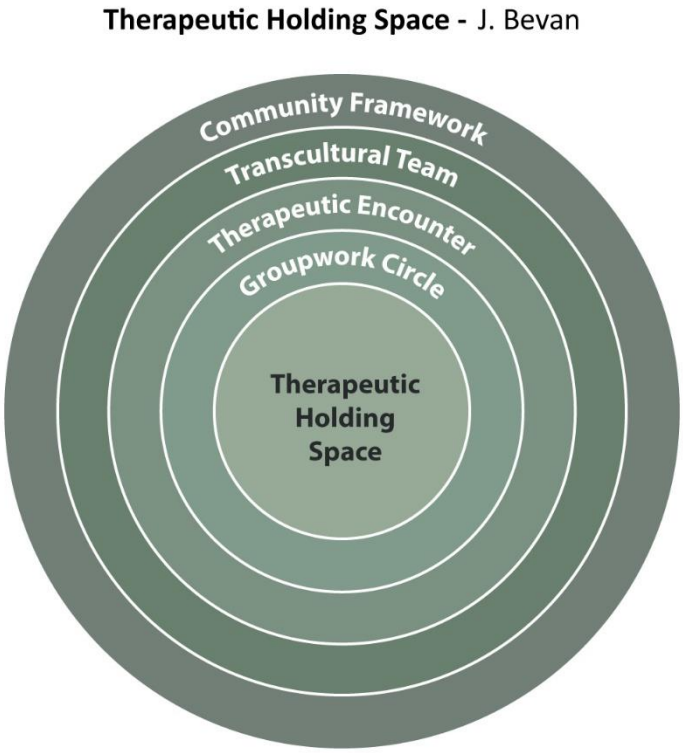
In the therapeutic world, Pascal (2010) highlights the importance of space, place and psycho-social well-being for the young person. My contribution would be to define the 'holding space' as a form of 'therapeutic encounter' (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2004). This is realized conceptually by such authors with an understanding of response to youth disturbances through complex transition and disruption (Brandon *et al*., 1998; Cooper, 2014). I perceived it as a form of social work 'essence' but wanted to further define how being received and listened to therapeutically, within a groupwork circle, could be a form of resilience and transformation in community destabilisation (Athumani, 2010). This conceptualisation echoes Winnicott's idea of 'transitional space' (1974). In a 'transitional space', a deeper listening spirit is required to therapeutically 'hold' the young person when environment destabilises sense of security. In my research vision, the 'holding space' is a resting place from the trauma of disorder where people can be held, received without prejudice, and listened to therapeutically.

The importance of the transcultural team would be to create a secure ring around the young person formed of local practitioners with grassroots community knowledge and transcultural practitioners external to the local political and emotional landscape (chapter seven). Within the holding space, the circle created by practitioners would represent both therapeutic community and ancestral community of belonging. Through use of community traditions and representation, the narrative of the community in oppression might be realised as expression of its pain as well as its unique capacity to nurture and sustain.

My research contribution would be to develop a set of principles that support the use of therapeutic holding spaces by transcultural practice teams for the young person to build a sense of psycho-emotional resilience during episodes of family and community destabilisation. I was drawn to the image of the circle as all-encompassing, embracing both the individual and the collective and able to echo the cultural context of the community. Within the circle, a range of types of therapeutic practice would unfold as a natural alliance between practitioners and young people. Within this process, the emphasis of Moustakas (1990) on cognitive and intuitive 'awareness' would be important as both research and practitioner intuition. It would elevate the importance of the young person's expression of self and spirit in the face of adversity and direct the type of reflexive therapeutic response.

A transcultural service approach is considered an intrinsic feature of the history of social work in its radical and anti-discriminatory movements with its vision to transcend national divides. In my research, I define this multi-dimensional approach as *community, a '*community of practice' (Wenger 2000) operating at local and global levels. I envisaged the *community of practice* within the holding space formation to include local and transcultural practitioners, community leaders and activists, therapists and young people engaging together in a respectful and meaningful way. Friedman & Rothman (2015) promote the concept of an 'interdisciplinary community of practice' as a model for action research in a conflict zone. In **2.6** I identify literature authorities drawn from global peace keeping, conflict resolution and humanitarian social work to establish the principles of transcultural team discipline required.

Fig 2 The Therapeutic Holding Space around the Young Person



1.5 Seminal influences and the developing conceptualisation of the therapeutic social work approach

The holding space approach relies, in my view, on the quality of therapeutic encounter. I wished to connect my research with two movements in professional social work practice forums:

a. the development of a therapeutic relational school of social work practice which uses a psycho-social approach with young people experiencing distress in family and community contexts.

b. a community development approach to social work practice based on participatory and transformative principles of social engagement and action in communities of need.

I felt the need to differentiate between these models of practice attributed to social work. The first approach is associated with community social work in European statutory formations where social work holds legal and agency duties in responding to the displaced young person. I wished to examine established and emergent knowledge of therapeutic practice which supports the young person's sense of psycho-emotional resilience in such complex transitions. I attributed the term 'relational' to the literature I sourced from the Tavistock School of social work practice, London (Ruch,2005; Fook, 2012; Lowe, 2013 and Cooper, 2017) describing a more therapeutic social work stance within the generic statutory approach.

In the second formation, social work holds a presence in international community action (Fook, 2012; Lowe, 2013}; these sources include critical accounts of the therapeutic needs of contemporary

young people displaced as migrants and refugees (Papadopolous, 2002; Dominelli, 2013;), which I outline in **2.2**. In social work conventions, literature promotes the awareness of the psychological tensions that occur in family and community divisions; when this is translated into international social work action it promotes family and community therapy and conflict resolution. In the context of international humanitarian social work, the literature increasingly reflects an awareness of community conflict due to political violence in war zones. Social work theorists have developed models of transcultural community action, 'cultural competency' (Laird, 2008) and post conflict resolution (Ursano *et al.,* 1995; Bush, 2013; Bhattacharya, 2019) as a response.

This conceptual inquiry into the heritage of social work in relation to young people affected by community conflict helps to establish the skills of social work in emergent forms of youth trauma and peace-making. Chapter two contributes to the debate a literature review of formal social work and allied community psychological disciplines in the development of these 'soft' forms of therapeutic community practice in response to conflict. In chapter three, more emergent authorities are sourced through conference presentations, workshop debates and semi-formal interviews within social work in community action research and practice (**3.1; 3.2; 3.3**).

1.6 The development of the conceptualisation of therapeutic space

Research space - I opened this chapter with a primary interest in the concept of 'awareness'. Within participatory action research domains, Denzin (2016:20) discusses the creative processes of "insight, immersion, creation and reflection". Jacobs defines the interpretation of knowledge as *'spirit'*: the search for deeper meaning and the urge to "keep diving into the wellspring of our own awe" (2008:19). Moustakas elevates the researcher dream state: a 'lingering presence" over the research creating "rhythms of concentrated focus" (Moustakas, 1990:10 -11} and hence inviting the clarity of intuitive thought.

I intended my research inquiry to support a distinct type of research space based on the reflexive heuristic principle which invites a deep reflection and openness to discovery. Land's work on 'liminal space' (2011) seeks to articulate, through literary muse, the 'netherland' of consciousness, an 'edge of dream' state where heightened awareness and intuition can move into places of discovery in connection with depths of subconscious thought and feeling. Land uses the term 'liminality' to describe the twilight zones of understanding. His work evokes a transformative state that challenges existing certainties in defence of fluidity of thought (Land, 2011). The emphasis on a twilight zone of consciousness seems relevant to guide researcher and practice responses to young people who have had deep disturbances to their sense of reality and stability. It values the perceived, the uncertain and the emergent that can occur in challenging experiences; this influences my epistemological account in chapter four and my understanding of knowledge formations in therapeutic practice.

Practice space - Lowe's term, the 'thinking space' was formed to promote ways of thinking about race, culture and diversity in therapeutic practices with communities in conflict (2013). It is an expansive space that transcends defensive territorial patterns of thinking. Lowe describes it as a new way of managing self in the face of fear and oppression inviting a "non-judgemental atmosphere in which individuals who have been forced to contain difficult emotions are encouraged to listen, talk, and think without violence or coercion" (2013:34). "It is the experience of discovering, in interaction,

that the feelings of fear, of worrying about being exposed, attacked, even annihilated by others, expressed in interaction can lead to the creation of new knowledge and meaning" (Lowe:2013:34). This echoes Bion's earlier therapeutic concept of work on 'knowing' and 'knowing about' (1962), the latter being a deeper type of emotional engagement open to discovery and awareness through interaction.

Lowe takes this concept into the psycho-therapeutic world that concerns itself with the nature of human suffering and oppression:"with greater knowledge of self and others, we (as psycho-therapists) are more likely to be aware of our own capacity for destructiveness and, in so being, are better equipped to prevent unnecessary harm and suffering for the benefit of all" (2013:34). This concept is important to my research debate; it is a defence against the "narcissism of small differences" (Horner, 2014:42) which separates human bonds, destabilises communities and arguably, leads to oppression. Brooks suggests that our human "'identifications and idealizations', within race and culture, define us and invade our intuition to think" (2013: 35). Within Lowe's articulation, 'thinking space' is not a neutral or value-free space but "the commitment to understanding and learn about forms of oppression based on difference "(2013: 34).

This concept of research and practice space as expansive thought and interconnectedness, outlined by Lowe (2013), influences the conceptualisation of the moral premises which shape my holding space approach.

1.7 Outlining the Palestine Youth Trauma Project

Moustakas (1990) prioritizes the concept of meaning through dialogue and interaction (**1.1**). My inquiry into youth trauma is developed with an empirical project situated in the West Bank, Palestine where traumatic loss is understood in the context of occupied territory where the military target young people's sense of psychological space and place. Makdisi (2008) describes this as a culture where community life unfolds within an experience of daily occupation which seeks to dispossess and wrong its indigenous people. The military rule uses both administrative laws and weapons to enforce a form of opposed order and suppression; "Israeli Military Law army commanders and judicial authorities have full executive, legislative and judicial authority over 3 million Palestinians living in the West Bank. Palestinians have no say in how this authority is exercised" (Palestinian news site Wafa; accessed 17.2.21). The context for the project is more critically defined by Palestinian research authorities in chapter three (**3.3**) and expressed experientially through data accounts in chapter six and seven.

Chomsky and Pappe (2010: 162) describe Palestinian society as a community victimized by "crushing blows, unremitting cruelty, hostility and abandonment from all sides". More specifically, at the time of the project intervention in November 2015, the UN High Commissioner Report 28/11/2015 identified changes in Israeli military tactics and the resumption of a former practice of 'administrative detention' enforced by the military on Palestinian children without trial. This Palestinian YT project commenced in Hebron on 16/11/15 when this change of tactic was causing deep disturbance and unrest for the Palestinian community (West Bank). The youth group we planned to work with were based in H2 Hebron, the district most under attack at that time. All the

young people in our project had been imprisoned in the Military Detention Centre, hence had symptoms of trauma from the experiences of arrest, imprisonment and direct targeting tactics.

The Annual Report of the UN High Commissioner in March 2017 reflects the circumstances of oppression that were occurring at that time:

3.29 *Collective punishment and excessive use of force by Law Enforcement Officials.*

3.44 *Torture and ill-treatment in detention.*

3.48 Administrative and arbitrary detention.

(**Thesis Appendix 7**).

The following articles of the report indicate the context for the project:

56.Each year hundreds of Palestinian children, some as young as 12, are arrested and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system. Charges usually involve stone-throwing and, more recently, incitement to violence based on social media posts.

58.The fact that Israeli military law applicable in the West Bank permits detention of Palestinian children from the age of 12 is at odds with the specific protection granted to children as a particularly vulnerable group, and the general rule that any decision affecting them must have their best interest as a primary consideration. (Report of the High Commissioner and Secretary General to International Human Rights Council 24 March 2017; Full Report: Thesis Appendix 7).

The Palestinian practice debate about how best to understand and treat symptoms of trauma in young people reacting to the nature of a conflict zone has an established body of academic research knowledge in terms of understanding the impact of trauma (Jabr, 2014; Saymah *et al.,* 2015). The Commissioner's Report uses the United Nations Convention of Human Rights and aspects of International Humanitarian Laws as a framework of concern; this echoes my decision as researcher to acknowledge the importance of the UNCRC 1990 in international humanitarian social work action.

1.8 Ethical dimensions and research constraints

The theme of displacement for young people generates a debate about exclusion, displacement and moral worth which I weave through my research. It is a radical and transformative inquiry inviting young people who are displaced back into the 'circle of community' (**1.3, 1.4**). The political stance of social work as a profession highlights understandings of anti-oppressive practice in the context where the client group has suffered oppression (Dominelli, 2002). The 'participatory principle' in my research invites a different sense of human exchange and intuition through respectful humanitarian awareness. The central lens in my research is the primacy of the oppressed individual and the intention to reinstate their voice in alignment with social work principles (**2.6**). This is promoted in both my theoretical influences for research approach: heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1994; 2001) and participatory action research (Heron, 1998; 2008). These theorists claim the participatory action

intrinsic to research processes as this can allow people *to "*free themselves both from personal oppression and from structural domination" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:33).

Whilst this sense of a moral prism within the conflict context directs my work, as researcher I require awareness of the constraints caused by the humanitarian purpose of the inquiry:

> The risk of intrusion: stepping into a destabilised community and engaging with people carrying trauma.
>
> The complexity of a conflict context for research when data represented will be influenced by manifestations of trauma.
>
> The consequences of transcultural project team presence in terms of complicated commitments, loyalties and duties within a politicized conflict zone.
>
> The effect on research participants as witnesses to the emergence of traumatic events.
>
> The tensions between community need and research purpose in terms of roles, actions and endings.
>
> The justification of research in a community context of deeply troubled human circumstances and life and death existence.

1.9 Research approach, knowledge sequences and thesis design

My thesis is structured in three conceptual stages of developmental awareness with the application of heuristic reflective knowledge sequences.

Stage 1 Chapters 1 – 3: Incubation – establishing the conceptual-reflective form of inquiry

Stage 2 Chapter 4 – 6: Illumination – developing the intuitive-reflexive form of inquiry

Stage 3 Chapters 7 – 9: Creative Synthesis – securing the conceptual-intuitive form of interpretation

Writing in a reflective researcher stance creates anticipation of the subjectivity and emotionality of situational research. Probst identifies the principles of reflexivity as "accountability, trust-worthiness, clarity; an engagement with the ethical awareness of the researcher's own practice" (2015: 41). Seal identifies the reflexive approach as a guide for researchers to reflect on the meanings of the topic, the researcher intention and the consequences of social-cultural influences (2014). This form of 'immersion research' exploring the nature of life in a conflict zone guides the researcher to be receptive to the complexities, ambiguities, the images and symbols of reality as coded through cultural understandings and human experience.

The reflective-reflexive nature of my research requires a secure lens which can establish both conceptual and intuitive integrity. My intention as researcher, in alignment with social work principles, is to challenge social hierarchies and structural determinism and to avoid foundations of abstract concepts as if determinants of lived reality. The increasing centrality of reflexivity within social work and social sciences research allows for a deeper intersubjective process and hence the potential to deconstruct (Fook, 2007) perceived certainties or scripted discourses in order to

contribute to the "flourishing of human persons and their communities" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005:14). Hence, expansive research processes become a source of human liberation.

The reflexive principle provides this deeper "rigour" (Johnson, 2006; Gilgun (2015) of reflexive methods to identify the consequences of social-cultural influences on the research inquiry. I have outlined the intention to use the 'heuristic reflective' design (Moustakas); this prioritises the value of lived experience as emergent awareness. In the central thesis, the experiential stage of the inquiry uses a model of participatory action research as a framework congruent with the heuristic (Heron & Reason, 1997, 2001; Reason, 2006; Marshall & Reason, 2007) to create a pure democratic form of knowledge discovery.

Reflexivity as a process is complicated, however. Radnor discusses the 'uncertain edge' of reflexive research and Probst identifies the 'double arrow' of the reflexive researcher (Probst, 2015). As pure as the researcher instinct might be, there will always be a 'subjective pre-determination' which affects emergent knowledge and competing participatory claims. The heuristic model, therefore, provides a reflexive conscience for the researcher. This means that even if engaged in the heightened emotionality of the research context, there is still requirement for a more measured objectivity or watchfulness as researcher.

My research stance, therefore, has been designed as a combination of heuristic inquiry and participatory action research, with particular guidance from the work of Heron and Reason within the School of Co-operative Inquiry as a precise form of participatory action research.

Heron's 'circle of inquiry' (1998) has three principles:

- ***Emotional competence*** *– the ability to identify and manage emotions (1998:124)*
- ***Non-attachment*** *– to clarify an intentionality of purpose without over-identifying with the situation of action (1998:125).*
- ***Radical perception*** *– an immediacy or holistic awareness of the lived world of primary meaning: The deep tacit experiential pre-understanding (1998:119).*

Thesis Structure

The fluid reactive nature of action research required me, in this thesis, to use a reflexive form of sequential structure to reflect the multi-dimensional methods of knowledge formation and emergence. I have adapted the Moustakas Six Stage Cycle (1994) as a form of knowledge praxis for my thesis. The heuristic model defines an inductive analysis in six stages – initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, creative synthesis and explication (**1.1**). In this thesis, these are blended into three inductive stages of incubation, illumination and creative synthesis: Chapters 1 – 3 develop the conceptual foundations, chapters 4 – 6 are the immersive experiential accounts of my thesis, chapters 7 to 9 form the final explication and creative synthesis.

'Indwelling' is the central focus of Moustakas' theory for research inquiry (1990:24). It allows the researcher to acknowledge and 'dwell with' foundational insight in the spirit of reflective and reflexive analysis. This process of 'indwelling' remains constant throughout my research, providing the discipline which holds the more systematic processing of knowledge sequences and

understanding whilst feelings and thoughts test out the authentic nature of perception and intuition. It is a deep commitment to the processes of illumination.

Stage One: Incubation, Research Foundations

The conceptual stage develops my conceptual and intuitive foundations for my inquiry into the formation of a 'therapeutic holding space' practice approach:

Research aims:

To understand the psychological impact of contemporary forms of youth displacement.

To trace the contribution of social work as a therapeutic community practice with young people in conflict contexts.

Chapter one sets out my inquiry, research question and my initial premises.

Chapter two seeks formal literature as authorities on defining psychological aspects of trauma and therapeutic response.

Chapter three is the first circle of inquiry; it takes the primary research aims to three forums of practice authority which work in a directional way with young people experiencing displacement: data from Tavistock school of social work writers and researchers in workshop forums; data from individual interviews with conference delegates - I.F.S.W. Edinburgh Sept. 2015; data extracted from presentations at the Kingston Conference, Oct 2015 –"Understanding Youth Trauma in Contexts of Political Violence".

Stage Two: Illumination

Research aims:

To define features and contribution of the 'therapeutic holding space' as a model of trauma response.

To develop therapeutic forms of participatory engagement with young people experiencing trauma in community contexts.

The second stage is the centre of the research inquiry.

Chapter four is the philosophical foundational chapter which outlines my ontological and epistemological influences on my inquiry.

Chapter five sets out the methodology for the central circle of inquiry, the Palestine Youth Trauma Project.

Chapter six is the account of the Palestine YT Project; it includes the data and reflexive accounts which include Palestinian practitioner narratives, Palestinian practitioner interviews, young people creative arts extracts, Participatory Action Team (PAR) reflexive account, Participatory Action Team interviews, researcher reflexive commentaries.

Stage Three Creative Synthesis

Research aims:

To define the impact of collaborative research action in community destabilisation.

To define, and evaluate the contribution of the 'holding space' as a model of trauma response.

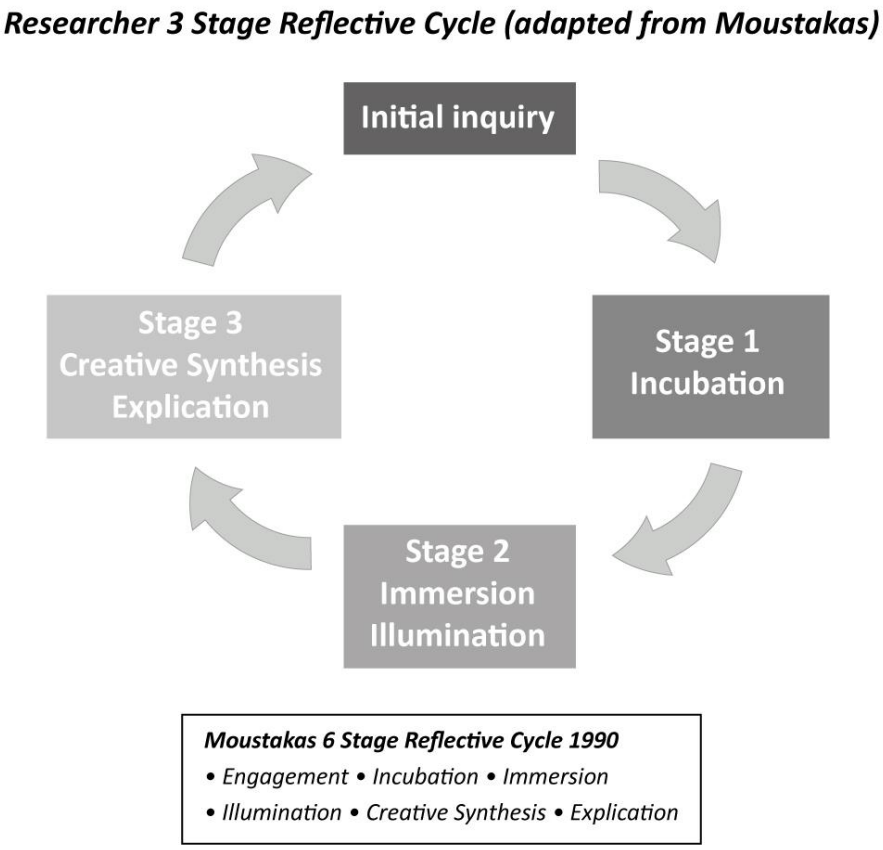
The third stage of the thesis is the analysis of all accounts within the inquiry.

Chapter seven collates and evaluates data and extracts from the project in Palestine, to develop definition of the Therapeutic Holding Space approach.

Chapter eight responds to all five learning outcomes drawing together the different voices of authority and experience, conceptual and intuitive, within the research journey. It is held by the researcher reflective overview in alignment with heuristic guidance (Moustakas 1990; 2001) where experiential and reflective skills develop through the process (1998: 5).

Chapter nine is the final explication stage of analysis, with researcher recommendations and reflexive commentary on the development of the research inquiry. The final stage of illumination is a state of expansive awareness (creative synthesis) and formal analysis (explication).

Fig 3: Thesis Cycles of Heuristic Inquiry (adapted from Moustakas, 1990).



Chapter 2: Literature Review - Conceptual definitions of youth trauma & therapeutic response

Researcher commentary

My introductory chapter presents social work as a profession which responds to family and community conflict. In chapter two I recognise two models of response: a statutory welfare approach to individual and family need, and an emergent global model of individual and community relief. Both approaches, in my view, function within the realms of the core professional mandate of 'safeguarding' vulnerable groups; I define this a professional duty to identify risk and oppression and build resilience. Recognising the variance of approaches across cultures and socio-political mandates, I present the universal 'essence' of social work as its capacity to work with local people and community infrastructure in a democratic and participatory form of inquiry into need and response. The central aspect of this type of inquiry or 'assessment' is, in my view, the psycho-intuitive lens of the social worker, aware of the impact of external conflict and oppressive powers on individual sense of self, of spirit and composure.

In figure 5.2 (**2.5**) I acknowledge how traditional welfare formations of social work as a profession have extended from national and regional constructions into an international alliance with distinct qualities. These forms of transcultural social work practice are prioritised in this chapter due to their interest in specific aspects of transcultural social justice, eco justice and conflict resolution (**2.9**). I identify this emergent sub-culture of social work in research and practice action at international levels to be deeply participatory as a community approach, working with local people, community elders and human services to combat conflict.

Within contexts of war and military siege, the inquiry sharpens to define tangible approaches to support young people who are displaced from their ancestral place and sense of belonging through oppressive forces. This thesis seeks to redefine the purpose and essence of social work in this context, where a deep psycho-intuitive awareness is required and a capacity to work in a state of heightened alert due to the external disorder. In circumstances of critical community destabilisation, as occurs in the central project in Palestine accounted for in chapter six, the deeply reflexive nature of response requires a blurring of professional roles in service structures which might be themselves destabilised. My intention to concentrate on the 'therapeutic groupwork model' requires defining the distinct contribution of social work whilst acknowledging therapeutic groupwork skills transferable across allied professions such as youth work and community psychology in more fluid situations of conflict.

This chapter therefore outlines the central conceptual and theoretical influences on social work in family and community relief, using youth displacement as the common thread of experience caused by community disorder. Where these fault lines become heightened sources of oppression, I suggest the type of psycho-social response becomes a different impulse so that the intrinsic safeguarding lens of the profession confronts, what I term, forms of 'existential trauma'. In war zones, as in the Palestinian conflict central to this thesis, young people and especially young males are not only susceptible to these disorders but potentially victims of deliberate targeting.

This account seeks therefore to redefine the conventional social work model of psycho-social therapy in work with young people in complex transition, defining principles and features of its usage by community practitioners using it as a psycho-intuitive groupwork approach in forms of conflict-based youth trauma. This requires acknowledgement of the bedrock theories of social work, the critical social, the anti-oppressive, the psycho-therapeutic; each of these principles requires definition in the context of specific conflict, and in response to distinct forms of trauma manifestations for young people.

Reader guide: Chapter two is the formal literature platform to substantiate my initial research premises about youth trauma and therapeutic response. It supports research aims one and two:

** to understand the psychological impact of contemporary forms of youth displacement*;

*to *trace the contribution of social work as a therapeutic community practice for young people in conflict contexts.*

This chapter, therefore, considers contemporary forms of social work and allied community therapy; defining effective responses to young people in the deepest experiences of conflict and trauma. The chapter opens with the concept of identity as self, developing sense of self, and the traumatized self as aspects of 'personhood' (Heron, 1998).

Stage one identifies literature defining features of the displaced young person, seeking to understand the psychological impact of experiences of conflict and oppression. It explores the impact of displacement to the young person's sense of identity, belonging and meaning within family, culture, sense of place and ancestry.

Stage two identifies literature defining aspects of psycho-therapeutic social work, its historical influences and contemporary approaches to youth displacement. I identify key theorists in the conceptual foundations of welfare social work, and a specialized emergent literature which considers child and youth transition within contemporary forms of human displacement including migrancy and refugeeism. The range of formal literature in the foundational stage of my thesis reflects these different sources, including authors from specialized social work disciplines, authors from a range of community practice and psychological disciplines responding to young people in family and societal destabilisation, and a specialized source of emergent literature analysing psycho-therapeutic approaches to youth displacement from war zones. The key points from this conceptual debate are used to illuminate the defining of the therapeutic holding space as a practice response to contemporary forms of youth trauma.

The literature review includes the following themes:

- UK / Western world literature on youth trauma due to family and community destabilisation p.30/31
- Youth displacement and psychological disturbance: world conflict zones p. 32 / 34
- Established therapeutic literature of youth trauma and response Fig 4 p. 34
- Formations of organisational social work with key theoretical influences Fig 5 p. 37
- Social work in psycho-social and holistic therapy Fig 6 p.45

Reader note: The literature of contemporary youth displacement from a therapeutic lens is limited; my study places the concept of displacement in a practice context which had largely developed

trauma approaches based on family displacement rather than community displacement. I contain my search to literature in social work, psychology and allied community professions.

It is common for research analysis to distinguish between migrants and refugees (Betts, 2010; O' Connell Davidson, 2013). As this research was concerned with the psychological impact and therapeutic response of youth displacement generically, I source literature across these two fields.

Literature Review Part 1: Understanding features of youth trauma in conflict

2.1 The sanctity of personhood

"The displacement, the homesickness, makes me feel I have an empty place in my heart; the fact that I can't go back always feels like there is a wound in my heart which needs to heal".
Rwanda youth survivor

This inquiry concerns young people who have had traumatic loss through experiences of displacement in circumstances which create daily threats to their sense of identity. The context for inquiry includes two forms of displacement; the impact of cultural displacement where young people remain in communities in a conflict environment, and young people who are migrant due to conflict over ancestral land. The outline invites a critical understanding of the interplay between the individual and the collective, recognising in experiences of human suffering our desire to "bridge the gulf that exists between isolation and connection" (O' Donohue, 2000: 16).

My framework for analysis therefore is the psychological thread of identity, belonging and nurture, and the impact on sense of self through the trauma of forced displacement. Psycho-dynamic thought raises concern about how young people find the resilience to sustain when in a developmental stage of 'awareness' (**2.7**). Forced displacement clearly disrupts the developing sense of self and hence, threatens youth composure. This therapeutic 'awareness' appears intrinsic to the philosophical and theoretical orientations of social work, in terms of supporting people to survive and flourish in the face of conflict and oppressive forces.

My work is influenced by literature which promotes the sanctity of the individual as the self-referencing person; in particular, writers rooted in philosophy and humanistic psychology defining 'personhood' in its developmental and inter-relational context (Maslow, 1954; May, 1994; Rogers, 1986, 1995). Maslow's work presents the primacy of the value of the sense of self: "the desire for self-fulfilment, namely the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1954:93). Rogers held that all living things have an essential pattern of dynamic change so that 'self' is "the force to actualize the fullness of an individual's personhood" (1986: 2002*).* His promotion of the 'person-centred' approach emphasized "the constructive directional flow of the human being towards a more complex and complete development and towards the full unique potential of the individual's personhood" (Rogers, 2000:986). Maslow's model of self-actualisation (1954) identified basic need as physical survival need and the higher realm of dimensions of psychological and emotional well-being and spiritual self-realisation.

The debate opens by considering how far these cornerstone conceptualisations of adolescence influence therapeutic response to the young person's sense of self and sense of spirit. Polkinghorne (2014) traces the foundations of humanistic psychology to behavioural sciences and psychoanalysis. He notes an absence of 'self' and 'soul' as terms in modern academic psychology and philosophy and this has been equally observed in a wave of critical literature on social work education, philosophy and practice (Matthews, 2010; Moss & Holloway, 2011). Allport (1955) observed that until 1890, American writers such as Dewey, Royce and James regarded self as a necessary concept; but in the following 50 years, few American psychologists made mention of it and none employed the term "soul" (1955: 36).

Founders of the contemporary wave of humanistic psychology (Bugental, 1987; Heron, 1992) reintroduced self as a 'cornerstone' concept to open "awareness of the inherent possibilities of human existence….and the process through which positive change (can) occur in psychotherapeutic work with clients" (Polkingholne, 2014:91). A primary concern within my research is how the disrupted young person's sense of place and belonging impacts on their psychological composure and capacity to re-locate sense of self. In the conceptualisations of 'sense of self', emphasis is placed on the capacity to transform. May (1958: 43) promoted the concept of self as 'sense of being'*; '*being' understood as "sense of potentiality" *(*1958: 43). Heron's model of 'personhood', a primary influence on my thesis, also emphasizes the intuitive perceptive state of self. His model identifies four basic psychological modes: the *affective*, the *imaginal*, the *conceptual* and the *practical* (1996: 106). The primary focus is on the 'feeling state' as the core from which all other aspects of the psyche emerge – emotion, intuition, imagining, reason, discrimination, intention and action. Heron's philosophy is that 'personhood' is realized through participation, participation with others, within community and natural world awareness (1998; 2008). This supports my use of Heron's model of co-operative inquiry as a participatory action approach outlined in **1.9**, **5.2** and **5.6**.

Spence's Model "Intersecting Dimensions of Youth" (2005) identifies the historical, social, biological and spatial aspects of youth identity and development. This multi-dimensional approach supports awareness of the influence of social, cultural and environmental landscapes on the experience of the young person moving through the transitions of adolescence. In complex youth transition, identity is seen as a negotiated process where young people have *"*agency*"* or control (Wood & Hine, 2009:21); an important concept that supports my opening consideration of 'awareness' as self-attunement in chapter one (**1.1**).

Heron terms the concept of 'person-centred inquiry' a *sacred science* giving central focus to the idea of the free and self-determining individual and the 'primacy of personhood' (Heron, 1998). This primary focus promotes a 'critical subjectivity' and the "all-pervasive right of persons to participate in any decision-making that affects the fulfilment of their needs and interests, the expression of their preferences, values and, above all, the inner life of spirit" (Heron, 1998:3).

The focus on the 'inner life of spirit' in the journey to self-discovery is central to my inquiry. Heron defines it in connection to the metaphysical realm where people "affirm their own original relation to the presence of creation" (Heron, 1998:3). This promotes respect for the state of inner judgement and discrimination of the individual who holds the potential to "use the full range of their sensibilities to explore their relationship with being" (Heron, 1998:3). This challenges the "wheel of authoritarianism" (Heron, 1998:3) in society and deterministic views of individual and community

well-being. It returns to my vision of the standing stones and the significance of the groupwork circle which can recreate a sense of sacred space and belonging.

Heron's beliefs about the sanctity and capacity of self 'agency' influence this discussion of the realm of lifespan philosophy, transpersonal psychology and relational social work. My work promotes the holistic awareness of both conceptual and intuitive states and within therapeutic awareness, the desire to achieve "resonant attunement" (Heron, 1996: 105). Rogers identified the 'divided self' – the outwardly conceived self and the inner potential, the authentic or congruent self (1986). In chapter one (1.3) I discussed the influence of Lee's work (2005) on my research lens. His perspective considers youth in a state of natural 'separation' from childhood nurture and belonging within the development of personhood and 'separability'.

These theoretical conceptions of the sense of self and developing self-awareness are a central influence in social work responses to young people experiencing complex transition. In contemporary relational approaches, this concept of individual awareness is framed within a sense of emotional intuition and resilience. This is defined by Goleman (1996) as emotional 'literacy' in terms of understanding self and self-resilience, as a point of regulation in relation to others: "the development of the ability to perceive, interpret, label and communicate appropriately an individual's emotions into a social context" (Thompson *et al*., 2012: 67). Heron translates 'personhood' into this transpersonal context in his definition of 'co-creation' as "imago dei: each human is a responsible co-creator of their domain within the universal estate, in relation with others similarly engaged" (Heron, 1998:3). These definitions support my presentation of the young person's awareness as sense of 'composure' in contexts of human displacement.

Chapter two opens with Maslow (1954) and Heron's (1992) conceptual understandings of personhood to present the inquiry into the young person's psychological state when experiencing displacement. Personhood is outlined as the sense of self, developing self and the traumatized self that occurs in these circumstances for young people. Sense of self is, therefore, linked to the idea of identity and belonging both in terms of existential sense of self and social inter-relational sense of self. This becomes an important point of reference in understandings of youth development and youth displacement in this stage of my thesis. This framework opens my literature review with identification of the eco-sociological framework for understanding the psychological impact of youth displacement and the importance of both social and ecological sense of self in building resilience. Heron's principles in 'person-centred inquiry' and 'co-creation' (Heron, 1998) become both primary principles of my research and conceptual guides which support my choice of participatory action research as the methodology to frame my inquiry (chapter five, **5.2**).

2.2 Psychological impact of youth displacement due to family and community destabilisation

Primary themes in UK and Western world literature relating to youth trauma include destabilisation in the family due to socio-political and demographic change (Almond, 2006; Adams, 2009), separation from birth family due to family breakdown (Pryor, 2014), safeguarding concerns (Davis *et al.,* 2012) and youth homelessness due to socio-economic change (Curtis *et al*., 2013; Frith *et al.,* 2014 and Usborne, 2014). Gauci & Sealey's paper (2017) raises concern about European socio-

economic instability and the specific impact on contemporary patterns of youth homelessness and displacement. This paper combines a social policy and therapeutic lens to consider causations and the psychological consequences of socio-economic change.

These sources represent a tradition of literature locating the debate in the context of contemporary patterns of youth displacement due to demographic, economic and environmental change. Crisis (2013) highlights that homeless young people are some of the most disadvantaged and discriminated against groups in modern Western societies linking to Gauci & Sealey's account (2017). UK and European sources focus specifically on the changing nuclear family (Almond, 2006; Curtis *et al.,* 2013; Pryor, 2014) as causation of psychological displacement for young people (Brandon *et al.,*1998). Specialised literature focuses on the psychological impact of homelessness and 'hidden homelessness' (Crisis Report 2013; McCoy 2016) as a form of youth displacement caused by family and community hardship (Quilgars *et al.,* 2008; McCoy *et al.,* 2016).

At a global level, Schapendonk's study (2015:52) identifies the unequal effects and excesses of 'globalisation' on the life experiences of young people in particular, and the contrasting realities of power and access (2015:50). The fundamental claims of humanity - of belonging, warmth, stability - replaced by family and community separation, conflict, and material insecurity will inevitably take its toll on the person's sense of identity and emotional well-being (Gauci & Sealey, 2017). In 2020/21 these features of concern have been exacerbated by the impact of COVID 19 and consequential isolation for young people in the UK, in Europe and across the world.

Related studies identify the varied and complex home and family circumstances that young people experience in diverse and rapidly changing societal contexts, and therapeutic writers acknowledge the impact of the interaction between internal composure and external disorder on the young person's sense of stability and security (Ruch *et al.,* 2010; Megele, 2015). This is a primary feature of my inquiry, which in this chapter, I attribute to the psycho-social tradition (**2.10**). Sarkisian *et al.* (2012) highlight the importance of developing services which can meet the individual and unique needs of disadvantaged young people in an inclusive and therapeutic way. In this context, 'therapeutic' is defined as a generic practice approach which is informed by understanding the psychological traumas young people face as a framework for psychological response. McKie *et al*. (2012) emphasize the impact on childhood resilience of multifold transitions and Brandon *et al. (1998)* promote therapeutic ways for children to make sense of complicated and disrupted lives.

For young people where family life is significantly destabilised, the primary UK/European welfare strategy is to re-locate the child (Humphreys & Thiara 2003). Three of the primary factors causing family destabilisation are identified as domestic violence, mental health and substance misuse – the 'toxic trio' (Stanley *et al.,* 2010; Corby *et al.,* 2012). Brandon *et al.,* (1998) observe that where *'*destructive conflict' between parents is hostile, unresolved and involves the children this is particularly damaging. Psychological harm is also increased where there is lack of parental and sibling contact (Sen & Broadhurst, 2011); or there is 'troubled contact' due to unresolved conflict or absence of information and contact with parents and siblings post separation (Delong & Davis, 2013).

These studies have a dominantly UK / Europe contextualisation yet parallel themes occur in global studies of youth displacement when considering the psychological impact of migrancy due to community tension, fracturing and separation (**2.3**). European studies identify the need for

psychological understanding and therapeutic intuition in response (Sturge & Glaser, 2000; Sen & Broadhurst, 2011 and Delong & Davis, 2013); the importance of acknowledging traumatic memories pre displacement (Thiara & Gill, 2012); observation of the sustained psychological impact of the violence and conflict witnessed (Thiara & Gill, 2012) and the importance of interventions which reframe sense of restorative self (Delong & Davis, 2013).

In generic terms, the cumulative effects of early childhood trauma due to family destabilisation and separation are well documented and fundamental to understandings of youth trauma (Bellis *et al.,* 2016; Hughes *et al.,* 2016). These authors observe the impact of early trauma not only into adolescence but its impact on adult psychological health. Bandura's seminal work (1999) acknowledged that the risk factors for adolescents in transition are prevalent as having to cope with existing stressors whilst being exposed to emerging biopsychosocial changes and demands. "The passage through adolescence to adulthood has become riskier than it was in the past, especially for youth growing up in conflicted and fractured families in impoverished neighbourhoods. Youngsters who enter adolescence beset by a disabling sense of inefficacy transport their vulnerability to stress and dysfunction to the new environmental demands and to the pervasive biopsychosocial changes they find themselves undergoing" (Bandura, 1999: 177-178). Social work and youth work literature highlight the emotional-psychological impact of the impact of separation from family and community life (**2.4**). Holmes (2016) describes it as 'the void'.

It is a complex path for the therapist to unravel. "The meaning of any traumatic event is a complex interaction of the event itself and the individual's past, present and expected future as well as biological givens and social context" (Ursano, 1992: 5). Young people most exposed to trauma due to displacement are likely to be amongst the groups who are 'hard to reach' with therapeutic response. For example, Hamilton *et al.* (2011) observe the lack of care or counselling received by homeless young people showing evidence of trauma. Children and young people who are exposed to sustained trauma are more susceptible to post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety (Furlong & Cartmel, 2006). This potentially limits their capacity to engage with supportive human services and humanitarian relief.

2.3 Psychological impact of forced displacement: Conflict zones

It is largely assumed that forced displacement will carry more severe psychological consequences, although literature emphasizes the importance of understanding the diversities of context and psychological impact. It is important to distinguish between 'free floating migrants' (Piore, 1979) and the forced displacements that many young migrants experience when community life is in conflict (van Liempt 2007; Alpes 2011). Of this latter group, many will have experienced or witnessed violence and forced family separation.

Contemporary studies locate their research at refugee and immigration points in Europe or resettlement services in the UK responding to displacement post wars in Afghanistan and Syria. In a UK context, the Refugee Council (Home Office, 2013) statistics indicate 82% of unaccompanied UASYP are males and Afghanistan remains the highest figure of refugees. Kohli's UK study highlights the high level of emotional distress seen at the point of arrival to Britain (2006). Many unaccompanied young people have complex emotional issues and personal histories of loss and

violence (Newbigging *et al.,* 2011). Many have experienced war, trauma, persecution and abuse of their most basic human rights and are isolated from any family member to oversee their care (Barrie *et al.,* 2011).

Young people exposed to armed conflict or violence (Betts 2006) are at high risk of residual and enduring trauma (Lyons *et al.,* 2006). Lyons *et al.,* (2006) and Cox & Pawar, (2013) are two of the first prominent social work orientated therapeutic research studies that highlighted the specific psychological needs of children and young people on a global level in communities of conflict; studies observe anxiety about survival, fear of parents and siblings being killed or taken away, fear about own safety and awareness of risks of being kidnapped, injured or detained (Lyons *et al.* 2006). For young people remaining in siege contexts, Cox & Pawar (2013) identify the sense of powerlessness and dehumanising forces of oppression due to external forces which disrespect and violate the residual norms of culture and family life. "It is the trauma of what they have seen …young people living in war and civil conflict zones with the daily risk of seeing their parents struggle to support relatives and children, with loss of homes, short medical and food supplies, risk of shootings and the violence of daily life" (Goelitz *et al.,* 2013:89). Lyons describes the daily sharing of the "knowledge of a community being violated" (2006:62). These accounts, therefore, are stark evidence of the complex psychological traumas young people face.

A collection of migration studies highlight the specific features of risk and psychological impact for young people: the isolation of the young person from any sense of 'family project' (Kalir, 2005; Alpes, 2011), the 'inversion of the normal' (Maoz, 2005), and the psychological consequences of "encountering unfamiliarity" (Schapendonk, 2015: 56). Authors evidence how the features of the unknown create psychological disturbance, a sense of loss from the experiences of flight and an uncertainty about the present and future (Khosravi, 2010; Kohli, 2011). They also emphasize the gulf between legal, hence sanctioned, and illegal, hence haphazard, travel opportunities (Vogt, 2013).

Such studies convey the continuum of extreme isolation, uncertainty, vulnerability and violation of rights faced by young people. Wernesjo's (2012) study highlights the common experience that young people are not only left uninformed during migration, but also excluded from decision-making prior to migration. Crouch & Desforges (2003:10) advocate for practitioners to use a critical awareness of how the young people "negotiate the world they encounter", and the "rationales and meanings" they attach to their travel experiences. Betts' (2010) study of youth migrants indicates the need for diversity of understanding due to the "multiple mobilities" of people and the caution against "common analytical frameworks" (2010:52). Schapendonk's study (2015) emphasizes the "transformative capacity" of the young person, observing that the emotional intensity of the transition can be "more than the young person can handle or prepare for" yet equally a passage towards resettlement and restoration (2015:55).

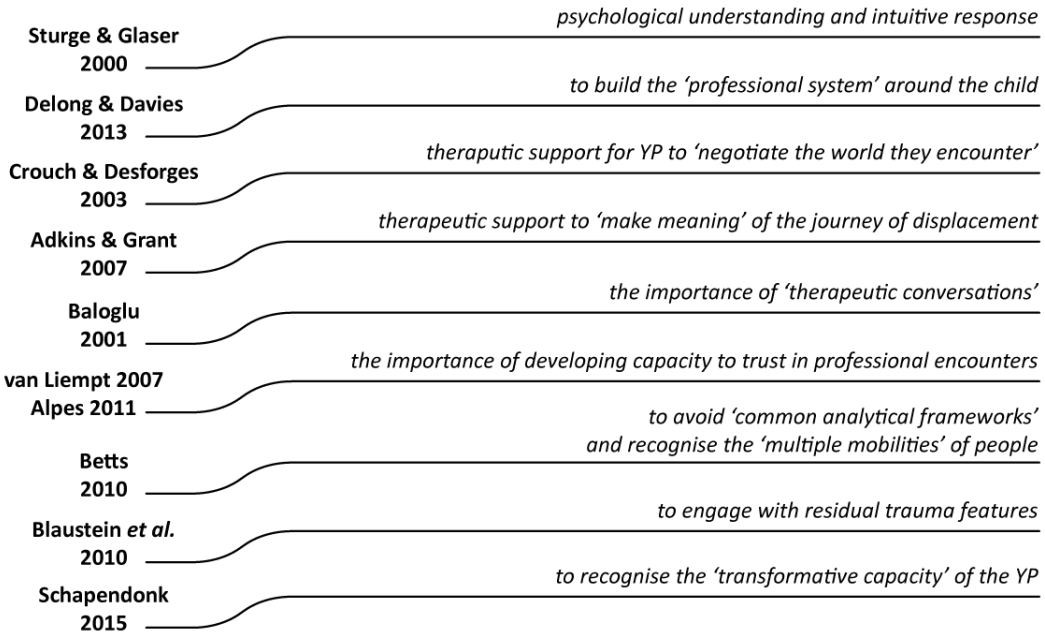
Connecting with Bandura's conceptualisation of adolescence as a vulnerable developmental stage, the journey of the young person can be associated with the "rites of passage" from youth into adulthood (Noy, 2002:55). This holds the potential for deep personal change and transformation, with young people demonstrating the capacity to build strategies to prevent risks, establish reorientation and even find "tranquilities" (Schapendonk 2015; 62). However, it is important to distinguish the vast variability of expectation and reality, and the risk that the final destination of the journey might be 'unbearably inhospitable' (Bauman 1998:309).

Kohli and Mather (2003; 2006) emphasize the importance of psychological response for UASYPs to promote 'sense of belonging' and 'psycho-social well-being'. However, literature highlights the lack of priority on psycho-emotional services over progressive needs such as education, housing and social networks. The lack of therapeutic intervention can perpetuate the residual trauma symptoms due to denial of emotional release (Blaustein *et al,* 2010).

Migrancy studies also emphasize the importance of 'therapeutic' conversations and the connections which create a sense of community on the journey; value is placed on 'informational familiarity' (Baloglu, 2001), and 'persuasive stories' (Noy 2002) that exchange information and provide promises of opportunities and survivals. Khosravi's account (2010) is an auto-ethnographic study of the psychological terrors of border crossing for young males, describing both the extremes of isolation and complexities of 'comradeship' which influence personal interpretations of disruption and belonging. Kohli's accounts (2006;2011) support this narrative from a theoretical study of separation and sense of belonging in unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people; emphasizing the challenges to emotional equilibrium and composure.

These studies hence reflect the importance of 'community' and community conversations as a forum of connectivity relevant to my research claim of the participatory inter-relational principle.

Fig. 4: Features of therapeutic response to youth trauma: key theorists



2.4 Trauma due to land displacement

Displacement, as a concept, is clearly a far greater trauma when involves forms of forced transition due to conflict over land. Aspects of forced and traumatic transition from land or invasion into land include denial of understandings of cultural and religious practices, ways of living and usual patterns of life (Derluyn *&* Broekaert, 2008). Specialised therapeutic literature on youth displacement recognises the psychological strains related to conflict (Quilgars *et al.,* 2008; McCoy, 2016), grief (Goelitz *et al.,* 2013) and 'accumulative traumas' (Herman, 2010; Goelitz *et al.,* 2013)). The literature emphasizes a risk of a primary focus on basic survival service responses when individuals require a deep critical therapeutic service informed by understandings of community crisis (Donnelly *et al.,* 2009). This highlights the principle of 'awareness' I promote in my research, further defining it as a respect for location based on indigenous land and cultural rights.

Ferguson's (2016) empirical research study of migrant children in the UK 'looked after' system through resettlement processes demonstrated that where sustained therapeutic relationships were developed, emotional release occurred. His study promotes the importance of the 'relational approach' and 'therapeutic encounter' in complex youth resettlement (Ferguson, 2016). The therapeutic relational approach is also highlighted by Baylis, 2011; Ruch *et al.*, 2016; Timor-Shelvin *et al.,* 2016 and Higgins, 2017. Wade *et al.* (2011) conducted a study of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and the response of social services UK, identifying the importance of social work in initial assessments in promotion of holistic understanding of psycho-emotional needs.

Authors promoting a more holistic form of conflict release in 'displacement therapies' advocate for narrative approaches (Quilgars *et al.,* 2008; Mc Coy, 2016} to understand sense of history and family, and expressions of 'belonging' {Derluyn *et al*., (2008). Lack of engagement and sense of trust in therapeutic engagement is a common theme, and studies identify the complexity of co-existence where migrant young people hold emotional disconnection from others, conveying symptoms of emotional withdrawal and a fear of the 'hostile stranger' (Townsend & Pascal, 2012; Ferguson, 2016). It is clearly complex for the young person carrying scars of societal oppression to engage with a new human environment.

The literature locates the importance of secure therapeutic and inter-relational encounter post displacement. Ndvolu's work (2013) promotes 'reflective groupwork' as a means of inviting young people to "make sense of, and reconcile past experience" (Ndvolu, 2013: 24). This requires critical awareness of young people's psychological states and ways of rekindling capacity for social relationship. Wade *et al.* (2011) found that the primary needs of youth migrants are to build new attachments within secure environments and to find new purpose in everyday routines (Kohli, 2011).

2.5 Displacement and the value of therapeutic space

This section considers formal literature supporting my research promotion of sense of therapeutic space and place as response to 'existential trauma'. Pascal's work on 'space, place and psycho-social well-being' (2010) places emphasis on creating sense of location for young people experiencing psychological crisis due to sense of loss. Literature demonstrates the prevalence of the use of the term 'space' in therapeutic practice with displaced youth, both to describe a physical landscape of

secure retreat (Sampson & Gifford, 2010) and the philosophical dimensions of relational space or 'holding' (Dunkley, 2008; Pascal, 2010; Ferguson, 2016).

The term 'vibrant space' Ndvolu (2013) confirms my vision of the therapeutic transformative quality of retreat for displaced young people. Ndlovu defines the use of reflective groupwork in post-apartheid S. Africa as a *"*vibrant space to discuss personal effect with a view to improving lives and family circumstances*"* (2013: 24). Dyck and Dossa (2007) use the term 'healthy space' to describe the potential psychological release for migrant young people connecting with positive 'sense of place'. Sampson and Gifford (2010) talk about 'place-making' in a re-settlement camp to engender a sense of well-being for young people with backgrounds of refugeeism.

The therapeutic nature of retreat space for troubled youth is promoted in my work in association with tribal sense of land and ancestry due to the theoretical conventions which promote earth and cultural sense of belonging. This form of indigenous conceptualisation of human retreat is often termed, in tribal contexts, 'meditative wisdom'. Dyck and Dossa (2007) promote therapeutic interventions which reaffirm the person's sense of 'belonging space'. Hence, the actual connection to ancestral land is a form of tangible therapeutic self-affirmation. Associated literature supports my promotion of a practice approach which develops sense of space as a therapeutic landscape for restoring young people's sense of belonging and composure (Dunkley, 2008; Sampson *et al.,* 2010). My 'holding space' vision elevates the concept of retreat, silence and peace - making to defy the psychological disturbances in sounds and emblems of external chaos and disorder. Kohli (2006) explores the importance of the 'sound of silence' for UASYP using reflective space to restore and make sense of complex experience. This, for me, echoes Heron's conceptualisation of 'sacred space' (1998).

Specialised studies identify the specific traumas within countries and regions under forced occupation or apartheid rules due to an accumulative and sustained sense of the chaotic and uncertain (Ndvolu, 2013: 24). In Palestine, Pappe & Chomsky emphasize that "siege is an act of war" (2010:115) which results in the 'nullifying principle' which displaces a community and forces it into an "existential struggle for survival" (2010: 16). In this cultural context, the political "wall of denial and repression" results from fifty years of "systemic government suppression" (2010:74) hence, the creation of an inter-generational wave of psychological trauma. This distinct form of trauma is considered in detail in chapter three with extracts from research of conflict and young people as victims of political violence (**3.3**).

As indicated in my work, a cultural sense of space can be real or 'visualized' as a form of therapeutic art with young people who are displaced from ancestral land (Baldwin, 2013). Dunkley's work (2008) considers how practitioners can create 'place-making' in a resettlement camp for 'troubled youths' suggesting the capacity for practitioners to create sense of space, sense of safe space, sense of community central to my instinct about the therapeutic holding space approach (**1.4**).

Therefore, space becomes an image of identification, reaffirmation and transformation in the literature of youth displacement. Despite consistent acknowledgement of the immense impact of conflict and displacement on young people's psychological health, there is always the potential to create a "transitional space in which a new world can be envisaged" (Winnicott, 1974:104).

In summary, the literature studies of youth displacement and migrancy highlight specific themes that support my research inquiry. They emphasize the particular susceptibility of young people to traumatic transition and uncertainty at a crucial developmental life stage. They raise discussion of actual and virtual conceptualisations of landscape as a therapeutic concept to release the traumas young people sense in reaction to conflict and violence in the environment. Hence, they elevate my premise about the relationship between space, sense of place, trauma and emotional release as therapeutic concepts.

Literature Review Part Two: Social work in therapeutic response to youth trauma

Part one has identified formal literature which supports my conceptualisation of the psychological journey of young people in frameworks of displaced self, traumatized self and transformative self. Part two identifies literature defining social work's foundational premises in statutory welfare, its development as a therapeutic practice with specific frameworks of psycho-social and holistic theories, and its international organisational formation supporting transcultural response to global community conflict and displacement.

Due to the complex and contested nature and defining of social work as an organisation, I have defined five arms of organisational development and service delivery relevant to my research:

Fig 5 Conceptual Chart: Formations of Organisational Social Work.

2.6 Social Work foundations: Human rights and welfare

Social work developed as a form of statutory welfare in organisational response to child and family need and risk within frameworks of human rights and social justice. The primary focus is distinguished as an assessment of need and risk with services which provide human 'safeguarding'. Within these assessments, social work theories promote 'systemic awareness' of the framework surrounding the young person's experience to identify risks and rights. Yontef (1997) outlines the professional focus on building 'sense of self' as a person's awareness of identity and belonging, his work influenced by Gestallt theory with its belief in the 'self-organising system'. Risk, within this construct, is based on the understanding of a person's basic rights to nurture and stability. It

promotes the order and stable life conditions of the social and eco system. As summarized by Sommerfield & Hollenstein, "a person's conduct of life is categorized by the dynamic interaction between the person and the social action systems (family, school, probation service, etc); the two faces of 'life conduct systems and socio-biological systems'" (Sommerfield & Hollenstein, 2012: 671). These create a social action system which is structurally connected. Human beings secure their survival by forming "social figurations as an active, creative form of ensuring survival" (Sommerfield & Hollenstein, 2012: 671).

This illuminates, in my view, the 'existential' aspects of social work's conceptualisation of safeguarding and therapy; it informs my inquiry into how a transcultural social work team conceptualizes the creation of a 'therapeutic community' around the displaced young person as a form of 'social action' system. This notion is complicated, however, and it requires a highly defined therapeutic discipline in responding to the needs of young people in abject circumstances across cultures. The transcultural team requires a critical multi-dimensional understanding of identity, ancestry and belonging which, I argue, is intrinsic within social work's foundations in anti-oppressive practice. Fredman's work on emotional communication (2015) challenges the conception of a universal 'story of emotion' that transcends cultures as this risks denial of the nuances of grief in psychological turmoil. Fredman outlines the importance of "deconstructing and tracking emotions and exploring how emotions are connected to family of origin and cultural context – developing a sense of interactional understanding to better regulate emotions" (2004:41).

Central to my inquiry is how the psycho-social lens can promote a more critical holistic approach as a defence against the sense of splitting and dissonance that occurs in trauma. This requires critical awareness of the constructs of power and influence affecting both social relationships and human service approaches. Fredman (2004:41) highlights the importance of 'emotion talk' where emotion is seen as "socially purposeful, culturally constructed and interactional". "Emotion stories are seen as intricately woven with stories of identity" (Friedman & Rothman, 2015:28). The therapist, in inviting the person's narrative of identity and belonging, must be conscious of the intricacies and complexities within cross cultural exchange seeking to highlight where there is risk of discrimination or oppression (Laird, 2008).

I intend to define how these forms of emotional exchange about identity and belonging support the young person's psychological health. Also, how they function within emergent considerations of social work in eco-sociological frameworks promoting sense of self location within landscape and 'community' orientation. It is a debate about organisation and agency. In chapter one I suggested that social work is humanitarian in essence; in this section I outline an emergent debate in social work and humanitarian justice, community justice, and international social solidarity. This includes consideration of literature which highlights childhood and family rights in oppressed cultures, and the rights of indigenous people to peaceful and sustainable settlement.

2.7 Social Work foundations: Social justice, welfare and safeguarding

Research indicates there are now 14 conflict zones in the world and more displaced persons than ever since World War II. Current humanitarian reports recognise the social impact of unequal economic growth on a UK, European and global level: the "growing polarization between the

advantaged and the disadvantaged" (Bynner, 2005:377). The increasing divide is felt by vulnerable people in communities: children and young people; the poor, disabled and marginalised (Oxfam Growth in Inequalities Report, 2016). Global forces in trade and economic investment have led to a widening gap between rich and poor, hence increasing hardship for young people (Gauci & Sealey, 2017).

Associated with post WWII social democratic reforms, social work developed in state alliance to political and social visions of social justice and 'welfare'. Ledwith (2005) identifies the 'critical community praxis' of traditional European social work, working within welfare state ideology in response to people in crisis. At its radical edge, social workers engage with the most disadvantaged in society (Dickens, 2016). Trevithick defines the stand against marginalisation, discrimination and social injustice as intrinsic to organisational social work (Trevithick, 2014; Walker & Beckett, 2011), supporting and protecting children 'at risk' in family and community contexts (Teater, 2014), working with 'distressed' young people (Harris, 2011), and advocating for the rights of vulnerable adults (Parrott & Maguiness, 2017).

This conveys the generic socio-political commitments that shaped the profession; the more radical schools of social work invite a precise analysis of power in critical, radical, reformist social work: Ferguson & Woodward (2009), Dominelli (2012), Fook (2012, 2016), Thompson (2012), Teater (2014), Hugman & Carter (2016), Hood (2018). Thompson outlines three main elements of social justice: absence of unfair discrimination, respect for people's rights, and the notion of merit (2017). Hence the premise of the 'fundamental right to belong' and the protection of sense of self and worth (Global Agenda 2010) is central in social work practice. Four models of social justice can be traced to social work: social justice and equal rights, social justice and participation, social justice and liberation, social justice in opposition to politics of separation (Segal, 2015:15).

In a contemporary context, Hood promotes the use of 'complexity theory' in social work practice to promote critical complex responses to multi-dimensional human need. Theorists aligned to foundational social work movements attribute formational influences to the social theories of Habermas,1987; Giddens 1984; Foucault, 1977 and Bourdieu, 1977. These contribute a critical awareness of organisational and institutional power and the complex relations between "knowledge of people and systems of power" (Gray & Webb 2013: 47), which, arguably, dominate to destroy the legitimacy of 'the other', of those in subordination to social and political laws. Echoing social work's interest in social solidarity, Habermas's concept of 'lifeworld' defines how a reservoir of shared meanings shape our individual and collective identities (1987). Each source holds a perspective on the way that social life is influenced by constructions of truth, reality and moral purpose. Habermas, concerned with the power of language to determine social interactions, raises a critique of norms on the basis of "objectivity, reflexivity and linguistics" (Gray & Webb 2013: 47). Foucault raises a critique of "socially determined discourses" (Gray & Webb 2013: 47).

Giddens' 'theory of structuration' (1984) considers the influence of social systems on human behaviour and promotes 'reflexive modernisation' which gives permission for individuals to rationalise and define themselves, their emotions and choices. These understandings of the principle of human participation and the capacity to self-rationalise become important aspects in my search to define social work's philosophical influences. These support the vision of the therapeutic holding space as a democratic circle of interaction, expression and self-realization.

Chanan & Miller (2013) and Hugman & Carter (2016) place emphasis on 'rethinking community development' and the values that enshrine social work responses to the complex socio-political arenas of contemporary social need and division. Ferguson *et al*. (2004: 209) identify the core challenges of market forces, neo-liberal agendas, and geo-political interests that have competed against claims for social unity based on notions of identity, difference and progression. Social work invites critical awareness of social and political constructions of needs and deservingness, and a constant evaluation of the 'dominant power paradigm' in ideologies of professionalism and welfare (Pease, 2009).

Bourdieu invites social workers to critically understand their 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977). Social work steps into what Giddens terms 'fateful moments' (1991) in people's lives; this requires a critical interpretative approach informed by understandings of political, structural and societal disadvantage (Fook 2007, 2012). The definition of social work 'awareness' positions itself between state power and social justice, giving it a distinction as a community advocate and initiator in participatory community development (Twelvetrees, 1991; Popple, 2015) and a presence in community crisis (Ledwith, 2006; Dominelli, 2013). Ledwith defines how social work uses "community action" and "critical consciousness" (2006: 12) to create an agenda for negotiation between the rights of people and social structures capable of oppression and exclusion. Midgely uses the terms 'remedial, activist and developmental social work' identifying 'remedial work' as response to disadvantaged individuals and families, and developmental work as community action to promote the social and economic liberation of people (2001).

The dual role of state agent and community activist creates a residual debate within social work literature; Butler and Drakeford highlight the complicated ideological shifts in contemporary global social work response, becoming "the unwitting but not unwilling partner of political and ideological processes that have robbed social work of its essential radicalism and transformative potential" (2005:7). Bourdieu highlights the constraints of social work which "must increasingly fight on two fronts: against those they want to help and who are too often too demoralized to take a hand in their own interests, and against administrations and bureaucrats divided and enclosed in separate universes" (Bourdieu *et al.,* 2002: 190). Bourdieu viewed social workers as 'agents of the state' who are "shot through with the contradictions of the state" (Bourdieu *et al.,* 2002: 184).

Despite these challenges, the true 'essence' of social work is still, arguably, a valid contributor to contemporary causes of social justice with its universal claim to "establish the conditions necessary to empower people to take control of their lives and to create communities based on ideas of equality, the common good and harmony with the natural environment "(Held & McGrew, 2003:112-13). These accounts from literature support my researcher instinct to extend traditional conceptualisations of social work in welfare responses to a broadening of 'safeguarding' as a critical awareness of the influences of global politics and socio-economic power on marginalised groups of people.

2.8 Social Work in transcultural response to global communities

The conventional social work debate about 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1977:198) defines how centralised welfare, health provision and legal mandates affect local people. This conceptualisation has extended in the last 10/15 years to how the global affects local and national social work practice and response (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2004). The holistic approach to contemporary social work practice, rooted in 'social, economic and environmental justice' (Dominelli, 2012) naturally supports a 'participatory worldview' (Reason, 1994). Gray and Webb (2013) term this the 'Bourdiesian notion' of social work, which directly influences the International Federation of Social Work in defining its relation of people to their environments and its expansive ideas of liberation, human rights and social justice across borders (Stark, 2014; Ornellas, Spolander & Engelbrecht, 2016).

I identify two conceptualisations of social work as a global profession. Firstly, it can be defined as an alliance across regions and nations of social work practice and research to take a stand against global violations of humanitarian rights in child trafficking, child abuse, cultural cleansing, forced settler movements, global trade agreements and invasion of indigenous land rights. The second alliance is a more 'grassroots' approach to localized or regional community crisis where transcultural researchers and practitioners formulate grassroots response. Transcultural teams respond to localized poverty, unemployment, environmental hazards and the oppression of minority groups and sub populations (Dominelli, 2012). This second definition includes the specialized responses of international practice concerns in alliance with local social work and allied community activists; the Palestine Youth Trauma Project within my research is an example of this formation (chapter six).

The shift from micro to macro practice promotes international alliances and claims the principle of 'relational communication' (Maschi, 2016) to support sustainable communities affected by both geopolitics and climate change. This is encapsulated in the Global Agenda (Hong Kong, 2010), an alliance between the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) to agree principles and actions for social work and social development as a global community:

Respect, dignity and worth of the person, strengthening the recognition of the importance of human relationships, strengthening environmental and community sustainability, combating social and economic inequalities within countries and between regions (Global Agenda, 2010).

In international contexts, social work's organisational mantra of social justice is used to develop knowledge of 'new humanitarian challenges' (Branom, 2012) and to support local communities at risk in their sustainable advancement (Ferguson, Lavalette & Whitmore, 2005; Dominelli, 2010). This social work 'worldview' also promotes transcultural social solidarity to protect multi representation and indigenous community rights (Dominelli, 2010; Cox & Pawar, 2013). It's literature highlights concerns about community destabilisation and forced migrancy due to environmental change and human conflict, and promotes rights for groups without civil status or political protection (Lyons *et al.,* 2006; Cox & Pawar, 2013;). Emergent priority concerns for the international social work movement include child and women trafficking, and youth migrancy from war zones (Lyons *et al.,* 2006).

The emphasis on community development across borders reflects a new commitment to both human and environmental sustainability and earth 'awareness', framed as 'eco social work' (Adams,

2005). This touches the realms of 'existential social work', in my view, as it holds a stake in land rights, climate change and environmental rights, in peace building and conflict resolution. Dominelli (2013:437) promotes "interventions (that) are holistic and tackle structural forms of oppression, environmental degradation and injustice to empower people." Eco social work is hence a 'holistic understanding' of natural and human landscapes and their impact on people's survival and nourishment; this awareness, fundamental to my research focus on the survival of communities under siege, promotes a contemporary adaptation of social work methods in order to promote societal change (Dominelli, 2013; Demirbilek, 2016; Ramsay & Boddy, 2017).

Eco social work, in my further defining in the ontology chapter of this thesis, supports an emphasis on organic healing energies found within human and natural landscapes (Fook, 2007; Dominelli, 2010). This is an important supposition that influences my understanding of the therapeutic holding space, an approach which is designed to be used within a community system. It invites into the circle awareness of the community's energy to sustain and heal.

2.9 Social work and conflict resolution at family and community level

Social work is accountable at both macro and micro levels. Social work literature highlights social work concern for the impact of external conflict on family life and my research acknowledges its influence in the initial formations of 'family therapy' as therapeutic groupwork with family circles experiencing crisis or conflict (Higgins, 2017)**.** Contemporary peace activists and writers (Mani, 2002; Salomon & Nevo, 2012; Elworthy, 2014) trace the line between personal separation and societal oppression to identify how the chain of conflict can be addressed through processes of exchange and reconciliation. Such literature assumes the connection between social work's heritage in response to family conflict and the organisational influence on contemporary politics and social agenda as a form of peace action and conflict resolution (Dominelli, 2012; Lowe, 2013).

Midegly (2001: 28 - 30) outlines the contested debate about the role social work should play in social and political arenas. Within a conflict zone, the balance between conflict resolution and legitimate practice response is complex and reflects the contested arena of ethics in transcultural social work action discussed in chapter one (**1.7**). Associated literature highlights colonial domination (Popple, 2015), 'white knight' intrusions and short-term solutions leaving communities powerless again (Cox and Pawar, 2013). Friedman observes the need for responses which are aware of the 'multi layered contexts' of relationships and cultures and the complications of interpreting emotion across cultures (2015). The need for 'cultural competence' (Laird, 2008; Bell *et al.*, 2012; Fook, 2016) is an established notion in social work practice; in contemporary contexts, it guides practitioners to define legitimate forms of collective and transcultural practice accountability across cultures with principles formed on 'cultural receptivity' (Coakley and Gruber, 2015). Maschi (2016) talks of the importance in a human rights context of three principles: understanding social context, meaningful participation, and 'relational communication'. Transcultural alliances are often legitimized as social work activist practice in nations as a collective voice against economic, political and social injustice where there is a breach of human rights for vulnerable groups. The focus on vulnerability, echoing the professional duty in 'safeguarding', legitimizes intervention on the basis of human rights violations (Newbigging &

Thomas, 2011). This is the importance of the 'outsider witness' built into the transcultural team approach by Palestinian practitioners as discussed further in chapter six.

In a conflict zone, the distorted environment will affect nuclear family harmony and create inter-generational tensions, hence this conflict 'awareness' supports a systemic transformative type of relational practice in family therapy and conflict resolution (Almond, 2006; Adams, 2009). Wood & Hine (2009) highlight the importance of practice awareness of the interaction between 'agency', defined by Wood as "personal capacity, biology and personality" and 'structure' defined as "systems and structures that influence young people" (Wood & Hine, 2009:5). Conflict resolution appears a legitimate framework for the consideration of trauma and trauma release work; when this involves transcultural presence and advocacy it is often associated with peace activism as conflict 'resolution'. It is vision based; Elworthy calls for a 'multilayered consciousness' which would "enable people all over the globe to begin living on the vision of what a better world would look like" (Elworthy, 2014:113). Elworthy's vision is across cultures of community action; Lyons *et al.,* (2006) echoes this within the profession of social work connecting action to protect human and eco environment within a greater vision of world peace.

In connection to this inquiry, social workers have an understanding of experiences of child trauma through child protection and safeguarding roles (Lyons *et al.,* 2006). This justifies the call for appropriate social work interventions for children and young people affected by community destabilisation due to human conflict and war as a broader form of child safeguarding (Goelitz & Stewart-Kahn, 2013). Segal's model of social empathy promotes *"*self-other awareness, perspective taking, emotional regulation, contextual understanding of systemic barriers and macro perspective taking" (Segal, 2015:15).The established knowledge of social work in family conflict and family conflict resolution invites a practice of reconciliation as a therapeutic bridge which diffuses family splitting and blaming and enables the individual to regain sense of self and sense of harmony within their human - social environment.

The model of family and community encircling the child in need translates to an international model of child – family – community – international practice community surrounding the child / young person at risk (Betancourt *et al.,* 2013). This, again, echoes my vision of the circle surrounding the child in the therapeutic holding space approach.

2.10 Social work in psycho-social therapy

My vision, therefore, is of the therapeutic holding space as a deeper ring of 'safeguarding' in alignment to social work's traditions in protecting vulnerable groups. In chapter one, I declared my research alliance to a form of 'soft therapeutic' community practice. The relational fields of social work practice developed through the psycho-dynamic and humanistic orientations of the 50s and 60s into more specialised 'casework' approaches founded in the late 60s onwards across UK and Europe (Biestek, 1961; Egan, 1975; Butrym, 1976). Biestek's humanistic principles of "individualization; purposeful expression of feelings; controlled emotional involvement; acceptance; the non-judgemental attitude; client self-determination" arguably laid the foundation for the modern therapeutic - relational approach to safeguarding within social work practice (Biestek, 1961: 33).

Bowlby's theory of a 'secure base' developed the realisation of the importance of interpersonal relationships as a foundation for belonging, security and well-being: "all of us from the cradle to the grave, are happiest when life is organised as a series of excursions, long or short, from the secure base provided by our attachment figures" (Bowlby, 1988:69). The psycho-dynamic thought in the 70s and 80s developed understandings of 'complex attachment' to significant others, with emphasis on clinical treatment responses to 'maladjustment' and 'defence mechanisms'. These psycho-dynamic approaches to childhood development influenced formative social work in work with children and young people through complex transition, sustaining the clinical treatment focus on 'attachment' and 'attachment deficit'. Social work was also influenced by the more informal relational orientation of humanistic psychology, with a focus on the 'self-actualizing self' discussed in **2.1**.

Whilst approaches within humanistic psychology and psychiatry adhered to objective treatment plans, social work developed a softer form of non-clinical relational therapy within the community context of experience. Viewed as 'street level bureaucrats', social workers and youth workers adopted a more critical social perspective in understandings of youth need. Payne's 'person in environment' perspective (2005) outlined the expectation that the practitioner assesses the individual in reaction to their environment, hence the development of the systemic psycho-social approach with a more critical awareness of external stressors on 'behaviour' (**2.10)**. Social work has, arguably, historically held this influence in engagement with young people, with a heightened instinct for the internal strength of the child / young people within their nurture environment. Connecting with Winnicott's idea of 'transitional space'(1974) discussed in 1.4, social work builds the relationship with the young person as a sustaining feature in the circumstances of change, with focus on self-development, re-orientation and resilience building. This can be understood, therefore, as a form of 'positive reattunement'.

This form of reattunement is arguably at the core of soft therapeutic community youthwork. Two conceptual developments of the social work profession, the 'relational' (Ruch, 2010; Furling, 2013; Megele, 2015) and the 'reflexive' (Adams, 2005; Bruce, 2013) support a different form of relational practice with more emphasis on the young person's capacity to be self-referencing. Bandura's (1989) theory of human agency supports the importance of self-efficacy, perception and personal beliefs of the individual, echoed in Furlong and Cartmel (2006) and Cooper (2017). Saleebey's focus on the social work assessment of strengths promotes people's capacity to find meaning, as opposed to a central focus on problem identification and solution or 'behaviour modification' (Saleebey, 2006: 116). 'Positive psychology' has equally contributed the strengths based rather than deficit approach to 'personhood' emphasizing human capacity, and the positive tendency towards growth and fulfilment (Moneta, 2014).

In this research, I hold the view that the psycho-social model of engagement is an important contribution to youth transition as it conceptualises the psychological and systemic well-being of the person within a critical socio- political awareness. Brown *et al.* (2014) promote the importance of rapport and confidence building as a form of resilience for young people who have mental health issues due to structural oppression. This promotes individual resistance to oppression by building strength as a sense of personal 'agency and control'.

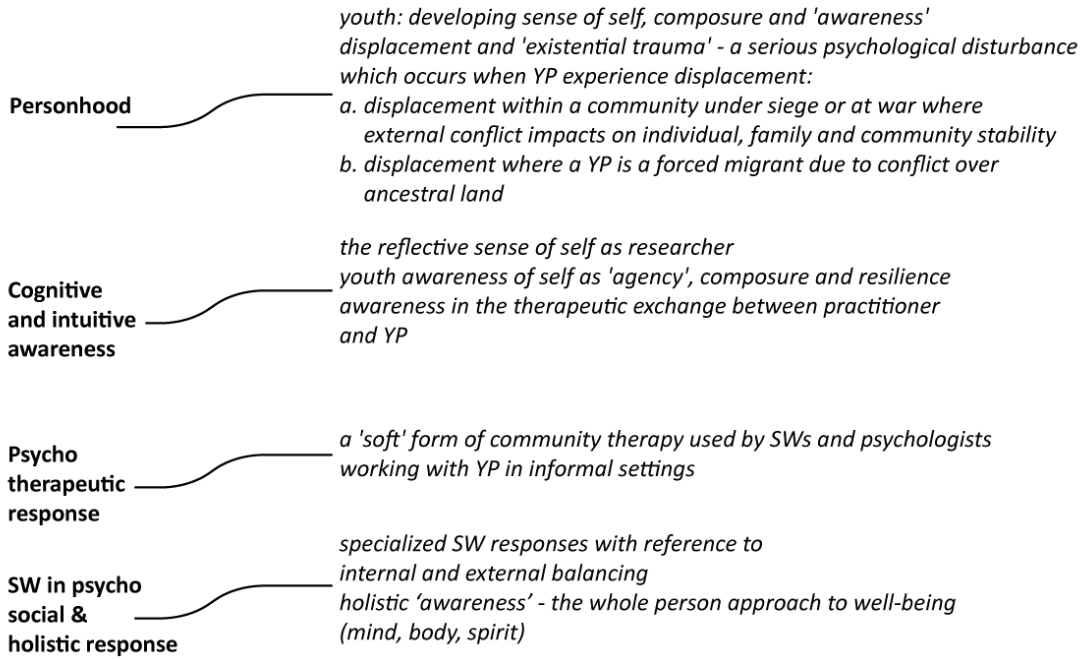
The discussion has outlined the development of social work in psycho-social response:

- Social work influenced by humanistic psychology, developing an interest in self-actualisation, 'personhood', resilience and strengths-based practice (Rogers, 1986; Heron, 1998; Rutter, 2002; Saleebey, 2006).
- Social work and awareness of the impact of attachment health and deficit in the young person's developing psychological health & composure (Winnicott, 1974; Bowlby, 1988; Howe, 2005; Cooper, 2017)
- Social work in relational - therapeutic practice (Adams, 2005; Ruch, 2010).
- Social work in systemic family therapy and conflict resolution (Almond, 2006; Adams, 2009).
- Social work as a safeguarding response to individuals and families at risk or in complex transition (Branon, 1998; Donnelly, 2009; Ferguson, 2016.)
- Social work in holistic and psycho-social practice.
- Social work in holistic therapeutic response to loss and trauma in conflict zones (Papadapoulos, 2002; Wade *et al.,* 2005).

2.11 Developing conceptualisations of therapeutic social work

The literature in stages one and two of this chapter have been acknowledged as formal influences in my initial and developing research premises about youth displacement and therapeutic response, as summarized in figure 6.

Fig. 6: Developing conceptualisations of research premises



I have suggested that existential trauma requires a deeper and broader form of therapeutic response than assumed in service conventions. Core to my research inquiry is the need to establish the capacity of social work to engage with the person holistically, mind – body - spirit. The terms 'relationship-based practice' (Ruch, 2010) and 'relational practice' (Furlong, 2013) are interchangeable in literature describing a form of one-to one social work practice in non-clinical therapeutic environments to support the person's psycho-emotional health in times of adversity. Promoted by a range of contemporary social work theorists (Howe, 2005; Ruch, 2005; Ferguson, 2008; Megele, 2015) the 'relational' is a form of critical - therapeutic social work practice based on the reflexive response to the individual. In more therapeutic forms of 'reflexive practice' (Bruce, 2013), the reflexive cycle of exchange responds to the psycho-emotional instinct of the young person.

This psycho-social model of exchange (Megele 2015) invites a therapeutic emphasis on the internal lens, the 'feeling state' which builds emotional awareness as a form of psychological regulation and composure. In this model of practice, the focus is on transformative inner qualities: "strengths-focus, affirmation of self, resilience building, meaning reconstruction" (Howe, 2005:69). Adams *et al.* {2005:71) define this as the 'psycho-social domain' of social work, combined of "emotions, behaviour, cognition and interpersonal relations". This broader holistic defining and awareness of the individual's psychological and inter-relational environment protects the individual's sense of unique being and belonging.

Children and young people who are exposed to sustained trauma are deemed more susceptible to post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety (Papadapoulos, 2002; Ursano *et al.,* 2014). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can negatively affect children's attachment organisation especially in the critical period of vulnerability in infancy when attachment quality develops (Lang & Gartstein, 2018). For children subject to 'toxic stress' the pre-frontal cortex is inhibited because of the overactive amygdala so instead of being able to make a rationale choice the need for action (fight, flight, freeze) is overwhelming and often presents as aggressive and impulsive behaviour (Burke-Harris 2018; van der Kolk 2014). Factors that protect individuals include safe peer relationships, early help and intervention, trauma informed policies and systems, and compassionate and attuned supportive responses from professionals (Young Minds, 2017).

My primary interest is how this development of holistic and psycho-therapeutic social work responds to the traumas resulting from youth in reaction to stimuli of oppression and conflict. In many cases, the deliberate targeting of young people will be a psychological assault which creates both distortion and adaptation of behaviours to this 'unnatural' social sphere. The belief in the self-referencing individual rooted in humanistic psychology and social work (**2.1; 2.9**) promotes an orientation in which the central focus is on identity and the impact on sense of self through disruptive experiences. The importance of building therapeutic rapport in engagement with young people with emotional needs is emphasized by DiCroce & Preyde (2016). The therapist, conscious of the young person's sense of self 'agency', can connect with negative memories and fears associated with trauma and explore a "cognitive reappraisal of the traumatic event" (Adams, Dominelli & Payne, 2002:78). This prevents internalisation of fault finding and pathologising the 'child'; also, rather than mastering the symptoms through clinical treatment approaches, the individual has the opportunity to reconstruct their sense of 'identity' (Neimeyer, 2015) and 'meaning' (Adams, Dominelli & Payne, 2002). In this sense, the psycho-social model provides a framework to examine

internal and external aspects of the experience and 'compose' the way the psyche reacts to external stressors.

Wade *et al.* (2005) recognise the importance of a holistic social work practice approach which invites the expression of psycho-emotional and spiritual frameworks for culturally displaced young people. The holistic model, held as central to social work practice, provides this critical lens as it enables the practitioner to view their trauma as a "disrupted harmony of body, mind and spirit" (Adams, Dominelli & Payne, 2002:78) and to frame responses based on sensory, physiological and psycho-emotional being. This approach is multi-dimensional and affirmative of the individual allowing for a more precise defining of the aspect of personhood affected by the trauma.

Currer (2007) relates this form of 'therapeutic re-conceptualisation' to understandings of therapeutic engagement with loss in war zones such as Kosovo and through working with families following the 9/11 tragedy in the USA. Currer traces the experience of loss in terms of childhood identity and belonging (2007:70), hence supporting my parallel research focus. Interestingly, her work discusses and rejects the concept of mastery suggesting that the importance, in raw human experience, is to locate and acknowledge locating loss in a way which invites one to sit with ambivalence rather than attempt to normalise or dispel it. Both Boss (2006) and Currer (2007) uphold the idea that we need to learn to live with the tension of loss and resilience (2007: 90). This concept will be developed further in chapter eight in discussion of Levine's primary account of trauma therapy (1997).

Currer (2007) emphasizes the importance of understanding the ambiguous, subjective and fluctuating nature of the state of loss in response to crisis. People will have profound reactions to the 'attachments' they hold significant in their lives, and these reactions are understood in primary therapeutic practice approaches within models of loss, grief and mourning (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 1970; Wilson *et al,* 2008). The feeling of the loss will be accompanied by individual affective, cognitive, moral and behavioural reactions (Payne, 2005).

Learning to live with tension suggests a different practice approach from conventional welfare and notions of 'safeguarding' which I develop further in chapter eight. In the relational exchange, practitioners share notions of survival and resilience. Resilience has been described as a "dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luther, 2008**).** Resilience based responses to the experience of conflict are also supported by Hobfall (2007) who identified a five stage model of intervention a practitioner should use in conflict based interventions: safe, calm, control, connectedness, hope. This is aligned to the Lindenfield model (2000) used by the transcultural social work team in the Palestine Youth Trauma Project (**5.10**).

2.12 The holistic, the transformative and the transcendent

I have introduced the concept of the 'existential lens' of trauma and therapy; this awareness potentially reconfigures the sense of the conventional 'practitioner and client' approach and promotes a more equitable process of exchange and discovery. Moss (2005) in his article, "Thinking outside the box" invites a deeper examining of the way in which we understand people's journeys in times of need and in response to life's complexities: "If we are to do justice to the rich tapestry of

human experience then we have to have this ability to stand back; to think creatively; to challenge old shibboleths….." (2005:40). This returns to my presentation of the 'liminal space' of my research inquiry and to Heron's emphasis on the revelations of knowledge as 'experiential knowing' and representation (Heron, 1996) (**1.5**). Research indicates a connection between emotional resilience and the capacity of young people to "manage their unmanageable thoughts, emotions and realities (and to) reorganise their experiences in order to feel secure and in control" (Landreth, 2012:38). The focus within social work on inviting young people to identify "alternative framings of reality" (Megele, 2015:100) both creates a strategy for resilience and secures sense of legitimacy and worth (Chenoweth *et al.,* 2005). Thompson connects resilience to emotional and cognitive self-awareness: "the development of the ability to perceive, interpret, label and communicate appropriately an individual's emotions into a social context" (Thompson *et al.,* 2012:67). This literature supports the importance of understanding the holistic capacity of the young person rather than separations of conceptualisations of strengths such as intellect, physical and emotional bodies. This deeper interpretation of 'holistic awareness' is discussed further in chapter four.

Neimeyer's model of grief and loss has focus on 'meaning reconstruction' as a process in transformation (2015). My work acknowledges two practice approaches to meaning reconstruction; firstly, the focus on reforming and reframing perceptions of significant relational bonds which aids re-establishing the safety and belonging needs of the individual. This is a dominant feature of western world social work models as outlined in chapter two (**2.4; 2.8; 2,9**). The second approach is to acknowledge the starker reality of significant loss and displacement; that sense of belonging and security in its previous composition is irredeemable. This 'existential awareness' echoes the principles of 'transformative social work' (Adams *et al.,* 2005), promoting an emphasis on new meaning through transition and the deeper sense of existential being. This latter approach is more compatible with the depth interpretations of the holistic framework attributed to Ng and Chan. This model accounts for four stratas of practitioner and 'client' awareness: *personal safety, basic needs and physical illnesses, psychosocial distress and pathology, holistic well-being* (Ng & Chan model of Holistic Social Work Practice, cited in Adams, Dominelli & Payne, 2005:72).

Whereas, in my observation, European social work literature can limit the circumference of holistic theories with a particular hesitation around emphasis on the *spirit* and *spiritual awareness* of the person, this holistic approach responds to the individual as an "integrated whole" with an aim for "body-mind-spirit harmony" (Adams, 2005:69). Ng and Chan align their holistic model to the SMART principle: "Strength focused, meaning reconstruction, affirmation of self, resilience training and transformation" (Adams, 2005:69).

Holistic well-being, as a term, suggests "integration of the whole in terms of the physical (body), the cognitive and the emotional (mind) and peace of mind and life meaning (spirit)" (Adams *et al.,* 2005: 70). Influenced by traditional Chinese medicine philosophies, in my interpretation this model has three underlying principles:

Everything is connected: "*human existence is a manifestation of physical, psychological and spiritual being*".

Life is ever-changing: "*Life is the eternal dance of yin and yang and the flow of energy maintains a harmonious dynamic equilibrium*".

Healing comes from within*: "therapy aims to ignite the person's innate healing power that will bring them back to a state of balance".*

(cited in Adams *et al.,* 2005: 73).

Rather than a treatment approach which aims to restore a homeostatic state, this model suggests that trauma is part of the journey towards greater intuition and body-mind-spirit harmony. A subtle shift of professional focus therefore moves to a more dynamic focus on the person's liberation through deeper self-realisation (Lee, 2005). This debate is developed further in chapter four (**4.1**) where I propose a framework of holistic practice influenced both by social work literature and the more emergent literature of holistic therapies.

Chapter conclusion

The unfolding inquiry in this chapter has identified the inner conflict which occurs for young people experiencing family and community displacement in generic forms, and the residual traumas experienced within conflict environment destabilisation. Using the lens of the self-developing self and the inter-relational self, the vulnerability and capabilities of the young person are identified. The discussion in this chapter demonstrates how the traditional statutory social work model of welfare response to individuals and families in conflict has influenced knowledge utilised in contemporary International social work frameworks with focus on conflict resolution and peace building as forms of socio-political and environmental justice (Dominelli, 2012). In my view, the transcultural position of international social work is an 'expansive space' (Lowe, 2013) that transcends culture, race and community and holds the profession accountable to its core claims in social justice and community action.

The profession's heritage and status with oppressed and 'denounced' individuals and groups provides a disciplined response which is critically aware of the impact of such forces on people's sense of sustainability within their sense of culture and ancestry. This will influence definitions of therapeutic engagement, organisational approaches and transcultural team responses in cultures which hold their own philosophies of life and survival. The developing contribution of social work in psycho-social therapy restores sense of self within a framework of 'holistic awareness'. This awareness turns the focus from the external strains and conflict in the community to the eco-system surrounding and sustaining the young person. Hence, the formation of a therapeutic circle is a transformative 'tool' which combats both individual trauma alienation and youth marginalisation within cultures in conflict.

In this chapter, therefore, my initial premises about the valid contribution of social work to transcultural community relief responses appear authenticated by the specialised fields of formal literature. My developing vision is the importance of the therapeutic circle and the transcultural team formation in response to localized community crisis. However, the precise and exacting nature of youth trauma responses to conflict require a highly specialized form of therapeutic response. Fredman's work on emotional communication (2004) emphasizes the complexity of understanding how emotions convey stories of trauma and how practitioners accurately transfer meanings and experiences through multi-layered contexts of their relationships and cultures. These concepts will be further examined in chapter three with contemporary social work debates from conflict contexts.

Chapter 3: Emergent research and intuitive knowledge of youth trauma and therapeutic response

Chapter three is the first 'circle of inquiry'; an experiential knowledge platform which examines and seeks to develop my preliminary research suppositions. Chapter two outlined the development of therapeutic social work response to young people in complex transition and experiences of family and community conflict. This chapter accounts for my search to understand how this form of 'psycho-social and holistic awareness' responds to current therapeutic understandings of youth trauma and psychological health.

Moustakas observes that the researcher question, and the researcher's relationship with it, will determine whether an "authentic and compelling path has been opened" and that authenticity will be known by the revelation of 'essence' and 'meaning' (1990:40). Moustakas uses the term 'heuristic therapy'; to be fully engaged in therapy in a heuristic sense requires 'mutual discovery' with the "intention of understanding the essence of the other's experience" (1990:40). In this chapter, it seems integral to my researcher nature to take my inquiry to the therapeutic social work communities in which I participate.

The three collections of data stem from live conference and workshop debates of therapists engaged in youth trauma fields. The first is a workshop debate of researcher - therapists in the School of Therapeutic Social Work, Tavistock. The second stage of data is a collection of semi formal interviews which are extracted after a paper I present on my research inquiry at the Annual Global Conference of the International Social Work Federation (I.F.S.W. Edinburgh, 2015). The third stage of accounts are extracts from presentations at the Kingston Conference on the specialized theme of my research: definitions of youth trauma in communities where young people are victims of political violence. Many of the presenters are Palestinian or international researchers who have engaged with the Palestinian conflict, hence this contribution gives a first-hand cultural perspective framed with research authority.

Moustakas states that the "first phase of heuristic psychotherapy involves…engaging the other….and preparing for mutual discoveries of meaning" (Moustakas, 1990:40). Moustakas suggests this is a 'rhythm' of inquiry, from which communication is possible at a deeper level (Moustakas, 1990: 106). Each of the three communities are directly involved in research to practice action in the realm of psycho-intuitive therapy hence understand the conceptual debate within a theoretical and intuitive experiential lens. The reflexive focus on 'essence' and 'meaning' (Moustakas, 1990) in this methodology of knowledge inquiry supports me to examine my suppositions and premises within established subject specialized fields of research. The Tavistock School holds an interest in action research and many are established authors and therapists within social work domains. My involvement in these research and practice action communities has 'grown' in years in which my research interest was formulating.

These accounts are established as 'data' through informed dialogue and individual presentations in alignment with the defining of data methods in participatory research approaches (**5.9; 5.13**). In each of the three inquiry platforms in this chapter, I therefore follow established research inquiry processes in engaging with the group of participants, outlining the research inquiry and seeking permission to use their account as data (**Appendix 2**). I endeavour to separate out my engagement

in the debate as participant in the research community, the voices of participants recorded as 'data', and the final analysis as my research voice. These different modes of knowledge are discussed fully in chapter five.

3.1 Introduction

In chapter one, it was noted that Lowe describes the thinking space as a "non-judgemental atmosphere in which individuals who have been forced to contain difficult emotions are encouraged to listen, talk, and think without violence or coercion" (2013:34). Chapter two used formal literature to develop the definition of a form of therapeutic-relational engagement influenced by social work traditions. I demonstrated how social work has developed both the psycho-social model and a form of holistic awareness to nurture the young person when complex transitions create psychological dissonance during adolescent development. Both models recognise the developing self in physical, emotional and spiritual spheres and therefore support my premises of the psychological impact of displacement affecting this holistic form of awareness.

The early humanistic conceptualisation of self in relation to the therapist (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1986) developed into a professional stance which seeks to be compassionately 'attuned' (Young Minds, 2017: 2.11). This nurturing energy is a form of resilience building with focus on the young person's capacity to make meaning of complex transition. Hence, the focus on the person's awareness and sense of intuition in making meaning of the experience of displacement remains central to this inquiry. These are valid therapy premises with the potential to create a holding space as an emotional environment where the young person can feel trust sufficient to invite "cognitive reappraisal of the traumatic event" (Adams, Dominelli & Payne, 2005:78).

However, in chapter one and two I developed recognition that this type of relational-therapeutic stance in a destabilised community context is complex and unchartered; it requires a more fluid practitioner stance with critical watchfulness and reflexivity to the precise circumstances. This chapter moves into contemporary domains of specialist practice with young people to more deeply understand this intuitive reflexive stance. I also aimed to identify how researchers and therapists respond to my vision of the therapeutic circle and my conceptualisation of the holding space.

The account of literature in chapter two supported my articulation of the development of social work's psycho-therapeutic lens in response to youth trauma, identifying the themes as follows:

Youth displacement & impact on sense of identity, belonging and 'meaning'.

Use of psycho-social awareness to 'rebalance' sense of personhood and composure.

Therapeutic acknowledgement of sense of self and self-agency to support cognitive and intuitive awareness during complex transition and trauma.

Therapeutic acknowledgement of the holistic circumference of experience to support physical-sensory, emotional, psychological and spiritual balancing or 'holistic equilibrium'.

Holistic attunement providing definitions of focus on mind-body-spirit harmony.

Invitation for the young person to 'restory' (Adams *et al.,* 2005) the experience of trauma within their journey of discovery.

Chapter three continues the exploration of research aims 1 and 2:

To understand the psychological impact of contemporary forms of youth displacement

To trace the contribution of social work as a therapeutic-relational practice for young people in conflict contexts.

It also develops the inquiry into defining and evaluating the contribution of the 'holding space' as a model of trauma response in destabilised community contexts (Research Aim 3).

3.2 Data Inquiry Platforms

	Context and title	**Data method**	**Selection processes**	**Research community represented**
Inquiry Platform 1	**Tavistock Therapeutic Centre London Conference** **Title**:"Thinking and Working Together: Developing a Relational Social Work Curriculum for Social Work Education" 15.3.2013	Selection of voices from workshop debate.	Workshop participants – anonymous.	Therapeutic social work researchers, writers and practitioners.
Inquiry Platform 2	**I.F.S.W. Annual Conference Edinburgh Conference** **Title:** "Social Work Partnerships across Nations; Themes and Solutions" October 2015	Individual semi-formal interview.	Conference participants invited to participate in individual interviews after workshop. Authorisation to attribute.	Representatives of the European / Global social work research and practice community.
Inquiry Platform 3	**Kingston University Conference Conference** **Title:** "Rethinking Trauma and Resilience in the Context of Political Violence: New Directions for Research and Practice". 14.11.15	Selected extracts from presentations.	Selected by researcher as conference delegate. Attributed as in public domain.	Researchers and writers in the therapeutic community fields of psychology and social work.

In the three stages of this chapter, direct voices as 'data' are presented in italics and conveyed as direct sources without interpretation. The data accounts are presented, then the analysis phase follows.

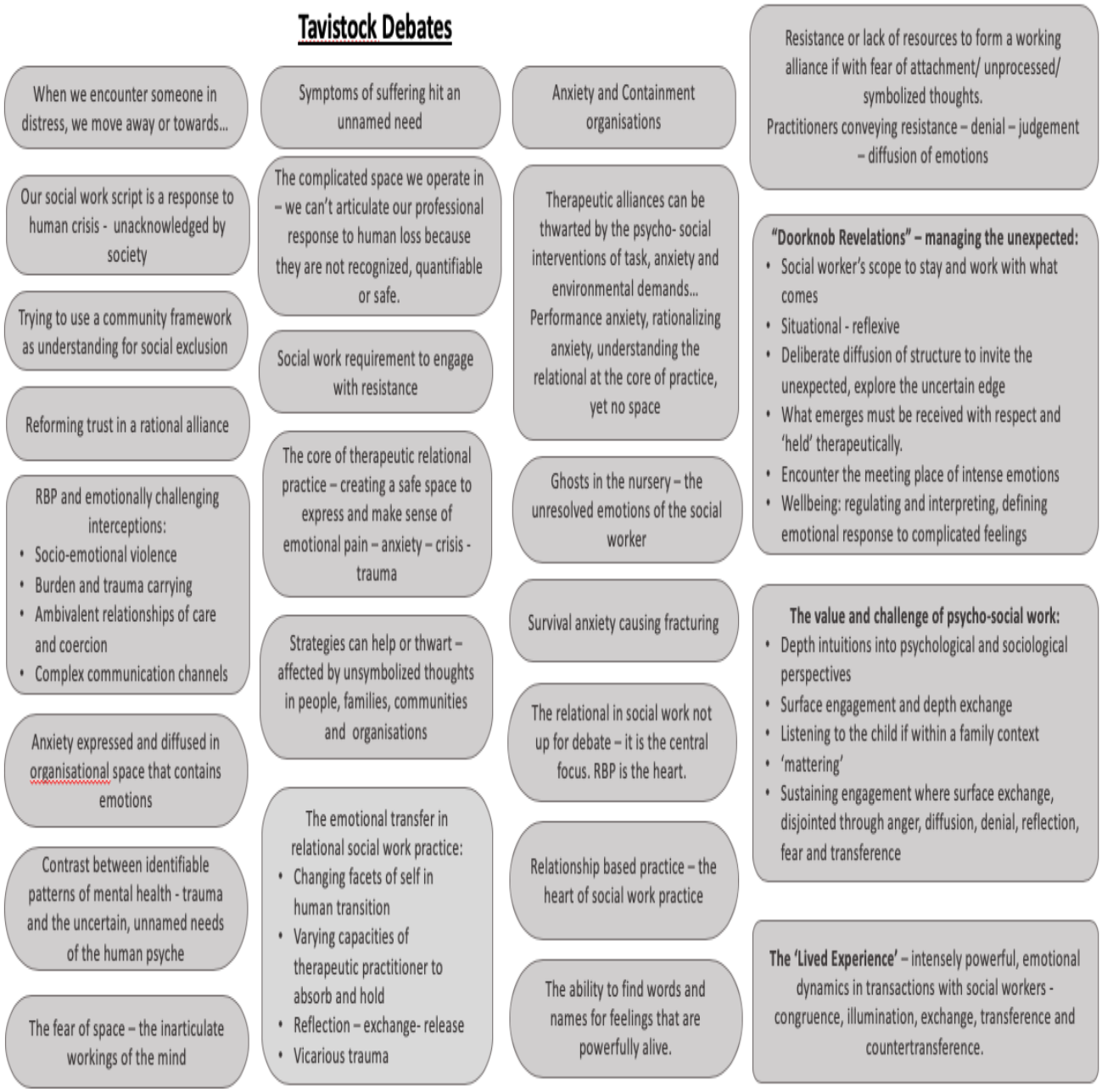
3.3 Inquiry Platform 1: Tavistock Debates

Reader guide: The Tavistock Debates

The debates form a workshop day in which participants as members of the Tavistock School of Social Work Research and Practice engage in discussion about the importance of including therapeutic social work approaches within statutory social work curriculum for HEIs. The debate reflects a residual concern about the tensions in statutory social work practice developments which have shifted from therapeutic relational encounters to more transitory forms of assessment and resolution. This emergence is attributed to climates of austerity and a move towards more managerial accountability and viability in social work performance which diminishes the reflective-reflexive edge of more therapeutic forms of professional engagement.

This section conveys narrative accounts of researchers and practitioners upholding a therapeutic relational social work approach. The voices of anonymous contributors are represented, followed by my own narrative of the core features of debate I consider relevant to my inquiry. Core themes are substantiated with formal literature published in the Tavistock research community. Delegate accounts are presented in blue font.

3.3.1 Record of workshop voices.



3.3.2 Summary of debate with participant accounts

Researcher Inquiry

How do participants in the debates define therapeutic social work? How is the psycho-social approach represented within this therapeutic approach?

How do participants define the therapeutic holding space? What are the values and constraints of its application?

How do 'holding spaces' support the psychological effects of trauma for young people?

The Tavistock debate reflects the UK development of the social work 'caseworker' approach (Egan, 1975): a non-clinical relational response to individuals in need influenced by humanistic psychology and psycho-dynamic thought in the 70s and 80s (**2.7**). Participants express concerns about the impact of a climate of austerity and managerialism on a service which is presented as, at core, relational; concerns are expressed that reactive procedural social work shifts the intrinsic essence of instinctive social work. *"Relationship Based Practice is the heart of social work practice – the relational as our practice is not up for debate; it is the central focus"*. Participant 1

Social work's heritage is identified in participant accounts of humanistic and socio-political philosophies and theories which support therapeutic response to disadvantage. Social work is defined as a service which supports the liberation of people in socio-political oppression, with a form of respectful engagement which challenges structural dominance and personal diminishment. A concern is raised about therapeutic engagement being unacknowledged or supported in organisational constructs of modern 'welfare': *"Our script is a response to human crisis – unacknowledged by society"* Participant 2. Practitioners identify the critical edge of practice, responding to "*unsymbolised thoughts in people, families, communities, organisations*" within shifting social and political realities which affect the young person in their human environment. *"The complicated space we operate in – we can't articulate our professional responses to human loss because they are not recognised, quantifiable or safe"* Participant 3. The implication is that this form of therapeutic social work is unsafe in a procedural climate which pushes it to the edge rather than acknowledging it as the heart of practice as expressed in the debate. The relational approach defined meets the young person in the contextualisation of the complex experience or oppression. This is the 'soft therapeutic' community practice I outline in chapter one and two.

The image of therapeutic practice 'space' emerges in the debate with consensus: it is a place of therapeutic engagement which defies organisational rationing and lowers the pace of casework to allow focus on the young person in their moment of need. Practitioners identify the need for distinct contemporary approaches to guide processes where practitioners respond to unsettled emotions and residual traumas. "*Therapeutic alliances can be thwarted by the intervention of task, and environmental demands…. performance anxiety…rationalising anxiety….so it is important to sustain emphasis on the relational ….and the importance of the space in which to create it*" Participant 4. The 'moment of engagement' is considered to be a form of therapeutic 'holding', a type of deep therapeutic listening and practice presence. The holding space, therefore, is a tangible practice construct which the therapeutic social worker creates as a facility for therapeutic exchange and response. The participants all identify with the concept, suggesting it is within the skill base that a social work practitioner utilises, formed of a type of therapeutic composure and intention. It is considered to be radical to introduce this therapeutic edge into practice, inviting a "*reforming trust in relational alliances*" Participant 5.

The practice space, whilst a desirable practitioner construct, is complex and contested. The facilitator will encounter the troubled edge of "*emotionally challenging interceptions: socio-emotional violence, burden and trauma carrying, ambivalent relationships of care and coercion, complex communication channels*" Participant 6. Practitioners respond to "*symptoms of suffering but an un-named need*". The practitioner encounters "*doorknob revelations" (these describe the moment when a social work steps into a home environment and unchartered issues emerge): " the uncertain un-named needs of the human psyche"* Participant 7. For some, this emotional encounter

might be overwhelming so that a "*fear of the space…of the inarticulate workings of the mind*" emerges. There may be "*resistance….to a working relationship with the young people with fear of attachment*" Participant 8. The practitioner might be wary of opening a therapeutic space due to exposure to …" *unprocessed symbolized thoughts…. resistance…denial….diffusion*". The "*survival anxiety*" of the young person will invoke a complex range of reactions, with potential for fracturing and diffusing the relationship Participant 9.

All voices in the debate, however, acknowledge the value of a genuine relational-therapeutic encounter for the young people and the therapeutic capacity of the profession. "*Social work has the scope to stay and work with what emerges…to deliberately diffuse the influence of structure and containment, to invite the unexpected and explore the uncertain edge……the encounter is the "meeting place of intense emotions*" Participant 10. "*The core of therapeutic social work is to create a safe place to express and make sense of emotional pain, anxiety and trauma*. The safe place invites the expression of "*lived experience*" with the potential to find "*congruence, illumination, exchange*". What emerges "*must be held with respect and responded to therapeutically*" Participant 11.

"*Mattering*" Participant 12 is clearly a central attribute and when there is a sense of respectful synergy, there is potential for "*the ability to identify the 'ghosts in the nursery' (alluding to the subconscious fears and shadows of childhood)* ….and to "*find words and names for the feelings that are powerfully alive*" Participant 13.

The psycho-social approach is deeply respected as a framework for the relational approach. All practitioners acknowledge it as being central to social work practice in taking the engagement to a more dynamic level. It provides the capacity for "*surface engagement and depth exchange*", with "*depth intuitions into psychological and sociological perspectives*" Participant 14. The encounter is the place which holds the scope for regulating, reframing and interpreting the expressions of the psyche, and addressing "*emotional responses to complicated feelings*". The dialogue generates a debate about whether the psycho-social model requires more precision. *"Is RBP defined sufficiently and theoretically developed enough to hold expressions of uncertainty and distress*?" Participant 15.

All holds on how the practitioner can build a sense of congruence with the young people and create a trustful listening space. If this is achieved, there will be the potential to move into a second stage of deeper therapeutic encounter or 'treatment'. This generates questions about power and exchange: *"How do we build relationships which generate capacity? How do we hold spaces in a way which invite emotional engagement without essentialising or intensifying emotional function?*" Participant 16. These constraints and challenges are associated with the primary principle of self-efficacy and self-development featured across voices, with importance given to securing the young person's sense of cognitive-intuitive control and development. "*How far can we measure the influence of our personal and professional conceptualisations and beliefs about therapeutic relationships and healing sources" Participant 17.*

Throughout expressions, there is the sense of the transformation and healing that can occur if the right requisites are protected to support the therapeutic exchange.

3.3.3 Overview of discussion with reference to Tavistock research and literature

The Tavistock Debates demonstrate a distinct formation of relational practice acknowledged by the social work community. In my commentary, I underpin the accounts with reference to a selected list of key theorists aligned to Tavistock: Papadopoulos, 2002; Ruch *et al.*, 2010; Fook, 2007; Howe, 2002, 2009; Koproswka, 2014; Lowe, 2013; Cooper, 2017, 2018. Ruch *et al.* define a form of 'relationship-based practice' distinct to social work (Ruch *et al.,* 2010). It is closely attributed to the psycho-social model as acknowledged in the Tavistock literature (Howe, 2009; Cooper, 2017; Ruch *et al.,* 2010; Megele, 2015). The psycho-social model is valued as it provides the external and internal lens required to secure the psycho-emotional state of the young person. The practitioners recognise as crucial the understanding of the impact of environment in the contextualisation of therapeutic practice, present in the debate as an accepted 'critical consciousness' of organisational and political power (Fook, 2007). The psycho-social approach prioritises the focus on the young person's psychological health in processes of trauma and disturbance, facilitating an 'intervention' which strives to restore internal and external balance (Megele, 2015).

The distinct essence of social work practice is defined as a relational stance of respectful engagement with people in the social sphere, with reference to the fundamental rights of the individual to a sense of dignity, worth and fulfilment (Banks, 2012). This is considered as defining social work's intrinsic essence in engaging with people in a valuing way, prioritising both the young person's sense of self and use of practitioner 'self' (Cooper, 2017). Emphasis is placed on 'emotional communication' (Koprowska, 2014; Cooper, 2017) and critical awareness of the impact of environment on the individual's developing self. This duality of lens within the psycho-social approach is defined by Howe as the "simultaneous interest in both the individual and the qualities of their social environment" (2002: 12). This is related to a youth context and the concept of young people developing sense of self (Howe, 2002; Lowe, 2013). Value is given to the social work formation of relational practice recognising it as a therapeutic 'art form' which requires certain conditions and precise skills. These are identified in the work of Ruch *et al.* as "key understandings of social work in relationship-based practice" (2010:20). Features include the relational encounter, the emphasis on unique focus, the 'use of self' and a form of respectful practice which is inclusive and empowering (Ruch *et al.,* 2010: 21). Whilst practitioners express cautions about patterning responses to young people, there is a collective sense of a generic understanding of 'soft therapeutic' practice in community contexts.

The therapeutic instinct is defined as watchful due to its socio-political instinct; practitioners identify the harms of systemic and social injustice and express a desire to 'shield' the oppressed person. This parallels the practitioner interest in building the person's sense of self and self-efficacy through conveying their sense of human composure (Cooper, 2017). Practitioner power is therefore a two-edged sword: it is a form of power-nurture which invites the person's sense of 'self-agency'; it is also a shield and advocate, particularly in the context of childhood and adolescent vulnerability and harm.

Practitioners demonstrate the validity of the psycho-social model in practice with traumatized youth; listening to the troubled edge of experience with a critical awareness of the impact of external stressors. Practitioners 'hold' this sense of environment, termed by Howe "person-in-environment" (Howe, 2009:114). This is a multi-dimensional lens; Ruch *et al. id*entify the cognitive

and affective responses to the person being supported (Ruch *et al.,* 2010: 21). The psycho-social principle allows for a recognition of the "intrapsychic, interpersonal and broader social contexts" of relationships (Ruch *et al.,* 2010: 21).

The emotional consequences of trauma are viewed therapeutically; practitioners are aware of how this causes psychological disturbances in short and longer term spans within a person's life. This is resonant of the therapeutic belief in trauma as a 'disrupted harmony of body, mind and spirit' (Howe, 2009) as discussed in chapter 2 (**2.12**). The emphasis on holistic practice is a distinct theme in the debate. The holistic approach is affirmative of the individual; Adams, Dominelli & Payne discuss its alignment to the SMART model identifying this as a theoretical-philosophical practice orientation moving from psycho-social pathology to positive psychology and empowerment (Adams *et al.,* 2005). The collective voices present the shared awareness of defining features of social work practice: the ability to step aside from formalised structures of practice and focus on the moment of engagement; the recognition of professional power in relations and the importance of exchange and reciprocity to restore the composure of oppressed persons. A priority focus in the debate is how to create a 'safe space', how to nurture the expression of emotional disturbances and how to work through, or move through, the emotions as a way of restoring self. There is an interplay between the dimensions of cognitive-reflective and emotional-instinctive in the debate (Howe, 2009). This echoes current writers who challenge a linear cognitive approach to resilience and meaning making in work with 'trauma victims' (Papadopoulos, 2002).

Tavistock literature acknowledges the established anti-oppressive and anti-racist veins in social work practice and how this promotes respect for diversity and cultural competency in modern-day approaches. This awareness highlights both the complexity of power in therapeutic-nurture relations and frameworks of culture in existential understandings and modes of emotional expression. This relates to Lowe's identification of the 'thinking space' as a platform to promote anti-racist and culturally aware practice (**1.4**). This concept is related specifically to therapeutic responses to refugees by Papadopolous (2002). Practitioners raise the tensions of professional isolation if making therapeutic community responses to deeply troubled young people when working outside of organisational mandates. This challenge is surmountable, and practitioners find consensus in acknowledging a desired or optimal level of emotional engagement that the therapists require as a measure of accountability. These are complicated raw edges of experience and therapeutic response. The therapist desire to engage, to listen deeply, is invaluable; this is particularly so in the deeply troubled contexts of practice outlined in stage 2 and 3 of this circle of inquiry. In the moment of relationship, all is open and new and the therapist's skill is to un-code the intrinsic and invite the emergent.

3.3.4 Emergent themes to inform my inquiry: The Tavistock debates develop the understanding of how displacement impacts on the young person's sense of developing self, tracing social work' s heritage in response to young people displaced in more generic forms of social separation and family transition (**2.1, 2.2**). Participants add definition to the framework of a therapeutic social environment in supporting the young people's restoration (**2.5, 2.6**). There is consensus in debate voices and related Tavistock literature in defining the pre-requisites required to establish a genuine therapeutic social work encounter. This is a generic debate with social work responses to marginalised,

disadvantaged and troubled young people but specialised literature such as Papadopolous (2002) and Lowe (2013) define this response with young people who are psychologically destabilised due to socio-political violence in their communities. This is an emergent social work debate, with the practice focus on theories for working with disturbed emotions, releasing trauma and building resilience (**2.9**). Relational practice with young people as 'victims' of community oppression requires a higher level of practitioner critical awareness of the complex balance of nurture and coercion in working with disengaged and resistant young people. A transformative alliance will only be achievable within these frames of awareness (**2.11**).

Therapeutic features of the 'Holding Space': space is commonly used in the debates and related literature, both as an image for retreat / stillness, and an actual construct reflecting how social workers 'hold' the young person therapeutically. The 'holding' is presented as a therapeutic concept, true to the essence of more therapeutic forms of social work practice. In the Tavistock debates social workers voice the emotional vulnerability of the young person in their need for 'emotional holding'. Echoing my premises in chapter one and two, the debates place importance on the young person's intuitive-feeling state, and the importance of the practitioner nurturing the development of their cognitive-reflective awareness through complex experience. The therapeutic skill of the practitioner is to create a therapeutic environment which engenders trust for the invitation of open expression and depth emotions.

Developments for further inquiry: these accounts reflect understandings of the therapeutic holding space which support a more reflexive creative type of therapeutic response than in standardized social work approaches. Participants express reservations about the influence of modern social work organisational constructs, indicating that in conflict contexts with high levels of environmental change a more fluid innovative approach is required.

I anticipated that the psycho-social approach would translate into contemporary contexts of social work response to community conflict, due to emphasis on the need to be critically aware of how the socio-political environment influences young people. Discussion supported the need for more empirical knowledge of therapeutic social work practice in conflict zones, and the theoretical approaches to framing response to psychological harm. I noted the recurring emphasis in the Tavistock debates on systemic frameworks and their alliance with psycho-social practice. It appeared a deliberate focus to shift the sense of 'support' being generated by an organisational agency to the eco environment comprising natural nurture and regenerative systems around the young person. This construct is outlined further in chapter eight.

Inquiry one has provided support for my interest in how social work creates a therapeutic environment round the young person, this generating a trauma- informed listening space. This inquiry has allowed a more precise defining of the therapeutic skills used in a holding space approach, the primary focus being a form of psycho-social engagement which listens to the person's reactions to the conflict environment and concentrates on the release of locked emotions and psychological disturbance. The sense of power in the therapeutic relationship also has emphasis, with the indication that transformative energy occurs through transfer of power and the engendering of respect for the young person's self-intuition.

3.4 Inquiry Platform 2: I.F.S.W. Annual Conference

Reader Guide: This section incudes my outline of the conference paper at which delivery I invited participants to consider involvement in follow up individual interviews. The interview accounts are presented in full in appendix 3. Extracts of interviews are included in this section, in blue font and italics.

Conference Paper: "Action Research/ Transformative Practice; accounts of social work in collaborative community research and practice" Joy Bevan. I.F.S.W. Edinburgh Conference Paper 2015.

Paper outline*: This presentation explores the contribution of action research as a collaborative research approach which guides SWs to utilise skills in participation and alliance across cultures to support local community action and development.*

The presentation outlines 2 actions research community projects:

The Dzerzhinsk (Russia) Community Action Project with local social work and psychologists supporting families at risk of state intervention. 2013 – 2015

A training project with Experiment in International Living (European NGO) for post conflict resettlement workers across Europe 2014.

The workshop invites a debate about congruence between the skills and values of action research and international social work practice with an invitation to build research partnerships to promote transformative community change in response to contemporary global community needs. The core focus is on the practice context of youth displacement in destabilised communities, with delegates invited to share accounts of use of community action methodologies.

3.4.1 I.F.S.W. Practice Interviews (Appendix 3)

The interviews reflect accounts of researcher-practitioners who attended my presentation outlined above. Hence, their accounts reflect the context of debate considering how action research as a methodology, and social work transcultural teams as a formation, represent therapeutic-relational responses to youth trauma. All interviewees have experience of practice with displaced youth working in IDP camps, holding stations or communities under siege. The majority are involved in action research projects.

Participants were invited to meet at the conference to undertake individual interviews. The account below includes extracts from their interviews, with headings reflecting parallel themes expressed by the participants.

Participant A: Roxana, international social work academic and action researcher, IDP camp practitioner, Calais and Romanian refugee camps.

Participant B: Anna, Israeli refugee resettlement social worker.

Participant C: Carin, Icelandic therapeutic school educator working with migrant children and their families.

Participant D: Natalie, refugee holding station therapist, Valetta Malta.

Participant E: Jack, post conflict resettlement work with refugees, Northern Ireland.

Participant F: Maddie, child & adolescent mental health nurse, UK.

A. Community displacement / IDP Camps

"The complexity of a conflict community or a displaced community is that it loses its sense of identity and unity or organic harmony and oneness" Roxana. Roxana describes how, in the IDP camps, there are "no measures, no rules, no patterns" so that when a young person arrives with features of trauma there is not the infrastructure – either in the informal community network of the camp, or in the limited service formations, to recognise symptoms or respond within the natural human environment. *"The camp community might therefore judge, penalise or alienate the vulnerable young people" Roxana.*

"The refugee camps in Israel are very young communities without a sense of community settlement or infrastructure. Many of the young people have seen their communities oppressed or destroyed and this affects their sense of identity and self-location" Anna. Anna describes how there is a sense of *"restlessness",* of *"a disparate and desperate resettled community which lacks cohesion or the support of formal or informal interrelationships".*

The assumptions of community cohesion are challenged by first-hand experiences of both resettlement camps and communities receiving those who are displaced. The scars of psychological trauma affect the individual with a sense of fear and distrust in unfamiliar social landscapes; a displaced community will reflect these at a collective level and also create splitting within the family group resettled. Carin, in practice in a school setting with refugee children (Iceland) emphasizes the importance of a whole family approach as the parents carry *"psychological scars of isolation and exclusion"* so the school community infrastructure must recognise and include them. The sense of exclusion is perpetuated by language and cultural barriers.

Roxana recognises the contribution of social work in the IDP camp to *"build community infrastructure"* where individuals and families are functioning in separation, isolation and at times, hostile competition for resources, space or human attention (Romanian gypsy settlements / Calais IDP camps). Natalie describes a refugee station in the Maltese Docks, receiving people into the docks from migrant shipping journeys in war zones. Largely, the young people are destabilised and have had no form of therapeutic support and are at risk of further dissociation and alienation from the receiving community: *"Everything is complex and uncertain in the world they are approaching. They are vulnerable and totally at the mercy of the receiving country, the decisions of authorities and the resource providers. Resettlement workers in the holding station encounter deep practice challenges trying to connect with disengaged young people who are literally curled up in physical shock states"* Natalie.

B. Defining the psychological needs of displaced young people

Young people as refugees demonstrate a *"heightened sensitivity and awareness of the impact of being on the move, removed from one's ancestral land, separated from family"* Anna.

Roxana observes the deep emotional needs of young people as refugees in IDP camps and the lack of service priority for the complex psychological states these emotions create. Roxana notes the "internalising effect" of trauma, the *"complex grief states"* resulting from separation from, and anxiety about absent family members and equally, a "sense of grief for the community they have 'lost'.

Roxana observes that social workers use Roger's conceptualisation of "Unconditional Positive Regard" (1986) as a model to promote the psychological worth of the young people, to "deeply receive" displaced young people as an expression of their worth and value. *"They can have lost this sense of self value……feel worthless."*

Practitioner accounts demonstrate their recognition of the combination of psychological and biological development and transition states. *"The young person's psyche is in a developing state and needs nurture and reassurance which might well have been denied. The practitioner needs to be aware of their developing capacity to manage deep psychological strains and treat them with a therapeutic sensitivity and awareness"* Natalie.

C. Defining features of trauma in youth displacement

Traumas occur as manifestations of emotional disturbance and shock causing the young people to internalise the violence observed or experienced. The cognitive awareness of trauma will be variable, subject to the level of individual resilience to external reactors in the environment. *"Fear takes people inwards" …… "the person is still in shock – then sees the echo of their shock in the symptoms of others"* Roxana. Natalie also identifies features of shock symptoms in young people: *"they are often curled up and shaking – withdrawn into a silent world – unable to respond to the activities around them".*

Carin works with refugee children in an educational setting in Iceland and has a socio-psychological perspective of trauma recognising its impact on the person's psyche, their cognitive function and also on their social opportunities and liberties: *"I see the impact of trauma in young people in an educational setting where they are withdrawn, uncertain, having difficulty relaxing in play and concentrating in learning tasks. I see the way that trauma affects every aspect of their lives and ways of being. They cannot function as the other children in a classroom setting do"* Carin.

Maddie is a UK MH practitioner and researcher with a clinical MH practice awareness of adolescent trauma states. *"Any change (displacement) will impact on a human being but due to the developmental aspects of young people, their developing brain, changes that are negative can have a significant immediate impact then over the life span. The word 'displacement' when applied to individuals will certainly mean 'disequilibrium; it will be experienced as a huge psychological upheaval, though varying in individual intensity"* Maddie.

D. The importance of 'holding space' in IDP camps / destabilised community contexts

Practitioners demonstrate a generic understanding of the concept of a 'holding space' in a destabilised community context: "We use holding spaces in our hosting project with young people in shock states" Natalie. Jack works within post conflict family and community practice, Northern Ireland. *"Holding spaces are a measured place, a space framed with therapeutic understanding and acknowledgement, a retreat space to build trust and express anguish and fears"……. "I think that holding spaces offer a sense of partnership; therapeutic partnership which is a contract for change based on principles which are features of the space – listening space, retreat space, which tells the person they matter as an individual" Jack*.

Maddie: "*The first two principles of containment and reciprocity mirror those basic early infant needs of being held and understood; these are not only confined to infancy but also at other times of distress and trauma. Being 'held in mind' in a psychological holding capacity should never be underestimated and is a survival cornerstone/foundation."*

Roxana highlights the importance of *"making space for therapeutic engagement"* with young people in an IDP camp. She describes how new settlers arrive, carrying emotional disturbances from their journeys, and have to compete for a sense of place and location. This creates new conflict and additional psychological strain, hence the need to build the community as a *"measured space",* space as a sense of location, stillness, being and purpose. It is *"space as sufficient time or 'time out' to acknowledge and locate their psychological need".* Roxana observes how the 'holding space' is then an invitation, locating the young person so that they can build their sense of trust again, can *"learn to talk again".*

Natalie identifies the use of different forms of therapeutic space, talking and silent space: *"Silent holding spaces where we meet in a quiet room with music and exercises to create a soft therapeutic "time out" space…… We also use talking spaces where we provide a listening and interactive circle for a small group of young people".*

Anna works with young people as refugees and observes they have little direct experience of structured therapeutic practice, hence she values the more fluid natural aspect of a 'holding space' approach: *"they want a sort of emotional engagement which respects them and listens in depth so I feel it is a less clinical and more informal type of therapeutic practice. It is finding a space where you can be alongside them for a while in an environment which is always on the move and in a state of flux"* Anna.

"The formation of practice spaces holds a contrast to the complexity and contradictory face of a destabilised community. We know this in the history of Northern Ireland and how practitioners recognise the intergenerational trauma through families because of the conflict and separations of family and community life in the past" Jack.

E. The need for new practice formations and challenge to existing welfare influences

Practitioners recognise the heritage of community practice with oppressed, troubled and disadvantaged youth, but view the conflict environment as a precise and specialised context of psychological intervention. *"We need more innovative reactive and creative ways of working…… grassroots practice"* Jack.

Practitioner contributions suggest that a clinical form of individual therapeutic treatment may be unsuitable; they describe a more fluid and softer type of response to trauma. Roxana notes the need for new types of therapeutic practice approaches with displaced youth in IDP / destabilised community contexts. She values the Western social work knowledge of therapeutic 'casework' but senses the complexity of adopting such an approach where models assume a stable welfare / community structure. The tensions for practitioners occur when local structures do not support or have the capacity for therapeutic approaches, and when young people arriving at the camps cannot respond to structural service approaches. Roxana notes a *"gulf between the practitioner experience of dislocation and the young person's sense of displacement and consequent trauma state. It is a very challenging practice context where we need precise frameworks as everything they see and hear is overwhelming and the approach needs to be able to hold these deep moments of expression and grief"* Roxana. Anna outlines the "*restless reactions*" of young people to their traumatic experiences and disturbed thoughts and emotions, noting young people have little recognition of formal therapeutic approaches and need *"a measured space, a secure place, a holding and listening space, a relational space…this is very important in the restless reactions to displacement."*

F. The contribution of social work in a community therapeutic role

Practitioners promote groupwork as a social work community response to individual isolation caused through displacement, connecting it to the concept of retreat space and the skill base of traditional social work practice. Groupwork encloses and endorses the young people. *"Groupwork …. combats marginalisation, encloses, provides a safe place for potential understanding and therapeutic encounter"* Carin.

Carin uses groupwork approaches to promote community or peer group inclusion and social reorientation: *"A destabilised community affects the ability of community members to come together in an open and relaxed manner. It creates tension, distrust and blaming within the community so that the forces of oppression targeting it are taken into the human environment. This causes confusion and harm. This effect requires practitioner realisation – to have a heightened awareness and watchfulness or the impact of the oppression will come into the practice space"* Carin. *"This dual edge frames groupwork in a specialized way so that it is an organic, transformative way of meeting and exchanging stories and visions"* Roxana.

Jack expresses the view that *"social work is intrinsically communitarian and participatory in its approach. It frames its awareness on sources of knowledge drawn from lived experience and alternative realities for people and groups pushed to the edge of society. Social work understands and promotes core values of anti-oppressive and diverse partnerships to create greater forms of social justice"* Jack. *"The social worker is a gatekeeper with a watchful eye to the psychological and*

emotional needs of the young person whilst assessing the capacity of the community to respond to their needs and provide stability and security" Natalie.

Jack and Roxana acknowledge the contribution of social work to international humanitarian community action in a framework of 'human rights and social justice'. *"Social Work as an international body has a humanitarian conscience; we have to be concerned about the extent of the crisis and the way young people are so targeted and oppressed, both in conflict communities but also in their experiences once displaced"* Jack. Roxana presents the view that social work has a distinct contribution in respecting cultural diversity, as *"both a locality instinct and a breadth of transcultural awareness".* The social work instinct also provides *"a sense of social justice and commitment to community cohesion"* (Roxana) in the disparate and unsettled sense of community intrinsic to an IDP camp. The community framework of social work adds a critical awareness and loyalty to "deepest community need" and promotes an *"engagement with local people and community leaders to try to hold and re-stabilise community circumstances"* Roxana.

The community framework for social work analysis of need is identified by Carin and Roxana. *"Social work has a strength in responding to complex communities and re-forming communities where there are new movements and new social needs which can cause fragmentation and distrust"* Carin. *"The priority community stance of social work is protection for children and young people and this is a crucial commitment in an IDP camp"* Roxana.

G. Defining the nature of therapeutic social work in transcultural team response to community displacement

Roxana observes the *"listening spirit of social work"* and identifies social work as *"therapeutic in heart and spirit".*

"I would define therapeutic social work as deeply respectful face to face practice where the young person holds the story, the insight, the instinct about their need for recovery or restabilising. The therapeutic instinct of the practitioner is the practice conscience – holding the engagement, listening for the effects of the trauma, the disturbances and the hidden fears. So the two voices come together in a dialogue which is an exchange, a contract of trust and respect with a desire for some positive change state" Roxana.

Natalie describes therapeutic social work as the *"true essence of our practice",* defining the socio-political impact of oppressive forces on the young person's psyche. Social work has *"a deep listening spirit that has understanding of troubled experience and seeks to respond in a compassionate and intuitive way that makes the person feel valued and of worth"* Natalie.

Practitioners identify the value of the international social work community, supporting the sensitive balance of transcultural responses to local need, particularly in areas where local practice services are also destabilised. The breadth of the transcultural perspective is observed by Roxana to be important in opening the intensities of locality conflict. *"The international framework creates a heightened awareness and test against linear and mono cultural approaches. It also challenges uniform judgements and responses"* Jack.

"We must not undervalue the local community instinct and healing spirit. Part of our practice approach is to listen to this spirit and to engage with local practitioners, community leaders and young people to understand their community framework" Roxana. *"The international team supports local practitioners who might be experiencing the trauma themselves"* Natalie. "***** *receives the displaced people from many communities; it is important that this diverse population of need is received by a diverse therapeutic community which can see across cultures and across a vast range of ways of living individual, family and community life"* Natalie.

The principle of diversity in the transcultural approach includes local-global awareness as well as the differential between eastern and western models of practice. *"I think eastern models remind us of the spiritual features of loss and grief; this is an essential framework in community destabilisation and work with young people experiencing deep traumatic loss"* Roxana.

H. Social Work and Action Research

The contribution of social workers using action research methodologies is known to Roxana as an approach to team building for community support infrastructures in refugee camps in Romania and Calais. She observes that social work has a *"natural alliance"* with action research promoting a *"locality instinct"* enhanced through transcultural teamwork approaches so that this *"dual edge"* gives a heightened insight and commitment. Groupwork is considered to be intrinsic to the social work contribution of action research, framed in a distinct way so that it is an *"organic and transformative way of meeting and exchanging stories and visions of community"* Roxana. *"Action research claims to work in the situation of need and to engage across social groups to find the most vulnerable participants and the politically excluded. Social work is only a part of the approach, but has intrinsic qualities in community cohesion and respect for the excluded and oppressed so is an important presence in an action research team"* Anna.

Within practice contexts, an international team holds the potential to have more breadth of research and practice knowledge of effective approaches in conflict zones. S*ocial work is political, supporting representation of diverse voices and recognising social restrictions and cultural nuances. These principles create their own practice formation and hold a congruence with the principles and processes of action research in forms of co-operative inquiry, understanding and human advancement"* Jack.

Natalie identifies the multi-dimensional aspect of action research which appears to support innovative reflexive approaches, and to have a synergy with the heightened trouble states and diverse experiences her team encounter. *"Orthodox approaches are not equipped to respond to the constant flux of waves of crisis that refugee hosting centres experience. Yet we need specialised knowledge and expertise of a highly skilled nature. We use action research as a project approach which can work with local experience and with diverse teams to develop specialised understandings of effective approaches to need"* Natalie.

"The participatory approach combats the sense of exclusion. The idea of collaboration invites the sense of community surrounding the young person and the practitioners become the facilitators of this network approach. The environment becomes a relevant point of reference" Roxana.

3.4.1 Researcher analysis of participant responses

The perspectives of social workers and allied practitioners demonstrate that the contemporary practice arena is multi-disciplinary, and holds a global commitment to local community action and interaction. Their voices define the strengths and vision of the IFSW community. The practice models discussed reflect the practice approach variances and different cultural influences, with the Western hemisphere contributing the therapeutic 'case worker' approach and the Eastern hemisphere more defined models of community relief / community development with a holistic approach which encompasses spiritual and religious aspects of community life and thought. There appears consensus that a transcultural approach stems the local-global divide and offers both greater breadth and objective discipline when achieving this balance. The psycho-social model is recognised across cultures. It is considered to be a distinct but not exclusive feature of social work in community action responses.

Practitioners are largely front-line workers in IDP camps, dock holding stations or destabilised community contexts. Their concerns reflect the specific types of trauma and psycho-emotional conditions of the young people, the deep forms of psychological disturbance and the challenges of engaging with young people in shock states of disassociation and destabilisation. Accounts describe a separatist, isolated world of extreme human turmoil which pushes young people to the edges of human 'community' of any form. Practitioners recognise the challenges of effective therapeutic responses in crisis relief contexts, seeking a generic model informed by research knowledge of contemporary youth needs. There is a common interest in groupwork and teamwork approaches, recognising this as a tool to restabilise the young person, reconnect them to their peers and therapeutic environment, and even to echo the experience and memory of community they carry with them. As with the Tavistock debates, there is a shared acknowledgment that social work has a distinct therapeutic contribution, as a psycho-social approach to emotional engagement. The young person carries their internalized trauma but also the sense of grief for their displaced or oppressed community. They step into a world of hostile strangers where all hold stories of trauma and grief and all tussle for survival and a 'sense of place'. Practitioners describe, in varying terms, the importance of therapeutic contact with an 'aware' practitioner within this context.

The concept of a 'holding space' is accessible to practitioners who contribute their own defining of its use within their agency contexts to support disturbed young people. The natural alliance between social work's theoretical and philosophical stance and the nature of action research is widely acknowledged with relevant examples of contemporary application across disciplines. As with the Tavistock debates, the systemic framework of community, family and peer group is promoted; however, the harsh fragmented environments of IDP camps, holding centres and communities in conflict challenge the potential for natural, organic healing. Accounts describe the extreme isolation of traumatized young people. This suggests these environments require transcultural approaches in groupwork and teamwork to reinstate sense of community.

3.5 Inquiry Platform Three: Kingston Conference

In this chapter, inquiry platforms one and two form generic understandings of therapeutic social work in contexts of contemporary practice with displaced youth. The empirical inquiry identifies how established social work formations can adapt responses to more emergent community need. The central focus remains understandings of youth trauma through displacement, and the relevancy and defining of the 'therapeutic holding space' approach.

Stage three of this chapter takes a critical inquiry into therapeutic responses to young people as victims of political violence with a particular focus on the Palestinian context central to my inquiry. The Kingston Conference opens a generic debate about psychological therapies as response to young people in global communities destabilised by political violence. The Palestinian context, presented by both indigenous and international researchers, reflects the contemporary research epistemologies considered valid within the context of Arab - Palestinian, culture and within contexts of political siege. This section moves from social work to more generic community approaches in mental health and psychological therapies; this highlights awareness of the different epistemologies of trauma specialists in conflict contexts, influencing definitions of youth trauma and theories of psychological approaches.

The core aspects of political violence relevant to my study of youth trauma in the Palestinian context (chapter 6) are central themes in the Kingston research debates: *the way that military siege invades into the daily lives of young people in normal 'everydayness'; use of checkpoints and guns in the streets to prevent children free access to their community; soldier invasions into the schools and classrooms; harassment of children walking to the market place, to the mosque, to the school, to outdoor play areas. Chapter six:* Researcher Diary Hebron Nov 2015.

Reader Guide: The following accounts are extracts from the presentations, commencing with the opening address by Sir Vincent Fean and then taking presenter accounts in order of presentation.

All references are sourced from conference presentations and selected as extracts to inform the following accounts. Where Palestinian young people's voices are included, these are from empirical studies as evidenced and marked in green font with italics**.** Palestinian youth voices are presented in italics and brown font; these are attributed as empirical data extracts from presenter accounts.

3.5.1 Accounts from Kingston Conference

Conference Title: Rethinking Trauma and Resilience in the Context of Political Violence: New Directions for Research and Practice, 14 Nov 15.

Key Conference Themes: Trauma under military rule; youth detention; trauma & resilience cycle; inter-generational trauma; fear and resilience; community framework.

Sir Vincent Fean British Consul-General Jerusalem, Patron of Britain and Palestine friendship network : *We extend from the Kingston Conference to Palestinian people the message they are not alone, they have friends around the world, they have hope. All life is sacred and all human beings are equal in value.* Opening Address, Kingston Conference.

Palestinian youth accounts:

Account 1: *They say we have the right to walk to school safely. But no – they steal our rights to walk the streets. But I have – in heart, mind, belief – ways of holding my human rights to me.* Amil 15

Account 2: *Mother – why do you go on the march?*

Boy – because I need to, it is my place, it is my future

Mother – your place is here in the home; you are young.

Boy - I am not young…. I go there to defend the homeland. I go there to see Palestine. But I also hide there so they won't shoot me.

Boy - I will die and the march is life. Gaza is no life. *12 yr old boy.*

Account 3: *I do not need to go to Haifa. I do not need to see Haifa. I see it in my mind and in my mother and grandmother's eyes.*

Mother – but then you need to go on the march to protect the future of Haifa.

Young person - I want to be – and not not to be – so I will go …. and then I will return. I do not want to go to the march and get shot and go back in a wheelchair. *14 yr old girl.*

Account 4*: If I don't play I will die.* Palestinian child

Accounts from an empirical study evaluating the spirit of Palestinian young people reflected in their courage and fear of participation in the Friday peace marches.

Zeina Amro, PhD Project: Palestinian Youth Participation, Institute of Community & Health, Birzeit University.

Selected presenter accounts (Full record, Appendix 4).

Presenter 2: *The march echoes the walk of return – a transitional space of profound emotion and fantasy – an invitation to build an imagination that can overcome. The march to return – the return to safe childhood…to humanity…connecting the generations of a culture and a community. Yet the risk of shooting and maiming… If illogical, is very logical in a context of uncertainty and terror.*

Samah Jabr, Gaza Trauma Clinic Medic. Presentation Paper: 'The Children of Palestine: Struggle and Survival under Occupation'.

Presenter 3:

Boys arrested in the night; If parents stand in way harassed and threatened; Interrogated in Hebrew, without representation; forced to give names of classmates and family members.

Post prison: Broken attachments; pain of deprivation and scarcity of inner resilience. Violent environment a reminder of the hostile experience and risk of recurrence.

Affect on family life stability – specifically, the challenge of fathers by boys who have not felt they protect them at point of arrest.

Constant anxiety of mothers guarding the homes from night raids.

Riad Arar, Director of Child Protection and Social Mobilisation, DCI Hebron. Conference Presentation: 'Extracts from DCI accounts, 2015'.

Presenter 4:

Palestine context – protracted conflict – psychological conflict – mutual fear, mutual distrust. 5 million people who have been occupied for 47 yrs. Longest occupation in modern history. Genocide against everything that is called Palestine. How is such a dislocated community going to react normally?

The conflict runs in our veins.

Prof. Manuel Hassassian, Gaza Community Mental Health Programme. Conference Presentation: 'Understanding the Palestinian Conflict from within'.

Presenter 5:

The world will not leave us – someone will do something.

I was a *child in the 2nd Intifada yet arrested and spent 40 days in jail.*

For what self of myselves am I going to live for? Conflict between you and the life you dream of. Fear to be married, to have a child and bring them into the conflict.

This conflict runs in our veins….Slow suicide if you emigrate – so you stay here.

Rama Yayad, Researcher at Tennessee University. Kingston Conference Presentation: 'Youth and Political Conflict Research Project',

Presenter 6:

The Last Resistance; Always already dying children; Bodies – the emblem of trust. The body becomes an inhabited space.

Check points break the line of support between child…family…extended family…school…mosque…orchard…..olive grove.

The exclusion of face-to-face dialogue where sound and voice are swallowed by the mechanical…results in demonization and criminalisation.

Muthana Samara, Gaza therapist. Kingston Presentation: 'Children's Journey from War to Refuge'.

Presenter 7:

The cycle of loss and grief of a community under siege

Sabotage of water and medical supplies

Destruction of homes and crops

Children pulled out of bed in the night and sent to prison camps.

Mohammed Altawi, UK- Palestinian Mental Health Network. Kingston Presentation: 'The fracture of resilience; the Palestinian community'.

Presenter 8:

The right to play and feel secure and nourished

The child and the un-childing of childhood

The voice and the un-voicing of a community

David Raines, cognitive behaviour therapist. Conference Presentation: 'Palestinian theories of trauma and response'.

Presenter 9:

Children's voices – everydayness, mixed with flashes of deep trauma and fear.

Trauma discourse – we as Palestinians were evicted from the trauma discourse. Children are in it. It should not be.

Dr John R. Van Enwyk, researcher. Conference Presentation: 'Psychological Therapies in Gaza & Sri Lanka'.

Presenter 10:

Gun to body is all persuasive – to mind, to psyche…the trauma is the point of collapse of the political possibility of freedom into the mind of the child.

Political interests have become greater than the interests of children.

Muthanna, Gaza medic. Conference Presentation: 'Gaza Community Mental Health Programme'.

3.5.2 Researcher analysis of accounts from participants

Why is the Palestinian child such a threat?

The knowledge of the child…… that they can see the trauma as its own weakness. New birth; the risk of the new child in the world may create a new story of truth.

Samara, Gaza Medic

Research studies into childhood trauma will always be emotive and politically charged. Rogowski highlights the importance of reflexivity when responding to childhood trauma: "To look underneath and in depth; to secure a psycho-emotional understanding; to recognise frameworks which provide energy for recovery" (Rogowski, 2010:42). These words in many ways define my sense of the therapeutic response to youth trauma in conflict zones. The focus is overwhelming yet requires a precision of understanding. The clarity of depth scrutiny in researching in a conflict zone will be diffused in reaction to environmental sensors and indigenous community narratives (Argryis, 2003; Chaitin, 2003).

In the Kingston Conference the debate holds generic research understandings of the impact on the childhood psyche of political violence in world conflict zones. It is held by the interplay of objective and subjective, of local and global with the discipline of research and practice integrity. However, it is not neutral. The research touching a Palestinian context has an urgency reflecting the changing

landscape, the changing military tactics affecting children and young people at the time of the research presentations. Hence, research is caught up in a political voice of campaign and the global research community reflects the complexity of research accountability in this context where political violence breaks bonds of trust and inter-relationship in families and communities.

Two schools of research were notable in the conference accounts. 'Outsider research' tended to have a more scientific quantitative approach concerned with providing evidence of the extent of psychological harm, with definitions of harm influenced by medical scientific theories. 'Insider research', dominated by Palestinian presenters but including international researchers influenced by 'insider' epistemologies, tended to use a qualitative experiential stance and community framework for the debate. This appeared to sit naturally with the Palestinian-Arab culture of expression in research methods. Action research was a dominant methodology used within accounts suggesting the importance of community participatory action promoted in my research methodology (chapter five; **5.2;5.3**). The presentation extracts include secondary qualitative accounts of young people's voices as a crucial point of understanding first-hand experience of life as young people under siege. Presenters used instinctive – creative methodologies expressed with a poetic sense of idiom.

The distinct nature of the trauma research is articulated by Altawi, (KC 2015) in his words: "How does the community hold the trauma for the child, when the fracture is in the community not in the individual?". This duality is at the core of the Palestinian presentations, reflected in the imagery of "gun to body….gun to mind" and the "already dying children" (Muthanna, KC 2015) with the juxtaposition of courage and fear, play and death, safe and unsafe. Understandings of community shelter and nurture are interwoven with associations of fear, attack and violence. The immensity of these debates elevates the spiritual tone of accounts. These conceptualisations transcend age and children and young people's voices use this adult language and imagery as reflected in the opening accounts (Amro, KC 2015). Indeed, central to the debate is the collective researcher acknowledgement that children are denied childhood, and at the heart of attack in Palestine. Within family contexts, researchers separate out childhood and parental experience with recognition of the different gender and age roles within trauma reactions. Mothers are particularly isolated carrying sense of home and fear of home invasion (Samara, KC 2015); fathers are a strong presence in community life, but considered weak by sons if they do not defend their homes (Altawi, KC 2015). Jabr's account (KC, 2015) indicates boys are a primary psychological concern as more targeted and imprisoned; yet they perform a societal role whereas girls mirror mothers as the heart of family and community with accounts reflecting a deep inner fear of female attack substantiated in the Palestine Youth Trauma project accounts (chapter six).

Humiliation, segregation and intrusion are constant themes in presentations reflecting the face of community under siege. Researchers connect with a common emphasis on the specific features of community trauma within Palestine due to the history of conflict since 1948 woven into inter-generational life and the fabric of the land (Makdisi, 2008; Saymah, Tait & Michail, 2015). It reflects a complex political community narrative of constant dualities and juxtapositions, noted by Barber and Jabr's accounts (KC 2015) and reflected in the youth voices echoing both courageous resilience and perpetual fear. Accounts reflect the insight yet unsteadiness of the trauma lens: the complexities and ambiguities; the multi-faceted definitions of childhood, life satisfaction, well-being, mental health, trauma and psychological responses.

This duality influences researcher epistemologies; there is an uncertain partnership between methodologies. Research tensions emerge not only between qualitative and quantitative interests, but between the primacy of sustaining an objective research inquiry or of an emotionally engaged reflexive response. There is also tension between medical diagnostic understandings of response to trauma and the opposed sense of trauma as universal, inter-generational and located in the transference of the displaced psyche of the attacker. The latter approach appears to have a natural cultural alliance. Emergent research, dominantly indigenous lead, challenges the more clinical MH dysfunction / disorder model of community and childhood trauma to promote the strength of community participation. This collective voice is expressed as the community spirit and imagination, framed with methods of creative arts and captured in the poetic stance of Palestinian research presenters.

This is a significant observation. The clinical MH paradigm of trauma and vulnerability of Palestinian children diminishes the agency of children as self-healing central to my inquiry. Research therefore requires a critical inquiry stance which can acknowledge extent of harm without diminishing the creative and spiritual restorative capacity of Palestinian children and young people. This premise echoes an established body of research that questions orthodoxy ideas about children as helpless victims in face of war (Gilligan, 2009; Barber, 2014). Indigenous Palestinian researchers challenge the 'psychiatrizing of the trauma discourse' (Barber, Kingston Conference) suggesting this leaves little space for discovery and transformation. The opposite approach, however, risks over-promoting the identities of youth as political actors in the narratives of resistance. The Gaza medic, Jabr, challenges these narratives for diminishing the psychological impact of child trauma and the need for formal mental health service developments. She identifies this as an adult community narrative which, when echoed in the voices of children, risks the distortion of childhood identity and rights articulated by an adult world (Jabr, 2014).

Researchers as therapists and medics emphasize the importance of understanding the unique and sustained nature of circumstances and the cultural invasive nature of Palestinian trauma. Raines notes the impact when "trauma is a collective oppression from outsider presence" (Raines, KC 2015). Barber reflects the invasion of the mind: "conflict between you and the life you dream of" and the duality or mind-splitting: "for what self of myselves am I going to live for?" (Barber, KC 2015). The pervasive nature of Palestinian trauma is reflected in the language and imagery used by Samara: "the body becomes an inhabited space"…."the voice and un-voicing of a community" (Samara, KC 2015) .

Action research methodologies appear congruent with the Arabic culture of research inquiry in Palestine (Jabr, 2014; Saymah *et al.,* 2015). They promote participatory approaches which reorientate the child to promote their psychological health restoration through community interaction; these appear natural approaches reflecting the intrinsic dynamic of collaboration and mental health services in Palestinian community life. Conference speakers support transcultural research methodologies and MH networks, but with indigenous methods and new epistemologies based on cultural connectivity and the importance of emphasizing the trauma and resilience cycle. These are reflected in Barber and Samara's studies (KC 2015) with a notable focus on the use of creativity and imagining to reinstate the child's natural mindset. Jabr refers to the "objectification of the mind" with indigenous research and therapy intentions to work with children in ways which…" challenge the dispossession of the child's mind" (KC Presentation 2015) .

Resilience is a mainstream practice premise; accounts indicate where children feel secure to resist, quality of life is strong. Dr Guido 's study of life satisfaction amongst Palestinian children takes the research debate away from the pathologizing accounts with quantitative analysis accounts indicating high life satisfaction in Palestinian children. Jabr promotes a "radical openness to the world which defies the bonds of colonisation" (Jabr, KC 2015). Guido's research promotes 'mentalisation' as a way to explore symbols in memory triggered by recurring sensory reactions to the environment to recreate sense of meaning: "It is liberating…memory…symbols…meaning ….to sustain life and never stand still" (Guido, KC 2015). Children's voices are invited to represent radical and open imaginaries of vision to reclaim their liberation and sense of place in the world. This, again, is congruent with the intention of action research and central to my project mode of inquiry as evidenced in chapter five.

The emerging focus on creative arts and creative methodologies is a deliberate research 'tactic' expressed in the Kingston Conference as the mechanism to reinstate the childhood imagination, the right to play and to dream, to express pain and fear. It is the emblem of hope. The dream state moves towards a desire for peace whereas the environment increases in disorder due to violent and oppressive tactics. Too deep a dream state within an opposed external reality could create its own psychological trauma. "Is post traumatic growth possible? It is about acceptance and forgiveness? But how do we achieve this in perpetual oppression?" (Barber, KC 2015). This raises a question about the complex balancing of realism and vision in a community under siege. All recognise the complexity of the research arena and the deeply exacting challenge to support a tangible response.

"How do people touch each other in fear, grief, hopelessness?" (Barber, KC 2015). This seemingly impossible question is taken into the search for shared methodologies and research-practice alliances to provide coherent support. The research community understands the importance of transcultural research with insider and international perspectives to provide a deeper clarity and advancement of innovative responses. *"One cannot work in Gaza or the West Bank without the sense of deep respect for the dignity of local communities and local practitioners…… It confirms we are colleagues world-wide – so we want to be psychologists together, do psychology rather than impose psychology"* Pal UK MH Network representative, KC 2015.

Chapter Summary: Understandings of trauma related to emergent themes

The three platforms of inquiry in this chapter have developed frameworks for understanding contemporary contexts of youth trauma in conflict zones. The practitioner articulations of youth trauma are passionate in concern and vision reflecting the urgency of therapeutic awareness and commitment to develop informed responses. This connects with my primary premises about how the debate touches the international social work community at this time (chapter one and two); in the second and third inquiry platforms of this chapter researchers are involved in therapeutic action in communities in siege and refugee and resettlement camps or holding centres. The therapeutic concern is reflected in the emotions and the poetic – philosophical tones shaping expressions of data.

Data accounts in stages 1 and 2 confirm my premise about the need for new types of practice which are 'reflexive' to current contexts and provide therapeutic as well as pragmatic relief (Bruce, 2013; Megele, 2015). Relief and resilience building are presented as key concepts in facing established

trauma. Conceptualisations of mental health are aligned to broader theories of holistic awareness in promoting participation and realisation in approaches with young people. A researcher 'preoccupation' with positive mentalisation and claiming the imaginal and the dream state supports the vision of restorative practice which can challenge negative outcomes and promote the realisation of hope. This will be discussed further in my ontological account of chapter four.

The Kingston debate of childhood rights within a context of political violence highlights the complexity and diverse nature of therapeutic constructions in community advocacy and interventions. Practitioners operating in conflict environments convey images of deeply troubled children and young people and the ambivalence of research accounts in the face of a desperate and enduring humanitarian crisis. The different forms of theoretical expression reflect opposed epistemologies and the residual tension of how to respond therapeutically to the young person without pathologizing or limiting their sense of agency despite the established evidence of inter-generational and residual traumas.

In terms of trauma responses, Ursano *et al.* (1994:16) emphasize the variance of reactions and affects, although indicate the importance of defining and measuring psychological, physiological and sociocultural responses in order to more precisely ascertain health outcome. Post-traumatic war stressors have been identified by Horowitz (1976) as 'intrusive' and 'denial-avoidant'. Ursano *et al.* (1994) identify that for many, reactions might be normal responses to an 'abnormal event' and these might be, largely, transitory. They describe trauma acts as "psychic organizers" producing specific "affects, cognitions and behaviours that are released under certain symbolic, environmental or biological stimuli" (Ursano *et al.,*1994:8).

Most studies surmise that a predisposal to psychiatric illness prior to the traumatic event creates a more severe post-traumatic reaction (Kulka *et al.,* 1990; Fullerton *et al.,* 2004) but for many, there is a residual risk of PTSD features in transitory or sustained ways (Ursano et al., 1994; Fullerton *et al.,* 2004). Biological affects have been recognised by van der Kolk {1997} and Repetti *et al.* {2002)as fundamental aspects of trauma. Psychological affect is recognised by Kulka *et al.* (1990) and Betancourt *et al.* (2013) to include depression and anxiety disorders. The holistic lens protects this expansive understanding of trauma and trauma response.

Theorists, therefore, combine with empirical voices in the three stages of inquiry of this chapter to support the importance of a community and socio-environmental lens in assessing features of youth trauma and building resilience. In Brown's study (2018) a community approach is supported where allied community practitioners engaging with children and young people are 'trauma aware' and offer a more holistic approach to trauma within frameworks of well-being and life fulfilment. This echoes Guido's approach in Palestine (KC 2015; **3.5.1**). Principles of the community model include "safety and nurture; trustworthiness; collaboration; empowerment; choice" (Brown, 2018:63). In the Kingston Conference the Palestinian accounts demonstrate the importance of insider research knowledge, yet also the value of sharing across cultures of research methodologies and mental health approaches. This research exchange and adaptability appears to be an important feature of my inquiry into valid contemporary approaches to youth trauma. The primary reference, however, must be the local practitioner understanding of trauma.

The young person's connection to a secure reality and a reforming of composure is through a distinct type of therapeutic lens. The therapeutic process of transformation is achieved by re-

kindling the young person's sense of self, their sense of 'personal location' and individuality (Burke, 2008) with respect for their 'unique circumstances' (Salomon & Nevo, 2012). In this way, "self is perceived in a more social and fluid way" (Baldwin, 2013: 52). This opens up a "limitless possibility of multiple narratives unendingly shaped by the social, cultural and historical factors" (Baldwin, 2013: 52).

The imaginal and the claiming of hope is translated by therapists into a vision of how young people can reform composure after trauma. Saleebey's work on strengths-based practice echoes this vision; it challenges practitioners to reflect on the "assumptions underpinning many practice approaches that service users' destinies are constrained by the problems they face" (Saleebey, 2006: 116). In my vision of transcultural team response, due to the participatory nature of action research, the young person will increasingly shape their own trauma narrative. This challenges the diagnostic and prescribed account of youth trauma and of therapeutic practice, historically bound by 'negative schemas' (Banks, 2012). The therapist is not only required to validate the young person but to examine their own reflexive understandings of self and to recognise the multiple possibilities of a new narrative emerging.

In all three stages of inquiry, accounts express the impact of community trauma in both alienating the young person and in causing a sense of psychological 'splitting' into selves. Presenters and therapists form narratives which convey the importance of indigenous community frameworks, transcultural team responses and participatory research approaches congruent with the therapeutic groupwork approach at the heart of my research. The 'holding space' therefore is a therapeutic circle with the potential to become a creative space of reconnection, reflection and discovery. It is based on the distinct sense of encounter with young people building on "the combination of attributes that each of us forms to make a unique place among others" (Megele, 2015:15). The holding space invites a form of expressive participation which build the person's sense of awareness through 'narrative' and imagination. Baldwin (2013) develops a model of narrative practice in which he raises the importance of the 'dialogical self' as a way of seeing the person as subject, as an activist in their own life circumstances.

Satir's work supports this concept of positive self-understanding as a forum for transformational change. *"*The therapist's use of self is the greatest therapeutic tool that the therapist has to create the conditions to facilitate positively directional, transformational change. Therapists who experience their own positively directional Life Energy are able to provide clients with therapeutic relationships based on care, acceptance and new possibilities. The therapist often experiences the positive nature of the client's Life Energy even before the client does and connects with the client at that level*"* (Satir, 1985)

The sense of anticipation values the young person's potential to realise the possible.

Conceptual development of defining features of 'existential trauma' and therapeutic response

Existential Trauma

- Understanding the pervasive impact of a conflict environment on the psychological health of young people
- Holding a simultaneous therapeutic interest in both the individual and the qualities of their social environment (Howe, 2002).
- Recognising the impact of destabilisation due to socio-political violence in communities (Lowe, 2013) and the specific nature of inter-generational community traumas.
- The social work lens of 'watchful awareness' to identify harms of systemic and social injustices and the need for therapeutic 'shielding'.

Therapeutic Response

- Creating a sense of safe place to engender relaxation, trust and release.
- Focus on 'emotional engagement' (Koprowska, 2014) which nurtures the young person's sense of 'agency'.
- Working through complex emotions, inviting 'meaning making' (Papadopoulos, 2002) and restoring composure.
- Psycho-social focus on young people's psychological health striving to restore internal and external balance within environmental and community framework.
- Holistic approach as affirmation of the young person encompassing their interpretation of mind-body-spirit balancing.
- Relational practice as a therapeutic art form inviting the creative, the imaginal, the hoped for.

STAGE TWO: ILLUMINATION

Chapter 4: Ontological and Epistemological Foundations

Reader Guide: This chapter has three parts: part one is the defining of my ontology and epistemology; part two, how these influence theoretical and conceptual approaches to knowledge; part three presents the rationalisation for my choice of participatory action research as methodology for the Palestine Youth Trauma Project.

Part 1 Ontology: Conceptualisations of the existential and inter-relational self, within experiences of being, belonging and displacement

My research inquiry is immersive and participatory, using principles of therapeutic encounter with the aim to support young people to release features of enduring conflict. It requires precise understanding of the subtleties and complexities of psychological disturbance in a conflict zone. In the foundational stage of research, I suggest that my inquiry touches a pain that resonates with existential awareness. Reason (1996) promotes the value of the existential awareness of the researcher in 'participatory human inquiry': "We need a way of knowing which integrates truth with love, beauty and wholeness, a way of knowing that acknowledges the essential physical qualities of knowing…we need a new story about our place in the scheme of things" (Reason, 1996:8).

This chapter presents the ontological and epistemological principles which underpin my research vision in terms of young people striving to know sense of self within the human and metaphysical sphere. I acknowledge a natural alignment to the reflexive experiential nature of qualitative research paradigms concerned with human suffering, in particular, the work of the School of Participatory Action Research (Heron, 1996; Heron & Reason, 1997). This promotes radical democratic expression and exchange as a form of human knowledge, hence transformation **(1.9)**. My research is primarily drawn from conventions in social work and community services influenced by humanistic psychology and theories of relational therapy. These are largely prescribed approached with boundaried forms of exchange. The chapter opens, however, with the premise that the complex experience of youth displacement requires a deeper sense of inquiry with technical mastery of different relationships between beliefs, knowledge and interpretation.

My own ontology, expressed throughout this thesis, would be the 'study of being' (McCormack, *et al.*, 2017) within realms of deeper reality and existence, with the heuristic lens guiding me to claim a poetic and metaphysical instinct alongside the rigour of scientific order required in research debate. This poetic state is open to the emergent, the uncertain and the metaphysical. The subject focus on deepest experiences of human pain translates this ontological principle into concerns with the nature of reality and existence in a social world (Holloway & Galvin, 2016). This requires practitioners to engage with "human concerns relating to life, ageing and death, being and becoming, embodiment and identity, choice and meaningfulness, belonging and needs, sense of time and space, freedom and oppression" (Finlay, 2011:19). In this sense, therefore, my own researcher desire to use a heuristic methodology to invite an expansive state would mirror the participatory action research design as a circle of inquiry in which young people would become 'co-inquirers' (Heron, 1996) into conceptualisations of human existence, trauma and restoration.

My research intention was to present the concept of a therapeutic holding space as an expansive space of illumination in which individuals would feel supported sufficiently in a therapeutic sense to deepen their sense of self. The important therapeutic principle would be to nurture the agency of young people as self-healing. In my defining of the psycho-social approach, practitioners would be expected therefore to 'scope the landscape' surrounding the young person. In chapter one, I present my vision of the therapeutic holding space design as expansive and multi-dimensional, hence counter oppressive. This form of therapeutic circle design is inclusive and participatory with fluidity of voice and thought as a challenge to dominant hierarchical powers. The collaboration with community elders and the participatory element within the therapeutic circle would aim to diffuse powers which oppress and diminish, hence inviting re-generation. This radical emancipatory intention requires a transparency and shared awareness between researcher and 'subjects' about the lived experience of trauma, and its effect on individual sense of being.

This ontology, founded on the principle of 'participatory alliance' **(1.8)**, requires different epistemological foundations which can acknowledge the existential self and the inter-relational sense of self (**2.1).** The epistemological concern with valid knowledge invites me as researcher to elevate aspects of humanitarian therapeutic relief (Holloway & Galvin, 2016) which recognise the aspects of continual siege and oppression in conflict contexts where no resolution or release appears tangible. Frameworks of conflict-relief therapy with young people have more radical participative formations where all share the trauma awareness in the environment (chapter eight). In a context of military siege, as in chapter six, the human landscape has three forms held by forces of agreement and opposition in ever-changing states: the local community, the transcultural team formation, and the military occupation. All are engaged with making meaning within these inter-locking and shifting human communities. This interpretive stance is heightened, more deeply intuitive and reflexive to the point of evolution in the environment of conflict.

In this sense, the therapeutic relationship itself becomes a type of 'essence' in inquiry and discovery. Heron talks about 'participative subjective-objective reality' (1996). This influences my inquiry to search for theoretical conceptions of practice concerned less with technical constructs of 'intervention' and more with a shared search for human understanding and desire for an essence of inter-relational equilibrium. I define this awareness as the understanding of the individual and collective realisation of self in need. Established areas of inquiry within social sciences and social work research paradigms consider how people come to terms with a range of complex experiences of loss, grief, trauma and oppression (Orme & Shemmings, 2010) within family and community contexts. Conventional human service epistemologies remain primarily relevant, but in my research there are two epistemological shifts. Firstly, the application of systemic and psycho-social frameworks requires a more critical interpretive stance which acknowledges the non-linear and the multi-dimensional aspects of individual and cultural oppression as outlined above.

Secondly, my work seeks to elevate the metaphysical and spiritual dimensions of human consciousness in experiences of conflict. This instinct has guided me to form a natural alliance with the spiritual and philosophical foundations of both indigenous tribal research paradigms and belief systems influencing specific conventions in current holistic therapies. This alliance of social work / social science conventions and the earth or eco consciousness and healing teachings of indigenous and holistic therapies requires justification. In my view, these schools of thought provide clarity and depth to the models of holistic and psycho-social social work practiced defined in chapter two (**2.11;**

2.12) as they promote and define the importance of meditative practice within natural and metaphysical spheres. This gives more substance to the holistic conventions of social work practice in mind-body-spirit restoration; Western world conventions of practice tend to emphasize physical and psychological entities and diminish the spirit and spiritual dimensions. In tribal 'meditative wisdom' the individual is intrinsically connected to the spirit of earth and divine consciousness; in holistic therapies this acknowledgement allows for a separation of treatment approaches to physical, psychological and spiritual manifestations of need. I hold the premise that in youth displacement, the agonies of loss of home, family, ancestral culture naturally generate a deeper search for sense of identity, belonging and meaning in spiritual terms. These cultures of practice therefore elevate the spiritual; this supports the therapist to identify manifestations of trauma, the impact on the young person's spirit and sense of composure, and the impact on their sense of being.

This deeper defining of the holistic framework to elevate how people use consciousness, or 'meditative wisdom', in raw experiences of conflict supports my development of different sets of terms to reflect the influences of indigenous and meditative customs. 'Eco consciousness', 'meditative wisdom', 'holistic awareness' become part of an ontology which shifts the research inquiry into deeper conventions of 'therapy' as individual awareness, human connectedness and healing. I would argue that changing the semantics of restorative interventions from forms of 'therapy' to 'healing' creates a different set of requisites of practice discussed further in chapter eight. The conceptualisation of 'existential trauma' sits naturally with the frameworks of healing approaches.

These concepts also highlight the complex juxtaposition of individual and collective in experiences of human displacement. In contrast to more linear separatist understandings of individual self and treatment plans in Western world therapy conventions, my research defines 'existential awareness' as holistic aspects of individual need within a framework of self in the inter-relational and the spiritual sphere. The dynamic of this research inquiry therefore is distinct; it is deeply intuitive-reflexive and all engaged with the experiential search for meaning within epistemologies which consider the deeper essence of existence and co-existence.

This chapter conveys my intention to acknowledge these epistemologies alongside the conventions of holistic and psycho-social therapy used in social work practice, acknowledging this as a juxtaposition which requires frameworks of interpretation which redefine conventional conceptualisations. This includes re-examination of conceptualisations of community and well-being; in indigenous philosophy, influenced by the feminine spirit, there is more emphasis on the inter-relational and connected self than more separate definitions of self and identity in mainstream Western world practice conventions. This debate echoes the discussion of 'self and separability' in chapter one attributed to Lee's work (2005) (**1.3)**.

The chapter unfolds with deeper defining and analysis of the ways that my researcher interest in ontological and epistemological principles shape the debate.

4.1 Sense of belonging, displacement and the restorative self

My research inquiry is about how people restore their sense of self when the framework of community is under threat or removed, and sense of ancestral place is taken from under their feet. My debate through previous chapters develops the conceptualisation of a therapeutic holding space as a symbolic space untouchable by violence. This concept becomes more present in therapists' accounts in chapter three as Palestinian medics discuss how 'positive mentalisation and imagining' can be used as a defence against the relentless violence towards the childhood mind in Palestine (Jabr, Guido, Conference Extracts, **3.3**). This consideration connects with my search for the therapeutic holding space approach imagining its therapeutic capacity as a transitory space in which young people can release the perpetuating images of oppression and threat and find retreat. In my opening account (**1.1**) I suggest my vision of the therapeutic circle echoes the image of community representing human connection to the earth within ancient standing stones. This existential memory of human existence and belonging resonates within me as I seek to develop my account of the therapeutic significance of the holding space as a circle of community around the displaced young person.

From the formal literature in chapter two and the empirical debates in chapter three, sources of literature and data have guided my conceptual articulation of these moments of discovery, when a heightened awareness becomes significant to the person in a transformative and healing way. At an intuitive level, I sense that this process of individual awareness and transformation can be enabled by the therapist through a mutual sense of developing awareness. This is only possible where both parties are open to the deeper questioning of experience. This chapter provides the reflective space for me to refine conceptualisations of psychological health and trauma within understandings of 'holistic awareness'.

Sense of 'being', according to Maslow (1954), is the central basic principle of human need and the motive to belong central to human existence and society. Robeiro (2001) identifies sense of being as the necessary condition of social interaction; in his study of youth affected by substance misuse, personal levels of social inclusion are related to levels of recovery and rehabilitation. This suggests the composure born of secure connection to others will be a crucial aspect of resilience for young people affected by 'traumatic change processes' (Coyle & Williams, 2000). Harrison and Ruch (2007) describe 'use of self 'as a form of practitioner composure which can equip practitioners to evaluate cognitive and emotional competencies of young people. This artistry of emancipatory practice, however, requires a critical understanding of processes involved in the cycle of reflection on experience and sense of self, cognitive and intuitive processing, interpretation and 'knowing'.

Sense of being and belonging, therefore, are fundamental requisites of human existence, which in my research provide the person with a sense of composure and connectedness. Sense of being, in adversarial circumstances, will potentially destabilise existential understandings of self for young people in physiological and cognitive development. Through meditative or reflective awareness, there is greater potential for resolution of inner conflict and restoration of holistic sense of self: 'attunement'. 'Wisdom and meditative cultures', according to Hale, encourage the practice of retreat and stillness to listen more deeply to consciousness and awareness; this she defines as 'sacred space' (Hale, 2007). There is a parallel usage of this term in meditative practice and in attachment theory where it guides practitioners to support a disassociated child's sense of

alignment to others. It echoes my instinct about the therapeutic groupwork circle used in social work in conventions of community practice with young people. The circle, therefore, becomes an important emblem of community and belonging in my thesis. It holds as sacred the sense of existential belonging.

Chapter one identified as important to my inquiry the primary concept of 'awareness'. This chapter adds the second principle of 'attunement'': a process in which the person reinstates their sense of self and inner harmony after dissonance. I consider that tribal wisdom connects the existential sense of self with the duty of compassion, the development of the social self central to my premises about healing. The formation of community is also sacred, watched over with ancestral wisdom and traditions. Indigenous wisdom locates concepts of space and place; this wisdom derived from communities which have a "long inhabitation of a particular place" (Warren, 2008:31). Within tribal discourses, for example Toltec wisdom, the practise of elder meditation in the wildness, away from the human sphere nurtures a higher sense of self within metaphysical consciousness. The tribal elder returns to the community with sacred knowledge of ways of being and living (Ruiz, 1997).

Hence meditative cultures promote the development of a 'mindset', a reconnection with the intrinsic self, our 'birthright' given to us by nature. This mindset holds the consciousness of natural health harmony: vibrant health, free of disease, and vibrant mind, free of stress (Warren, 2008). Indigenous teachings invite emancipation from cultural and social conditioning, the 'rules of domestication' (Ruiz, 1997) to promote a higher form of community consciousness based on harmony, wholeness and wildness.

Clearly, these are important forms of awareness in understanding existential forms of human displacement. In the evolution of human consciousness, there is the scope for a new form of 'culture' and social existence where human interest is not driven by the competitive divisive forces of political self-interest and internal disorder, but by a desire for compassion and peace: a 'heart based culture' (Theo van Dort, 2019). In this process, knowledge is drawn from mind to heart space and transformation is sourced through a higher perception of meaning about ways of living and rules for social formations; the memory of the standing stones.

In chapter two I demonstrated how primary emphasis is placed on conceptualisations of being and social belonging within social work discourses (**2.1**). The motive to belong is considered central to human existence, culture and civilisation (Malone *et al.,* 2012), with belonging associated with aspirations for the fulfilment of potential (Wilcock *et al.,* 2006). Social belonging is, however, a transient state, affected by the responses of others and the reflexive sense of self. Dimensions of belonging include sense of secure attachments (belonging and attachment theory), sense of engagement and participation, sense of contribution and value. Whereas the conceptualisation of the existential self is fixed and secure, the social sense of self, as identity, is fluid. Identity becomes "a matter of socially situating oneself and negotiating with one's own identity – the fixed self becomes fluid, socially constituted, and unstable" (Salgado & Clegg, 2011:424).

In my research, I recognise the importance of the essence of compassion in social work response to marginalised and destabilised individuals; I define how it influences therapeutic processes of engagement and restoration (chapter eight). The psycho-social model of practice guides the social worker to understand the person's sense of being and belonging within their family and cultural system and to respond to evident instabilities. Laird describes this as a practice stance based on

'cultural competency' (2008). When a young person is migrant, they are displaced from this sphere of belonging. Just as the memory of the standing stone circle reminds us of our ancestral sense of belonging to the earth and each other, the therapeutic circle in my vision of social work practice creates a memory for displaced young people of their connection to circles of family, community and ancestry. The transcendent spirit hence holds the notion of overcoming the contextualised sense of the displaced self. Ngulu's work (1986) held the central premise of the "decolonization of the mind" which can overcome political and social subjugation. Baldwin's notion of transformative narrative introduces the "dialogical self" (2013:51) which allows for a negotiated dialogue, a higher consciousness, moving through processes of re-framing and enlightenment. My research began presenting the importance of 'awareness' and has developed conceptualisations of 'restorying' (Adams et al., 2005) and positive mentalisation as a cognitive intuitive process which prepares the young person for restoring sense of self. This is the healing process.

My work promotes a community framework for supporting the social sense of self, but distinguishes between modern conceptions and formations of 'community' as social sphere and the tribal and communitarian ideologies of holistic, purposeful community. Feminist and communitarian schools of thought influence my research; they locate moral value on the primacy of human relationships: Gilligan's work on the feminine 'ethic of care' (1982) and Wood's view of the "interdependent sense of self" (1994: 149) emphasize heightened consciousness of self and the purposeful interconnection between self and others. The feminine-communitarian ethos contributes a personal and relational understanding of 'essence and meaning' (Sela-Smith, 2002) and 'emotionality' (Fredman, 2004). In the sharing of emotions there is both the sense of deep humanitarian purpose, and the rhythm of the existential life-pulse. This notion of rhythm and existential energy becomes important within my development of the conceptualisation of the therapeutic circle (**4.3**). and is purposefully acknowledged in the creative arts platform design in chapter six.

The 'feminist communitarian' model (Wood, 1994:151) contributes the concept of 'interpretative sufficiency' – an approach which seeks to open up the social world in all dimensions. This is a non-separatist, non-elitist view of the social self which contributes to my conceptualisation of the holding space as a non-separatist community formation (**8.4**). Within the PYT Project this conceptualisation informs the intuition of the practitioner in ways to map out the circle as an echo of harmonious 'community'.

These ideologies underpin my research: 'existential awareness' (author's term) or 'critical consciousness' (Reason, 1996) become understandings of eco and humanitarian justice and ways of being which influence the framework of awareness in the therapeutic exchange between practitioner and young person. This 'holistic health consciousness' (author's term) encompasses the person at human and eco levels and holds the circle of sustainability around the child. When this is fractured, trauma occurs.

4.2 Geo-politics, indigenous land rights and the displaced self

"*Oppression does not discriminate. It oppresses all. It's invisible and pervasive force constricts the heart, suppresses the spirit and censors expression. When the force of our attention lives in stillness*

and animates balance and renewal, there is an endless breadth of possibilities that nourish heart, spirit and creativity". Rose von Thater-Bran, 2012 (cited in Elworthy, 2014:104).

My thesis debate of youth displacement is dominantly about childhood rights within global turbulence and political self-interest. Social work supports a critical consideration of humanitarian laws of duty and moral purpose which promotes the primary community interest of childhood nurture and sustainability within a community context. Elworthy (2014:124) cites Judge Weeramantry, former president of the International Court of Justice, in his claim that it is "our primary duty to protect our children's children. If we fail to do so, we are betraying the most solemn and sacred trust that lies upon us as human beings and trustees for future generations".

In chapter two I identified social work's critical consciousness as a socio-political lens watchful to the impact of social forces which cause the exclusion of children (**2.10**). Lee's critical analysis of this social work urge promotes critical definitions of "separability versus separateness" (2005: 154) in processes which generate a sense of human identity and value in childhood development. He identifies that "separability is the possibility of relationship…a possibility always involved in the generation of human value" whereas the growth of separateness is "a means for distributing human value" (2005:154). Social work literature traces this default affect within modern liberal discourses influencing separationist social rules of living and organisational welfare. These conceptualisations frame my primary thread of childhood trauma and dimensions of social belonging and disassociation. Lee's work (2005) on childhood separation highlights the gap in emotional and psychological development that will affect the consciousness of the young person who experiences exclusion.

My work promotes an awareness of the connection between natural landscape and humanity to challenge the impact of indigenous land displacement. This potentially both violates the person's sense of location and threatens the future of community. As I write this a new wave of global debate about identity, racism and colonial power unfolds with the Black Lives Matter debates 2021. Banks observes how recent shifts in geo-politics and economics affect the rules of belonging in modern society (Banks, 2012). Hierarchical and colonial powers will dispossess the status of the poor, the displaced and the young, whereas 'restorative justice' is a way of treating with respect the sense of 'personal location' and 'individuality' (Burke 2008).

It seems to me these are fundamental existential matters which require addressing in response to youth trauma. My central research project takes this 'awareness' to the complex debate about indigenous land rights in occupied territory in the Palestinian West Bank. The works of Pappe and Chomsky influence my understanding of this research contextualisation. Their use of a critical discourse methodology invites a multi-dimensional debate which reframes understandings of the "role of social and military resistance in Arab communities" (Chomsky & Pappe, 2010:2). Pappe conceptualises the humanitarian debate about moral worth and moral deservingness in the Palestinian question; he observes the enduring significance of 'nakbah' ('catastrophe' in Arabic) denial for Israel (Chomsky & Pappe, 2010:3) and its influence on power and domination.

Palestinian trauma is described as an existential type of social suffering resulting from political targeting, the 'persistent humiliation' of a nation. It is de-personalised and all-pervasive as indicated in the data accounts in **3.5**. Within nine months of the 1948 Agreement, half of the population of Palestine were displaced and turned into refugees; those who remained were massacred, an act of

'ethnic cleansing' (Makdisi, 2008). These authors promote 'dialectical debate' to invite a space for negotiation, claiming the Palestinian question is the "conscience of the world, the place where injustice unfolded and continues in an on-going crime of denial" (Chomsky & Pappe, 2010:3). Chomsky and Pappe identify enforced 'dialectical discourses' (Chomsky & Pappe, 2010) observing that without dialogue, there is no space for reconciliation or to reframe the narrative. Even today, UK politics in the media permit the elimination of the native, the criminalization of the Palestinian child. It is reflected in the act of 'political cleansing' as an attack on Corbyn for the stand he and others in the UK Labour Party took for Palestinian rights in 2019. In a related conference presentation (Humanitarian Crisis, Malvern, March 2019), Pappe expands his philosophical account of colonial settler injustice; the "false narrative" of the "hostile alien" creates a moral hierarchy of claims to land, community and settlement and within this force of political preoccupation, there is no scope for the Palestinian race to be humanised.

Hence, the existential debate turns to a consideration of settlement rights and indigenous sense of ancestral place. The therapeutic understanding of the importance of the social right to belong challenges the dominant paradigm of the territorial settler and rules of social division and determinism. Pappe uses two dimensions within his address: space and place, as conceptualisation of identity and belonging for Palestinian people. This echoes the premises I consider in my research, raising philosophical claims for understanding youth displacement in war zones in chapter two (**2.4**). It also supports my central premise about the therapeutic holding space and its association with the reinstatement of identity and belonging within a located sense of place (**1.4**).

A fundamental premise of social work is that social divisions and exclusions create human dissonance, perpetuating cycles of negative mentalisation. This is a common concern within childhood and youth trauma services. The mind in the social sphere reacts to external stressors which, in recurring patterns, may create trauma: "maladaptive dreaming" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 162). The antidote is the positive mentalisation of meditation and "self-reflective inquiry" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:162). These conceptualisations parallel my discussion of the importance of 'cognitive awareness' and 'attunement' in my opening chapter (**1.1**).

The ontological 'awareness' that I use in my research, is influenced by these suppositions of identity and belonging, displacement and dissonance. The democratic participatory principle stands at the centre of my ontological framework as a challenge to power and influence. The existential sense of self threads to the social and inter-relational self so that this sense of non-hierarchical connectedness invites a release from trauma and a restored sense of harmony and location.

4.3 New consciousness

In the opening section of this chapter, I expressed the threads of human and existential thought that have influenced my ontological position as researcher. Elworthy's term of "new consciousness" supports a new way of engaging with people in highly complex social contexts, an "intelligence based on self-awareness and the humility to challenge our preconceived notions of support and intervention" (Elworthy, 2014: 72*).* This defines my primary researcher intention. It echoes what I perceived about social work's capacity to touch this critical awareness in practice with others through human suffering. This requires a critical recognition of the impact of culture and community,

identity and differences, with the binary consciousness of 'us' and 'others', Western and Eastern Hemispheres, race divisions and narratives of supremacy created by powers of domination (Fook, 2007; Laird, 2008).

The 'settler narrative' justifying domination and dispossession of ancestral community contrasts with the feminist communitarian research movement; Steier suggests the latter has contributed an "ethical self-consciousness" which identifies "subtle forms of oppression and imbalance and teaches us to address questions about whose interests are regarded as worthy of debate" (Steier 1998:149). Binary accounts and binary consciousness (Laird, 2008) create competition rather than tolerance for difference and support for the marginalised. In a conflict community, the contradictories and competing tensions will be greater for all, affecting the equilibrium of self, family, community, and organisational service responses. My work is guided by theorists who claim visions of co-dependency, mutuality and participation as peace-making principles to combat the global, national and local forces of division and territory (Brett, 2010; Salomon & Nevo, 2012; Bush, 2013). These must be addressed for therapy, as a deeper form of healing, to occur.

My central ontological premise for restoration is the participatory principle; inclusive, and multi-representational. Having worked in international community development with marginalised and oppressed people, I have observed the profound dynamic energy of this type of mutuality and co-dependency. Its capacity for human growth and compassion lies beyond words. Representation is an important principle for my inquiry; of primary concern is the research endeavour to promote the interest of displaced people, within a framework of sustainability, nourishment and wellness. In chapter two I acknowledged the work of writers such as Adams (2005) and Payne (2014) in promoting 'eco social work' as a philosophy of sustainable practice in human and eco spheres. Understanding self in the eco system unlocks a local and global consciousness of what is needed to preserve, protect and sustain our planet, and in turn ourselves (Dominelli, 2014). Eco social work holds a sense of the connectedness of all things in the eco sphere (Payne, 2004); this principle guides the therapist to conceptualise the thread between harm to the natural environment and dissonance in the psychological balance of the young person experiencing environmental displacement (Norgaard & Reed, 2017). This is a deeper conceptualisation of social injustice which requires the therapist to acknowledge organic sources of restoration and healing. Strengthening the individual is a way of strengthening the community, just as the individual is strengthened by nourishment from their intrinsic sense of community through principles of co-dependency.

Hence, my research promotes the worldview of international social work practice which is systemic and multi-cultural in conscience (Boddy *et al.,* 2018; Jones, 2010). It is not assumed; Rossiter (2011) suggests a troubled world of contemporary social work practice with constraints between the "separated discursive positions of critical and normative practice". She calls for social work as a profession to uphold a "razor edge conscience for social justice" in its methods of representation (2011: 980).

Recognising that community can have positive and negative effects, I use the term 'community' as a philosophical and theoretical framework to conceptualize the 'good' (Gray *et al.,* 1997). My premise is that a sense of 'attunement' (Samara, 2014) can be achieved through a primal sense of the essence of nature, and the essence of community; both these levels of awareness are included in the conceptualization of the inter-relational sense of self. This consciousness invites a sense of

restorative capacity to support the sense of self separated from social and eco spheres. Attunement, in this context, is a critical consciousness that transcends human suffering and trauma; a greater knowledge that invites us to ”come back to the wise space that is within us” (Samara, 2014:9). This sense of the intuitive self is at the heart of meditation practices. Flatischer (1992) supports this concept as a new understanding of “the many musical voices of our world” (1992:11). A rhythmic consciousness can rebalance disease and physical manifestations of illness, trauma and emotional manifestations of ill health. Within the design of the therapeutic healing circle used in the Palestine project, drumming and rhythm and therapeutic release tapping (Yule, 2015) are important features which, in my awareness, echo the deeper rhythm of community and ecosphere as a memory of nurture and healing.

My research presentation of ‘existential trauma’ is based on the premise that if land nourishes the individual and community, when land is itself fractured or carries human conflict in its environment, this effects the eco chain of nurture and sustainability. This concept is supported by two contemporary holistic therapy authors, Shapiro and Prechtel and connects with the eco social work theorists promoting the connection between environmental and human justice (Dominelli, 2013). Shapiro’s work (1996, 1997, 2004) addresses the issue of land, land conflict and dispossession of people’s indigenous land rights. Where territorial settlers impose land rights on local dwellers, there is a violent eco displacement or trauma. Prechtel (2015) uses the term ‘geographic schisma’ to describe the energetic fault line that occurs where human conflict or violation occurs in a place. In Prechtel’s understanding, negative energy channels or *vortex* can reform where conflict is resolved or continue to carry the toxicity into future generations where land energy after trauma is not treated or acknowledged. In this context, trauma creates a violation of the healing energy between community and land.

Prechtel’s vision at an eco level connects with the work of van der Kalk (2014) at a social and physiological human level; as the landscape after trauma needs healing, so the person carrying trauma must be supported to heal or the trauma remains a disease carried by individuals and society. Prechtel believes that ”the unexpressed grief prevalent in our society today is the reason for many of the social, cultural and individual maladies that we are currently experiencing” (2015:5).

If this is believed, the human fractures caused by trauma require a critical understanding. In chapter one, two and three, my research claimed the importance of holistic practice which I now term ‘holistic awareness’ in recognition of how it provides cognitive and intuitive strength in adversity. In chapter two and three I attributed this to a therapeutic practice approach of holistic social work which frames therapeutic awareness of mind, body and spirit as a healing circumference (**1.6; 2.4; 2.12; 3.2**). In chapter four I have developed awareness of how social work in therapeutic understandings potentially connects with holistic health philosophies; both theoretical orientations support a treatment approach which promotes mind and body harmony. The holistic health approaches more precisely define how treatments connect through the physical and sensory, to the emotional and to the spiritual. This prioritizes the physical body as the gateway to the higher emotional and spiritual states which becomes relevant to the development of my conceptualisation of youth trauma and response in chapter eight. This knowledge illuminates my inquiry as it elevates discussion of the physical pain and physiological symptoms of trauma and how these features will affect the emotional and spiritual condition of suffering (Levine, 1997).

In chapter six and seven, I outline how the therapeutic holding space approach is designed to create a circle as a community of rhythm and harmony. The activities used in the PYT Project, many taken from holistic therapies and creative arts therapies, concentrate on the physical and sensory body as the opening of the therapeutic circle formation. This is an important pre-requisite for therapeutic practice with traumatized persons, connecting with the intuitive and sensory 'feeling state' (Levin, 1997) that they bring into a 'treatment space'. Levine's work on sensory responses to trauma is discussed in depth in chapter eight.

This chapter has indicated the potential development in the philosophical framework of psycho-social awareness which, combined with emergent holistic thought and ancient tribal wisdom, can hold a more robust platform for the deepest forms of human inquiry, in both research and practice. This shifts the discussion from the clinical edge of 'therapy' to a more existential practice response of healing and healing energies. I have endeavoured to find a balance between these fields, realising my inquiry must remain true to social work debates, but that in stepping into the field of human displacement from land and ancestry, it requires epistemologies which can frame the person's experience within an existential sense of community, ancestry and earth consciousness.

This requires the study of emergent authors and subject areas which address human need within understandings of natural life rhythms and healing. These sources of literature enrich the inquiry as they contribute to the sense of practice encounter and response. In indigenous wisdom, this consciousness of healing, harmony and sustainability is passed down through the generations by community elders: "Indigenous knowledge has always been about the inner journey that respects intuition, spirituality, artfulness and interconnectedness" (Warren, 2008:31).

This chapter has enabled me to clarify my ontological principles for my research inquiry as follows:

The interconnection of essence of nature and essence of people
The participatory principle – respect for inclusivity and co-dependency in sustaining individual and community life
Conflict, land fracture and human trauma
'Existential trauma' and the rhythm of community and ecosphere healing
Cognitive and intuitive awareness
Holistic awareness

Part 2: The research mindset and processes of knowledge formation

In the development of my research inquiry, the set of pre-judgements I have expressed are:

- The understanding of self is complex and multi-dimensional, defined in a transient reaction to space and time, and influenced by motivational components in terms of purpose and meaning (Christiansen & Townsend, 2011).
- That the person's sense of "being" in the world is influenced by a balance of individual values and beliefs, external factors and history of the socio-political and cultural context (Akesson, Burns & Hordyk, 2017).

In my research, these pre-judgements support different knowledge paradigms as outlined in chapter one **(1.1; 1.7)**: the reflective heuristic, cyclical and emergent modes of knowing, participatory and reflexive inquiry, discovery through intersubjectivity and dialogue.

4.4 Knowledge paradigms congruent with my ontology

My research instinct is heuristic. It invites the researcher inquiry through processes of self-knowledge. Part one chapter four has demonstrated my understanding of the importance of positive awareness as a state of harmony and healing. This requires a thread between my own sense of composure as researcher and the situational, contextual understandings articulated by those my research engages with: practitioners and young people in conflict zones. My work requires a constant revisiting to ensure the research vision and intention remains clear and the line of perception is true, in understandings of how the multi-dimensional conflict context is experienced by young people, and perceived by the therapist.

Moustakas guides the researcher to establish skills in research encounters which identify the 'perceptions and realizations' used by people to adapt to human interactions (Moustakas, 1990). The use of the reflective self in the 'inter-subjective field' (Cooper, 2017) requires a critical edge which recognises cyclical formations of knowledge and multi-dimensional thought; this invites the uncertain, the unknown and the emergent. As my thesis develops, it assumes different voices – the narrative, the reflective-poetic, the critical scientific, the questioning, the interpretative. During my research journey, my heuristic voice also shifts, so develops a discipline which holds a balance between the instinctive and the cognitive, the established and more emergent forms of knowing.

My research consciousness of the heuristic creates a critical coherency; Radnor suggests this research process is transformative and transactional (Radnor, 2002 :32); as the research becomes a reciprocal process where there is a reaction at researcher-participant level and at researcher-conceptual level. Reflexivity guides an awareness of researcher self in a circular relationship between subject and object and invites a "therapeutic commitment" to each other in a research context (Probst, 2015:37). This 'therapeutic commitment' is an underlying concept of both the work of Moustakas (2001) and of Heron (1998), as primary influences on my methodology. These influence my alignment to dialogical forms of inter-subjective reflection.

The second aspect of the heuristic lens is a protective mechanism to maintain critical criteria for defining and refining understandings of the environment which frames the human experience. I

require adherence to epistemological principles which can hold multi-dimensional debates about psychologically challenging existence and reflect the sequential progressive nature of self-awareness. In my work, knowledge hovers around juxtapositions – of local and global, individual and collective, self and other, tangible and ethereal, known and unknown, just and unjust. This breadth of debate also invites a precise focus on the 'moment of experience', in which Moustakas guides me as researcher to identify this as a moment of discovery, of newfound awareness.

In my foundational chapters I have conveyed my researcher instinct that this form of youth displacement is emergent and defies pre-conceptions; that it needs to be understood within a cultural-religious-spiritual framework and that the external environment requires consideration within critical forms of human analysis. Sela-Smith's appreciation of Moustakas' mode of inquiry includes observation of a "deeply embedded knowledge not normally available to conscious awareness" (2002:53). This echoes my observation about the forms of trauma experienced in conflict zones which will cause deep disturbances for young people, impossible to coherently articulate. This is my understanding of the 'liminal' space of research (Land, 2011).

This process of knowledge formation is therefore unique, highly instinctual and reflective, yet within a research context, requires foundational rules of discipline and integrity. Probst (2015: 38) suggests reflexive researchers hold a double eye of self-analysis and receptivity to the other. Within the constructivist paradigm, this "reactivity is an essential element in the co-creation of knowledge" (Ben-Ari *et al.,* 2011). In this research tradition the path of logic becomes cyclical, open to organic processes and a 'turning back on itself' (Schratz *et al*., 1995) rather than reaching definitive knowledge positions. This conceptualisation of knowledge development and sequencing is made more tangible with the use of the six stages of awareness by Moustakas (1990), adapted for my thesis design into three inquiry platforms **(1.9).**

The development of knowledge, therefore, in my inquiry is more of essence than a set of established empirical evidence. This distinction highlights the immersive interactive nature of the research design, and the way that knowing emerges as a heightened state of awareness, of researcher and potentially those engaged in the inquiry. This is, arguably a radical researcher stance as it values uncertain or "not knowing states" (Jacobs, 2008) reflective of the deeper uncertainties of human experience that move towards spiritual consciousness and revelation. Jacobs (2008:5) suggests indigenous perspectives hold a sense of the: "sacredness of space and place, the purpose of research to benefit the community; the spiritual awareness that everything is connected hence that knowledge must incorporate the mysterious" (2007:49).

Pellizoni (2003) introduces the value of 'radical uncertainty" to identify ways in which knowledge may be interpreted in different ways and at times, through the suspension of knowledge. Multiplexity and the multivocal representation of world views allows for this radical edge. Jones-Devitt & Smith term this approach "radical relativism" (2011:104); once the observable scientific reasonings are seen to be fallible, this allows for difference and uncertainty. Notions of 'radical realism ' invite multi-dimensional claims and voices as valid truths in the contested arenas of social work interventions (Jones-Devitt & Smith 2011, 104). This challenges conventional paradigms, however, which search for meanings that hold congruence with larger and formal systems. Reductionist by nature, this convention steers individual experience to whole system structures of health and social care, for example, definitions of mental health and established definitions of risk,

harm and solution. Managing change or recovery then becomes a process of dealing with resistance; the domains of radical and critical social work accounted for in chapter two.

In my research, the cyclical emergent nature of knowledge supports the transient view of reality and conceptualisations of trauma that my research participants will hold. This transience is influenced by the person's emotional state, reactions to the external environment and the troubled edge of experience. The interpretivist-constructionist approach holds personal sense of being with an awareness of "broader, inter-dependent cultural and social factors, both past and present and represented in the dialogue" (Cohen *et al*., 2000:14). This is a heightened lens therefore, for both researcher and therapist.

Complexity theory (Warren *et al*., 1998; Fraser *et al.,* 2001), closely aligned to critical social work theories, supports this depth intuition and offers an alternative to the reductionist mode of thinking. It encourages "intellectual inquiry and innovation" (Jones-Devitt & Smith, 2011: 129), adaptability and respect for the uniqueness of the individual and their circumstances. Complexity theory holds an authority in critically informed social work approaches (Hood, 2018), often applied to forms of practice with hard-to-reach young people.

The critical dialogical mode in knowledge formation has been established as a challenge of the 'dominant paradigm' by Habermas, (1987) and Foucault, (1977). These alliances with critical discourse echo the earlier work of Friere in community action (Friere, 1982:21) who promoted "critical consciousness" and "collective action". Foucault's theoretical stance is dominantly oppositional, wary of the rules of everyday life within social conventions. His philosophy is one of 'discourse' to generate fluidity of thought and being – to challenge "fixed entities" (Gray & Webb, 2012: 47) and controlling discourses in pursuit of a liberated sense of individuality.

The creative instinct is also a radical participatory mode of individual and collective expression which represents the accounts of lived experience and invites exploration through creative exchange. In the contemporary creative arts movement of action research, there is a recurring emphasis on community and transcultural community as a forum for expression and learning with a focus on relational alliances to support excluded and oppressed groups (Tilakratna, 1987; Rahman, 2000; Guhathakurta, 2015). These approaches are discussed further in **5.4** and will influence the design of the therapeutic holding space (chapter seven).

4.5 The participatory principle in knowledge formations

Participation, as a principle, requires a critical understanding of power, authority and oppression. My work has recognised the role of the International Social Work Movement in promoting the participatory principle as a mode for 'multi-vocal representation' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), supported through a transcultural response to the community fragmentations caused by political and social divisions. Whilst social work literature sits comfortably with participation in terms of anti-discrimination and anti-racism, difference and diversity, the principle of participation has a distinct and emergent social work literature based on diverse and multi-representational worldviews. Pease (2009) promotes the importance of "challenging the dominant paradigm". His work traces the different influences on a critical social work stance including the "role of economic and politic

systems in shaping experience and social relations…the importance of challenging power differentials between organisational responses and people's lives" and promotes "the forming of egalitarian relationships which validate people's lived experiences of oppression" (Pease, 2009: 98). The researcher needs to establish that the knowledge assumptions influencing the research encounter are 'authentic' and 'valid' within this philosophical framework (Moustakas, 1990).

My inquiry sits within a qualitative social sciences research contextualisation. The situational nature of the inquiry touches complex edges of research and community action, inquiry and response. The exacting nature of experience in a conflict zone requires a therapeutic encounter taking research into an 'indeterminate zone' (Colley, 2003) which cannot separate externally established research criteria from immediate value and practice response. My identity as researcher sits between these roles as an academic researcher and humanitarian social work activist. My primary research duty prioritises the research practice, but also extends my research discipline to ethical expectations of moral action and professional social work accountability.

4.6 Steiner, Four Arrows and Fook: Seminal research influences

My researcher alignment to more relational forms of experiential knowledge requires support from established theorists that can underpin my epistemology. I have traced three theorists within established experiential-intuitive research domains; all represent the connection between research and critical social or community action. They all have an interest in participatory research which supports 'multivocal representation' of peoples, in particular, the marginalised and the oppressed (Reason, 1990). Through their work there runs a collective thread of interest in the creative-therapeutic and the creative-therapeutic-spiritual domains of human expression and awareness in processes of human transformation. Their conceptualisations of knowledge inquiry and human response hence influenced my research position.

Rudolf Steiner (1861 – 1925). The Philosophy of Freedom (1894) reflects Steiner's development of anthroposophy, a life world consciousness which transcends normal experience across spectrums of society to enhance one's creativity and sense of life purpose. The Steiner community remains a protected community based on feminine-communitarian ethics in which people with a range of disabilities, often diminished in social contexts, are invited through democratic participation to develop a life of greater creative instinct and fulfilment. Despite holding a scientific foundation, Steiner's philosophy invites processes of 'existential illumination' (Steiner, 1894): methods of 'therapy' invite the creative reflective impulse as the capacity to transcend. His vision of a non-hierarchical approach to community prioritises the individual capacity of the imagination over the concept of productivity.

The capacity to see beyond, to harness the creative and the imaginal in expression, is an important premise to guide responses to the complexities of youth trauma through community conflict. Steiner's philosophy of approach promotes the instinct of discovery:"if you only search for the potential of central forces….this will determine the outcome and cause a reductionism. We cannot assume what we see is based on measurement and rationalisation" (Steiner, 1894:24).

Don Jakob aka 'Four Arrows' is an indigenous tribal leader and academic-researcher. Drawing from his Cherokee heritage and his experiences with indigenous communities, he supports research founded on diverse and alternative worldview perspectives in order to deepen processes of human inquiry.

His research stance supports three virtues: "*honor of the centrality of researcher voice, experience, creativity and authority; virtues of courage, respect, generosity, fortitude; regard for the people's version of reality"* (Four Arrows, 2008:1). Four Arrows' work aligns to Steiner in its support of more experiential and reflective paradigms which value the imagination and the creative spirit. Four Arrows pays attention to "the larger cosmic rhythms and connections which expand our awareness and challenge the reductionist views of the world" (Four Arrows, 2008:5). He promotes multiple representation; 'knowing' is a non-hierarchical and holistic sense of awareness that invites a humility and a curiosity towards new understandings and deeper harmony. This awareness is, in Warren's words 'indigenous purpose'; an individual and collective focus on survival, sustainability and greater awareness, hence "its interest in discovery and intuitive skills rather than knowledge competency based on adherence to pre-conceived understandings of truth" (Warren, 2008:31).

Two premises of Four Arrows are influential on my research claims; his definition of world peace as "conflict resolution; putting things back in order" through harmony with the natural rhythm of the world (2008: 6). He views creative expressive arts as "a living process for communicating and understanding" (2008: 6). Secondly, both Steiner and Four Arrows place emphasis on creative arts as modes of self-expression, self-exploration and inter-relational harmony. This influences my choice of data collection and the use of creative arts as forums of expression as processes for healing with young people in the Palestine project (methodology chapter five*).*

Steiner and Four Arrows, therefore, support a critical consciousness of world views which are translated into types of participatory community practice. Believing in the emergent spirit, they invite a creative urge and instinct which supports transformative effect. They evoke both the sacred and the spiritual. Their positions are participative and democratic in promotion of a whole community approach.

Jan Fook I have chosen Fook to connect with the philosophies of Steiner and Four Arrows within a contextualisation of critical social theory and social work. Fook represents the Tavistock therapeutic social work community and its principles outlined in chapter one and two (**1.6; 2.6)**. Fook's Model of Knowledge Deconstruction (2007: 28) promotes both the importance of an open-mindedness and emergent form of knowledge creation connecting with the premises of both Steiner and Four Arrows. Her model conveys knowledge as 'knowing' (Four Arrows, 2008) promoting a desire to arrive at greater planes of truth or awareness, and seeing the new knowledge as a form of critical and transformative social action.

Fook identifies 4 ways in which we might participate in knowledge creation:

"*knowledge is both embodied and social*

knowledge is subjectively mediated

there is a reactivity element

knowledge is created interactively" (Fook, 2007:28).

This epistemological reasoning guides me to more critically define the humanitarian essence of my research within my own researcher alignment to international social work domains of critical social action. Increasingly, social work research authorities such as McLaughin (2011), Orme and Shemmings (2010), and Shaw (2012), observe a shift from social science to social action research and a commitment to invite critical analysis of organization and power in community contexts, the way in which language is used, the effect of dialogue and the use of social action to transform (Denzin, 2002; Steier, 2007).

4.7 Ontological and epistemological influences on methodology

Participatory Action Research extends the qualitative mode of human inquiry established in social sciences research paradigms with a deeper form of participatory-reflexive inquiry. I acknowledge a congruence between the heuristic inquiry lens of Moustakas (1990, 2001) and Heron's central interest in human inquiry into *"*understanding of the human condition" (Heron, 1996:158) through participation and a form of 'transformative dialogue' (Heron, 1996).

This immersive researcher encounter with human experience supports my instinct for a deeper participatory process in research. Both Moustakas and Heron touch the edge of research as social action and therapy. Moustakas makes the connection between heuristic research and psycho-therapy, aligning his sense of personal progression with the work of Maslow (1954) and Rogers (1961) on self-actualization. Heron's work is committed to the conceptualisation of 'personhood' realised through participation and self-knowledge. Models of participatory action research develop this inquiry and social action stance (Heron & Reason, 1997, 2001; Reason, 2006; Marshall & Reason, 2007) with a primary intent to contribute to the "flourishing of human persons and their communities" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005:14).

Although the foundational premise within action research was 'social action inquiry' (Levin, 1950), the theories of participatory encounter developed in the work of Reason and Heron in the School of Participatory Action Research in the 90s (Reason, 1990; Heron, 1992) in forms of community collaboration and therapy. PAR practice ethics involve both establishing and maintaining nurturing, reciprocal and respectful relationships and inviting unique understandings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 33). This type of insight is considered by PAR researchers to be a dynamic structure of 'knowing' integral to the essence of humanity. Coglan refers to this action research instinct as "authenticity in insider action research" where the notion of authenticity creates a "dynamic operational structure" based on the principles of attentiveness and awareness in inquiry (2019:183).

Co-operative inquiry is a distinct method within the School of Participatory Action Research which rests on a paradigm of "participative, subjective-objective reality" (Heron, 1996:158). In this reality there is "a given cosmos in which the researcher mind communes and is not separate from" (1996:158). This suggests a deeper level of subjective immersion and exchange between researcher and participants, using the model of 'co-operative inquiry' to provide a scientific formula for knowledge formation. This model gives theoretical credence to my vision of the therapeutic circle as an interactive form of trauma acknowledgment and release where knowledge exchange invites radical expression, hence liberation. Heron (1992) defined the principle of 'non-hierarchical collaboration' with his innovative model of 'co-creation' in which participants co-design the research

project and nature of inquiry (Heron, 2008). This invites a radical dimension of participation in research and therapy with knowledge formed through exchange and interaction.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005), within the PAR philosophy, support the principle of diverse representation, a subjective epistemology and a naturalistic set of methodological procedures. The philosophical underpinnings of the School of Participatory Action Research (Heron & Reason 1997, 2001) therefore support my research ontology as declared in this chapter. The PAR theoretical emphasis on 'transformative worldviews' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) guides the researcher to be precisely accountable to the community represented by the research, hence responsive to existential organic eco and human environment laws and local community customs.

Conclusion

This chapter has recognised how the young will be displaced within global corporate rules and processes and how this will create inherent 'chaos and complexity' in social infrastructures and ways of living (Warren *et al.,* 1998). This requires challenge with a form of therapeutic response based on the vision of 'harmonious community'. In the foundational instinct of my research inquiry expressed in chapter one (**1.4**) my intention was to develop a form of 'thinking space' (Lowe, 2013) which would support therapeutic forms of community action and participatory emergent forms of knowledge formation. I believe the theorists considered in chapter four refine my development of this intention. Moustakas' principle of heuristic inquiry in sequential stages of awareness provides my over-arching structure for research. The development of Heron's work within the School of Participatory Research outlined in 4.8 has contributed precise theoretical guidance for a participatory project in which participants can shape the inquiry and contribute to developing awareness.

Chapter 5 Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss how the conceptual and intuitive processes involved in the foundational stage of my research guide the approach to knowledge formations, methodology and data collection. I include a general account of my approach to knowledge and data formation through the thesis (part 1), consideration of theoretical influences on methodology and methods of research in conflict zones (part 2) and my account of methodology for the central Palestine Youth Trauma Project (part 3). Part four is an analysis of the effect of PAR as methodology post PYT Project.

My central supposition is that the situational, emancipatory nature of the research inquiry requires methods of engagement and data collection which are less hierarchical, reflexive and intuitive. Consequently, the thesis includes data formed through a range of creative-expressive modes reflecting both the participatory reflective nature of my research engagement and in the Palestine project, local culturally recognised methods of engagement and research encounter.

Part 1: Approach to knowledge and data formation

5.1 Design for research inquiry

In my thesis the heuristic design guides my reflective and participatory approach to knowledge formation through three stages of developmental awareness (**1.9**). The engagement with self and others creates a form of research partnership which has different formations influencing the mode of inquiry in each of the heuristic stages.

Stage 1 chapters 1 - 3 Foundational Conceptual: narrative-reflective form of inquiry

Stage 2 chapters 4 - 6 Experiential Immersive: intuitive-reflexive form of inquiry

Stage 3 chapters 7 - 9 Explication: conceptual-intuitive form of interpretation

These are general demarcations; in the introduction to chapter five I discuss my understanding of the importance of having a range of fluid modes of inquiry and data collection in response to people's conceptions of research inquiries and in reflexive response to local cultural understandings of research engagement. Hence the cycle of inquiry – reflexive researcher premise – dialogical exchange or narrative account – creative synthesis – explication runs through my thesis with key terms reflecting the developmental sequences of Moustakas' account (1990). Three crucial illuminative points of knowledge formation are the circles of empirical inquiry (chapter three, chapter six) and chapter four which develops my clarity of ontological and epistemological foundations.

This reflexive nature of my research, responsive to local people and practitioners, requires a clear and tangible framework for authentic delivery. In chapter one I declared my intention to use the 'heuristic' (Moustakas, 1998, 2001) as my overarching influence on my inquiry design. This supports my research position in the foundational stage of my thesis (chapters one to three) where I am

involved in the practice communities which provide the context for my circle of experiential inquiry. In the foundational stage of the research the inquiry is influenced by my professional premises and substantiated by the literature sources as evidence.

As my inquiry develops, my reflexive researcher voice becomes more secure. Chapter four part one is a crucial heuristic point in my research. It presents my understanding of how ideological and theoretical premises guide my defining of the therapeutic approach formations of holding spaces. This section is the centre of my heuristic journey where I recognise how to define the precise account of trauma that occurs for young people in community destabilisation: 'existential trauma'. This defining moment supports the preparation for the central inquiry in the Palestine project in chapter six.

Chapters 7 to 9 hold my final heuristic voice which answers to my heuristic insight expressed in chapter four to six; this final reflective account is informed by all that is experienced and expressed in the accumulative research accounts of literature reviews and the two circles of inquiry. Hence, the three developmental conceptual stages have different modes of inquiry and encounter with participants. Within all research encounters, my aim is to convey the direct expressions of people and to separate out the sections of interpretation and analysis. This approach reflects how my inquiry is influenced by the cognitive stages of inquiry – incubation, conceptual and intuitive awareness, immersion and final analysis or 'explication' (Moustakas, 1990).

The thesis includes two circles of empirical inquiry, chapters three and six. Chapter three holds a specific inquiry into how practitioners define the holding space, and within a conflict zone, the importance of 'location' (Pascal, 2010) (**2.5**) and sense of 'belonging space' (Dunkley, 2008) (**2.5**). In the first circle of inquiry the voices of researcher-practitioners consider themes of identity-belonging-displacement; they are expressed within the measured domain of the practice community. This community is also my domain due to my roles in action research; therefore, the nature of the inquiry and my intrusion as researcher are 'natural' participative positions. The heuristic approach guides me to separate out accounts, which I present as true accounts conveyed without influence; my own interpretation of data follows (Moustakas, 1990).

The second and central empirical inquiry is accounted for in chapter six. The Palestine Youth Trauma Project takes my research inquiry into the formation of a therapeutic holding space within the heart of a community under siege. This develops the inquiry into therapeutic practice approaches and the specific forms of trauma affecting Palestinian young people. This affect is a 'feeling state' which my data in the Palestine project seeks to define. It is a raw, uncertain, destabilising sense of self, of family and community.

My work observes the importance of a radical democratic participatory form of research within a context of a community destabilised by oppressive sanctions and tactics. In the Palestine Project, the data inquiry has to hold the emotional charge of the environment. The local practitioners are interviewed in a heightened alert stance – watchful to the changes in the young people and their human landscape. The interviews are therefore a balance of the subjective emotional but also reflect the objective debate stance local practitioners are trained to take. This creates a local practice narrative which is theoretical-adaptive.

The researcher requires a responsiveness to the stories of local participants and the witness of community trauma (Goelitz *et al.,* 2013) without an absorption which challenges the boundaries of the research project. The implications of knowing and representation through participation open up different approaches to engagement, listening and interaction. The reflective-reflexive instinct therefore responds to the emotionality and emancipatory edge of my research inquiry with a direction towards deeper participatory immersion and 'awareness'.

This necessitates a critical observation of use of language and expression and the way that these reflect people's sense of awareness – individually and collectively. Reason (2015:47) identifies the importance of "voice and reflexivity" which invite the reactive and interactive. In the sharing of expression there must be a heightened instinct into use of language, cultural norms of expression and the impact of the transcultural interface.

Inevitably, the community fractures, family tensions, complex psychological features of human existence will, in turn, affect the nature of engagement with the international research team. My assumptions require clear ethical tenets in terms of how knowledge systems can hold encounters within a community which lacks global representation, in response to young people who have been both marginalised and directly oppressed. This chapter outlines specialized research material which addresses these constraints (**5.3**).

The destabilised conflict context in my research challenges assumptions about research conventions which are measured and pre-determined. The complex role of researcher-practitioners in Palestine is formally acknowledged by Chaitin's paper (2003) entitled "We'll have to reschedule the interview; the air raid siren just went off". She describes the "often changing and violent socio-political context" which influences the "complex processes of data collection, interpretation and representation" (2003:187). Awareness of the capacity for development and change in the local environment is crucial as it will influence the nature of engagement, the essence of data and the quality of contribution of the research project.

These contemporary debates of research approaches in conflict zones highlight the requirement for different research principles and approaches to project engagement and data collection. This does not dilute discipline; crucially, they demonstrate the importance of a reflexive stance with recognition that the research intention and design will be affected by the environmental disturbances. This stance has to be held from commencement of project to end, day and night. This is developed as a concept in **5.3** where I address how literature and theoretical knowledge guide my role as both researcher and therapist in the immersive stage of inquiry (stage 2).

This chapter (**5.4**) also discusses the inquiry platform with the young people, recognising the importance of creative modes as both a more fluid participatory form of youth inquiry, but also one which has a deeper impact in terms of giving 'voice' to the oppressed and in my account, to the young who are displaced.

Part 2: Formation of methodology and methods

5.2 Justification of PAR for the Palestine Project.

In the second circle of inquiry, I developed my research inquiry whilst also stepping into a 'psycho-social domain' (Adams *et al.,* 2005) of trauma practice. I was living with local therapists and families within a war zone; leading an international practice team engaging with a local team to establish authentic responses to traumatized young people. Hence, I describe it as the 'psycho-social domain'. Within this research domain, I am an 'outsider' yet also within the therapeutic circle responding to a community in need. The complexities of these juxtapositions are outlined in chapter 1: ethnographic tensions and the complexity of intrusion, tensions between community need and research purpose, roles and commitments in evolving project team participation and interaction, complexities of transcultural practice approaches in terms of power and alliance (**1.7**).

I have indicated how the heuristic guided me as researcher in the project encounter as it nurtures the discipline to develop self-awareness and prioritizes the sense of reflective-reflexive response to human exchange and knowledge formations. This is accounted for in **1.8, 4.1.** and **5.1.** In the central project, however, I needed robust tangible guidance to identify the different forms of researcher authority: dialogical forms of knowledge formation, a distinct form of project engagement and therapeutic instinct, a deep listening stance. In addition, it was important to have a heightened sense of cultural and transcultural awareness as discussed in **1.7** and **4.2.**

There are additional challenges I faced as researcher; in **4.3** I discussed the principles of participation and representation as central to my work. I could not fully anticipate how far these would be tested in situ; in order to realise the participatory principle this would require going right to the core of the conflict zone and giving the power of expression back to the most marginalised and oppressed. This would mean encountering risk and resistance, and tasting personally the sense of danger.

This chapter outlines the decision to use participatory action research as the methodological framework for the Palestine YT Project, specifically drawing guidance from the School of PAR and Heron's model of 'co-operative inquiry' (Heron, 1990). I required a methodology which could hold the subjectivity and emotionality of situational research whilst also providing a framework for the development of knowledge as authentic data. In **1.8** I presented my understanding of the synergy between the heuristic and co-operative inquiry, hence the central project design holds Heron and Moustakas as primary guides in self-reflection, reflexive action and participatory inquiry. This synergy does not create neatness; the challenge is how to hold the methodological awareness with integrity while also responding as humanitarian therapist to the ever-changing social circumstances. The final reflective account I convey as researcher at the conclusion of chapter six reflects this complex reality.

Heron's model of co-operative inquiry marks out a 'community of inquiry' (Heron, 1996); this attracted me as a precise form of interpersonal reflection and exchange between research leader and participants. It also echoed my conceptualisation of the therapeutic circle. This approach would honour the "co-existence of multiple worldviews and localised indigenous knowledge systems" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:49), hence, beginning to address the complexity I predicted in local-global project alliances. The 'transformative worldview' is central to the PAR approach, specifically

attributed to Denzin and Lincoln (2005). The philosophy of participatory action research (Heron & Reason, 1997, 2001; Reason, 2006; Marshall & Reason, 2007) would parallel heuristic inquiry in supporting experiential intuitive forms of research; taking these into a social action framework where the inquiry developed in interaction with the expression and perceptions of participants.

The use of the heuristic reflexive principle with processes of co-operative inquiry invites a critical consciousness of the status and expectations of the action researcher in stepping between research and therapist modes. Heron identifies *"*transformative, illuminative and informative outcomes" (2008:107) which support interactive and emergent knowledge systems. This holds congruence with my epistemology outlined in chapter four (**4.1**).

PAR processes would allow me to frame an inquiry as an 'intersubjective space' (Cooper, 2017) based on a type of social action which seeks to support a "mutually enabling balance" (Heron, 1996:11). In my researcher vision, the circle of inquiry both mirrors the community, but also permits understandings to be continuously reinterpreted over time and acted out within the rhythm of the circle. The PAR inquiry method provides rules of interaction in the inquiry circle; the heuristic stages of awareness reconceptualise the circle as a spiral and, therefore, enable the interpreter *"*to avoid deterministic assumptions*"* (Debesay, Naden & Slettebo, 2008: 58) of experiences being inflexibly fixed. This heightened inquiry lens also separates and tests out the different sequences and nuances in knowledge formation (**1.7;1.8**) holding the capacity for greater awareness and intuitive-cognitive development.

The importance to me of discovering a reflexive mode of understanding was established at the initial stage of my inquiry (chapter one). My research premises suggest, that for transformation to occur, the researcher-therapist requires a more fluid set of practice premises, ideologies and attitudes that can go into deeper consciousness of existential laws which provide nourishment for growth and healing. I consider that new awareness as a form of transformation or 'new consciousness' (**4.3**). This would, in turn, challenge external medical and practice hierarchies of knowledge based on clinical diagnostic approaches to human need and response; the alternative emphasis would be on intrinsic understandings of human sustainability and healing (**4.1**). Reason's work (1990) within the PAR domain has an 'existential consciousness' which influenced my approach (**4.1**), with value placed on the concept of 'original participation' which emerges through organic communities and provides a sense of intrinsic holism which can be transformative.

5.3 Participation and collaboration in an environment of conflict

Whilst the work of Heron and Reason illuminated my awareness of the central concepts of participation and collaboration as generic PAR research approaches, specialised theorists have developed an emergent school of participatory research in conflict zones (Johannsen, 2001; Yuksek & Carpenter, 2018; Larrea, 2019). Johannsen promotes PAR as the research facilitation of "active involvement of local, national and international actors in ongoing collective research and dialogue that allows societies emerging from conflict to better understand and respond to the challenges of social, economic and political reconstruction" (Johannsen2001:12). Yuksek and Carpenter (2018) focus on the model of participatory analysis as a process for peace-building in community youth work in Cyprus using a transcultural team approach in parallel to this inquiry. These theorists parallel

my own construction of the PAR approach in the Palestine YTP as a vehicle for conflict and therapeutic release.

Clearly, there are complexities in operating in an intense political environment. Goodhand's work echoes others in emphasizing the importance of rigour in conflict zone research where the trauma of conflict can immerse the research team. Researchers need to be aware of how their presence might affect the "structures driving violent conflict" and the "coping strategies and safety of communities" (Goodhand, 2000:14). Goodhand promotes an understanding of the "patterns and dynamics of conflict" with awareness that conflicts are often characterized by "dynamic and mutating patterns of conflict reactive behaviours" (2000: 14). This requires a critically informed action research inquiry and, in my account, supported by the residual knowledge of conflict-based therapy and resolution in social work practice.

Bhattacharya's work on 'indigenous research' (2019) promotes situating the knowledge framework within the indigenous culture, identifying that the research process is responsive to the community context, and developing a deep relationship with participants. Again, this is resonant of the approach used in the Palestine project as a response to an invitation to co-ordinate with an existing Palestinian action research project (**5.8**). Bhattacharya's work highlights, however, the risk of outsider researcher dominance and the denial of indigenous cultural identity, resilience and progress. She suggests that as community destabilisation stems from denial of an indigenous community identity and authority, the dominance of an 'outsider' researcher intention itself requires constant critical reflection. These accounts again align themselves to my interest in use of methods of dialogical exchange and interviewing to invite and honour indigenous and emergent knowledge frameworks (chapter six).

The notion of 'territorial development' occupies an increasing place in the literature and in the discourse of contemporary politicians and policy makers (Rifkin, 2013; Larrea, 2019). This reflects an interest in local economic, social and service agreements and partnerships, within a recognition of the micro-macro interface. The 'territorial metabolism' (Larrea, 2019) needs to be evaluated in terms of the characteristics and culture of local societies, their capacity to cooperate as well as the nature of their oppositions and conflicts. This form of analysis highlights the complexities facing action researchers using a participatory approach within a conflict environment. On one level, engagement with local community politics would appear an intrusive and naïve research stance to assume, yet within social work research, there is a focus on social activism and social-environmental awareness as a critical informed framework for community analysis (Branom, 2012). Awareness of the capacity for development and change in local environment is crucial as it will influence the nature of engagement and potential transformative effect of the research project.

PAR in a conflict zone requires an acknowledgement of the implications and political nuances of a local research involvement and highlights the complexities of the dual roles of researcher and practitioner-activist. A contemporary field of research actively promotes this dual stance: Moelino & Fisher, 2003; Diesing, 2012; Larrea, 2019. This requires action researchers to move into roles of community 'facilitators and therapists' (Larrea, 2019). Social work domains of action research require a critical analysis of the expectations of the profession in community action and specifically, conflict resolution. The principles of social work which guide these attitudes within conflict resolution are outlined in **2.5; 2.8.**

5.4 PAR and therapeutic-creative methods of engagement and expression

Arts based action research is an acknowledged school of participatory research for inquiry, intervention and discovery which consists of the "merging of the conventions of 'traditional' qualitative methodologies with those of the arts to allow for deeper research insight" (Coglan & Bryden Miller, 2014: 4). In the contemporary creative arts movement of action research, there is a recurring emphasis on community and transcultural community as a forum for creative expression and learning with a focus on relational alliances to support excluded and oppressed groups (Tilakratna, 1987; Rahman, 2000; Guhathakurta, 2015). Although the concept of inviting radical free expression into the research inquiry is complex, it is understood within the practices of creative arts forums in terms of dynamics of exchange and innovation. The project lead creates a stage or platform as the invitation for expression and discovery. In this project design, the therapeutic holding space becomes the platform stage for therapeutic expression (chapter seven). The use of creative arts as expressive forums for young people in a conflict context such as Palestine is also less intrusive than narrative accounts or interviews.

This is a form of radical democratic expression using creative participation to transform. Rahman's research working with Bangladeshi poverty groups invited participants to create a form of 'interactive theatre' based on the vision of people as "creative beings" with the desire to see "the creative possibilities of the underprivileged people released" (Rahman:2004: 19). Guhathakurta (2015) developed this approach using a method of creative expression, 'discourses of transformation', based on a project design of elements of theatre combined with the praxis of PAR. A Bangladeshi community activist, he describes how PAR used theatre animation as a project principle to encourage people to see themselves as "principal actors in their lives and not as subordinates to other social classes" (2015: 149}. This conceptualisation echoes the work of Friere (1974) and Boal (1985).

In my project design, the creative arts emerged into the project design and in the moments of critical project inquiry, they became essential and intrinsic as a forum the young people could engage with to express their deepest emotions of uncertainty, fear and trauma (chapter six, stage 2). In working through these faces of trauma they could them free themselves to expressive creative emblems of resilience. I consider this is a form of 'transformative discourse'. I have suggested the use of creative arts in trauma work with young people both gives them a framework for expression and also indirectly becomes a process in restoring a sense of hopefulness; the realisation of dreams central to the Palestinian researcher premises expressed at the Kingston Conference (**3.3)**.

5.5 PAR leadership and the circle of 'co-operative inquiry' as method of knowledge, interaction and social action

The justification of the use of PAR for my project approach in Palestine therefore connects with my understanding of Heron's interest in understanding the human condition through participation and a form of 'transformative dialogue' (**4.3**). PAR appeared to me to provide a mechanism for moving more deeply into a form of social action and therapy through "participative, subjective objective reality" (Heron, 1996:12). This deeper interaction would create an awareness, a 'co-creation of

understanding' (Heron, 2008) which could rebuild young people's composure after trauma through the invitation into active participation and expression. This research approach would support my intention to inhabit or to claim an 'inaccessible world', in the specific context of the Palestine project, a world which is divided and contained by check points which create barriers to communication across local communities and support networks, and with the 'outside world'.

I valued PAR as a tangible and transformative methodology; it is "critical research dealing with real-life problems" with use of "collaboration, dialogue and mutual learning" (Denzin & Lincoln 2008:557). 'Co-creation' (Heron, 1996) is a relational research approach which collates knowledge through interaction with self, others, environment, community, and the inter-relational across cultures. Influenced by Heron, I modelled my project approach on a circle of participation or circle of 'co-operative inquiry'. This, in my view, became a method of participative knowledge, therapeutic interaction and transformative social action.

In the context of the Palestine project, I anticipated that PAR would create a thread of communication in a community separated and dispersed and the circle of inquiry as a design would open the dialogue of exchange, negotiation and response required. The accounts of chapter six, presented as narrative and dialogical 'data', demonstrate the value of this approach and how true forms of data are created when participants become 'co-inquirers'. In Heron's model of 'co-operative inquiry' this notion of participation is envisaged at a deeply radical level where participants shape and even co-design the research project; again, the Palestine project used processes of co-design as outlined in chapter seven.

I observed the potential for healing capacity within the PAR approach; theorists such as Heron and Reason declare a therapeutic emancipatory purpose. The central focus on participation in PAR is, in my view, transformative as it invites into the inquiry marginalised people and through their active involvement, enables relocation of sense of self. This echoes my central premise about identity and the trauma which destabilises sense of self (chapter two, introduction).

When a transcultural team works in local practice in a community under siege, this again creates a sense of valuing. The reflexive process potentially deconstructs conventional notions of the research encounter to invite a shared alliance with all in the circle of inquiry. This theoretical concept is made possible through my design of the therapeutic circle.

The use of the heuristic reflexive principle combined with the processes of co-operative inquiry in combination create an approach to data analysis which provides a critical consciousness of the status and expectations of the action researcher in stepping between research and therapist modes. Heron identifies "transformative, illuminative and informative outcomes" for the researcher engaged in this form of inquiry (2008:107). The transformative element, in Heron's terms, has a potentially spiritual sense of encounter; he describes co-operative inquiry as a form of "experiential spiritual inquiry" (Heron, 1998:2). This encounter occurs in the processes of "individual lived inquiry" and "inter-relational dimensions" (Heron, 1998:2), echoing, for me, the importance of the capacity of the individual to develop their sense of existential self and socially related self through processes of inquiry and awareness (chapter four). Heron crucially defines the participatory element in democratization as the right to membership of a person's community.

For transformation to occur, the therapeutic encounter requires a set of practice premises, ideologies and attitudes that can go into deeper consciousness of existential laws which provide nourishment for growth and healing (**4.1;4.3**). Heron and Reason (1997) frame a type of human inquiry based on 'respectful participation' and 'non-hierarchical collaboration'; Heron places emphasis on the process of 'co-creating' a new reality based on framing experience within the realms of imagination, intuition and discovery (Heron, 1996).

Heron articulates the vision of co-design in research action to support more fluid dynamics of power, authority, exchange and research ownership. Processes of research cycling (Heron, 1996), move between experience and reflection (1996:4) or experience, deeper reflection and vision using the community as the backdrop for knowledge and learning where its participants continually recreate knowledge through "cycles of collaborative inquiry in living" (1996:4). This process is dynamic as it invites all participants to reflect and express vision and meaning, thereby influencing the project formation (Friedman *et al,* 2012). The project formation therefore becomes a process of realizing an intention for harmony at an individual and collective level. Coglan's work on action research (2019: 38) includes a model of authenticity with four modes of operation: experience, understanding, judgement, decision. The language of experience includes 'attending, sensing and imaging' and understanding which encompasses 'inquiring and reflecting'. This is resonant, in my view, of the spirit of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) and my conceptualisation of the truest essence of social work practice outlined in **2.9**.

5.6 Researcher roles in participation and interpretation

Reason (2013) recognised the difficult edge between the vision of a participatory worldview and the practice of participation in human inquiry. The work of Heron and Reason specifically envisioned a community project platform of need, but a conflict context requires a precise research conceptualisation of how the inquiry is influenced by the destabilised environment. This is where I look to social work authorities and the profession's interest in conflict release as therapy.

The researcher as project lead needs to recognise power and difference, competing perspectives and voices, variance of vision and action. Heron (1981) suggests only the researcher can exercise free will and creative judgement. Jacobs (2008:1) identifies the need to honour the researcher's voice, experience, creativity and authority. This is an exacting task for the researcher to fulfil, requiring exacting discipline, and Jacobs talks of the virtues the action researcher requires*: "generosity, courage, respect, humility, fortitude" (2008:2).* These principles guide me to define the moral discipline and qualities of leadership of the participatory action researcher. It requires discernment to recognise ethical duties in prioritising the competing voices that naturally occur in practice spaces in terms of authenticity, legitimacy and deservingness.

PAR Leadership qualities are identified by Heron as: *emotional competence – the ability to identify and manage emotions (1996:124); non-attachment – to clarify an intentionality of purpose without over-identifying with the situation of action (1996:125); radical perception – an immediacy or holistic awareness of the lived world of primary meaning; the deep tacit experiential pre-understanding (1996:119).*

The concept of 'radical perception' is important to my inquiry stance; this I perceive as a heightened awareness which responds to the person's sense of the world, expressed through the methods of data collection. This then requires a form of data collection which recognises people's "creative adaptive capacity" (Neuman & Kreuger *et al*., 2005:93). This recognition of people's creative capacity is important to my work; it invites an experiential immersive data collection platform based on honouring and receiving the expressions of others. However, it is important to separate out the subjective immersive and more objective inquirer roles; this will be possible with a heightened awareness of both the indigenous community and the conflict environment.

This heightened awareness of community and environment is, in my view, a natural phenomenon within social sciences research with the "pervasive concern with social inclusion, justice and change" (Shaw *et al.,* 2013:2). However, once the absolute rules of logic and reason are replaced by diverse orders of being, how does the researcher hold a definitive position responsive to expressions of worldviews and interpretations of social reality? Paley's work promotes the "axiom of resident meaning" (2017:31) with its commitment to determining the most accurate understanding of "meaning attribution" without causing reductionism. Probst defines how the researcher develops an awareness of researcher self in a circular relationship between subject and object (Probst, 2015:37). This is the "double arrow" of the researcher which can risk excessive self-analysis (Probst 2015:36), but this process is also fundamental in "sustaining critical awareness, managing reactivity and being accountable to very vulnerable groups" (Probst 2015:46). It is the researcher who holds the role of final interpretation, who "illuminates, elucidates, uncovers, unearths, understands …." (Paley, 2017: 33).

Stage Three: The Palestine Youth Trauma Project

5.7 Project Outline

The invitation: PAR supports inquiry designed on the premise of an invitation rather than a project imposed on participants or a community. I was invited to share a project with Riad Arar, Director of Social Mobilisation, Defence for Children, Palestine as a result of an exchange at Kingston University Conference on "Psychological Responses to Trauma in Children as Victims of Political Violence", London 2015 (**3.3**). I was already supervising two social work research projects engaged in a community project with Riad in Hebron. The invitation was for an international PAR Team to participate in a further stage of an existing action research project developed by Palestinian social workers and school counsellors working in partnership with young people to explore therapeutic responses to youth trauma. Our project invitation occurred when a new wave of tension was emerging and military tactics were shifting: more children were being taken into prison pre-trial and at earlier ages of 11 and 12; more home night raids were happening creating deep anxieties in the communities of the W. Bank.

The intention: the intention was to form a transcultural social work alliance across disciplines of social work and psychology in the UK and Palestine (reflecting the local community health alliances in the W. Bank supporting child trauma). We would also use community therapy artists to support the principle of creative arts in therapy. The UK PAR Team would discuss and present our

approaches for use with the local young people in a shared practitioner conference before working at the Youth Centre (Hebron) with local practitioners and youth leaders; in this way, our approach would have local and cultural sanction. The intention is outlined in detail in **6.1**.

My own intention in deciding to participate was to further explore the contribution of PAR as a social work approach in conflict zones, and to develop understandings of effective trauma approaches and the validity of holding spaces as a model of community participatory approach with young people in contexts of community conflict.

The socio-political context: the Palestine Project is precious and exacting as a research field; it has an established body of academic research knowledge in terms of understanding the impact of trauma (**3.3**). There is a consistent precedent of transcultural practice and humanitarian work; local people and practitioners are used to working with outsider researchers and community activists, hence research methods are an established aspect of the Palestinian community research culture.

All the young people in the Hebron Youth Project had been 'victims' of the Military Detention System, hence were on a monitoring list. Local practitioners believed this experience caused a distinct type of trauma for the children and tensions in families, in addition to the inevitable circumstantial traumas experienced through arrest and military detention (**6.1**).

The research project was supported by a partnership project between Bethlehem University Psychology Department and D.C.I. Hebron (Defence for Children International) with a specific concentration on communities in the West Bank Territory. Palestine. D.C.I. as an organisation provides lawyers and SWs as advocates to the children and families of children imprisoned, hence the project intervention would be framed within this informed position of youth and community need.

5.8 Development of research vision and project design

I had developed a participatory action approach in a consultancy project working with local social workers and psychologists supporting families in distress in the Dzerzhinsk Community, Russia 2012 – 2014 in a context of economic crisis. In the Palestine project the family framework was still central to the PAR design; yet the specific focus on young people required a different type of therapeutic practice based on the holding space model of the therapeutic groupwork circle.

Riad had developed the action research approach with the young people as a 'talking and research' circle sharing experiences, cataloguing key features and discussing ways of working through the trauma. This development held synergy with my research interest. I proposed an adaptation of Heron's 'circle of co-operative inquiry' using therapeutic groupwork skills and a creative arts platform. Developing the central commitment to trauma relief, I anticipated that the formation of the project circle would frame a therapeutic ring as a 'holding space' for the young people; a sense of retreat from the disorder and violence in the external environment in which to explore features of trauma. It would be a creative-therapeutic inquiry space echoing my premises about reflective-reflexive therapeutic social work response outlined in **5.2** and responsive to the local community interest in creative arts for emotional release (Jabr, 2014).

I required a project methodology which could take into account the environment; the inter-relational dynamic and the reflective-reflexive stance required of the researcher. In Heron's model of PAR (1998) there should be synergy between the intellectual interests of the research and requirement to understand the mindset of the community. Hence, I recognised the requirement as project lead to understand, experience and interpret the nature and "depth of the community" (Warren, 2008:30) and the legitimacy and nature of project contribution**.** My contribution was to form an international PAR Team, to negotiate with international and UK agencies for support for the proposed project intervention, to build into project design the theoretical principles developed by Heron and Reason and to use my adaptation of the groupwork circle as a 'holding space' approach (5.10).

The Action Research Team Palestine: The Palestine AR Project is a long-term intervention responding to the changing circumstances in Palestine, the W. Bank with particular focus on H2 Hebron as a district under sustained siege. The region is an unstable area with over 200 school counsellors and social workers 'treating' children with symptoms of trauma in schools. There were 22 12-18 year olds involved in the project, 8 girls and 14 boys. They had all been detained in the Military Defence System on a recurring basis. The trauma included witnessing or receiving violence either by soldiers or aggressive settler violence (often with weapons). These circumstances and the specific concerns during our project intervention are discussed in **1.9** with reference to the United Nations High Commissioner Report, 2015 (**Appendix 7**).

As action research leaders, we identified shared understandings in terms of research vision, methodological approach and models of practice engagement. All young people were already action research participants; they had been informed of the opportunity to participate in a further research development and had given consent and parental approval. Riad, as the local project lead, was the gatekeeper for the local young people and their family representatives (**Appendix 5**).

The project was supported by IFSW; the International Committee of the British Association of Social Work; Amnesty Middle East.

The PAR Team UK:

Joy Bevan, PAR Joint Lead. Registered Social Worker, Family Therapist, Action Research PhD Student, International social work & Community Development Researcher. Member of International Committee, British Association of Social Work.

Deborah Ryding, Registered Social Worker, PG Student in Therapeutic social work, Children's Advocate, EMDR Trauma Recovery Specialist, Conflict Zones.

Saima Assaf, Registered Social Worker and Court Advocate, Unaccompanied Minors. Member of International Committee, British Association of Social Work.

Michael Foot, Creative Arts Specialist and Drama for Recovery Therapist.

The PAR Team comprised of four community practitioners based in the UK: three white UK and one of Moslem origin. All had experience of working with refugee families / unaccompanied young people and three had worked abroad in IDP camps and community conflict work.

Professional Safeguards for research in a conflict zone:

My professional safeguards for joint project leadership included: HCPC Social Work Registration; University of Worcester Research Ethics; Holistic Practice Registration.

5.9 Adaptation of the therapeutic circle approach as method of inquiry

Heron's Inquiry circle	**My adaptation for the YT Project in Hebron**
Reflection and planning stage which involves propositional belief and presentational belief	Project induction and cultural **immersion** stage.
The first action stage of informative and inquiry skills	Training days with local SWs and psychologists; meeting with local community leaders and service representatives. **Creative synthesis.**
The deep immersion in the action phase	The holding space as circle of participation with the young people. **Illumination.**
The second reflection phase which makes sense of the data generated in stage 3	Palestinian team and PAR team reflections and resolutions post youth intervention. **Explication.**

Co-operative Inquiry Model (adapted) Heron (1998:54)

Heron's inquiry circle has four stages which I adapted for the Palestine project as outlined above. My adaptation also reflects my selection of stages in Moustakas' reflective cycle of immersion, creative synthesis, illumination and explication (Moustakas, 1990). Adapting the circle to allow for these developmental stages over progressive days of the programme with the young people allowed time to observe the effect of the legitimization of forms of interactive reflection as a means to heighten awareness of participants.

Day 1 Engagement with local practitioners and negotiating the project plan; establishing processes of trust and exchange between the three teams; inviting the young people to take control in sharing their expressions of life in their community; expressing values and emotional release through use of creative arts.

Benefit: developing the circle on principles of mutuality, participation and trust; identifying alliances; inviting the young people to lead in sharing their expressions of community life.

Day 2 The experiential groupwork phase: establishing the formation of the circle and working with the emotions that emerge. Rhythmic and sensory exercises and bodywork; qigong and dance movement; intuitive role play.

Benefit: developing the participatory elements of the circle, inviting young people to express needs and enabling therapeutic practitioners to develop processes of nurture, exploration, release and transformation.

Day 3 Group discussion of identified features of need which have emerged over the 2 days.

Benefit: A 'training teamwork' day exploring approaches for responding to the locked psychological features of trauma. Specific use of theoretical models of Yule, Lindenfield and Pearson, identifying adaptation for local contextualisation. Sharing holistic health approaches to trauma including

breathwork, qigong, mindfulness, visualisation and positive mentalisation. Discussion with local young people and practitioners about their own adaptations of approaches.

Day 4 Final celebration of the circle with creative arts busking platform.

The groupwork dance, stories and songs based on these premises included elemental qualities: earth, fire, water, air. This was designed to honour Palestinian land and landscape, and to frame the project with an awareness of local community and ancestral land. We opened the project framing a groupwork circle (woven across participants with strands of cloth) and placing a piece of Palestinian rock in the centre of the ring to acknowledge the connection between the people and their land.

The programme design was shared with local practitioners in the two days of participatory groupwork to form the local and outsider team. The local practitioners would examine approaches intently and decide which would be effective. They also contributed additional methods they had developed. The young people on day three contributed their own approaches; these included circle dance, stories and song; role plays to narrate to us their daily circumstances; a particular form of mind mapping involving groups drawing street scenes in Hebron and then adding sad and smiley faces at points of trauma and release / retreat (chapter six).

As we developed our groupwork approaches for the circle of participation in Hebron, we followed three theoretical authorities:

a. Professor Yule's EMDR approach (Yule: 2015) for children in war zones based on rhythmic movement, which we combined with our own skills in mindfulness and qigong to develop groupwork approaches for young people experiencing the physical manifestations of trauma.

b. Two practitioner authorities in groupwork approaches with children and young people using expressive arts forums to build emotional resilience and self-esteem: Lindenfield (2000) and Pearson (2005). Lindenfield's work included a model of seven stages of psycho-emotional steps to a final stage of reclaiming hope. These move through processes of "exploration, expression, comfort, compensation, perspective, channelling, and forgiveness" (Lindenfield, 2000:31), hence held a core focus on the person's capacity to reflect and assimilate negative processing using both cognitive and intuitive awareness. Pearson's work is a manual of creative techniques using visualisation and positive mentalisation with children and young people, as methods for releasing tension and trauma and restoring personal composure. This held synergy with the mentalisation and imagination approaches described by Palestinian researchers in the Kingston Conference (chapter 3:3).

5.10 Knowledge formation and data collection stages

In the adaptation of Heron's model, outlined above, data was designed to be collected at each of the three engagement stages in a sequential way.

Stage 1 Preparatory

Stage 2 Immersion

Stage 3 Explication

(adaptation from Moustakas, 1990).

Data Chart 1

Palestinian Practitioner Narratives	**Stage 1**
young people Creative Arts Narratives	**Stage 2**
Palestinian Practitioner Interviews	**Stage 2**
PAR Team Interviews	**Stage 3**
PAR Team Reflections	**Stage 3**
Researcher Reflexive Commentary	**Stage 3**

Data collection stage 1 This inquiry stage included exploring local practitioner insights into culturally effective 'trauma treatments', both to inform the inquiry and to establish the types of approaches to be included in the circle of participation.

Data collection stage 2 The interviews with local practitioners established understandings of the environmental and psychological effects on the young people. These interviews therefore gave an essential cultural contextualisation to the project plan. The circle of participation was designed on the principles of the therapeutic holding space; the data collected within it therefore reflected its contribution. The decision to use creative art forums would create data in a mode of research inquiry established in Palestinian culture with young people.

Data collection stage 3 Data collected through a reflexive team plenary (at conclusion of project) and formal interviews 3 months post project with team participants. The two timeframes for data collection would allow for the immediate instinctive and the more conceptual reflective mode post project.

5.11 Chart of inquiry and interpretive processes

Data chart 2

Type of data	Nature of data	Inquiry-interpretive stance of researcher
Palestinian Practitioner Narratives	**Natural emergence**	**Immersive-interpretive**
young people Creative Arts Narratives	**Creative expressive**	**Immersive-interpretive**
Evaluation of the Holding Space	**Therapeutic Design**	**Immersive-inquiry**
Palestinian Practitioner Interviews	**Semi-formal**	**Interpretive**
PAR Team Reflections	**Therapeutic - interpretive**	**Immersive-inquiry**
PAR Team Interviews	**Semi-formal**	**Interpretive**
Researcher Reflexive Commentary	**Post project reflective**	**Inquiry-interpretive**

Heron's 'primacy of personhood' holds the interest in how people use their 'sensibilities' to explore their 'relationship with being' (Heron, 1996). It was important for me to be able to separate out

different types of expressive voices as well as different types of inquiry and interpretive balance in receiving data. This methodological awareness guided the project leadership in interaction, with focus on: *identification of modes of representation; different sources of truth and reality; a heightened awareness of language and expression* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:49).

My project design followed leadership and intervention principles resonant with PAR theories:

- To give the voice of authority to those most affected by the circumstances of the inquiry (Heron, 1998).
- The importance of the opening exchange and shared 'visioning' to form project intention (Friedman & Rothman, 2015).
- To use creative arts methods to invite expression for release of negative self-conceptions and reinforcement of self-worth (Lindenfield, 2000; Pearson, 2005).
- To use a therapeutic watchful stance to note the processes of reflexivity, and psychological effect of the intervention (Moustakas, 1990).

The PAR project was a response to an invitation from a local researcher-practitioner and practice consortium. As outlined above, the project design reflected PAR guidance in terms of the dual role of leadership – to hold the discipline of inquiry while allowing different voices of authority, representative of all parts (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This included the importance of cultural diversity and the priority of local cultural influence on the project inquiry. The data in the central project would be designed to be reflective of local research platforms and Arab traditions of speech making and enactment. I was hesitant to only use the western model of prescribed interviews; although semi-formal interviews were part of the design, I wished to include the narratives, the dialogical exchanges and creative arts that would be expressed, in my view, at the heart of community life.

The researcher requires a responsiveness to the stories of local participants and the witness of community trauma (Cunningham, 2003; Goelitz *et al.,* 2013) without an absorption which challenges the boundaries of the research project. The Moustakas principle of reflexivity guides the processes of dialogue and exchange with emphasis on language and 'modes of appearing'. The focus on reflexive dialogue (2001: 218) supports the principles of participation, mutuality and meaningful exchange I wished to support in the project.

Forms of data included:

- local practitioner narrative accounts and individual interviews.
- PAR team reflections (group account) and individual interviews.
- the formation and evaluation of the "holding space" and data records of the young people's expressions through narrative accounts and creative arts forums.
- my own reflective account as researcher-project participant.
- my final analysis post project.

These accounts define the project intervention (chapter six) and form the basis of analysis for the effectiveness of the therapeutic holding space approach used in the Palestine YTP (chapter seven).

5.12 Thematic analysis of data

My inquiry design required an ability to hold both conceptual and intuitive forms of discovery. Greenwood & Levin describe understanding or knowledge as two hierarchies; the focus on formal scientific knowledge and more experiential forms of social sciences research; the latter they describe as a "concrete practical intelligence, reflective and value-based reflexivity" (Greenwood & Levin, 2004:49). The latter informs my approach; particularly in the circle of participation in stage two in which my conceptual position is almost suspended at times when I operate in a much more intuitive watchful mode of inquiry.

This is a deeply destabilised environment which affects all; we live, breathe and sleep with conflict in the air. Only the intuitive is left; it has a heightened instinct and clarity. Chaitin (2003) discusses how an agreement for an interview changes rapidly and repeatedly when the situation on the ground alters….highlighting the need to constantly review and revise agreements for research processes, the complexity of interviewing where formal frameworks for interviews are interpreted as invitations for oratories and or 'life story narrative' Wood (2006). Other complexities include the "perception of self and other in relation to conflict" (Chaitin: 2003: 187), and the relationship between qualitative work and political loyalties (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

The tensions of an interview approach responsive to local environment is that the participant and the environment shape the approach more dominantly due to the reflexive environmental and cultural component. As these are personalised reflexive accounts, there is a risk of higher subjectivity and description; however, I felt the two approaches were congruent with my research principles in the context. The researcher is required to recognise the impact of conflict on the research project (Matthews & Ross, 2010). This includes a receptivity to the receiving of stories that local people wish to share, when narratives include deep expressions of grief, loss and bewilderment, recognising there will be limited access to counsellors and therapists locally. Participants might want to use the forum to express distress, anger, confusion and uncertainty, and this would, in my view, be their right and legitimate 'data' within the context of a transcultural team engagement with local practitioners in unsettled circumstances.

I adopted the Braun and Clarke model of thematic analysis of data (2006) observing it holds congruence within qualitative paradigms of psychology-based inquiry. Braun and Clarke promote the value of thematic analysis as a data interpretation method as it is non-prescriptive. For my project, this approach is systematic, yet supports the constructionist aspect of the interviews and narratives based on Heron's theoretical premises of participation and developing personhood (1998). It invites different observations of the context and reality of the experience of trauma; however, it also acknowledges the epistemological influence on this reality from a range of social, political and practice-theory discourses outlined in chapter two, three and four of my thesis.

The Braun and Clarke process of data code, categorizing and thematic analysis, enabled me to present the data themes in a more direct "inductive" way (Frith and Gleeson, 2004) to promote spontaneity and organic processes (**Appendix 5**). This was crucially important in the Palestine Project to reflect the Arabic culture of expression and idioms of speech and language without adaptation.

Secondly, the Braun and Clarke model promotes a precision in identification of themes which can highlight the emergence of relevant patterns of knowledge and sharpen the clarity required to diffuse distortion in a conflict zone.

5.13 Immediate Project Analysis (Researcher project notebook, Hebron 2015)

The following observations were formed by myself as researcher at the time of data collection during the project in Hebron.

Understanding inquiry in the circle of participation

- *Understanding the circle – its value as a holding space.*
- *How the circle can mirror 'safe community' and how it can be used for transformative effect.*
- *Holding young people for a moment in time in a way which can give them enduring strength and self-healing awareness*
- *Analysis of how the action research practitioners can use the circle for therapeutic effect and identifying how the therapeutic encounter is supported.*
- *Observing how the young people engage and participate and identifying skills to invite them in and reflect a safe space of trust and nurture.*
- *Identifying the different stages of circle development over the three days and the capacity to build a safe community reflected in the circle formation.*
- *Value of creative arts as expressive forums.*
- *Use of rhythmic and tapping games and their effect in stabilising trauma and distress states of group participants.*
- *Sustaining consistent practice in a conflict landscape of constant change.*

Stage Four: Project analysis and evaluation of methodology

The Palestine YT Project occurred in moments of high alert shaping the inquiry processes. The sense of trauma was intrinsic - affecting land, community, and all groups represented. The global lens, and the importance of transcultural practice responses to local need, confirmed my project set of research inquiries formed in chapter one:

*To understand, generically, how the young person holds a sense of psycho-emotional resilience during episodes of family and community destabilisation.

*To develop awareness of practice needs and effective practice approaches in contemporary cultural circumstances of destabilised family and community life.

*To understand how a transcultural team of community practitioners can engage in an authentic and transformative manner with both local practitioners and young people whilst respecting and inviting grassroots community knowledge and organic healing processes.

My adaptation of the therapeutic holding space as a circle of participation was a design which confirmed my communitarian-participatory research premise (chapter one); trauma has to be

understood holistically and practice responses focus on developing self-restoration through participation and awareness of community healing processes. My decision to call on communitarian and feminine epistemologies to represent more interpersonal views of self, self-worth and contribution (chapter four) were realised in the framing of the circle to support community representation. This shifted my research epistemology from conventional research claims of truth to a more radical interest in essence and mattering, accounted for in my ontology (**4.2; 4.3**). The therapeutic stance of the research team was also influenced by the therapeutic-relational qualities of social work in community action I outlined in chapters one and two; the critical, socio-political and psycho-social awareness of practitioners.

In my design, the heuristic reflective stance is crucially important to hold the lens of inquiry. All forms of data collection have a reflective component based on understandings of self in relation to others and to the nature of the inquiry. Without the conceptual framework, I feel the project intervention could have been intrusive and misguided; yet the depth of engagement of local participants, young people, community leaders, Palestinian practitioners, Heads of Services in Palestine demonstrated the integrity of approach.

The level of emotional engagement was consistently intense, however and it was acutely evident that any wrong move could be a serious hazard. I considered the central mechanism of emotional regulation in reflexive responses to be crucially important. Reflexivity in such contexts becomes multi-layered and complex (Chaitin, 187; Lincoln & Guba, 2003))…. "because we are engaged in the same emotionally intense encounters as our respondents" {Padget, 2014:41). The crucial challenge in a conflict zone is how to respond to the immediate. This requires a unique quality of researcher awareness and contribution. Nothing is stable; participatory action research claims the participatory principle in a radical democratic way. Heron terms this 'radical epistemology' (1996).

Due to the cultural and political sensitivity of the project context, I identified 3 research-practitioner principles which would guide the quality of the engagement with project participants, local practitioners and community members:

- **Emotional regulation** Bruce (2013): a heightened reflexive lens to safeguard any manifestations of emotional distress resulting from the research engagement.
- **Critical consciousness**: "sufficient emotionality, detail, depth and nuance to raise a critical consciousness" (Reason, 2013:15).
- **Moral discernment**: Jacobs (2008) talks of "conscious subjectivity or meta consciousness" (2008:18) suggesting an advanced awareness of moral purpose.

5.14 Quality of data and emergent knowledge

My central circle of inquiry invited a cyclical debate about perceptions of 'existential trauma': foundational themes of identity, worth, belonging, transition, conflict, trauma and healing unfolded. The inquiry responded to the social and cultural dimensions of the project, with an awareness of how moving into a local habitus influences the manifestations of trauma and the complex, yet relevant, nature of interpreting trauma as an 'outsider'. In this project context, this required an awareness of the Moslem context and the framework for Arab codes of living and of faith which would influence the dimensions of understanding. The PAR approach adeptly guides a community

intervention which supports the process of intersubjectivity and the “co-existence of multiple worldviews and localised indigenous knowledge systems” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:49).

This contextualised and emergent form of awareness was supported by the form of dialogical exchange used in the project design: “open constructive dialogue” (Heron, 1998:2). Moustakas’ principle of reflective dialogue parallels this process of dialogical exchange with a critical emphasis on language and emergent truths or ‘modes of appearing’ (1990). In this way, the therapeutic circle challenges the ‘dominant power paradigm’ and invites more radical free forms of expression. The focus on ‘multiplexity’ (Hood; 2009) invites expression of multiple representations of self. This challenges linear demarcations of people, allowing the therapist-researcher inquiry lens to observe the individualized features of trauma and resilience evidenced in the circle.

One of the challenges in the project was how to receive the emergent. For example, the Palestinian ‘oratories’ and youth narrative accounts recorded in chapter six reflect forms of emergent data that were not in the project design, yet crucial to receive and record within the integrity of the project. I observed that a more diverse democratic circle of inquiry will transform the boundaries of established research structure and debate. Reason (2015:47) promotes the “reactive and interactive components of communication through language and expression”. This type of radical ‘discourse’ is described by Heron as the “open constructive dialogue” (Heron, 1998:2) or “reflexive dialogue” (2001:218).

Reason (2015:2) promotes a mode of expression to connect ideas of “identity, participation, consciousness and emerging consciousness”; this influenced my understanding of the existential lens required in the inquiry. My design intention was to make meaning of deeply subjective and disparate interpretations of being through both highly personal expressions and shared processes of dialogical exchange. This is more a form of narrative increasingly used in social work research and practice as a form of representation and claiming (Baldwin, 2007; Newell- Jones, 2010). These intuitive creative modes of expression allow the person their own ontological account as a vehicle to express conceptions of being, and understandings of the world. This is not a political discourse but a reflexive sharing of experience, heightened in reaction to the changing environment. The Palestinian narratives and interviews held the urgency of the context, and were framed in the language of childhood and human rights as echo of the International social work positioning to support communities of need

5.15 Research within a Palestinian – Arab culture

I developed awareness of the cruciality of a precise knowledge of local and culture specific formations of therapy and understandings of human suffering. Denzin promotes a “critical counter-hegemonic race consciousness” (Denzin, 2015:153). A paper on the use of psycho-social support for Arabic speaking peoples (Kingston Conference, 2015) focuses on the interpretation of healing and resilience in Arab cultures for people experiencing trauma; it concentrates specifically on refugees and displaced people from Arabic speaking countries in the Middle East. The training programme, designed by Dr Guido (KC 2015) promotes ‘focusing’ as a body orientated process of ‘self-awareness and emotional healing’. It is based on a successful project in Afghanistan reducing symptoms of PTSD for communities affected by conflict. The project is a CWF (Community Wellness Focusing)

programme which aims to promote wellness and 'harness the strengths' of the community. It outlines the facilitation by community practitioners of groups who become mutually supportive. Therapeutic skills include sensing directly into feelings and developing use of arts and therapeutic dance to increase 'inner resiliency'.

The psycho-social and community understanding underpinning this approach parallels the premises influencing project design in the Palestine project. The theoretical understandings of trauma echo the teachings of Levine's work (1997) discussed further in chapter eight. Both the epistemology of the CWF project, and the theoretical frameworks of trauma approaches reflect a response to a culture where trauma is intrinsic and intergenerational: "CWF doesn't change the events immediately but it changes how the events are perceived and processed" (Dr Guido, KC 2015). Guido's highlighting of the importance of perception and processing links to my conceptualisation of the importance of 'awareness' in **1.1**.

5.16 Reflections on PAR research and project lead roles

The work of Van Manen (1990) emphasizes the importance of meaning as "essence", suggesting that knowledge can be refined through processes of empirical inquiry to form depth influence. From this sense of deeper perception, I must re-activate the more formal knowledge form of interpretation to stay true to the academic discipline of my inquiry. This supports my foundational intention to develop a cyclical approach to knowledge; this defines the form of researcher reflexive action utilised in the project and invites both scientific and therapeutic analysis of the influences on, and processes of, knowledge emergence (**1.7**).

Schratz *et al*. (1995) identified 'stratifications of knowledge', recognising that the researcher is inviting the participant to express their perceptions in a dialogue which the researcher participates in, whilst also holding back from, and interpreting the conversation. Heron discusses the difference between information and transformation and supports a cycle of inquiry in which researcher and co-subject can equally step into the action phase then step on to a reflective and knowledge formation phase. Processes of "research cycling" (Heron, 1996) move between experience and reflection (1996:4) or experience, deeper reflection and vision using the community as the backdrop for knowledge and learning where its participants continually recreate knowledge through "cycles of collaborative inquiry in living" (1996:4). Within this highly charged environment, the research experience is truly 'immersive', exacting and fast paced. It is also life-changing.

The two different forms of 'interview' are separated out in my research design to demonstrate that the semi-focused interviews draw on existing data which influences the formulation of my questions. The hosting narrative is founded on a subjective intuitive appraisal of current conditions; hence the data that emerges from this approach is important as a pure interpretative account for the project contextualisation. In the final stage of data analysis, the researcher must hold the circle of inquiry with definitive accounts and observe research expectations of evidence informed patterns of meaning.

The Palestine project invited a recognition that people weave their personal experience within socio-political and culturally formed identities. The international research team moves into this experience

with a dual lens of participant and witness. The circle of inquiry stands at the heart of this co-existence and allows people to move between roles of actor, observer and therapist. This challenge occurs within the constraints of conflict zone life; the shifting agendas, the uncertainty, the heightened emotions, the anxiety, the absorption of violence and continual threat of invasion in the human environment. Within this immersive form of knowledge formation, it is natural to question the capacity of a researcher to stay true to their inquiry, when the project intention is to engage therapeutically and emotionally within a destabilised environment context. This research design is deeply exacting and requires heightened discipline; yet always underlying this is the receptivity of the local people; their willingness to engage, to share, to transform.

One of the greatest challenges for me as researcher was how to honour the community through research principles. The balancing of the emergent and the anticipated becomes almost unmanageable in the reality of a conflict environment. The creative arts forum is more expansive and led to a fuller free flow of expression, unbound by language and practice script, in which a cycle of trauma and resilience, as the whole cycle of human experience, could unfold.

I drew on the rules I knew. The heuristic praxis influencing my mode of inquiry and analysis added clarity and rigor to my processes of deduction and analysis due to the "dynamic process of interaction within and between ourselves and our participants, and the data that inform decisions, actions and interpretations at all stages of research" (Etherington, 2004: 36).

PAR processes allowed me to frame inquiry as a type of social action which seeks to support a "mutually enabling balance" (Heron, 1996:11). The motion of the circle of participation and the broader circular motion of the stages of my research inquiry allowed an identification of emerging linkages in themes and perceptions expressed which could, in my understanding, be accepted as authentic data. To reject such accounts would be harmful; this approach is potentially healing as it can give critical consciousness back to individuals who have been suppressed, so that perception and self-awareness can be realised and self-composure and esteem heightened (Lindenfield, 2000).

My way of managing the different forms of data was therefore to separate out, as indicated in chapter six and seven, their nature as direct oratories, collective narratives and semi-formal interviews. This would influence my decision about presenting them as 'raw' or analysed data.

Chapter summary

I felt the project experience confirmed my premise that my inquiry, combined with my practice premises, required a different, and precisely worked, set of theoretical and philosophical underpinnings to step into a conflict zone (**1.7**). One of the deepest challenges was the constant evaluation and review of appropriate action in response to the circumstances that emerged.

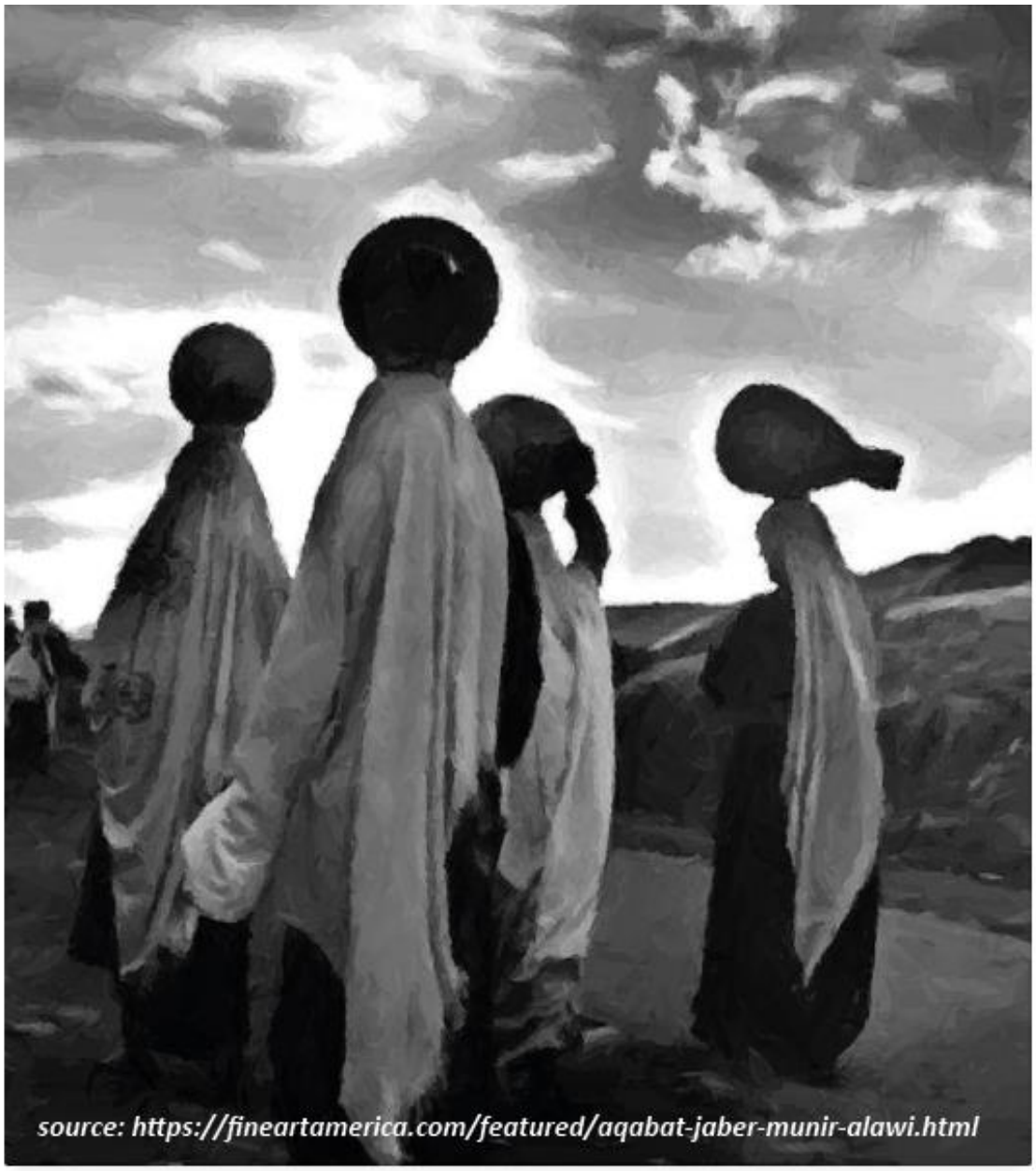
Transference of power is a complex concept in a contested community space; it takes a distinct type of leadership in research. In order for the research project to be authentic, there has to be a clear understanding of emotional investment and engagement with people who are troubled, distressed and displaced and to recognise, without absorbing, the emotional intensity of human experience at the moment of intervention. The three components of my researcher stance were the reflexive,

interactive and therapeutic. This stance would support the features of my research inquiry in interaction with participants:

- the different forms of authority and hierarchy in a participatory research encounter.
- the invitation for the participant to find a mode of expression congruent with their emotional state, their sense of research engagement and cultural expectations.
- inter-relational and interactive modes of expression which support emergent and cyclical knowledge frequencies.
- the distinct forms of interview as “critical constructive dialogue” with emphasis on the reflexive constructive nature of knowledge which emerges in a reflective interactional process through the exchange.

These inquiry skills have a synergy with social work in therapeutic-relational practice with encounters based on respectful participation, a collaborative approach to understanding and a desire for transformative community effect.

Chapter 6 The Palestine Youth Trauma Project



Aqabat Jaber

Aqabat Jaber is a Palestinian refugee camp in the Jericho Governorate of the eastern West Bank. Aqabat Jaber was established in 1948 on 1,688 dunams of arid land near the Dead Sea.

Stage 1 Preparatory: The Palestine Youth Trauma Project November 2015

It is through the stories we tell ourselves and others that we live the life, hide from it, harmonise it, have a relationship with it, shape it, accept it, are broken by it, redeem it or flow with the life.

Ben Okri, 1991. Birds of Heaven.

Note for reader: Chapter six is the account of the central empirical project which explores the effect of trauma and practice responses within a specific cultural context of Palestine. The presentation of this chapter is sequential, inviting the reader to respond to the development of the different encounters which inform the processes of reflection, reflexivity and explication' (Moustakas, 2001). In the spirit of 'co-inquiry' (Heron, 1998), respect is given to the accounts of project participants, so in this chapter, selected sections convey their voices without interpretation as indicated in the chart below.

Chapter six is presented in three stages: Stage 1 Preparatory; Stage 2 Immersion; Stage 3 Creative synthesis / explication.

Central themes for analysis in chapters six include:

Defining trauma as a psychological occurrence in a conflict zone.

Observing community life in a conflict zone.

Inviting young people expressions of trauma / life in a conflict zone.

Collecting Palestinian practitioner accounts of trauma and practice responses in a conflict zone.

Identifying the formations of social work in community practice responses.

Collecting the international practice team responses to life in a conflict zone / features of trauma / therapeutic practice approaches.

Observing the quality of contribution of PAR as a framework for encounter.

Observing the circle of inquiry as a formation of a practice 'holding space' in which to engage with young people and local practitioners.

The different forms of data include Palestinian narratives and young people creative arts narratives which are expressive individual accounts which occur naturally in the project; more formal data as interviews (Palestinian practitioner interviews and PAR Team interviews), and reflexive commentaries. Diary accounts and team reflections and interview form part of the data created through reflection on observation of, and participation in, the encounter of the therapeutic circle with the young people. The interviews and reflexive commentaries are woven into a final section of more critical explication by myself as researcher. The interviews with the PAR team practitioners involved in the project alongside myself are presented at the end of chapter six as full accounts without interpretation to respect the participant's own research and therapy 'lens' formed in the encounter.

Chapter six separates out two researcher reflective accounts. The diary extracts convey researcher reflections during the project whilst the researcher reflexive commentaries at the end of chapters six and seven present the more reflective analytical tone post project. Data accounts are used across chapters six and seven.

Data Chart for chapters six and seven

Palestinian Practitioner Narratives	**PN**
young people Creative Arts Narratives	**YPN**
Palestinian Practitioner Interviews	**PI**
PAR Team Interviews	**TI**
PAR Team Reflections	**TR**
Researcher Reflexive Commentary (during project)	**RR Project Diary Hebron 2015**
Researcher Reflexive Commentary (post project)	**RR**

Central themes for analysis in chapters six include:

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Identifying the formations of social work in community practice responses

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Observing the quality of contribution of PAR as a framework for encounter

Observing the circle of inquiry as a formation of a practice 'holding space' in which to engage with young people and local practitioners.

Stage 2 Immersion: The Therapeutic Circle

Therapeutic Holding Spaces

a response to young people experiencing trauma due to community displacement

PALESTINE YOUTH TRAUMA PROJECT
HEBRON NOVEMBER 2015

Stage Two Immersion

Section 1 Palestinian narrative accounts (these accounts are recorded as the opening welcome speeches to the PAR Team when we first arrived in Palestine. They were presented as oratories with a poetic vein and have been adapted, without changing words or idioms, into a poetic form. They reflect the local context as interpreted by Palestinian therapists and practitioners).

Riad

We are people – just like you
We have a lot of dreams
One shot colours everything.

We are frightened of losing our hopes and dreams.
Our reality
We are strong but we are getting tired.
We are weary, but we are not weak.

All the time we ask – what next?
What of us?
How will it be for us?
How will it be for our children?

We are proud of our co-operatives,
The professional alliances,
The exchange of learning.

We value the affiliations,
Coming to us to see how we are living.
To understand our human need.

Jusef took us to the highest point in Palestine, where he has built his farm. From there, you can see the whole of modern Palestine (West Bank).

Jusef

We are a strong people. When I was building my farm on the hills, the soldiers crept up to my boundary wall and watched me work. I carried on working. They moved closer. I turned from my work and stood up high and shouted to them; "Who are you? I see you. You do not frighten me."

This is Palestine; our land. It gets smaller and smaller. We do not create this division or want it. The division of land does not strengthen anyone; it just divides and fragments us. Then we all have to live with this tension.

We are all the same, across race, across cultures. We are all people of the earth.

Munther

I am a social worker in the Aida Refugee camp in Bethlehem. I came here as a child refugee. Now I support the children here. The refugees that live here are displaced families from all regions of Palestine, West Bank.

Life in the refugee camp is harsh. I was a child in the first and the second intifada, but this opposition is now more sinister, more aggressive. In the camp, we are all displaced and we are still more humiliated and threatened by the soldiers. They raid our homes; they come into the schools with tear gas; the teacher cannot protect the children from the attacks. Many of the children have lung disorders. They harass the children if they play outside so there is no safety, no recreation, no fresh air to breathe freely.

The social workers are troubled, worn out and at risk. They are targeting our children now. It is a new tactic.

Last Friday I protected a 6 year old boy who was playing with a ball in the park. Two soldiers picked him up and shook him. I stood between him and the soldiers. I was detained for four hours. When I left, the commander said to me; "I know who you are. I know where you live. Next time I will not speak with you, I will come for you."

I am OK in myself. I have made my decision. I cannot choose for my wife and my three daughters. Now they know how to make us weak; it is by threatening the families of social workers. So if we stand for the rights of other children we put our own at risk.

The difficulty we have is there is little space and so many children to treat. Everyone has a story; an experience of trauma. We treat the children in groups in the schools – but often the soldiers come into the schools and the teachers, who used to protect them, cannot do so. So it is difficult to treat the children in context where they are constantly anxious, watchful and at risk.

The children also increasingly experience trauma in the homes if the soldiers invade or the settlers harass us in our homes and outside them.

So the constant issue is the need for safe space. Historically, this has been the purpose of education – it has created a formal framework for children to nurture and protect them as well as educate them. We also work in the mosque. But these formal places are not always safe now. The children are increasingly frightened to get to the school and the mosque as can be harassed on the way. All the girls walk in groups of 4 or 5 to try and protect themselves. But these aspects of daily life are all traumatic, uncertain and fearful.

There are also the myths – someone has been shot in the next street and the children do not want to pass through that way. In H2 the children have to walk through the Palestinian graveyard to get to school and the soldiers often wait there.

The impact of these continuous experiences and fears is deeply psychological. As social workers we try to sustain a harmony, a thread of stability for the children but we can't do it on our own. We have no retreat or safe space. We rely on the international community and practitioners like you who work alongside us. These external formal spaces hold the internal conflict. They encourage us to carry on. If you help one practitioner, you help us to support 50 children. And they rely on us so much – we cannot fail them. We are trying to shift our power – we do not have authority or resources – not even a safe room to meet children in. But we are trying to network because this gives a strength and a hope.

But we are living in the same conditions and have the same range of feelings – the desperate fears, the anxieties for our safety or that we, as mothers as well as social workers, will let our children down if the soldiers come for them.

In terms of treatments, we do not have the time for individual treatments. So we try to find a safe space and create a group situation then talk about the situations we face. We use EMDR, CBT and family therapy. We are always learning and adapting as the situation escalates.

The Therapeutic Circle with the young people Hebron

Palestinian Project Activities in the Therapeutic Circle

Coyote narrative and community dance
Groupwork circle games and mindfulness techniques
Penguin dance
Qi gong and rhythmic exercises
Tapping games

In ancient times, coyote lived among the other animals and the people in the forests; a community with a shared purpose of survival. Food was scarce but the biggest fear was the cold of the Winters. The animals and the humans nourished themselves in Spring and Summer and prepared for survival of the long Winter ahead.

Beyond the forest was a mountain; 'fire mountain'; settlement of the fire gods. In their settlement there was constant food and nourishment and a fire at the centre of the settlement which burned day and night so that the gods never became cold.

The humans were dying of cold and starvation; they were weaker than the animals and coyote decided he would take a group of animals to the fire mountain to bring back fire for the humans.

They had to journey together through the woods to the edge of the forests; through the swamps; through the lower rockface; then they had to climb up fire mountain.

The story describes their journey, the progress, the hazards, and the victory of finally gaining the fire to bring back to the community of humans.

When the fire arrives in the community, the animals and humans form a circle for a celebratory dance of survival and unity.

This is the story that we took to Palestine to represent the YP's sense of belonging within community and landscape; that we enacted with the YP. In the final part, the fire returns to the community of people and in our enactment, we invited all in the circle to create a fire dance of celebration to the beat of the drum; the tribal beat.

In our enactment, three of the Palestinian school counsellors "stole" the drum and created their own Palestinian beat for the dance of the community. When the dance was completed, they then sang us a Moslem song about the light of the moon nourishing the people.

This moment, for me, was the moment when I felt our project had achieved its aim. We had conveyed our deepest message of the fire at the centre of survival, in a creative enactment which all participated in. The narrative gave a non-hierarchical message of human fragility and our co-existence with the natural earth and eco environment. The message, as enacted within the circle, was conveyed without words and understood across cultures.

In the final dance of the community, the authority was with our YP and local practitioners sharing with us their sense of community, culture and religion.

YP collective narratives in response to researcher questions.

We have come to be with you for the week in Hebron; to share practice understandings and stories of our lives and cultures; to understand how life is for you.

What is life like in Hebron and in Palestine for children and young people?

- *Occupation and check points*
- *Tear gas*
- *No rights*

What do you hope for and what gives you strength?

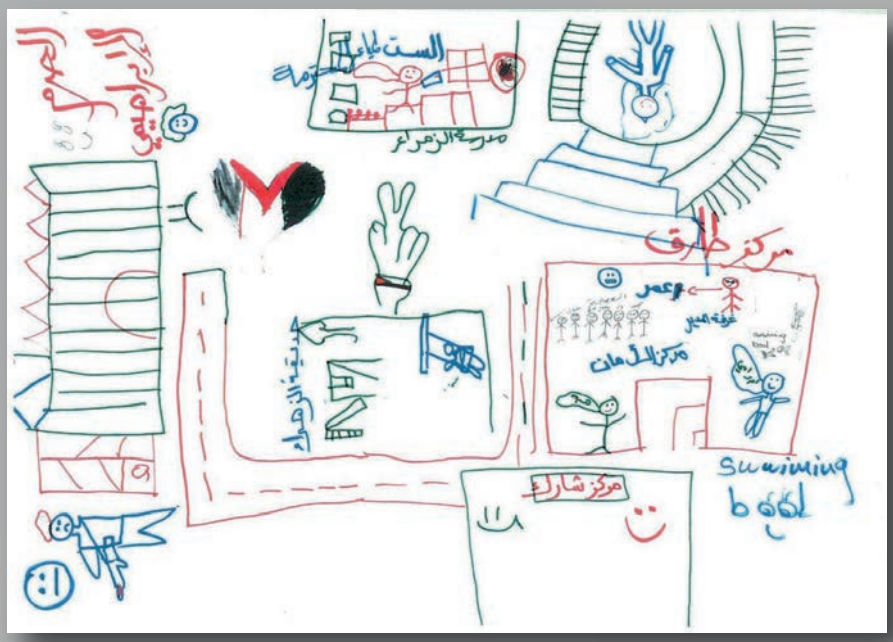
- *Community*
- *Family*
- *Each other*
- *Our unity*
- *Our faith*
- *Belief in our rights and liberty*
- *The mosque*
- *Our new leisure centre*

What do you fear?

- *Occupation*
- *Checkpoints*
- *Walking to school*
- *Rumours about where the soldiers might have attacked someone in the next street*
- *Soldiers raiding the school, losing our chance to learn*
- *Problems in the classes and getting home too early. Then not feeling safe.*
- *Sometimes we feel safer in school than at home so don't want to go home; then school is unsafe and we want to be home.*
- *We never know where the right place to be is.*

What do you want us to share with you?

- *Ways of working with people who have trauma so that we can treat each other……in the streets, in our homes, and especiall when we are in prison.*
- *Groupwork and community celebrations*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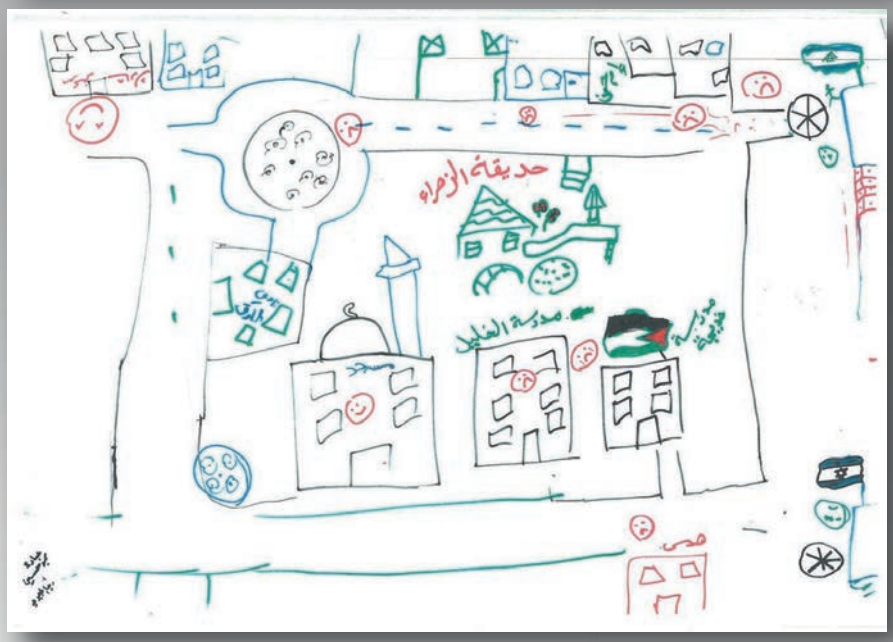
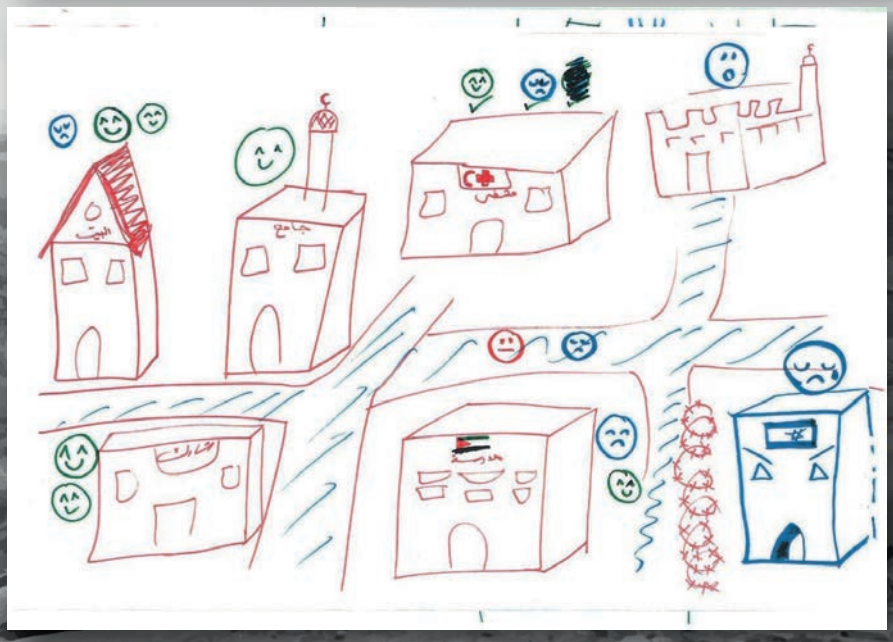
مركز الأمان
مركز شارك
swimming
pool


حديقة الزهراء
مدرسة النخيل



Group 1

This is the situation we live in. All the Palestinian children and YP have to come through the checkpoint every day. We all feel fear and isolation because of the soldiers, settlers and clashes with the Palestinians.

They come into our schools with tear gas ….put our teachers in danger….we cannot complete our school day.

School – we are looking to the future, the final stages of our education but a lot of students are leaving the school – too frightened to come. Most families are too afraid to send them.

A lot of clashes in the square by the mosque.

But also there is fear at home. The soldiers use tear gas in the homes.

Where is the safe place? The playground is a playground of fear. Home – but there is no safe place.

Group 2

There is a lot of difficulty in reaching Abraham's Mosque, our holy place and our most important mosque. When we go to the Mosque there is a check point and the soldiers challenge us.

The houses around the school are affected by the tear gas.

The people living in the old city of Hebron face these violations. Tear gas and shooting.

When we go to school in the old city we have to go through the graveyards and the soldiers are there.

There is resistance sometimes from the children – they throw stones because they can't do anything else.

There is no safe area – safe is going as far away from the checkpoints as far as possible.

Group 3

To access our Mosque we have to ask the soldiers' permission. All the time they have guns. We are afraid. We go to a school for girls. Because of the Opposition, our concentration is decreasing. There is a lot of disorder inside the school.

At the youth centre we feel there is safety – games, play, happiness. We also have a swimming pool now – we love the swimming pool manager. He is good to us

Group 4

We consider our home a source of happiness and safety. The majority of children do not feel their home is protected, however because it does not stop the children being arrested. In the mosque we feel safe because our beliefs protect us. Also there is a hospital there and because we can get medical aid we feel happy, safe. In the street we meet people and this makes us happy but we are also afraid to pass in the street.

My home is close to a checkpoint. When I pass the checkpoint there is a lot of fear. Our day is too short in school. Because of fear, tear gas, shooting. Many times settlers enter the school. Our education is reduced and there is fear in the girls. The teachers have split minds - it is not just education but they try to protect us and this is too much for them. When we see them weaken we are afraid.

They put the guns at the children. Some of the girls suffer from breathing conditions and sickness.

We are not at school now – there is a story that a girl has been murdered and there is blood on the school outside the school so we don't like to go there – we don't know if it is true.

- *The true essence of SW in a community context at time of great need*
- *Holding young people for a moment in time in a way which can give them enduring strength and self healing awareness*
- *Responding to their understandings of suffering within Arabic and Palestinian culture*
- *Managing own researcher and therapy team emotions and fears*
- *Sustaining consistent practice in a conflict landscape of constant change*
- *The discipline of deep listening and therapeutic watchfulness*
- *Responding to community grief*
- *Local practitioner traumas*
- *The groupwork circle is a powerful approach*
- *A deep participatory approach which invites dignity and the expression of celebrations*
- *How deep therapeutic reflexive engagement for a moment in time can sustain, create enduring transformation*
- *Therapy cannot be forced….must invite the spontaneous*
- *Hence therapy not about outcomes but about belief in our own natural resources*
- *Organic healing…..we are given enough resources for our own recovery….our own happiness*

Team observations of YP:
Discipline, articulacy, language of reality and hope. Courage, dignity, insightful, alert, respectful of each other, non competitive or hierarchical across gender or age. Community orientated / trauma aware. Fear for the future of their community!

Team Reflections; Analysis of psycho emotional states of the YP:
Difficult to assess – many different emotions emerging at once. Telling stories of trauma / fear / injustice with articulacy and strength of voice tone – yet times when the eyes look dazed, looking into the distance, glimpses of uncertainty and anxiety. One boy sat with his hood over the face the whole time!

General comments:
Anger – a strong sense of injustice. But no personalizing of the anger.

A collective anger. Yet also a ready humour, brightness, playfulness.

Shared emotions – the individual in the collective.

The girls are quieter – watchful – insightful – collective voices. Always huddled in groups for security.

The boys have different roles – some courageous, future leaders, resistant voices …but all respectful, measured, disciplined within the circle.

Within the groups of girls and boys there were features of withdrawal, uncertainty, containment and arousal. Some look 'hunted'. This was evident in facial gestures and body language; also, expressed in the role plays. One broke out of the circle and enacted a violent scene. Surprise – shock – some laughter.

The speeches were brave but the stories deeply traumatic and shocking in their injustice and inhumanity….dehumanizing tactics.

The experience of the checkpoint, the detention system is a devastation – a cruel trauma. Patterns of detention – once admitted, watched…..hunted. Queueing to walk past soldiers at checkpoint when you know your name is on a military list and you could be pulled out……psychological terror!

The speech has a pattern, is brave, articulate, strong – community voice – the claiming of hopes and dreams; but sometimes the individual loses the collective speech and there is a blankness….a gulf…which fill the silence of the circle.

One boy under his hoody, disengaged. One boy fidgeting. One 15 year old boy just released 8 days ago – dulled eyes, little facial expression, slumped shoulders, lethargy.

But equally a sense of rights – the right to liberty, the right to safe place, the right to a future, the right to learn. Vibrancy, courage, dignity.

All speak the language of rights – to be free, to play, to learn, to have family and community life, to be safe and have safe places.

Expression of the importance of 'safe space', connectedness, time out and togetherness.

***Psychological awareness and alertness** – using expressions and frameworks which conveyed how they took their psychological health seriously and recognised the impact of the environment on it.*

Courage and nobility – self-sacrifice. Community, family, neighbour before individual.

Watchfulness. Alertness mixed with emotional flatness.

Uncertainty, unknowingness. Dehumanising psychological toll. Curfews and changing boundaries. Always a sense of danger round the corner. People carrying their sense of human rights like a cloak – but seeing their humiliation, their diminishment flicker in their eyes.

Need for human engagement and outsider engagement….visitors from the outside world to share humanity and understanding.
Ever changing positions.

SW s as compassionate mountain leaders…alert, watchful and protective of their children, the future of their communities.

Mountain villages …passing the word from one village to another.

The role of women in watching, holding the pain of the family and of the community

Children in fear of imprisonment.

Children – street life and need to play.

Two incidents during our visit reflect the human landscape.

Firstly, on day one, we discussed stories for recovery and asked if the local practitioners used this approach. Riad stepped into the centre of the room and said he would share a story. He shared how 5 years ago, crossing a street, a sniper shot him in the leg. He hurried down the street into a group as it is then a soldier tactic to shoot a wounded man; a group of people were stepping into a hospital transport van. He sat with them. The soldiers stopped the van and searched for him but did not know his identity. He kept his leg covered and another passenger distracted the soldiers. Otherwise, he would have been pulled out and shot.

Listening to the story as 'outside' practitioners was complex; we were shocked at the trauma framework yet Riad told it, and the local practitioners, received it with humour. It appeared to convey the trauma and resilience cycle, the different prisms on life that allowed light to filter into seemingly desperate times.

On our final day, we met with Jusef. As social workers, we knew Jusef's story from involvement with BASW and their support for Palestinian SWs. His brother, a social worker, had been shot in the heart by a sniper while escorting young Palestinian youths on a non-violent peace March 18 months earlier. What we had not envisaged was the complex psychological state Jusef was still in. After his brother's death, he and the other males in the family were taken into prison and punished. Jusef, in a grief state, had to stand naked on a table in a cell for 3 days before being released. Jusef explained that he could not recover from his grief, still lay awake at night seeing his brother's face.

Both stories had a connecting thread. The passenger in the prison van who protected Riad's life was the brother of Jusef, later shot by the soldiers. These stories give a glimpse into the context, the realities of trauma built into the fabric of community life, the courage and vibrancy of co-dependency and the impact of sustained tactics of humiliation designed to suppress dignity and the human spirit.

We received them silently as international practitioners.

Stage 3: Creative synthesis and explication

"The silenced are not just incidental to the curiosity of the researcher but are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world. In this context research becomes a means of moving them beyond silence into a quest to proclaim the world." Friere 1990

This section includes the 3 Palestinian welcome oratories, the Palestinian practitioners collective narrative, and the data from expressive arts accounts of young people in the therapeutic circle. These accounts reflect a particular form of critical dialogue which was used in the encounters of the Palestine project. The critical exchanges are received with an understanding of the insight that emerges through collaboration and free expression, hence accounts are longer extracts as protected narratives.

6. 3. 1 Researcher reflexive commentary on narratives

The Palestinian welcome oratories and the practitioner collective narrative formed precious and important data providing a historical and current contextualisation and conveying immediate concerns. This was not a dialogical form of expression; we were the outsider audience receiving an insider and culture specific account and it was evident this was our invitation to receive and acknowledge in silence. The Palestinian practitioners conveyed their dignity, their courage as therapists in a form of 'human shield' practice, as social workers watching over the children and young people, the vulnerable, the men and the women. "We are people just like you….we have hopes and dreams…one shot changes everything" (Riad).

Munther's account describes a narrative of human shield work: "Last Friday I protected a 6 year old boy who was playing with a ball in the park. Two soldiers picked him up and shook him. I stood between him and the soldiers. I was detained for four hours. When I left, the commander said to me: "I know who you are. I know where you live. Next time I will not speak with you, I will come for you." (Munther, opening speech).

Riad's speech poignantly separates out the various groups of the community recognising how the occupation has impact at all levels but the social work lens identifies specific need. As males, their expressions reflect their protective role towards women and children; they also identify communities at risk and articulate particular concern for the living conditions of displaced Palestinians who live in the refugee camps. Munther's speech conveys his decision to take risks as a community advocate in the refugee camp whilst realising the consequences for families and communities of individual challenge. Jusef's speech is existential; it is concerned with land rights, fear of invasion and cultural targeting, and beliefs about humanitarian bonds. All conveyed an awareness, an anguish, yet a discipline of non-politicalized measure. All valued the importance of international partnerships and "alliances" (Riad) recognising how they encourage local therapists to sustain their community support.

Jusef's speech reflects the readiness in the community to express measured conceptualisations of the injustices and the residual political tensions: "This is Palestine; our land. It gets smaller and

smaller. We do not create this division or want it. The division of land does not strengthen anyone; it just divides and fragments us. Then we all have to live with this tension".

"We are all the same, across race, across cultures. We are people of the earth." (Jusef, opening speech).

The collective Palestinian narrative (CPN) presents, again, an anguished yet measured account of childhood trauma within the experiences of siege. Children are described as 'constantly anxious and watchful' due to the invasion of community spaces formerly considered safe: the homes, the school, the mosque, the playgrounds. The treatment of trauma is widely understood as common currency rather than a specialized service, with all formal services such as education identifying this as part of their residual role to be trauma therapists. Trauma has become all pervasive in every aspect of community life, with awareness mixed with uncertainties and narratives of terror (**YPN**). The escalation of environmental impact due to changes in military siege tactics during our project creates a new intention by local therapists, expressed in the collective Palestinian narrative, to build on international therapeutic exchange and adapt techniques of trauma response in developing community crisis:

"The impact of these continuous experiences and fears is deeply psychological. As social workers we try to sustain a harmony, a thread of stability for the children but we can't do it on our own. We have no retreat or safe space. We rely on the international community and practitioners like you who work alongside us. These external formal spaces hold the internal conflict." (**CPN**).

The young people's accounts include three forms: dialogical narrative in response to my questions, mindmaps and role plays chosen as expressive forms by the young people. All the accounts convey, again, a collective sense of trauma pervading all aspects of community life. The expression of the journeys mapped out the cycle of life as trauma and resilience with sad and happy faces. As a therapeutic tool, they allowed the young people to locate their anxieties and their 'celebrations' expressed visually. The talking through of these accounts then created its own form of 'narrative therapy', also allowing the transcultural team to understand first-hand accounts of youth trauma through words and responses.

The pictures and accounts revealed the uncertainty the young people felt in the external environment and the constantly changing interpretations of safe space and threat. This allowed the young people to locate and articulate their fears. In the school, their teachers used to protect them but soldiers were coming into the schools with tear gas and the teachers could not intervene. Home had felt a safe retreat from the streets but night raids on homes were increasing and they watched their fathers being humiliated by soldiers and unable to prevent the boys being taken out of the homes by force. The mind maps were 'elemental' – they expressed daily life but also the traumas and risks of the young people's existence. Their accounts were psychologically measured through their own eyes with the important accounts of 'safe' and 'unsafe':

"Sometimes we feel safer in school than at home so don't want to go home; then school is unsafe and we want to be home. "

"We never know where the right place to be is." (YPN).

The young people chose role play to express their lives; this art form conveyed the ambivalences of vibrant community and their terror of the external environment. It also allowed them to use the creative spirit, true to their culture, to express their courage and articulacy. The scenes chosen conveyed the 'everydayness' (Guido, 2015 KC) of community life – walking from school, going to market, kicking a ball in a courtyard. In this sense the acts were lyrical, each of the role plays depicted the individual within a community backdrop as supportive, protective, aware……. but never safe. In each narrative there was a cycle of human activity – guardedness or hostile surprise – fear of ambush – a 'knowing state' or awareness of understanding potential consequences of hostile encounter. The energy within the performance was a revelation of the spirit of youth life in Palestine: the street scenes, the loyalty to each other, the 'watchful adult' outlook within the eyes of childhood. Accounts demonstrate the way young people place importance on the community and service infrastructure to protect, without loss of their own sense of responsibility and inter-relational duty to others.

"My home is close to a checkpoint. When I pass the checkpoint there is a lot of fear. Our day is too short in school. Because of fear, tear gas, shooting. …The teachers have split minds - it is not just education but they try to protect us and this is too much for them. When we see them weaken we are afraid.

They put the guns at the children. Some of the girls suffer from breathing conditions and sickness.

We are not at school now – there is a story that a girl has been murdered and there is blood on the street outside the school so we don't like to go there – we don't know if it is true". **(YPN Voice 1)**

"This is the situation we live in. All the Palestinian children and young people have to come through the checkpoint every day. We all feel fear and isolation because of the soldiers, settlers and clashes with the Palestinians.

They come into our schools with tear gas ….put our teachers in danger….we cannot complete our school day.

But also there is fear at home. The soldiers use tear gas in the homes.

Where is the safe place? The playground is a playground of fear. Home – but there is no safe place."

(YPN Voice 2).

All of these accounts are expressed within the therapeutic circle, with the exception of the team interviews and the collective Palestinian practice narrative. The balance of emotion and measure, of strength and vulnerability, conveys an integral account as the reflection of a community under siege. It moves to the heart of the community with the free expressions and insights of its young people.

This is possible to realise within the framework of the therapeutic holding space. Whether sharing stories of challenge or expressing concerns about practice, there was always a sense that expression, vibrancy, creativity was only ever one flicker away.

6.3.2 Researcher reflexive commentary on Palestinian therapist interviews

Riad – Director of Social Mobilization, DCI.

Fayez – Head of Psychological School Counselling Service

Majadolean – Palestinian Social Worker

Zahira – Palestinian Social Worker

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We work to support the children and to help them to understand the cycle of trauma and resilience; that they are not silenced and invisible to the world; that they are children; their lives and their psychological health matters. Riad, Project Agreement Speech.

The human environment is ever present, in everybody's consciousness and the fabric of daily life. Its primary agenda is survival and protection of each other, and of a culture. The traditions of its ancestry and long connection to its soil creates a conscious influence in the current reflections of Palestinian-Arab culture.

People present a community backdrop of family and neighbourhood inter-dependency through celebrations, gestures in the streets, images and symbols, in creative expressions of poetry, dance and song. In these ways, the creativity of the people, their courage and resilience, is framed within their understanding of human connectedness and rootedness to the soil…the crops…the herbs…the olive groves….the religious and life cycle celebrations.

The counsellors were keen to share their songs with us, invite a glimpse into their culture – their images and symbols, their creativity, their connectedness, their rootedness. This is strongly conveyed when Jusef drove us up to his farm from where, he claimed, you can see the whole of Palestine.

What we can draw on is the strength of cultural issues of participation and solidarity. PI Fayez

We need to hold the infrastructure of community so that we are not scattered and broken. PI Majadolean

Within this ethos of community, the human response to outsider conflict is complicated. It is dominantly expressed as if it is an intrusion which cannot conquer the spirit of community. Against this, the Palestinian practitioner lens and narrative has to convey a dual edge; it echoes the community voice of vibrancy and resilience, but also reflects the therapeutic recognition of the psychological toll on the lives of young people. This is reflected in the following extracts and substantiated in Jabr's account as a medic operating in the Gaza Trauma Clinic (Jabr, 2014).

The psychological impact of military rule

Since many years, Palestinian communities in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem are held in difficult interims of social, psychological and economic aspects of occupation. The most affected are children. In the last 12 months, Israel has increased its military tactic in Palestinian communities so that we cannot safely live and flourish. In H2, the old city of Hebron, and in Tel Rumeida there are

daily arrests of children. They are arrested without grounds and wait in prison for a fair trial. They can wait many months. The situation is a social work and international humanitarian concern as the children are arrested now as young as 10; they can be shot if considered implicated in opposition to the military force. This is open to interpretation. Project Agreement Speech, Riad.

Children in Palestine experience enduring trauma. We believe it is now intergenerational and has become the fabric of our community and our daily life. PI Fayez

Everyone we met – ministers and officials, community elders, social workers, young people, hostel wardens and taxi drivers would discuss trauma as a present state collectively shared. Emergencies happened – streets were full of rubble yet silent – then sounds of turbulence would emerge around the next corner. The local practitioners and community elders held us with their watchfulness, with their hosting duties; it was a considered approach. Yet, at times it was clear that they too were uncertain and vulnerable. At times we also felt the fear of their exposure to threats and violence. At times we felt exposed ourselves, mindful of Zahria's comment that there is "no safe space". PI Zahira.

There were two images of community life that were always at stake in the sense of community: the street scene, and the home. The streets were the place of community gathering and networks but never safe. For the young people, the tension was the sense of their need to be outside, to be free, to be able to have play and recreation; yet the reality was the military presence in the streets and the risk that they could become targets. *The children all fear detention because it will affect their psychological state and once they have been taken, they are taken again. So they are hyper alert and anxious.* PI Majadolean

Because of the fear in the street scene and homes, the sense of safe place appears to have become emphasized and made a primary focus in the Palestinian practitioner dialogues. It is referred to by Riad, Fayez and Majadolean reflecting the importance of the theme. The practitioners make the connection between no safe space outside, and the need for therapeutic services to create a sense of safe space: *There is no safe treatment place. When a district is at risk, the children are more isolated and so are their counsellors. It is difficult to treat the children in the school because of a constant fear the soldiers will invade the school.* PI Fayez (Head of School Counselling Services).

The holding space is therefore readily accepted and welcomed as a vision of realisation.

The invasion of childhood and childhood rights

The social work framework and justification for Palestinian social work interventions in the community are always on the basis of human rights and childhood rights with reference both to the United Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990 and the 1948 UN Treaty for Refugees. The language of rights, therefore, is a constant presence in the three Palestinian narratives, in the young people accounts (right to safe play, right to education, right to secure home life) and in the social work accounts. *Child participation is essential in Palestine due to the diminishment they feel and the sustained invasion of their human rights.* PI Riad

The Palestinian practitioners emphasize the right of the child to play presenting play and outdoor freedom as a form of recreational therapy and release.

In the playground the children act mourning and burial scenes. PI Majadolean

The creative games are important for them – to give them a sense of self and each other – to celebrate this and relax for a while. PI Fayez

Defining Trauma in a Conflict Zone (these extracts of the PI interviews on trauma are presented without intervention with researcher commentary to respect the pure expression of their accounts).

What is trauma in Occupied Territory? It is the mother who kisses her sons goodnight in bed not knowing if they will be there in the morning. PI Riad

What traumas are we talking about? There is no-one that is not affected. The children are the deliberate victims of trauma, but their mothers and fathers feel it for them and as practitioners we try to change it for them so that they survive….and be children, and families. PI Riad

The external environment is designed to give us features of trauma…it is the military tactic to suppress us, and particularly to suppress our children as the future generation of Palestine. PI Zahira

We see the symptoms of trauma in the children all the time – the withdrawal, disinhibitions, the anxiety in the faces, poor eating, breathing problems, body tensions, low spirits. PI Majadolean

We don't have the time or the resources to treat individuals in clinics like the Western world. It is a different approach. And the trauma is everywhere we go, everywhere we look. PI Riad

The discussion about different processes of intervention – preparatory and reactive – appeared valid as many of the techniques discussed were reacting to and treating collective trauma symptoms. Yet, the core need appeared to be one which would give children a strength as individuals that they could carry into the daily conflict – a strength of mind, an ability to locate a safe place in the mind as a reminder of harmony and meaning when the external world seemed harsh and uncertain.

We teach the children self-reliance. They need to know that healing comes from the self. They cannot be reliant only on our services (school counselling with social work and psychology) because we cannot always get through to them. PI Fayez

The Palestinian practitioners conveyed their understanding of the complexities of local practitioner experience, their own representation of community life, as well as the hazards of vicarious trauma. Hence, in their accounts, there is a steady thread of emphasis on their own need for therapeutic engagement and safe space. *It is the military tactic to suppress us; when you practise in a danger zone the practice tries to be positive and secure in an insecure and hostile environment. The workers need safe space.* PI Zahira

They described working with the children collectively – and the impact when the group is affected by the trauma around them. One school counsellor discussed working with a group of children in grief

because one child in the group had been killed. She discussed how this pain creates an irregularity in the group processes – giving rise to anger and disturbance.

A common theme became the need to find safe space for children and how they were increasingly at threat even at home, or going to the park, or to the mosque to pray.

They discussed the difficulty of holding the children's pain, and how pain and danger were everyday experiences, hence the challenge in keeping on turning them into something positive. It was the search for methods which would transform weakness into strength, turn a point of assessment into a point of challenge that could be harnessed into creativity, and renewed hope.

Identifying therapeutic responses

As social workers, lawyers and therapists we try to respond to emergency situations but have to cross constant checkpoints – another trauma point. We need fast but sustainable interventions and techniques that can respond to people where they are, in the streets and market-place. PI Majadolean

Our practice tries to be positive and secure in an insecure and hostile environment……you become a part of our practice so that we can take the therapy forwards…PI Zahira

A common thread in the social work practitioner accounts is the importance of the psycho-social approach which can respond to the psychological needs of the 'child' within the awareness of environmental influences, both positive and negative. *The psycho-social approach reminds us to listen to the child's inner self and inner being and to build this sense of identity. So that we are the created self not created by the external environment.* PI Zahira

As a therapeutic lens, the psycho-social perspective heightens the focus on the analysis of environment to recognise both community and military presence as intrinsic psychological threats. Riad's account highlights the cruciality of the family lens in social work responses, and Zahira talks of the importance of family therapy approaches where the focus shifts from the individual 'child' to the human nurture framework. *The family environment is difficult for us as social workers. Families are proud……they do not want to say our family is splitting.* PI Riad

Social work practitioners use the community as a sense of organic healing landscape; this is evident in the dialogues with Fayez, Riad, Zahira, Majadolean. *The external support is important to restore us.* PI Zahira. Yet, their accounts also articulate the complexity of community; Majadolean's account identifies how the children are uncertain in the schools because the teachers are targeted, hence cannot offer consistent protection; in the home, she identifies how the fathers can be considered weak which…. *is a problem for the boys if the father does not protect them when the soldiers come….then they distrust or reject their fathers.* PI Majadolean

The transcultural team presence in the community

Riad, Project Agreement Oratory: *The project aims to develop an innovation and vision that they can claim so that they become youth leaders in the research; they share knowledge of their conditions and ways of building resilience. This is participatory research – to work with the children in a meaningful way which shares knowledge and gives them their own sense of worth and contribution for the future of the community.*

We value, and rely on our international practice affiliations as they support us and strengthen our sense of survival and future.

Local people – practitioners, community leaders, and young people conveyed how deeply they viewed the significance of our visit at a time of community crisis. All practitioners use the framework of practice as a form of holding space for the young people; they convey the importance of an international team presence to help hold this space: *It is living on the edge. The military service cuts off our communication and ability to meet together….the fact that you get through to us and listen to us motivates us deeply.* PI Majadolean

So our shared research project is a form of innovation in critical circumstances and a way of creating a partnership which gives hope for tomorrow. PI Riad.

We are living in a new era and it is hard to know what to do because sometimes we cannot see ahead. PI Majadolean.

The lead practitioners appeared like community leaders, protecting their practitioners and recognising their emotional needs and weariness. The leaders held responsibility for sharing the practice stories, yet wanted their practitioners to engage in groupwork, express and share creativity as if recognising their need for resilience and healing. It was a message about motivational energy – suggesting the importance of practitioners coming in from outside the conflict to engage and hold the situations – if only for a while. Providing retreat space for the practitioners as a moment in time.

With the conflict we are weary so it is healing for us to work together PI Fayez

The practitioners have established practice scripts – familiar with theories and a ready understanding of practice responses to trauma treatments. They talked about the children collectively, and the script was heavy and worn – as if the sense that there is no break, no relief in the therapy story.

They use the same theories, the same treatments and have a curiosity for new interventions almost as if the hidden and unknown technique will somehow change the circumstances of conflict. (Researcher Project Diary Hebron 2015).

The therapeutic response of the combined teamwork for the young people

The interaction between the local and transcultural practice team required a dual representation; on the one hand, there was a requirement for a sense of congruence and consistency in philosophical and methodological approaches. The emphasis on this is demonstrated in both team accounts. Equally, the objective 'outsider' presence of the transcultural team, combined with the knowledge of

different Western world approaches to trauma seemed significant. *We have particular value of our international alliances. We have developed deep trauma specialisms ourselves but it is good to exchange approaches.* PI Fayez.

In the practitioner training days, it appeared important for the practitioners to convey how their children and young people learnt about growth and development, family and community life, survival and resilience. The local practitioners conveyed the different forms of resilience and healing energies. This perspective is highlighted by Riad: *our core concepts are child participation, empowerment, and child-led interventions so that through participation and exchange young people become their own transformation.* PI Riad.

When the young people were invited into the circle of inquiry on the third day, it appeared as if the local practitioners were encouraging them to participate in a way which would demonstrate this distinct type of community resilience and energy. As an outsider team, we could not have understood this due to local histories, traditions and ways of living, Arab culture and patterns of faith. However, the transcultural team, in receiving these 'enactments', was in a way validating a culture, a way of living so that local life was authenticated. In a time of siege, this is deeply significant as a therapeutic team response.

The distinct difference of understanding trauma was conveyed by local practitioners and in the role plays and expressions of the young people. They presented trauma as a daily presence, carried across the generations and in all contexts of life. This was a present awareness and a collective script. (Researcher Project Diary, Hebron).

The therapeutic approach reminds practitioners to build this sense of strength and identity by the external environment….all children can return in their mind to that sense of belonging. PI Zahira

Use of creative arts

Creativity teaches resilience – it celebrates the good but also teaches us in times of change, to readapt. PI Riad

We use creative arts to activate the fears, and by inviting the children to express themselves,

we understand the circumstances which cause them to experience trauma. PI Riad

These are specialized types of story-telling and art work which invite them to express deeper needs…..when we watch them tell their stories they know we watch them with a therapist's eye. PI Fayez

Defining the holding space

The importance of the concept of a holding space had been presented to the Palestinian practitioners in terms of sharing our project inquiry; however, in their accounts they gave it an emphasis and recognition within their own understanding of Palestinian community life, providing

conceptualisations of therapy and retreat in responses to trauma. Again, these accounts of 'safe space' and 'holding space' are presented without comment to respect local therapist defining and awareness of them: *For the children, they are together in a safe space with both local practitioners that they know, and outside practitioners so that they feel very safe and respected. The outside world is watching over us.* PI Fayez

I think safe space is important….the children feel secure with practitioners present to protect them and listen – to see if they are becoming psychologically unwell. PI Majadolean

They have all been in prison and so they feel hunted. The circle gives them dignity and a sense of who they really are – not prisoners but children. They won't forget – the circle is significant and meaningful to them. PI Fayez

Retreat is everything. If you help us to hold a safe space for the children, it is therapeutic for them. And for us. PI Zahira

6.3.3 Account of PAR Team Interviews

Title / profile: Mick - Community educator and therapeutic arts practitioner

What is your view of the effectiveness of the holding space as a circle of inquiry and interaction with the young people?

There is something deeply transformative in this type of approach. Going in without a script but with an affinity.

The holding space – that approach allowed it to work in any space; the features are that you are open to the expressive and creative needs of the group and there is a point in the interaction where you lead them into a space until the moment where they feel composure to take the lead. That approach is going to work in any context – it is not dependant on a formal structure but needs therapeutic and creative skills.

This participatory intuitive approach is dynamic; it is instinctive and human whereas the therapeutic can feel like a formal art and more of a science than an art in essence responding to set frameworks and parameters. The principles of non-hierarchical participation are essential. The circle mirrors the tribal circle around the fire in the coyote story.

There is always a celebratory element when the practice group comes together as the celebration of shared humanity and the richness of this when realised across cultures. Creative arts expresses this richly. It echoes the idea that everyone has a story to tell, a valid insight and it is that drive to invite that which is within. The essentiality of expression in human dignity and self-esteem, and the importance of this with young people who are oppressed and experiencing trauma.

The PAR leadership has always to hold the space – local people are too involved, emotionally, have multiple investments whereas the PAR international team should be held to their central purpose.

We used rhythm and movement to mark out the circle each day. We begin with the assumption that people are happiest and most fulfilled when they can express themselves creatively: the focus is on the invitation to nurture the participant's innate creativity and curiosity. Inviting a story that involves a journey so that rhythm and movement create change and invite transformation. Giving the narrative back to the young people…… walking into a space and letting the participants shape what is going to happen through their instinctive need for creative expression.

The therapeutic aspect is the total absorption in the process.

They took our script and adapted it into a forum they knew, but also into a forum that had a deep purpose and intent. They wanted to show us, through creative arts, their story and what it was like. To celebrate their community. But also to express their anxiety and pain. This was the therapeutic element – they moved from relaxing and going into celebration to a slower pace where they trusted us enough to show us their true and deeper feelings.

Psycho dramatic element – moving the narrative and role plays to work through or realise through acting out, and then objectifying.

To do with self-discovery within a group, within a group that was mutually supportive.

Being invited into the circle, and being held in the circle gave a message of self-worth.

The creative arts allowed a psychological transformative process to unfold – acting out triggered release – which was acknowledged and held by the three groups – the young people, the local practitioners, the international team.

The transcultural alliance is sustaining – it is so rich when it works well it almost transcends time and culture. The vibrancy of the two-way processes of sharing – in the small things like sharing bread in the break time, to sharing a time of mourning when one of the children had died during the training day we lead.

There is an element of international witness, the value they felt in sharing their culture with us – their songs, faith, sense of community. Not feeling closed to the world. In Palestine, the significance of this – they are enclosed, almost locked in time and arguably, in a point of historical oppression.

This is a true account and I give permission for it to be used in research processes.

Signed *** Date 28.12.15**

Interview 2 - Debbie Ryding PAR Team Participant, Palestine Project.

What is your view of the effectiveness of the holding space as a circle of inquiry and interaction with the young people?

Stepping into an international practice space when that is in a state of flux – affects everything. It felt as if the practitioners were trying to normalise everything as a control method – but as we developed our involvement with them this triggered signs of deep emotions: panic, uncertainty, watchfulness, the pain of shadows and traumatic memories. There was heightened alert – making it difficult for them to sit in the group and engage at times yet also showing a deep commitment to the interaction with our team, wanting to share feelings of hope and community and to balance the sense of negativity in the room when we first engaged with them.

It was as if they wanted to gain something from our interaction with them that would sustain them and nurture their sense of hopefulness, knowing that their attempts to develop practice and sustain effective practice are always affected by lack of resources, lack of access and clear communication lines.

It felt they often wanted to share stories and engage at a human level rather than therapist level – to take "time out" from the traumas they address and the constant protection over their community. To let us be the therapists.

The circle was effective in terms of us as a team being able to go into it with the young people and meet them in a measured place that they had created.

The participatory element of the circle – their receiving us into it – was a deep symbol of participation. Holding space – it brought those they saw in authority down to an equal level. In their culture, and in the context of occupied territory with all the tactics of military suppression of young people, this is immensely powerful and significant. The equality was essential – it changed the interaction radically and allowed the interaction to move into inquiry. How they are and feel, what they need for their community. They also conveyed to us the participatory principle – they did not talk of individual scripts but about each other, their neighbours and communities.

Also, how they are in themselves – they have little space to express this as individuals – the circle gave them the space and the processes to allow the trauma to come out. Then it is taken away – it is held by the circle.

Everything in a conflict zone is moving so fast that the young person's trauma symptoms can be overlooked as if they are in a locked or withdrawn state, they are hard to reach. Again, the participatory level of inquiry and interaction showed they mattered as individuals as a form of 'therapeutic interest'.

It takes courage in a withdrawn state to express thoughts and feelings – the rhythmic exercises, the images (light, rock of landscape, fire, circle) allowed them to relax and take these messages of hope and resilience into themselves.

The workshop approach mirrored the trauma recovery framework for conflict zones: Inviting the young people to go into an imaginary place – a safe space for a while.

This approach is sustainable. Important they don't feel left or left out. This gives the intrinsic messages of respect. Not to underestimate the level of participation and democracy in the circle in their culture and within occupied territory.

This is a true account and I give permission for it to be used in research processes.

Signed: D Ryding Date: 28.12.15

6.3.4 Final Researcher Analysis – The Therapeutic Holding Space as a therapeutic circle in Palestine.

Social work practice in Palestine, is trying to create a better world. It is articulated by local social workers as a form of 'human shield' practice, trying to protect children from the military invasion and allowing them to feel young and free, secure enough to play in the streets. It is also a form of therapeutic alliance shared by all in the community and held by local social workers and school counsellors. The trauma is invasive and ever present; it is in the atmosphere and a threat around every corner. This is a distinct type of trauma which requires a precise form of therapeutic response.

It is immensely complex to step in to this politicized and sustained context of community life as an 'outsider' and make a tangible response. I think the valuable contribution was the holding space. The concept of space had a distinct association because of the impact of military invasion and the street scenes where it was difficult to conceptualise safe space. In the Palestinian practice articulations therapeutic space becomes tangible, aligned to my discussion of therapy and space in chapter two (**2.5**). Within the context of siege, Palestinian accounts demonstrated how practitioners used therapeutic circles of groupwork practice with children and young people to hold them together in ways in which they could express their anxieties and fears, their narratives of grief. The therapeutic holding space approach allowed this convention to be more formalised and more sustained, partly due to the outsider presence of the PAR Team.

The practitioners made evident the importance of transcultural approaches and outsider witness. They are expert trauma theorists who have had many opportunities to work with international practitioners and researchers. They are deeply intuitive, yet also value the intellectual discussion as an opportunity to develop knowledge of conceptual frameworks for intervention.

One had to respect their depth knowledge of trauma aware practice. Riad knew what was needed but saw they could not hold it alone. On one level, they presented a narrative of resilience to the young people – on another, they were themselves caught up in the script. His invitation claimed the 'fellowship' of international social work – the spirit of partnership, the alliance, the commitment to others in times of extreme need. He needed his practitioners to be held – to be acknowledged – to be listened to themselves therapeutically; the ring within the ring within the circle.

They also needed to voice to the outside practice world the concern about escalating invasion and the psychological toll in the West Bank. The therapeutic circle, therefore, became not only a holding

centre for young people but a forum for local and international practitioners to share and develop integrated trauma approaches in response to emergent community need.

PAR as a framework invited a form of participatory exchange similar to the conceptualisations of 'therapeutic exchange and encounter' discussed in chapters one, two and three. Within this awareness, young people and practitioners could move between roles of strength and vulnerability, and within these interactions, a new awareness was created. The radical participatory edge of PAR was an understated but consistent presence which promoted the importance of these young people, dispersing their sense of the hunted, the oppressed, the imprisoned. This 'new consciousness' proved transformative.

One of the prominent features of practice awareness was the individual-collective interplay and the way this influences response to trauma. The circle provides a platform for exploring the individual-collective dynamic. The collective holds but also contains the individual in their expression of identity and their understanding of trauma (Jabr, 2014). This factor is compounded by the common features of trauma: the checkpoints, the military presence in the streets, the attacks with tear gas in the schools, the prison experience, etc. These features become a part of the fabric of community and are held in everyone's consciousness. Zahira – *we all know the features of trauma in Palestine but sometimes it becomes too set an understanding and we need to listen to this child, and this family, in this experience.* PI Zahira. This issue is raised in Jabr's work (KC 2015) with her accounts of the Palestinian community narratives and established scripts of trauma.

The therapeutic circle acknowledges and celebrates local community, yet also provides a protected space where young people can realise their own identities collectively, away from family. Practitioners describe a defensiveness on the part of families – they do not want to face the reality of family tensions and splitting; hence the human services have difficulty accessing 'at risk' families. The trauma impacts on each family member if the family destabilises. Riad's concern was particularly for the mothers in the home with an 'eye' to the psycho-social lens: *the meaning of mental health is not recognised in many families so if a mother is anxious or traumatized, she must carry it alone.* PI Riad.

The practice approach is intrinsically participatory, engaging with children, families and having a strong community presence. *The active engagement of the children and young people is a primary focus of the practitioners; our core concepts are child participation, empowerment and child-led interventions so that through participation and exchange young people become their own transformation.* PI Riad.

The creative arts are valued by practitioners as a means to invite unique and new expression and to move away from the trauma scripts of the past. *We use creative arts to invite the children to express their stories in a new way so that they can feel their own identity going into the future not locked into the stories and traumas of past generations.* PI Riad.

Chapter summary

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated the different ways that knowledge forms in a conflict environment and the exacting discipline of the researcher in listening and conveying this in an authentic and respectful manner. The holding space provides a platform for therapeutic expression. It moves towards the poetic due to the sharpened edge of the spoken word and the power of the creative instinct when the stakes are high. All is fluid; insider, outsider, child, adult; peace, conflict. The power exchange in the therapeutic relationship is often shared as the practitioner shares the sense of destabilisation…fear of the unknown…fear of attack. Awareness takes on a crystal insight…yet can be beyond the scope of articulation in the complicated space where there might be no words – no place for rationale, only seeing and knowing, without the ability to define.

The experiential face of the research has developed the reflexive instinct; it has been a heuristic turning point which invites a stepping aside from the literature and formal practice conventions of trauma and an invitation to express what you learn when you become part of the landscape of trauma.

The therapeutic circle has both the capacity to invite expression but equally the ability to provide a sense of silent space, a place beyond the words as a form of individual meditation and healing.

Researcher extracts from project diary (Hebron Nov 2015)

The project had been completed. We were travelling from Jerusalem to a mountain village above Bethlehem for a project BBQ and 'debrief' with Palestinian practitioners and academics. A steep deserted mountain road in a barren landscape…..then suddenly ambulances coming around the corner ahead of us. Our driver halted….phoned….asked us to walk from there as he could not travel on. There had been a disturbance. We were told to walk along the road to a garage and then take a right fork up a hill where our Palestinian colleague was waiting with a jeep.

We walked silently….alert…uncertain. At the garage there were shouts….agitation…a group of Palestinian men on the track turned us away and up a track to avoid the scene. They stood each side of us….a human shield…..watchful and protective but equally uncertain.

Suddenly, in a moment of alarm, we saw another group of armed soldiers on the ridge to our right…letting us pass but watchful, with the control of surveillance.

Later, reaching a high mountain farm and cooking, sharing food together, exchanging stories but avoiding the expression of uncertainty and the need for explanation.

It came later….a checkpoint had been attacked in a reprisal and the nearest villages were preparing for military retaliation. The politics were not ours to own and too complex to untangle. Emotions oscillated as the circumstances defied the capacity to rationalise.

We were suspended, yet in the circle of people who know these experiences, know how to share together and hold each other through them. The Holding Space.

We walked later down the mountain road in the dark, driven half way then told to keep walking as our local guides would not be safe to go further……moving through a mountain village where everyone was quiet and watchful, following a barren track with a view to the ridges and seeing tyres being burnt at access points to villages to deter military invasion and 'reprisal'.

Understanding what it feels to be in hostile territory. Heightened perceptions – no knowledge, no practice immunity, no assumptions of safety – a part of the human landscape – potentially considered partisan as approaching from Palestinian territory in Bethlehem, West Bank. Clinging to the natural landscape although it seemed wild and barren – giving no sense of security, no message of reassurance. Hope suspended. Future unknown.

The sense of human and animal instinct coming together – trying to rationalise – but not being able to – trying to blend into the natural landscape away from a human landscape where guns and hostility made expected norms of reality unknown.

Researcher Account Hebron 2015.

STAGE THREE: CREATIVE SYNTHESIS

Chapter 7: Defining the 'Therapeutic Holding Space' approach

My research began with the vision of a model of the therapeutic circle to guide responses to young people experiencing trauma due to conflict and destabilisation. The constraints for local therapeutic service infrastructure in times of community siege would suggest the need for a tangible dynamic approach inviting transcultural practice teams to support local people and local practice infrastructure in precise ways. In the Palestine Youth Trauma project (chapter six), the conceptualisation of the 'holding space' developed as a therapeutic circle, influenced by Heron's 'circle of inquiry' (1998). This chapter evaluates the effectiveness of this approach and generic qualities to support the use of 'therapeutic circles' as a community therapy approach for conflict zones.

Chapter outline Section one identifies generic aspects of a therapeutic holding space approach, and presents key points as guidance for practitioners operating in conflict zones; section two defines the approach used in the Palestinian Youth Trauma Project. The analysis of the therapeutic holding space is substantiated with data drawn from the accounts of Palestinian practitioners and young people, the PAR Team and the researcher reflexive analysis based on participation in the project.

Part One: Generic features of the Therapeutic Holding Space for use in conflict zones

7.1 Defining the circle formation

'Holding' might sound abstract in a stable community but in a war zone, it has a deep relevance due to the physical and internalised symptoms of a destabilised community and landscape. The fear of uncertainty, of the unknown, the threat of violence and attack, pervade the atmosphere so that daily routines are suspended, and the rhythm of community life takes on an unsteady pace. People convey a state of constant alert and heightened sensory awareness.

My initial premise was that the therapeutic groupwork circle used in conventions of community social work could be relevant within conflict contexts; the theories of Moustakas (1994, 2001) and Heron (1996, 2008) contributed six stages of awareness (Moustakas) and the processes of 'co-operative inquiry' in groupwork formations (Heron). In both models, inner awareness becomes the central point of reference. The emphasis on cyclical inquiry and emergent awareness guided my design for the 'therapeutic holding space' approach, inviting people to explore understandings of existential trauma within a framework which would invite processes of deeper awareness.

Hence, the approach becomes tangible as a therapeutic circle formation drawn up by practitioners in a supportive ring around young people who are vulnerable. In my design, there are three circles of people held in a non-hierarchical groupwork formation. Each circle has different qualities:

Circle one: The group of young people who experience psychological trauma due to community conflict.

Circle two: The local practitioners representing both community and local practice infrastructure.

Circle three: The transcultural practitioners using a therapeutic reflexive stance.

Building on my initial premises about the intrinsic essence of social work as watchful and therapeutically aware, the presence of practitioners (local and transcultural) defies the static yet sustained hostile nature of the external reality. The defiance is possible because of the developing sense of awareness and capacity to 'restory' (Adams *et al*., 2005) the narrative of the siege. This process of restorying, in the Palestinian context, prioritised the psychological health and resilience of the young person, and the right to challenge the imposed forces of dominance and oppression and reclaim the sense of ancestral community surrounding young people. *We use creative arts to invite the children to express their stories in a new way so that they can feel their own identity going into the future, not locked into the stories and traumas of past generations. (Data extract:* PI Riad).

The representation of the circle as community invites a different reality based on deeper or 'existential truths', which again, stand true to my developing premises. These are reflected in the Palestinian project in the honouring of culture and ancestry. They are echoed in the images of landscape - the rock, the trees, the rivers, the hills; images which are introduced into the therapeutic circle. These emblems of culture and land raise awareness of the intrinsic healing qualities within the community's life cycle. The young people, invited into the circle formation, also represent the future of their community and culture.

The circle of inquiry holds the sense of organic community as a safe space from which local and transcultural practitioners can invite and respond to the YPs' expressions of trauma. These expressions were invited using a range of groupwork methods which supported the young people to develop, and express both cognitive and intuitive awareness as evidenced in **6.2**.

The participatory nature of the three circles is complex; its fluid nature creates a constant movement of energy and 'authority' which shifts between the transcultural team, the local practice team and the young people at different stages of progression and awareness. The participatory nature of the circle becomes dynamic and complex as the researcher remains true to the principle of 'co-inquiry' with young people (Heron, 1998). This requires the therapists to use a form of 'reflexive awareness' which responds to young peoples' needs and, at times, their resistance to participate and engage. When their energy is released, it transforms their status as oppressed. The acknowledgement by the transcultural practice team of the status and expertise of local practitioners mirrors this effect. They also carry the trauma of the community which can restrict their full participation and release as much as it also deepens insight.

All three circles of people are in a heightened state of alert, responsive to the circle whilst reactive to an awareness of their own internal responses to the external environment (the psycho-social lens).

7.2 Transformative processes within the circle

The transformative nature of the circle was realised through the use of the following features: the developmental nature of knowledge sequences forming a journey of awareness (Moustakas, 1994, 2001); the participatory nature of the circle (Heron, 1996, 2008) and the rhythmic cyclical nature of the groupwork formation.

The holding space has specific features or principles:

- The circle develops through stages of inquiry about the nature of trauma, the nature of community and the nature of existence moving it towards a higher level of awareness.
- The circle design holds three stages: incubation, experiential platform stage and analysis-awareness stage (Moustakas, adapted: 2001).
- Three rings operate within the circle – young people, local practitioners, and international practice team.
- The outer space is a ring of international protection which holds the local community participants due to its external presence.
- The inner space is a therapeutic and creative discovery platform
- Non-hierarchical participation occurs between the three rings of people, with demarcation of roles but fluidity so that each ring can move into the place of expression and authority.
- Images of the natural world are placed within the circle as an awareness of existential truths and locality. These represent the elements, the landscapes, and the organic community and culture.
- The three rings are dynamic within themselves, but also in interaction with others across the other rings of participants.
- The sequences of the circle are important – the opening rhythm of invitation and engagement; the central rhythm of deep expression and awareness; the therapeutic action rhythm; the closing rhythm which re-grounds and stabilizes before return to the external environment.
- The young people control the creative expressive modes of encounter and therapy.
- The local practitioners hold the circle with expert knowledge of the external environment, hence are caretakers of the ring of safety.
- The external practitioner-researchers are the therapeutic gatekeepers, keeping the rhythm of the circle steady, watchful to the needs of all, local young people and local practitioners, responsive to any who express anxiety, uncertainty or disturbance.
- The developmental nature of knowledge sequences creates the sense of the circle as a formation of inquiry, knowing and 'belonging', hence the journey of participation within it leads to transformation.

Practice Guidance

- At the start and end of each day it is important for the three rings of participants to become one whole circle, to represent the non-hierarchical unity of the whole group as a form of 'therapeutic community'.
- Use of rhythm, movement and circular games mark out the circle each day.

- The three circles of people interact in ways which develop the young person's sense of awareness and resilience so that at the core of the groupwork process they become the authority on their experience of being, community and trauma.
- The rhythmic cyclical nature of the groupwork draws attention with precision to therapeutic response to features of trauma. In this holding space formation the use of tapping, stretching, dance and rhythm create a cyclical motion and measured pace which reassures as well as releasing trauma features. It creates a sense of constancy, control and release for participants in the circle. The rhythmic quality generated parallels the EMDR approach established in conflict zone therapy (Yule, 2015) using tapping motions and sequences to release the physical and psychological strains of trauma. Arguably, in my approach, each therapeutic circle formation will have a different sense of rhythm and flow but, fundamentally, this reflects the energy of individual, community and life flow.

Therapeutic Focus

- The dynamic nature of the circle defies the static and challenges the embedded reality of oppressive forces.
- The holding space is protective, 'holding' in a situation of conflict and destabilisation for a moment in time and inviting truths that build resilience and awareness.
- The heightened status of the young people within the circle invites transformation.
- Honouring the therapeutic instinct within the circle invites the belief in healing and transformation.
- As the groupwork develops, the practitioners use a psycho-social approach to awareness, recognising the features of the external environment destabilising the young person's inner psyche.
- The circle as a holding environment is inclusive and non-hierarchical; it does not control but invite, hence young people have the choice to reveal what they feel safe to express without loss of control of composure.

The transformative nature of the therapeutic circle

The formation of the circle places emphasis on cyclical inquiry and emergent knowledge or awareness. There are a range of transformative dynamics; the developmental stages of the circle and the sequences of creative-therapeutic interventions hold a sense of progression hence transformation. The non-hierarchical and participatory nature of the circle promotes the young person's sense of self-efficacy and growth of resilience hence invites transcendence. The interaction between the three circles generates a deeply humanistic type of respect and mutuality which nourishes the young people in their sense of displacement and invites them back into the circle of 'community'.

7.3 The inner circle

Stillness and silence within conflict zone therapies are acknowledged by contemporary authors (Kohli, 2006; Betancourt, 2013; Cooper, 2014) and, again, echo my initial interest in the 'liminal' (Land, 2011) as a space beyond cognitive definition. The inner space is, in this realisation, the central message of the 'therapeutic holding space'. It invites local people into a sense of retreat which rekindles their inner awareness.

The inner circle is the space between the three rings, the place of silence and stillness which is held by the rings of people. This is the existential core of knowledge which resembles the echo of peace in the natural world; the memory of existential order which transcends the human landscape of competition and disorder. It is within this inner circle that the emblems of the elements are visible representations: light, fire, air, stone, wood, plants and water.

The inner circle is the fire of resilience.

This echoes the internal-external dynamic of the psycho-social model of practice as the external framework speaks of constancy in love, light and peace; the internal framework resonates with the young person's sense of inner self and spirit of resilience. The inner circle generates a message about the balancing of external and internal worlds but, unlike in the traditional psycho-social model where the practitioner holds the authority, in the therapeutic circle, the authority is handed from practitioners to the young people.

The therapeutic circle creates a tangible and visible type of therapy platform; it is still a form of 'treatment space' as practitioners use the inner circle as a point of reference to release features of trauma. The inner circle creates a different therapy or treatment framework which is elemental, rhythmic, interactive and expressive. The narrative takes a new form, a means of emotional connection with others but, equally, a way of exploring the inner self and the psychological divides that trauma can create (Baldwin, 2013). This reinvites the sense of the circle as a therapeutic stage (**5.4**). Within these cycles of experience of the groupwork the individual re-positions their sense of location in the human and the eco sphere. Once this awareness is grounded, it can be carried back into the external world of conflict as a memory of peace and awareness.

The therapeutic holding space, therefore, is a journey towards realisation.

Part Two: Analysis of the Holding Space Model in the Palestine Youth Project

7.4. The Palestinian context and the importance of 'holding'

The Palestine project is about invasion of space, and how practitioners can step into this troubled space and frame it as a different reality. The holding space is understood by conceptualising the sense of 'no space' that can occur in states of psychological distress where a person feels the human world is enclosing and 'hounding' them. This sense of no space was evident in the whole experience of entering Hebron as a city under siege. It was present in the reality of military tactics of occupied

rule, in queueing like cattle to cross checkpoints, in the enforcement of hostile outsider settlements, the destruction of Palestinian homes, the invasion of marketplaces and schools.

Within the Palestinian project, chapter six accounts of Palestinian practitioners and young people articulate the complexity of having no sense of 'safe space' in the external environment (Data extracts: PI Zahira, PI Fayez, PI Majadolean) and no retreat in the home, school, marketplace or mosque (Data extracts: young people narratives and mindmap accounts 6.3). Palestinian accounts reflect the complexity of the human senses in circumstances where there was a constant fear of attack, of hostility and violence; this was expressed with an emphasis on 'ambivalence' (young people mindmap accounts) where somewhere considered safe became unsafe and people considered resilient demonstrated vulnerability. The contradictory nature of these messages reflected the dynamic observed in Palestine where the cognitive state was unable to make meaning or find resolution and the senses were compounded by the heightened realities. The intrinsic disorder created by military siege creates a collective experience of trauma which, beneath the rhetoric, compounds the sense of self, of family, of community. *"Retreat for us is almost impossible as practitioners; we try to hold the secure space but the invasion returns".* (Data extract: PI Zahira).

The holding space was a clear feature of the approach of the practitioners in Palestine; it is articulated by Zahira as a *'holding space for family therapy'* **(6.3)**. Space and place were frequently used to convey how in a hostile chaotic environment the young people can be still, silent and secure. It is 'time out' space.

This emphasis on space for therapeutic practice and retreat is equally a priority focus in the three data platforms of chapter three. Within a conflict context, the concept of a 'holding space' as a form of therapeutic support is intrinsic to the awareness of therapists. However, the crucial recognition is that this form of therapeutic holding space will have its own dynamic transformative quality which is beyond definition, which reacts in complex ways to the conflict environment and which seeks a constancy in its reflexive response to the individual. This is summarized well in the words of the Palestinian social work, Zahira. *The psycho-social approach reminds us to listen to the child's inner self and inner being and to build this sense of strength and identity so that we are the created self not created by the external environment……all children can return in their mind to that sense of belonging. (Data extract:* PI Zahira).

The fundamental question, therefore, is how to form a creative therapeutic space which can engender hope and build resilience for young people reacting to a constant state of siege and displacement.

7.5 The formation of the Palestinian Therapeutic Holding Space Model

There is no safe area – safe is going as far away from the checkpoints as far as possible (Young people mindmap accounts **6.3**).

In the Palestine Youth Trauma Project, the external conflict environment was a constant presence and influence on the therapeutic circle of inquiry. The project occurred at a time of deep community

unrest and changing tactics of siege. These distinct features required recognition in the therapeutic circle design:

The threat to sustainability of human and eco environment: This is echoed in the words of Palestinian practitioners, chapter six and the presentations of Palestinian and international researchers in the Kingston Debates, chapter three. It is described in the United Nations Report 2018, which accounts for the deliberate and sustained targeting of specific communities, the diminishment in targeted areas of sources of humanitarian support, the separation of a people from their land and natural resources. The report records the human impact when a person's sense of location, community and culture is deliberately broken (A.19), emphasizing the impact on people's sense of 'self-determination'. This reflects my premise that the intrinsic purpose of the therapeutic circle is holding the person's sense of self after victimization. Within a contextualisation of perpetual disorder, it creates a sense of calm, of order, and a new vision of reality.

The design of the Therapeutic Holding Space reflexive to local culture and need: The awareness of the nature of local community and practice infrastructure influenced the design of the model. The project was a response to an invitation from local practitioners, reflecting their awareness of the value of local and transcultural practice partnership in circumstances of community crisis. Fayez's words indicate how the holding space design needed to be reflexive to the strains and effects of a specific human landscape and the specific nature of trauma of the young people as 'child prisoners' (chapter six).

The circle gives them dignity and a sense of who they really are. They have all been in prison…this reinstates their sense of self and sense of each other…the circle is meaningful and significant for them. (Data extract: PI Fayez).

The opening circle inquiry invited expressions of the understanding of Palestinian culture and the young person's perceptions of their role within it. The young people accounts conveyed their sense of awareness as representatives of the future of a community and of a culture (**6.2**). Within the Arab culture, it was held alongside an understanding of ancestry and faith, the importance of the mosque and community gatherings (young people accounts, **6.2**).

The core need appeared to be one which would give children a strength they could carry into the daily conflict – a strength of mind and an ability to locate a safe place in the mind as a reminder of harmony and meaning when the external world seemed harsh and uncertain. *The impact of these continuous experiences and fears is deeply psychological. As social workers we try to sustain a harmony, a thread of stability for the children but we can't do it on our own. We have no retreat or safe space. We rely on the international community and practitioners like you who work alongside us. These external formal spaces hold the internal conflict. (Data extract:* PI Riad).

The precise formation of the local practice infrastructure: The Arab practice team of social workers and school counsellors see right to the heart of their people's trauma, manifest in the young people. The therapeutic circle provides a natural platform for local service professionals across disciplines to build alliances as a unified local therapeutic response to need. In the Palestinian context, the therapeutic infrastructure is held by a range of local Palestinian and international NGOs, with local therapeutic responses formed through an alliance of social work and school counselling services. These latter services have precise knowledge of trauma effects in the environment; they also

understand the way this creates psychological disturbances for young people within their cultural and religious landscape.

It is a therapeutic space which engages with their psychological needs and their spirits as individuals. (Data extract: PI Zahira).

7.6 Model adaptation and development

The Palestinian circle design had three stages: opening, experiential, and analysis. The opening section explores local community culture and landscape; the central section explores trauma narratives and expressions; the third stage identifies therapeutic methods in trauma release and resilience development.

Due to the intrinsic and pronounced nature of the trauma within the environment, and the current unstable contextualisation of conflict, the two therapeutic rings of the circle, local and transcultural practitioners, needed to be able to hold a clear line of awareness and response. The local practice circle held the located sense of therapeutic need, yet also experienced symptoms of trauma themselves and in their families. The role of the outer ring of external practitioners was, in this sense, the deepest holding point, as more distanced from the pain of trauma.

The use of creative arts enabled the expression of the aspirations of the young within the community: the right to safe play and safe expression, and the right to free and safe access to learning. *We train children in the techniques that support each other; inviting them to talk about their experiences – individually, collectively, while practitioners hold them.* PI Riad

The interaction within the circle reflected the fabric of close community with a constant juxtaposition of individual and collective. There were two points of vibrancy: when one could step into the circle and express themselves in a way in which they felt honoured and received, and the moments when all held a note, a sense of shared harmony. The spirit of participation was true and aware; this held the therapeutic quality of the circle.

7.7 Project Diary Extracts: Researcher, Hebron 2015

Due to conflict over land, and deliberate destructions of crops and diminishment of the intrinsic Palestinian culture and infrastructure, it was important to open the circle with emblems of the local culture and landscape to honour this place of ancestry. We needed to be able to gain trust, to show respect, empathy and knowledge of the local circumstance and history for a true therapeutic encounter to unfold.

Within this cultural context, the framework was designed to acknowledge the destabilised external environment and invite expressions of the 'trauma narratives'. These narratives needed to be held within an awareness of the cultural and siege contextualisation.

The international team practitioners were constantly watchful of their reflexive actions and the responses of others. Only if we could find this synergy would the therapeutic transference be possible in the groupwork processes. Whilst different levels of authority could shift from the local team to the UK team and to the young people themselves, there appeared to be a silent agreement that all were committed to principles of exchange and discovery. The natural respect for community order was reflected in the way the three rings of people worked in harmony and respect.

The groupwork circle was effective in creating a rhythm and an understanding from which the young people felt sufficient trust and security to express their fears.

The creative arts design nurtured an open expressive platform for the young people to express their community narrative, their trauma narrative, and to recognise features of psychological disturbance.

The circle was effective because of the receptivity of the children evidenced in their enthusiastic and natural self-expression. There was the sense that the group reflected their community and the health of their community – with respect and non-competitive energy evident across practitioners and young people, across ages of young people and genders. It echoed the nurture bonds of community.

The three circles had precise demarcation yet also shifted roles and authorities. As the people make a whole circle this creates the image of a harmonious community and a common purpose; all are affected by the hostility of the external environment so share the sense of participation and security. Each circle holds another.

Project Diary Extracts: PAR Team, Hebron 2015

The holding space – that approach allowed it to work in any space. You are open to the expressive and creative needs of the group and there is a point in the interaction where they will take it over. It is a co-operative leading where you lead them into a space until the moment where they feel composure to take the lead. *TI Mick*

They have little space to express themselves as individuals – the circle gave them the space. *TI Debbie*

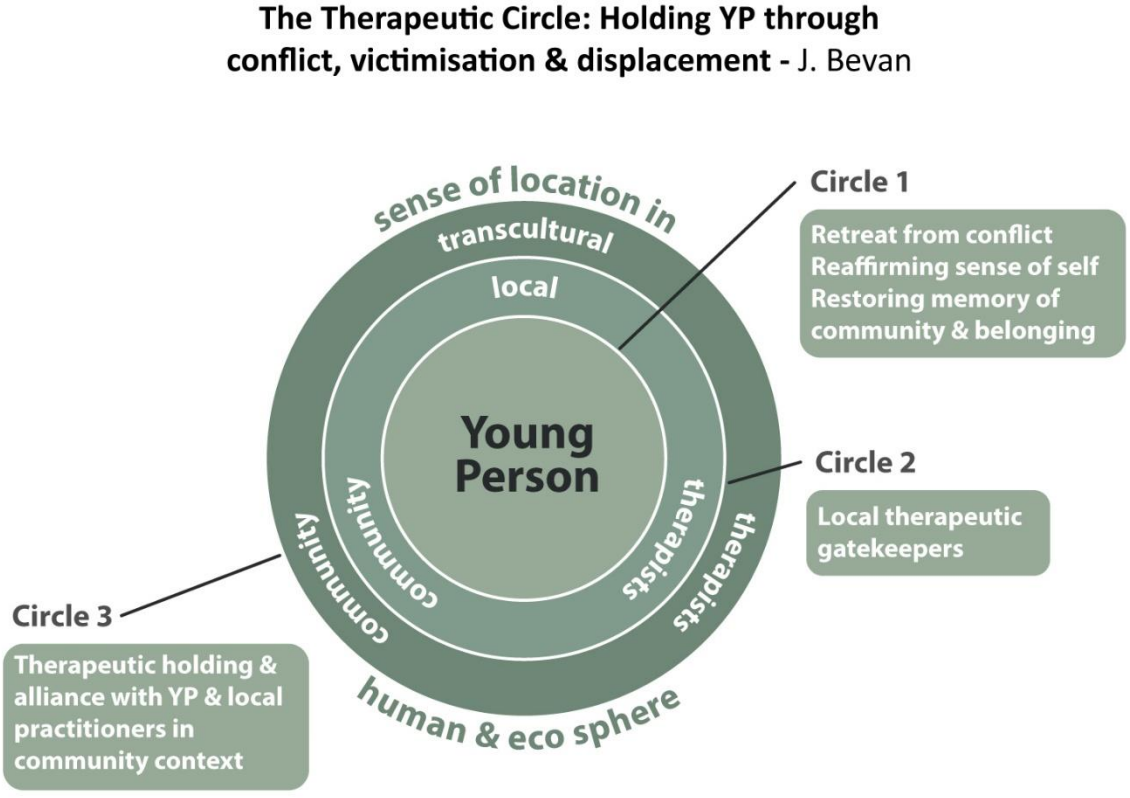
Chapter summary

Within a conflict context, the challenge would be to have an approach pragmatic enough to hold a secure therapeutic space in a destabilised external environment, yet fluid enough to be responsive to the circumstances emerging as the circle develops. Within this context of conflict, the 'holding space' was envisaged by local practitioners to be important therapeutically. This aided the natural development of the circle formation. There was a high expectation on the transcultural team, however, with the challenge of creating a secure sense of space, of retreat in which invasion would not occur. To create this as a tangible reality needed a balancing of vision, instinct and realism to be able to acknowledge and transpose the features of human displacement into notes of community and individual harmony, meaning and hope.

Who holds, who carries, who interprets the trauma? Riad, (Kingston Conference, 3.3). These questions rotate within the therapeutic circle. For displaced people, the aim is to locate their sense of trauma and invite their expression and defining of it within a therapeutic circle based on principles of inclusion and acceptance. To step into a conflict zone as a team of international practitioners and map out the circle requires a visible method of interaction in which the space within the circle represents both space and therapy. As a researcher-therapist, my premise was that space invites a pause in time, developing the capacity for reflective intuition and inviting healing and transformation. The expression of need, if not invited, creates a trauma shadow which is then embedded.

The reflective-reflective instinct which shaped my initial inquiry therefore echoes the nature of reflective awareness defined in the therapeutic holding space approach. Participants become not 'clients' or patients but 'co-inquirers' (Heron, 1998) into existential truths of being and survival. This critical awareness changes the use of language and expression; it prioritises the moments beyond language and into silence which can be realised and honoured within the therapeutic circle.

Fig 7:



Chapter 8: Response to research aims and final explication

Reader guide: My central inquiry was into the concept of a holding space which could support people experiencing internal disturbance due to external environmental conflict. My inquiry sought to understand the lived reality of this form of traumatic experience for young people in the environment of conflict and establish effective practice responses. In this chapter, I return to the research aims, addressing them one by one to examine the conceptual and instinctive knowledge that has illuminated the inquiry. I draw on the Palestine project experience as evidence for the knowledge formations for conflict zone responses, separating out when this is specific to the Palestinian-Arab context and where this context provides generic recommendations for global social work responses to conflict zone need.

My initial research aims were:

To understand the psychological impact of contemporary forms of trauma through youth displacement.

To define the 'therapeutic holding space' as a model of trauma response.

To identify the contribution of social work as a therapeutic practice for young people in conflict.

To develop therapeutic forms of participatory engagement with young people experiencing trauma in conflict.

To define the impact of collaborative research action in community destabilisation.

These five aspects of my initial inquiry have remained central to the development of knowledge, although research aims one and two have dominated the inquiry with the others becoming contributory themes. The primary concern was always to define and evaluate, through empirical research, the holding space as a form of therapeutic circle in a conflict zone. This intention was substantiated in the incubation stage of the thesis with the main literature search. In this final stage of explication my outcomes are supported with primary reference to a selection of trauma theorists, Ursano (1994, 2012), Levine (1997), Nouwen (1998) and Brown (2018) who take epistemologies which align themselves to my developing definitions of trauma awareness and response.

In chapter eight stage one, I address the five research aims identifying developing themes with evidence from formal literature and my empirical data projects. This stage includes a re-examination of my initial premises about the intrinsic essence of therapeutic social work practice and its relevancy to contemporary trauma responses. In chapter eight stage two I consider the therapeutic response of practitioners in conflict zones outlining generic recommendations for practice.

Introduction

The Kogi Indians in the Sierre Nevada mountains of Northern Colombia believe that when a child is born, a part of the star from the heavens is rooted within their spirit. It is their giftedness and their

calling. The responsibility of the tribe and of parents is to nurture the gift; in this way, the child will develop their sense of fulfilment. The discovery of self-awareness therefore becomes our 'birthright', which is discovered by a creative intuitive journey into existential awareness. Within the eco sphere and conscious community spirit, the sense of the developing child is nourished and protected in their emerging sense of self.

This appears to me to have a resonance with all that Maslow (1954), Rogers (1986), and later, Lee (2005) and Heron's work on personhood (2008) has sought to teach practitioners: that there is a form of therapy which is existential. This is fundamentally about how the practitioner acknowledges, listens to, and nurtures the young person's developing sense of being. It is echoed through 30 years of therapeutic relational practice engaging with young people at the point of need, in community settings. Within social work literature distinctly, it is present in the works of Dominelli (2002), Ruch (2005), Howe (2008), Adams (2009), Cooper (2014) and Megele (2015) as a therapeutic approach generating an exchange of energy to potentially release and transform internal conflict. These writers, in my view, have created an important and distinct school of practice teaching, echoed within the Tavistock Debates in chapter three of my thesis (**3.1**).

My initial premise was that forms of youth trauma resulting from circumstances of displacement will 'displace' the person's sense of identity and belonging. Youth trauma has developed in my thesis as an understanding of the psychological impact when the person's sense of connection to their nurture circle, their 'community', is removed. My research findings demonstrate that displacement from, or conflict over, ancestral land creates a distinct type of psychological disturbance in which there is a particular type of internal - external transference: 'existential trauma'. This affect is a 'feeling state' (Levine, 1997) which my data in the Palestine project seeks to define. It is a raw, uncertain, destabilising sense of self, family and community. It can defy expression.

The ontological / epistemological features which framed my inquiry in chapter four required deeper understanding of how meaning is formed in adversity and oppression, in ways that will challenge and split the person's sense of self. Indigenous and non-Western cultures carry trauma as a collective identity and awareness. This has significant implications for the nature of practice responses. I suggest the Western approach assumes a stable community and service environment as a framework for practice. Within the cycle of trauma and conflict, however, the response requires a freshness; an unorthodoxy which transcends professional mandates or templates of practice. This is considered in section two of this chapter, in an acknowledgement of the different ways of defining causes and effects and directing humanitarian service responses.

Research Aim 1: Revisiting trauma as a psychological occurrence in youth displacement

Definitions of trauma reflect philosophical and theoretical influences on understandings of adverse human experience and beliefs about legitimate therapeutic responses. The conventional understanding of trauma in Western world medicine and psychology identifies the experience of trauma as an individual trait, a psychological and medical 'disorder' of the mind. As defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, trauma is "an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (SAMHSA 2014:9). Standard modern accounts

identify features which occur when the trauma reaction to adverse events creates 'pathology'. Brown defines trauma as the severe emotional reaction to a loss state, identifying that 20 to 30 percent of those exposed to trauma will develop post-traumatic stress disorder (Brown 2018:7). The more one is exposed to trauma, in terms of severity and duration, the higher the likelihood of a PTSD diagnosis. "The traumatic event may be re-experienced in the following ways: recurrent and intrusive recollections of the event or the feeling as if the event was recurring; avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and detachment from others; dissociative symptoms; symptoms of increased arousal" (Brown, 2018: 8). In orthodox clinical systems, there will be an inquiry into the person's medical history, psychological and mental health features, treatment programme, and clinical assessment of 'traumatic brain injury' (Feeley, 2016).

Histories of psycho-dynamic theories influenced these orthodox accounts as discussed in chapter two of my research; Bowlby (1951) and Winnicott (1974) guided how therapeutic services respond to the function of children and adolescents affected by attachment deficits and severance of nurture security. Trauma informed systems and services responded to pathological patterns of trauma: "its prevalence, impacts, and interpersonal dynamics" (Brown, 2018:8). The influential ACE Report followed this theoretical convention with a study of the relationship between stressful and traumatic events in childhood and longer-term health conditions (ACE Study, Felitti *et al.,*1998). This study attempted to determine the negative effect of trauma features to promote 'trauma aware' integrated service responses to children affected by 'adverse childhood experience' (ACE Study, Felitti *et al.,*1998). Felitti's research identifies relations between traumatic experience and chronic stress affecting "developing brain and body systems" in childhood and adolescence (Felitti & Anda, 2010:83).

These accounts influenced mainstream trauma service approaches with a dominant philosophical thread linked to individualistic treatment approaches based on identifying 'adverse' or deficit symptoms. I have declared a different ontological basis for understanding the cycle of human well-being and suffering in which the holistic circumference includes, as in Levine's work, learning to understand pain rather than label the reaction to it as 'pathological'. In the generic literature of human loss and trauma, a notable shift occurs when the theorist refers to therapy as opposed to healing (Levine, 1997); in my view, a healing framework acknowledges organic, intrinsic sources of energy in human and metaphysical landscapes. This shifts the focus from trauma system to healing environment and promotes the concept of a natural trauma cycle (Levine, 1997).

The existential lens, a core feature of Levine's work (1997), places adverse human experience within the metaphysical range of human experience, and individual trauma within the constructs of collective community trauma. Within conflict contexts, Browne *et al.* (2012) define 'traumatizing experiences' as "discrimination, poverty, emotional abuse, race-based violence, loss of homeland, disruption of families", noting that these experiences can be historical and inter-generational (2012:11). Recent specialized literature defines forms of trauma affected by community oppression and conflict (Ursano, 2012). These accounts consider trauma within a social theory – social conflict context identifying the importance of "trauma and violence informed care" which acknowledges the histories of marginalised or oppressed populations (Browne *et al.,* 2012:10). Causes of these forms of social trauma are identified as 'systemic inequalities' (Chen *et al.,* 2002) and 'structural violence' (Repetti *et al.,* 2002). Responses include a form of 'culturally-competent care' which takes into

account cultural meanings of oppression and inequality and ways in which these experiences shape well-being and quality of life (Browne *et al.,* 2012).

These conceptualisations of trauma become important influences on my inquiry. The awareness of community oppression and resilience is therefore framed within the context of its cultural responses to human suffering. In my defining of the forms of trauma created through community conflict, a heightened psycho-social lens contributes to the recognition of inter-relational and internal aspects of trauma.

Brown highlights how "change needs to occur within systems and across collaborations" (2018:77) to create more culture and community aware responses in circumstances of external destabilisation. 'Community' might mean one significant relationship: family, ancestral-cultural community, community of practice or peer community. All of these appear relevant within the consideration of how the person moves through a trauma experience. The Tavistock debate in chapter three indicates that experiences of displacement cause a psychological thread of impact – uncertainty, loss, separation, grief, which isolates the young person within their family, and social and cultural landscape. My work, as it develops, increasingly acknowledges literature which defines the psychological state when under perpetual attack, in terms of particular features of resilience building required, as in the Palestinian context, chapter six. This raises a debate about the individual, the therapist and the system around a trauma experience. My work suggests that part of the practitioner response in a conflict context where structural services are affected, is to form a new system to protect against strains in the environment. Brown's work (2018) supports forming innovative community response services which can meet emerging community needs.

Clearly, specific issues occur when trauma pervades a culture, or in the case of Palestine, three generations of a culture. Jabr's work in Palestinian psycho-therapy programmes identifies the connection between sense of self and intergenerational community conflict, describing "the struggle to fashion your identity living in occupation….to promote the resilience of children in Palestinian school programmes….when a community experiences the historic traumatisation of a culture" (Jabr, 2014: 16). Her account deliberately identifies trauma as an assault on cultural identity. This will provide the community with strength of psychological awareness but also risk of absorption and burnout due to the pervasive nature of collective trauma.

My developing inquiry has found congruence with writers who promote a connection between eco-sustainability and health. I align my inquiry to the work of Levine (1997) entitled "Waking the Tiger; Healing Trauma". Levine's account of trauma is fundamental, existential, 'naturalistic'. The trauma state is viewed as an essential part of the human journey of survival and discovery; it is not feared or pathologized. "Trauma has the potential to be one of the most significant forces for psychological, social and spiritual awakening ….(and) ultimately affects how or whether we will survive as a species" (1997:2). Levine's account describes how the person has a natural capacity for recovering from a traumatic experience; it is when the restorative process is 'thwarted' that trauma becomes fixated. Levine acknowledges the potential for a trauma 'awareness' to resolve community conflict and wars at a global level. It is therefore transformative at both individual and collective levels.

As these writers support a community or collective awareness, they also promote the holistic or 'whole person' approach I promote in chapter two, three and four. Levine's work (1997) supports this as fundamental to his theory of trauma responses. Levine's premise is that modern 'medicine'

underestimates the intricacy of the two-way communication between mind and body, hence reduces the treatment response to the tangible and pragmatic. Brown's (2018) work on trauma care promotes an integrated trauma-informed model. Levine describes the 'two faces' of trauma; in one sense, the trauma creates a 'constriction' of normal life and in the other sense, there is the concept of deeper understanding and the capacity to transcend the "ordinary world" (Levine, 1997:195). This substantiates my defining of the metaphysical within the thesis.

Levine's work lays foundations for understanding our human 'wholeness' across cognitive and instinctual states and our innate wisdom to heal. "Because we are instinctual beings with the ability to feel, respond, and reflect, we possess the innate potential to heal even the most debilitating traumatic injuries" (Levine, 1997:19). Developing the definition of 'transcendence', Levine's work promotes recognition of the sensory and physiological responses that occur in reactions to trauma where both body and mind become altered. In such states, mental aspects of denial and disassociation occur but equally the body "tenses in readiness, braces in fear, and freezes and collapses in helpless terror" (Levine, 1997:19). Levine identifies these as normal defence mechanisms.

In this teaching, therefore, the trauma state is a natural part of our life experience; the unhealthy trauma state stems from the frozen residue of energy that has not been resolved or discharged so that we remain in a locked or frozen state (Ursano *et al.,* 1994). Levine describes this as the wild animal response to fear, observing that animals and humans use this response as a freeze state, the 'echo of death'. The freeze state prevents our body and mind moving into shock reactions; the moment passes then we return to composure or harmony. The treatment approach, therefore, requires awareness of the holistic defining of trauma, which allows for a return to a state of natural or dynamic equilibrium. "Trauma resolved is a great gift, returning us to the natural world of ebb and flow, harmony, love and compassion" (Levine, 1997:21).

The important aspect of responding to healing in such teaching is that we do not need so much a defining of trauma as an experiential sense of how it feels. This supports my conceptualisation of the way therapists engage with the instinctual 'feeling state' of the person. Levine describes this as "working with the reflection of trauma, mirrored in our instinctual responses" (Levine, 1997:65). A trauma reaction is largely a physiological state which we must listen to rather than define with logic. Standard definitions will create accounts of biological and psycho-social issues that prescribe a clinical disorder approach. Levine acknowledges the "intricate relationship of the subject of trauma to the physical and natural sciences, to philosophy and to the arts" (1997:1); he defines the trauma experience as the 'journey of trauma' acknowledging the necessary and unnecessary aspects of suffering which occur as it illuminates the enigma of the human spirit. This conceptualisation supports the therapist instinct to use creative arts with young people in the Palestine project to invite 'illumination' as an intuitive state of trauma.

One of the deepest discoveries of the Palestine project was the way that young people and the local community presented trauma as a trauma and resilience cycle. In a conflict community, trauma will be imbued in the earth, the crops and homes so that people live and breathe it. The consequence is that people respond to critical triggers, then move back into a composed state in a more everyday cycle of acknowledged trauma. This is reflected in chapter six in the young people account of trauma within what Jabr terms 'everydayness' (2015). I define this experience as the 'trauma and resilience

dance'; this was expressed in a profound way in the creative arts forum in the Palestine project, chapter six. Some symptoms of traumatic strain will become normalised and surmountable; the impact will not be evident. At other times the reaction will be sharp and pronounced. The different stages of the dance are reflected in people's faces and body postures; this was evident walking through the streets in Palestine and in our intuitive responses to the expressions of the young people when using creative arts to weave their narratives. In this sense, we were using the practitioner 'feeling state', expressed through creativity, as a response to the expressions of experience.

Levine's work describes how people can create a "mastery and wisdom"…"we can learn to identify a traumatic experience by exploring our own emotions" (1997:26). Clearly, traditionally this would be through dialogue and 'talking therapies' but again, in alignment with holistic therapies, I support a wide range of approaches and specifically those which respond to the senses. The use of rhythm, music, dance forms invite people to express and realise their emotional state through body movement. The movement and rhythm nurtures the sense of awareness as it relaxes the cognitive mind. Therapeutic dance approaches enact trauma to convey internalised states through body expression and rhythm which locate them and moves them towards a state of body-mind-spirit harmony.

The response to traumatic events, the extent of trauma debilitation is clearly individual, yet in my premises, intrinsically linked to the person's sense of community and their ability to feel inter-connection.

Research Aim 2: Defining the contribution of the 'holding space' as a model of trauma response in conflict zones

a. Space to reform sense of identity, meaning and belonging

Space emerged in my initial phase of research as an abstract concept; through developing it as a therapeutic circle of people I identified its association with stillness and retreat, a pause in time which creates potential for both self-reflective awareness and deep listening response. The holding space has emerged as a therapeutic circle which creates space and meaning; space and belonging; space and healing. Chapter two (literature review) and three (empirical data) demonstrated how more nuanced understandings of the complexity of belonging emerge within considerations of identity in a conflict community. Each individual will hold different perceptions of identity and belonging within their 'community' of ancestry, of nurture and of current contextualisation. The holding space is therefore a reflective space which allows the young person to stabilise sense of self. All that Moustakas and Heron have taught me in my research elevates the importance of this type of reflexive awareness in people's ability to make meaning of divisions and recognise the capacity to heal. It also resonates with Levine's work as outlined above. In the external environment the young person will be affected by all the signs of community conflict and pain; in the space, the young person can sense the order underneath the conflict, the natural landscape and ancestral place surrounding them.

b. Space and therapeutic response

The elevation of this form of reflexive awareness requires an environment of trust and sufficient stability for resolution and inner 'peace-making'. This peace-making invites the person to redress their sense of conflicted self. This is a transformation of care, arguably a necessary step for the client

to be able to engage with healing and transform, reflected in Wardell's definition of a positive listening space (Waddell, 2002). It anticipates the sense of personal 'agency' in 'sustainable positive change' (Healy, 2014). Levine's work identifies the need for "quietness, safety and protection…. connection with others …to restore our sense of wholeness" (Levine, 1997:37).

c. Space as liberation from oppression

In chapter four I outlined an ontological instinct about how existential trauma occurs as a result of contemporary geo-politics causing psychological splitting and divisive forces across cultures. The trauma the young person carries, in this understanding, results from forces of self-interested power, competition and dominance. In my vision of the therapeutic circle, all have equal status and there is a sense of inter-relational harmony. It is a neutral space as in the meaning of non-conflict; yet also a radical politicized space which defies the dominant paradigm of external conflict forces. The holding space, in this sense, has a powerful transformative quality due to its participatory democratic approach which releases the tensions caused by structural forces and restores the person's composure.

d. Space and the circle as a creative-therapeutic art form to combat isolation and fragmentation

One of the common issues in a conflict context will be service 'fragmentation and separation' (Brown, 2018); the service system reacts to the negative effects of the external conflict just as the individual does, so that individual and therapeutic structure are in a state of flux. This is crucially relevant to the Palestinian account of trauma; it causes the young person to fear the environment and feel alienated from the social context. In Levine's work the 'felt sense' is defined as "the medium through which we experience the totality of sensation……in the experience of trauma there is the amplification of every contraction of psyche, body and soul" (Levine, 1997:195). This is a uniquely individual experience; although I have emphasized how the Palestinian young people identified their sense of trauma as collective, there was also evidence of young people carrying features of psychological trauma which separated and alienated them from the collective.

Simon and Blum (1987) observed the particular psychological state of feeling of fear, hatred and hostility as common reactions to people subjected to 'human-induced trauma'. In times of danger, individuals often seek the shelter of their home environment, their 'haven of safety' (Harlow & Harlow, 1965). Trauma is a shared collective experience which displaced young people will carry in isolation from families and communities. The displaced young person's link to a secure reality and a healing reality is then the practitioner in the IDP camp, others on the journey, and sense of 'community'.

e. The Holding Space and the realisation of hope

"Without hope there is burnout; burnout is the sense that there is no purpose, no sense of meaning whereas hope is the antidote of burnout – it invites the creative outlook which allows a pause in time, a stepping back and a second glance at things" (Levine 1997:24). This second glance opens up possibilities. My work supports the notion of the adaptive spirit; this challenges the established construct and allows for "possibilities for regeneration" (Levine 1997:24). The therapeutic circle of the 'holding space' supported this conceptualisation as it created a reflexive framework for both self-reflection and inter-relational awareness.

The holding space provides a withdrawal from the external disorder; an invitation for self-reflective inquiry, release and the realisation of hope. The holding space in Palestine supported a practice stance which defied diagnostic patterns of trauma, inviting diverse stories and circumstances, hence weaving a thread between individual and collective experience and creating a message about human unity; an underlying order beneath the conflict. This is intangible; it is the mystical transformative capacity of the therapeutic circle when held in balance; that through the eye of appreciation the true, the good and the possible can be realised.

Research Aim 3: Tracing the contribution of social work as a therapeutic practice for young people in conflict contexts.

My work has engendered a critical debate about how social work defines itself across borders in response to the needs of displaced people. This has invited direct expression of practitioners who have been part of transcultural team responses, working at the heart of conflict, hence articulating a reflexive humanitarian social work response to contemporary global need. I have observed how social work within these contexts can form alliances, support local communities and infrastructure, and respond therapeutically with a particular type of professional instinct and skill. I term this the 'true essence' of social work; a form of therapeutic exchange and response.

From the accounts of social work in chapter two (literature review), chapter three (empirical data) and chapter six (Palestinian social work practitioner accounts) I have identified three themes defining the essence of social work in conflict contexts: the protective community instinct, the deep listening/soft therapeutic stance in community response, the transcultural alliance to support communities in crisis. This can be traced across cultures of social work practice; the duality of universal and local lens is well reflected in the Palestinian social work accounts of chapter six. The model of social work practice they represent has clearly evolved as a distinct professional approach in response to enduring siege, yet also portrays an alignment to the universal social work interest in holistic and psycho-social models of practice. Their approach is naturally collaborative and participative across both community representation and services infrastructure; again, the essentiality of partnership within siege dynamics. I honour the integrity and discipline of their practice which holds humanitarian vision and a constant reflexive watch over community. The social workers operated a distinct type of 'mountain outlaw' social work, driving across mountain villages in jeeps with mobiles, communicating with local people about their fears of siege on a daily basis, and operating a 'human shield' approach placing themselves between Palestinian children and Israeli soldiers where there was an identifiable threat of violence and imprisonment. In these latter roles, the language of human rights and childhood rights was interpreted precisely and claimed by local social workers to justify action. This echoes a culture of social work language in the IFSW conference and practice forums when justifying interventions in global issues of childhood violence (Cox & Pawar, 2013) under the umbrella of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (chapter two).

The local Palestinian social work understanding of 'soft therapeutic practice' has evolved, it appears, through partnership work with school psychologists and counsellors. This has created a distinct type of psycho-social awareness with a deep psycho-spiritual intuition. This is reflected, for example, in Zahira's interview in chapter six. In such a desperate community context, it appears crucial to

develop a multidisciplinary instinct which can work across professions for best effect; this is aligned to Megele's account of a "critical integrative psychosocial perspective" (Megele, 2015:4).

Some of the generic features of social work practice presented a challenge within the conflict context. The social democratic agenda of social work in contemporary times has to address the relationship between the individual and political structuralism which prioritises market forces over human exchange. This agenda has been raised by international social work organisations as a concern about "anti-systemic forces" (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2005:209). In Palestine, the political agenda was so pronounced there was almost a need to 'denounce' it in subjugation to a deep listening stance to this child or young person in their individual context. To raise the debate about political agendas would, arguably, perpetuate the preoccupation with outsider agendas over local expressions of community need. Similarly, to raise a debate about anti-systemic forces would be linear in a context where all forces, informal and formal, outsider and insider, held a complex interplay of the individual and collective system. A wariness of local systemic community influence is raised in Jabr's work where she accounts for the risk of collective community voices creating a script of valiant defiance of Israeli threats which cause an individual child or young person to create an imposed sense of victimhood (Jabr, 2014). Street protests, even in the cause of 'non-violent' opposition or peace marches, have caused the death of social workers in recent years.

I have come to understand, through my research, that social work in its humanitarian contribution, is realised as a form of local support for the interplay between the individual and the collective. Hence, the systemic holistic approach, accounted for in chapter three in this thesis (Tavistock Debates) is aligned with the psycho-social model in Palestinian accounts, yet in a particular way in which family and community traditions reflect Arab culture and faiths. This approach is systemic and inter-generational, hence guides social workers to hold a strong indigenous stand for young people who are displaced or marginalised. It also teaches how local people respond with the whole circumference of physical, cognitive, psychological and spiritual awareness to circumstances of suffering and grief. It is a culture which can hold and sustain its people through the life cycle and through the generations.

The systemic vision of sustainable community conveys a distinct ancestral hierarchy where community leaders have an authority and mothers and fathers have more distinct and less fluid gender orientated roles than in current European culture. Palestinian males honour mothers and women as home makers, although many of the social workers and psychologists we have worked with are also women in active professional roles. Megele (2015) notes how psycho-social work is influenced by 'existential philosophies' and a systemic awareness of the environment surrounding the child or young person. The systemic approach contributes this critical awareness to social work practice in interpreting cultural formations of family and community around young people.

One of the richest aspects of social work for me is its capacity to frame a unique reflexive approach to diverse circumstances and communities. My work prioritised the combination of holistic practice and psycho-social awareness in preparation for the Palestine project approach. The holistic approach seemed important to me in trauma response, providing the different aspects of mind-body and spirit awareness within understandings of the child's 'inherent self' (Megele, 2015). Megele contrasts this with a growing service instinct in Western world practice to understand the child's 'calculable' self and the emergence of a 'contract culture' where everyone is related to the other

through contractual obligations formerly agreed….a defence "against the anxiety of 'not-knowing'" (Megele, 2015:4). However, within a Palestinian-Arab Moslem culture it appeared that this sense of holistic and spiritual worth was a presence without needing a professional theoretical articulation. Coulshed describes this essence, in a social work context, as "the value of relating to others in a way which recognizes their experience as fundamental to understanding and action" (Coulshed, 1991:2). Within the Palestinian context, there was a strong sense of what Megele describes as 'self and other-awareness' (Megele, 2015) and holistic community awareness of the intrinsic worth of young people. This focus on youth self-worth seemed to be the primary focus of the social workers, demonstrating, for me, how global and local features of social work create a particular essence of humanitarian social work engagement.

In the Tavistock Debates (chapter three), practitioners suggested the need for new forms of therapeutic response to the threat to composure young people face in current circumstances of conflict. I believe my research inquiry in considering current contextualisations of youth trauma substantiates this need. The development of social work in therapeutic response to contemporary forms of childhood transition is considered by Gupta and Featherstone (2020) in a study of the psychological condition of children moving through adoptive processes. The study promotes the reflexive nature of social work practice and the importance that practitioners engage with the 'multiplexity' and 'complexity' of such human experiences without adopting a linear or established service narrative. The authors place central focus on the quality of social work in response to the child's psycho-emotional processing during experiences of transition. The adoptive child is at risk of what the authors term 'emotional trespass': "trespass occurs in the normalization of some standards over others"…"legitimizing some behaviours, and marginalizing others" (Gupta & Featherstone, 2020: 170). The authors promote the importance of allowing the child 'adequate space for expression' of the raw feelings resulting from loss. This support is defined in a precise way in which the range of emotions of loss, anger and grief are combined with the awareness of hope. This essence of engagement is, therefore, rooted within critical social awareness, with a framework which "addresses the social and economic contexts" of experience (Gupta & Featherstone, 2020: 172) yet also acknowledges the transcendent capacity of the person.

These conceptualisations of a psycho-emotional intuitive response to complex child and youth transition run in parallel to my vision of how social work can offer a transformative encounter based on 'compassion' and 'strengths based' practice (Saleebey, 2006), outlined in chapter two. Cooper (2017) supports this contemporary form of psychological instinct in social work engagement which guides the "capacity for attunement to our emotional experience of ourselves in relation to others; attunement (enables) the flow of emotional transactions between ourselves and others" (2017:12). Cooper defines this type of engagement as "use of self in the inter-subjective field" (2017:14); it relies on the practitioner's "emotional receptivity" with an awareness of the "complexity and subtlety of processes" (2017:13). His focus is specifically the way that social work engages with individuals with 'troubled mindstates' in which the subconscious and unconscious energies can affect the nature of the exchange. Cooper's work, therefore, reflects the more psycho-intuitive aspects of therapeutic social work, engaging with not only the social aspect of self but the inner psychological state in the face of deeply challenging experience.

It is this form of psycho-intuitive practice as a soft type of therapeutic social work in community contexts that I have sought to define in my research. It is conveyed in the Tavistock debates and

their representation of a deeper essence that has been held in the heritage and development of social work across cultures. The Tavistock circle in **3.1** identifies the complexity of this more therapeutic model of psycho-intuitive response which seeks to work with the new emergences of community need and specifically youth need.

The capacity of our profession to therapeutically respond to the complex face of separation, fragmentation and displacement young people experience requires a new vision. This means sitting alongside the 'troubled edge' of human need and honouring the person's sense of holistic awareness in processes of psychological challenge. In this thesis, this requires understandings of how to nurture the capacity of the child or young person to find meaning and transcend the negative spiral of complex experience. Cooper acknowledges the impact of 'defence mechanisms' and the risk that if the practitioner is not intuitively engaged and self-aware, there is a risk of "unrealized transference, countertransference, projection and splitting" (2017:12). This psycho-intuitive awareness, identified by Cooper, is resonant for me of my understanding of the type of psycho-social practice social workers engage with in Palestine, and an important part of the cognitive-instinctual awareness required within my design of the therapeutic holding space.

The distinct contribution of social work as 'essence' is therefore defined in my research as: a form of psycho-intuitive awareness in contemporary forms of therapeutic engagement, holistic practice and holistic awareness for re-attuning sense of self, social work and eco awareness of the innate human instinct to heal.

Research Aim 4: Defining therapeutic forms of participatory engagement with young people experiencing trauma

Brown's work (2018) calls for innovative community-based services which are both trauma-informed and promote trauma specific interventions in integrated models. This is based on the systemic vision of an individual's mental well-being understood in the context of community wholeness (Smith, 2013). Principles of the community model include safety and nurture, trustworthiness, collaboration, empowerment, choice (Brown, 2018:63); an echo of the principles of participation in my research.

In a conflict community, the community holds the service approach rather than hands it over to formal service responses. In Palestine, all are watchful of those affected by the environment; therefore, the experience is located in the organic community 'sense of place'. In this awareness, the framework is consistent, as held by ancestral lines, and trauma aware because trauma is recognised as intrinsic to the social landscape. In Palestine the therapeutic practitioners represent community as much as formal services; there is less demarcation between the vulnerable and those who respond. This lesser form of hierarchy more naturally supports the participatory principle of my research as evidenced in chapter seven in observations of how the three rings of the therapeutic circle are more fluid and equal.

At community level, both Brown (2018) and Levine (1997) use epistemologies which demonstrate the role of organic systemic energy in resilience and transformation. It is equally acknowledged in contemporary humanistic writers such as Elworthy (2014) and Salomon & Nevo (2012) as a peace building philosophy opposing the conflict emerging in competitive divisive influences. Palestinian social work accounts, chapter six, reflect a belief that it is a deliberate siege tactic to fragment sense of self, through intrinsic family and community bonds. As a survival mode, therefore, the purpose of

the collective is to allow the displaced individual or group to make sense of their experience and resilience through human and social reconnection. This conceptualisation of community loyalty stands in contrast to the individual model of assessment; the young person is assessed within their community framework and this realisation interprets a different model of human loss within fabric of community where the individual matters less than the collective. This was observed in Palestine where young people would ask how they could be equipped to treat cousins, younger siblings and neighbours, hence diminishing their own sense of need to champion the needs of others.

In chapter one I claimed the participatory principle as my fundamental premise which would challenge oppressive forces against young people and would transform their sense of diminishment. Brown (2018), in parallel to Levine (1997), recognises the potential for traumatic experience to lead either to crisis or to an opportunity for transformation. Both theorists recognise that in community crisis transformation can occur at a collective level. The Palestinian conflict, when articulated by therapists, always reflects both the anticipation of release, of community restoration, but also the way in which a culture learns to transform within the context of conflict. This is reflected well in the three Palestinian oratories of Riad, Jusef and Munther in chapter six. In my view, the more participative worldview, articulated well by Reason (2013) within the PAR tradition, will invite radical and critical social theoretical stances for participatory inquiry which is crucially present within the awareness of a community under siege.

Rather than Western world pathologising of the individual with trauma, the community framework, based on sense of alliance and affinity, aids individual composure as it shifts the sense of trauma 'burden' discussed in Brown's work (2018) from the individual to the community. It has a complicated interplay, however; in my findings in chapters six and seven, there is a sense of co-dependency which is both benevolent and restrictive. At times, the young people appear subordinate to collective stability; at times, the community protects and takes risk for the young people. This is echoed in the role plays performed by the Palestinian young people (recorded in chapter six) where an old man walks across the street to challenge two armed soldiers accusing three teenagers, a vulnerable man as human shield against armed forces.

These inspirational yet complex voices of community are echoed in the Kingston Conference presentations, chapter three. The symbols and imagery of Palestinian oratories create complexities and many shaded nuances which reflect complex influences of individual valour and community resilience; the 'martyr' symbolism can deflect from the individual reality of the complex psychological reactions and understandings of personal trauma. This Jabr (2014) describes as the 'duality' of the psychological spirit of the Palestinian child: innocent victim and martyr hero.

More nuanced understandings of the complexity of belonging emerge within considerations of identity in a conflict community. The internal fractures become symptomatic of the environment of siege. These are deep dilemnas for 'outsider' practitioners to respond to; hence the crucial inner ring of local practitioners within the holding space design of my research. Whilst the outsider ring is a reminder of the universal laws of practice where each individual will hold a perception of identity and belonging within their sense of 'community', local practitioners can hold this multi-dimensional community account of trauma with insider frameworks for the young person's trauma 'narrative'. Within the strength of Palestinian-Arab community, the individual is intrinsically connected to the collective, in a way which allows sense of self to become a part of the 'greater good'.

Research Aim 5: Defining the impact of collaborative research action in community destabilisation

I have noted above how the therapists in Palestine become more the backcloth of community than a separation of community and service responses often present in European welfare formations; this is significant in understanding how a transcultural social work intention to support local community is intertwined with support for local service infrastructure. This can be a feature of community work with women's projects which includes negotiation between local people and service responses in a participatory-therapeutic way; in a study by Brown of women's services she noted the importance of women's voices shaping the "controlled structure of the modified therapeutic community" (Brown: 2018:10).

In Palestine, the local community infrastructure is in a constant state of debate and negotiation. This results in a heightened trauma awareness, yet a more subjective service lens influenced by human experience of suffering and injustice. In my view, the transcultural social work team acknowledges the depth of local trauma knowledge, whilst creating a more neutral socio-political framework for the outer ring of the therapeutic circle. This requires negotiation about professional social work organisational mandates for disciplined interventions and legitimate action in a conflict zone.

Brown notes the importance of the child understanding the secure world around their experience (2018). Modification and negotiation is a form of practice reflexivity, therefore, which can transcend traditional forms of social work 'advocacy' in child protection and liaison in support of more innovative forms of negotiated intuitive response. The transcultural team will use the language of the international federation of social work and its professional vision of human rights and social justice; the local practitioners will hold awareness of cultural beliefs about childhood well-being and community healing. The young person has the precious unique insight of their world. A meeting point between these perspectives needs to be found within the inner ring of the therapeutic circle.

Lee's work (2005) on youth 'separability' releases the young person to establish their own sense of survival and fulfilment. Levine's work describes how the wild animal falls back to the pack for survival when in fear: "prehistoric peoples, though many were hunters, spent long hours each day huddled together…" (Levine, 1997:18). The ability to engage with the support system will depend on how the young person manages their sense of trust and sense of fear, and how they interpret their sense of belonging and adolescent emergence (Brown, 2018:4).

The juxtaposition between local and transcultural teams enables a more critical cycle of individual-collective awareness which priorities the rights and identity of young people. The community framework, although an essential presence, reacts to an unstable environment of siege. There are, arguably, three environments in interplay: the community cultural and ancestral landscape, the forces of military occupation, the formal service responses which include local and national social work and school counselling services in conjunction with international community projects and NGOs. In this model, the transcultural social work and Community Practice Team creates its own organism of support around the young person.

8.2 Defining the therapeutic response to youth trauma in conflict zones

I would suggest that the essence of social work, claimed in this research, is a valuable but not exclusive contribution to the formation of transcultural team responses to contemporary conflict zone trauma. The generic model of therapeutic response outlined in this chapter can be provided by a range of community therapists including social workers, community psychologists and mental health practitioners, educators and youth workers. It is within this diverse and collaborative context that social work offers a contribution with its primary professional definition of response to crisis.

8.2.1 The individual identity in conflict: sense of self, sense of fear

It is the fear of the hunted, arguably, which will potentially separate the already displaced individual from the social sphere. The fear of threat to survival, of self and others, is accounted for in the work of Baum *et al.,* 1983. This account outlines the extreme trauma which occurs where victimhood is the result of deliberate human targeting as opposed to freak accident or natural disaster. Ursano *et al.* (1994) observe that individuals commonly feel 'helplessness', 'isolation' and 'powerlessness'. Further studies acknowledge the internalised psychological symptoms of self-blame, loss of composure and sense of loss of control compounding the risk of threat to sense of self. This internalised fear risks setting into psychosis, inducing the perception of a permanent state of alienation (Levine, 1997; Brown, 2018). In Ursano's account, social roles of victimhood can include a range of symptoms including alienation, hostility and hero identity which separate the individual from the assumed 'norm'. "The role of hero or saviour can be seductive, but it is also isolating and in the long run may lead to the individual being treated as 'damaged' (Ursano, 1994:41). This dissonance is internalised so that the person carries a yearning for release and belonging.

Dwyer (2000) notes the need for human 'affiliation' when people face a complex or unknown threat, identifying the importance of 'social comparison' in anxiety reduction by comparing shared features and experiences. Trauma theorists identify how the established psychological state creates a conflicted sense of self identity, a paradox, in that "although we tend to experience ourselves as unitary, the very act of self-reflection (when one part of myself takes a view of another part of me), demonstrates a fragmented self in operation" (Brown, 2011: 198). Ryle and Kerr (2002:35) describe this sense of being as more of a 'federation' than a single state and Brown uses the term, 'separate self-states'. Brown develops the discussion in terms of the way these emotional states affect the individual's ability to make rational decisions. "Troubled people…lurch from one to another, or they fall into extreme states of despair or helplessness, anger or humiliation without knowing how to get back onto level ground. These internal fractures create disunity in a person's sense of themselves" (Brown, 2011:198).

This sense of 'disunity' is an important realisation in my inquiry. Van der Kalk's work (2014) on the way that psychological trauma roots itself in the mind and then diffuses into the body appears a true conceptualisation for understanding the trauma of land displacement affecting young people. I have seen in Palestine that tactics are designed to establish the mental sense of the human as a hunted animal, without roots and with physical sense of body displacement. This sense of uncertainty and dislocation will cause psychological forms of dissonance and splitting that theorists such as Levine (1997) and Brown (2018) account for. The nature of conflict trauma, therefore, requires a response

which generates a person's sense of intrinsic existential worth – the whole self, the inter-relational self, connected to life and others in social, environmental and metaphysical spheres. This connects with my initial premise about a practice response which reaffirms the person's sense of value, connectedness, and holistic awareness.

My instinct about the importance of holistic practice is confirmed within this ontology. Orthodox Western medicine, which treats the mind in separation from body, creates a form of human splitting which prevents the body from using healing energies to disperse the false notions of separated self. It alienates the individual within a framework of psycho-pathology. This thesis challenges such medicalizations and invites the intuitive-creative approach with less prescribed, more reflexive forms of therapy. Such conceptualisations nurture the person's capacity for "authentic transformation" as in Levine's work: "trauma amplifies and evokes the expansion and contraction of psyche, body, and soul" (Levine, 1997: 195**).**

The fundamental challenge for this inquiry is how to define fluid, reflexive responses which touch the metaphysical and the miraculous. This is the importance of inviting a depth sense of the intuitive. Levine observed that "people don't need a definition of trauma. We need an experiential sense of how it feels" (1997:24). The healer-therapist, therefore, needs to validate the person's sense of self, through deep listening to their expression of self in frameworks of existential healing. This framework is an expression of sense of self, sense of being, and sense of community.

Levine's account (1997) would suggest the claiming of the trauma narrative is an essential part of the existential journey. However, his work also recognises the inherent complexity of the trauma narrative due to the duality of understanding and feeling. Practitioners receive narrative accounts at critical and complex points of human suffering. Van der Kolk emphasized the deep connection between the intuitive self and the ability to process complex experience; survival narratives will be influenced by perceived and established societal constructs of well-being and the person's sense of the practitioner's 'therapy' narrative.

Levine describes how the individual energies of a victim of abuse or trauma can get caught up in 'beliefs' about violation which can continue to perpetuate and diffuse clarity of vision. This is part of the natural processing of the 'felt sense' and can occur at both physiological and psychological levels. His account suggests the need to communicate with the 'felt sense' in a way which acknowledges the physiological and psychological responses and the way the human organism communicates across body, mind and spirit. This premise supports my research instinct about the importance of the holistic lens. In its broadest sense, this includes recognition of the relationship between images, sensations and memories and their influences on the person's narrative of trauma.

The human mind often fragments the experience of trauma into parts to 'de-intensify' the emotions and the feeling state (Levine, 1997). Hence, memory becomes distorted and regulates our emotions in a way which creates avoidance or denial of full experience or liberation. Fixed memory becomes a literal or pragmatic account of experiences which risks denial of the freedom to feel, to fully experience all aspects of living. Levine suggests this influences our conscious and unconscious sense of self. "The key to transforming trauma is to move slowly in the direction of flexibility and spontaneity" (Ledwith, 2011:23).

Levine notes how in shamanic teaching the role of healers is to "restore health and balance individuals and communities where it has been disrupted" (1997:57). Shamanic teaching views illness and trauma not as individual symptoms but as a whole community concept where individual healing is connected to ancestral wisdom about collective human sustainability and fulfilment. The individual fear of the hunted within this story of community is that they will break the thread of tradition and ancestral knowledge of survival.

8.2.2 Refining the therapeutic response to 'existential trauma' in conflict zones

I began my inquiry seeking to define a depth form of holding therapeutic relationship. Experiential data accounts in my research describe where circumstances of critical tension in local natural and human environments create distinct types of splitting and oppression as psychological disturbances for young people. The urge for a community to separate themselves from, and stigmatize victims is founded on the sense that this maintains their own sense of 'personal invulnerability' (Ursano *et al.,* 1995). This is a strong force for self and community preservation which potentially destabilizes and outcasts the individual: 'displacement'.

The urge to alienate in a conflict community further blames the 'victim'; victims often experience feelings of "helplessness, loss of control, threat to life" (Ursano *et al.,* 1995:40). The psycho-social framework promotes a more critical awareness of such destructive processes and the observation of the psychological impact on those displaced (Ursano *et al.,* 1995). Brown (2018:15) identifies that **"**trauma-informed care is about creating a safe environment based on an understanding of the effects of trauma, to ensure that therapeutic encounters are safe, affirming and validating." Megele uses the term 'being present' to describe a form of "holding relationship that is empowering" and "enables positive change" (Megele, 2015:5). I have refined the understanding of conflict-based trauma in my research to recognise forms of 'existential therapy' which require a critical psycho-intuitive lens.

Psycho-social awareness can reinstate the individual's internal sense of composure and secure the social framework surrounding them. Psycho-social theorists identify these as important modulating processes; Ursano *et al.* highlight the following objectives:

- to facilitate the working through and integration of stressor experiences
- to support the formation and pattern of community responses
- to respond to the dislocation and disruption of social frameworks
- to direct the social movements of professional support and debriefing

Ursano *et al.,* 1995: 13

Transformation through developing sense of self, within practice therapy literature, occurs not only through a deeper sense of respect for the young person and their unique identity (Ledwith, 2011:23) but the release for the young person through their increased self- awareness. The development of self-knowledge is at cognitive and instinctive levels. Levine defines this awareness as the 'realm of the felt sense'; a form of 'holistic awareness' as I have come to understand it, within this inquiry. My definition of holistic awareness as a therapeutic construct includes two principles, the importance of intuitive awareness and exchange as a healing process, and the process of receptivity and validation within personal transformation.

a. Intuitive awareness and exchange within personal transformation

Nouwen's conceptualisation of the 'wounded healer' (1979) is a primary influence on my definition of holistic awareness in therapy. He elevates a therapeutic understanding of the other person through connection with the healer's own sense of suffering. This guides my aim to articulate how the therapist and the young person can form a dialogue which is more mutual, more existential as a recognition of the circumference of human experience shared between them. Nouwen's work considers the modern threat to the existential awareness of humankind through technical and industrial approaches which curb creative-spiritual intuition and disturb the natural sense of 'ecological balance'. He describes the "prisoner of the now, caught in the present without meaningful connections with his past or future" (1979:4). Nouwen's consideration of man's search for meaning and purpose resonates with my premise about the effect of trauma on the young person's sense of self and reforming identity through personal crisis. In Nouwen's account of health and therapy, the primary principle is a spiritual awareness of the human capacity for re-birth.

Central to the design of my therapeutic circle is the point of stillness and silence as the space beyond language, beyond dialogue, and beyond definition. Nouwen defines the 'mystical way' and the 'revolutionary way'. The mystical way is the awareness that in man's inner life there is a connection with the "reality of the unseen", "the source of being", "the point of silence" (Nouwen, 1979:16). This awareness connects the person with the universal: "…he finds a center from which he can embrace all other beings at once and experience meaningful connections……it is a form of "experiential transcendence" in which he can reach the "depth currents of his own life" (Nouwen, 1979:16).

The revolutionary way is the way of "transcending our human predicament", in which Nouwen refutes the conventional talk of "adaptation" with a more radical unleashing of the desire to "liberate the poor and end human conflict" (Nouwen, 1979:19). This, for me, is resonant of the truest vision of radical social work. Nouwen suggests these two ways are not exclusive but can be components of "experiential transcendence". In the revolutionary way, man is "not ruled by manipulation or weapons but is ruled by love and supported by new ways of interpersonal communication" (Nouwen, 1979:18). This, again, echoes my sense of the contribution of social work in international peace-building movements as outlined in chapter two.

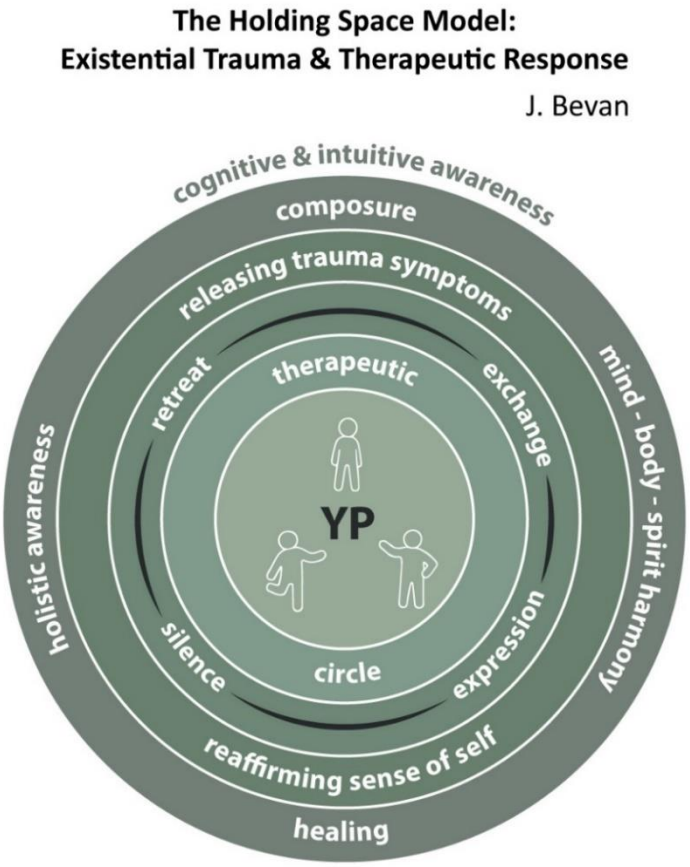
b. Receptivity and validation within healing processes

Within a conflict context, competitive and violence forces distort all; therefore, the practitioner requires a deep compassionate-humanitarian commitment to others to understand justified alliances and responses to need. This knowledge has illuminated my search to define a distinct form of psycho-intuitive practice in therapeutic response to young people in conflict zones. Megele observes the importance of an awareness of the impact of complex experiences on the person's psycho-emotional state. She observes that the challenge for practitioners is to "defend the complexity and contain the anxiety of emotionally charged human encounters". These include the ability to "bridge the individual's internal subjective feeling states such as pain, want, suffering, grief, love and hate" and to respond to a variety of forms of cognitive processes in "thoughts, values, beliefs and attitudes" (Megele, 2015:5).

There is a need for critical recognition of the distinct reactions to trauma which make the young person vulnerable. Levine defines such symptoms as “incomplete psychological responses suspended in fear”. Validation and attunement are terms used across the therapy-trauma literature (Ursano *et al.,*1995; Levine 1997; Brown, 2018). Attunement as a principle invites depth listening to the person’s emotional state with a sense of empathy and compassion. Receptivity (Butler, 2013) is an important concept in restoring the person’s sense of self.

The processes of affirmation and validation are part of the healing cycle. Southwick and Charney (2018) identify resilience as “the ability to grow from adverse events and find meaning in them” (2018:8) suggesting a focus on psychological healing. My work developed searching to define psychological therapy based on two therapeutic priorities: the conceptualisation of the energy of the young person in relation to their sense of personhood, and their sense of connection to social and metaphysical spheres. My research intention was to utilise a broad range of therapy and healing literature in which resilience theorists focus on psychological and physical-biological energies as multi-dimensional sources of restoration. The emphasis on holistic awareness within the eco-environment generates a sense of stability beneath the surface of human conflict as a message of hope for metaphysical regeneration. The healing process, therefore, is both multi-faceted and simple; it is crucially important that the practitioner can nurture the individual’s sense of fluid, adaptive energy to avoid the establishment of maladaptive symptoms. Vaillant (2002) describes resilient individuals as resembling “a twig with a fresh, green living core. When twisted out of shape, such a twig bends, but it does not break; instead, it springs back and continues growing” (2002: 285).

Fig 8:



Chapter summary

My research has demonstrated the importance of therapeutic circles within conflict and trauma therapy. However, I recognise this research vision of the therapeutic circle requires a distinct form of trauma awareness and response to nurture healing processes. Chapter seven defined the holding space as a therapeutic circle formation; in chapter eight, I have refined the forms of therapeutic encounter and response applicable within the approach based on a 'creative synthesis' of all the teachers and guides that have contributed to this research account.

In this chapter I have endeavoured to identify principles for this type of therapeutic encounter. The nature of trauma has been defined as a reaction to sources of conflict which alienate the young person from their sense of nurture community. This 'displacement' requires a distinct form of therapeutic listening to the impact of the environment surrounding the young person. I have defined this form of therapeutic listening as holistic or existential awareness, a more critical therapeutic understanding which acknowledges the complex, fluid and multi-dimensional nature of conflict trauma.

This understanding of conflict trauma elevates the importance of the nature of space as retreat for the person to redress their sense of self within a secure social context. This social context is a form of community which will have distinct influences within the location of the therapeutic intervention. Hence, it is a therapeutic response formed in negotiation with therapists and community leaders who represent the young persons' understanding of culture and community. This negotiated premise of a 'holding community' can address the sense of displacement and trauma the young person carries, inviting expression and release of a range of physiological-intuitive-sensory responses to adverse experience.

This is the 'therapeutic holding space'; it reflects a vision of an organic community where the individual can locate self within a non-hierarchical, non-competitive state. In the Palestine project, the coyote is invited into the circle of young people. The coyote represents the presence of the wildness in supporting the human cycle of sustainability and growth. Chapter eight, through the teachings of Levine, invites into the research the presence of the tiger; the trauma tiger who is watchful, alert, intuitively aware within the wilderness. The tiger, in this research journey, represents the spirit of intuitive survival. It is not susceptible to forces of human separation but at one with the natural world, others and sense of self. Malinski presents the genuine encounter with a therapist as a 'heartsong for the healing spirit'(2004: 89). It is a heart song of compassion and loving kindness without self-interest.

Chapter 9: Final comment

In this thesis, I sought to develop understandings of trauma as the complex reaction to human experience within political and social oppression. This required defining:

> contemporary therapeutic approaches which are tangible yet reflexive to the nature of disorder in the external environment of conflict.
>
> the nature of social work and allied community therapies in such contexts, recognising the requirement for a different form of therapeutic exchange in response to deeper or 'existential trauma'.
>
> the value of the therapeutic groupwork circle, with identification of principles and features of its formation.

Due to the extent of human displacement in contemporary eras, it appeared necessary to refine the contribution of transcultural social work practice in communities at war and in humanitarian crisis. This has been achieved by taking knowledge from conventional social work epistemologies in psycho-social and holistic therapy and combining these with influences in indigenous community teachings around human and earth consciousness. This creates, in my view, a deeper form of intuitive awareness in therapeutic response to youth trauma, influenced by an ontology based on human connectedness to the earth beneath our feet. I suggest, in my thesis, that this conceptualisation is true to an intrinsic essence of therapeutic social work, and equally resonant of philosophical thought in broader community therapies.

At the core of my inquiry was the intention to define and evaluate a formation of practice in which to situate this type of psycho-intuitive therapy. The therapeutic holding space emerged as a model of therapeutic groupwork circles, recognisable within conventions of social work and allied community practice. My research inquiry, in response to young people living at the heart of conflict in Palestine, demonstrated that in such circumstances therapeutic circles are understood and valued as tangible forms of therapeutic retreat and response. The knowledge formed in the therapeutic circle in Palestine confirmed that social work has a distinct essence in war zones as a form of conflict release. Its established form of psycho-social therapy requires, however, a deeper psycho-intuitive lens responding in a reflexive way to the disorders emerging in the ever-changing environment.

As a therapeutic social worker and researcher, I recognise this as the dynamic feature of our professional practice: its fluid relational response to need. This is a complex dynamic to define; Cooper (2017) highlights the complexity and subtlety of the 'inter-subjective field' surrounding the displaced child or young person. In circumstances of conflict, in my view, this requires understanding how intuition and cognitive awareness co-exist with the bewilderment of shadows of grief, trauma and despair. The search for holistic equilibrium will, clearly, be a different balancing act for each person in reaction to their environment of conflict. The therapeutic groupwork circle generates the capacity for attunement to our emotional experience of ourselves in relation to others. The deepest truth I perceived in engagement with young people in Palestine in a state of constant uncertainty and fear was their capacity to create a new reality. This new awareness could hold the pain of

trauma with an existential sense of belonging taught through ancestral and cultural lines of community harmony.

In summary, what I have sought to define reflects social work as a profession which responds to community conflict, using a groupwork convention which, in its truest form, is integrative across community therapies and within transcultural and local formations. This chapter concludes the inquiry with definitions of knowledge formed through the journey of my research.

9.1 The final voice

Moustakas indicates that the heuristic process has an internal clock: "It is beyond time…It is not ruled by the clock but by inner experiential time….one completes the quest when one's story comes to a point of natural closing" (Moustakas 1990:30).

I opened my thesis with the image of the standing stone and the human circle as the existential memory of humanity and existence. I have sought to express how social workers have echoed this vision in formations of therapeutic groupwork with young people, defining the therapeutic significance of the holding space as a circle of 'community' or humanity around them. The therapeutic circle invites conceptualisations of psychological health and trauma within people's understanding of 'holistic awareness'.

The inquiry

My research intention has been to contribute the model of the therapeutic holding space as a tangible response to psychological trauma in a range of forms of youth displacement and family conflict. This is a very contemporary context of human pain and trauma; since my research formed in 2012, the years of human displacement caused by the Syrian conflict have brought to the frontline debates about migrancy and resettlement, human rights and social justice across nations and cultures. No one is removed from the present concern about how meaningfully to respond to those around us who are in transition and hardship due to displacement.

My thesis has taught me a new language of expression and awareness; guided primarily by Moustakas and Heron, and also the many established writers and the emergent voices of young people, community therapists and leaders at the heart of this research subject. I have learnt that in order to deepen my understanding of the pain and awareness that people carry through complex experience, I need to first establish my sense of self and to articulate the search for mind-body-spirit harmony that resonates within me. It is the memory of belonging, which can be more deeply realised through displacement and the human search to redefine awareness of identity and meaning after displacement. This is a type of 'tiger trauma' (Levine, 1997); it is fierce and unchartered, but also inspirational and transformative. It transforms the written word into the poetic; within the Palestine project where young people faced such extreme challenges, this poetic spiritual state was an echo of their spirit and expressions. It appeared the natural mode of expression.

Heron (1998) guided me to respect how people use their sensibilities to explore their 'relationship with being'. Moustakas contributed the vision of 'holistic therapy' (1990) to guide therapeutic

response in forms of mind-body-spirit restoration. My professional career commenced in statutory UK social work and progressed into an academic and research post which allowed me opportunities to develop international social work partnerships. I worked in communities in Russia and Ukraine with families facing destabilisation within socio-political crisis. I supported action research projects for social workers in post war restabilisation in Nepal, Nigeria, Angola and Sierre Leone. I contributed to the professional forums that defined emerging human experience and social work response in critical socio-political circumstances and conflict zones. I was a member of the International Committee of the British Association of Social Work, co-leader of action research projects in Russia and in Palestine, and lead researcher for the Dublin Project, a global research and debate platform developing critical social work responses to youth trauma across global communities. These experiences enriched my understanding of the global breadth of the profession, its heritage in welfare response and its contemporary formations in transcultural community action.

The teachings, the philosophical guides, the tribal leaders that have influenced this research journey have shared a vision of 'community' which has enabled me to claim International social work as an 'expansive space' (Lowe, 2013), or an 'expansive humanitarian space' which promotes a psycho - social and psycho-intuitive understanding of people's need. I have sought to convey how this cognitive intuitive essence of social work can connect its heritage of soft community family and groupwork therapy with contemporary notions of human, socio-political and environmental justice.

For me, this understanding is associated with the cycle of conflict, division and peace-making which emerges in local, regional and transcultural communities and which individual and organisational social work seeks to influence (Dominelli, 2010, 2013; Elworthy, 2014). In any nation or cultural context, social workers are at the heart of this debate working in conflict communities or in migrancy resettlement practice. My instinct was that the fields of established statutory practice required a fresh understanding, a new awareness of how social workers respond to children and young people who are displaced in the increasingly common themes of political and community violence at national and international levels. This has required critical considerations of the therapeutic reflexive nature of social work in response to diversity; both cultural diversity and the complex diverse nature of experience. As in the research findings of chapters two and three, some young people will thrive and others will flounder. It is how we respond to this fragile 'sense of being' after oppression that was the primary focus of my work.

Opening the debate platform allowed me to tread a more individual line of analysis and definition. This included examining social work's presence in conflict resolution at individual and community level, identifying the sort of skills used in these types of highly sensitized encounters. I felt that the displacement of young people illuminated the complexity of practitioner response, inviting me to refine the conceptualisation of central elements of social work practice:

> the centrality of the child's well-being and right to expression in family and community systemic awareness.
>
> the professional compass: the essence of engagement with individuals, groups and communities at times of crisis and human suffering.
>
> the critical watchful eye for those who are marginalised and oppressed.
>
> the safeguarding-protective stance of social work within education, community health, youth justice and prison services.

My professional narrative of social work which shaped this thesis acknowledges these foundational elements, tracing sources from literature which support the welfare provider, the critical socio-political activist, the child liberationist, the holistic therapist, in an attempt to acknowledge the primary theoretical and philosophical influences on my inquiry.

The development of knowledge and knowledge illumination

I now define the therapeutic circle as a holding space framed within conceptualisations of individual, social and environmental justice. Therapy in conflict zones is, therefore, formed on an awareness of how the young person's sense of intrinsic being, their 'birthright', is affected by the "intrapsychic, interpersonal and broader social contexts of relationships" (Ruch *et al*., 2010: 21).

The trauma of displacement is experienced by those who flee or are 'dispersed'; in my research, these are young people who are migrant, often unaccompanied, or remaining in communities watching the impact of long-term siege on family and cultural life. They are displaced from their social networks, their family and community at a time of biological and psychological transition when they must make sense of processes of 'separation and separability' (Lee, 2005).

Within this inquiry into the nature of social work response, the discussion always paralleled broader themes of contemporary humanitarian welfare which are accounted for within the literature search of chapter two and the data accounts of chapters three and six. The therapeutic essence I outline guides social workers to hold a presence in refugee resettlement camps and migrancy stations, inviting young people to identify and release shadows and reaffirm sense of self. Composure, in this context, means a new sense of 'being' based on cognitive and intuitive awareness; therapy in these settings is not so 'soft', but a depth listening and response to critical narratives and expressions.

To achieve this, I have come to believe, requires a form of 'reflexive intuition' which learns deeply from interaction. In this awareness, I have discovered the importance of both sensory intuitive and cognitive reflective states of awareness and 'knowing' which inform both the therapeutic stance and the building of resilience for young people affected by the deepest forms of personal destabilisation.

This illumination confirms the importance of my vision of the therapeutic holding space, as a form of therapeutic circle. This discovery, for me, required a re-examination of the claims of social work in psycho-social support, requiring identification of how social workers invite this deeper level of cognitive and intuitive awareness. It appeared to resonate with the principles of participatory action research where all share the vision and nature of human inquiry. This challenges the standard forms of social work in protective action where the practitioner represents formal services which provide mandates for safeguarding those at risk. Within the Palestinian context, there was no 'safe space' or promise of resolution. The social work approach was to engage with local people in shared inquiries into how to endure and to build resilience within an unchanging face of challenge and conflict.

Hebron, in November 2015, was a desolate windswept and war-scarred place. Concrete rubble and barbed wire lay across the streets. The morning sun could be glaring and the night air freezing. The local practice infrastructure was weary, uncertain of how to sustain its protective response to local people. As a transcultural team, our senses, heightened in reaction to local people and local landscape, included a range of emotions of curiosity, respect and compassion but also alarm, uncertainty and confusion. Fear was a perpetual shadow at day and night. Yet there was a vibrancy

at the core of local community, with the strength of existential fire, which is echoed in the oratories, the interviews, and the expressions of the young people in the Palestinian accounts of my research.

It became evident to me, through this precious encounter, that the important thing was to honour human experience and intuition, not to give in to the urge to offer solution or limit the full compass of holistic response. In this context, the nature of social work is defined as an expansive form of encounter and exchange. It is a therapeutic intuition which acknowledges the shadows yet allows people to remain in complex circumstances, to develop their own sense of awareness and meaning as a defence against the destabilising impact of enduring trauma. The vision to deliver a therapeutic form of support was only made viable in interaction with this strength, this courage, this capacity to sustain.

The vision

I felt that the heuristic mode of inquiry would be the purest form of discovery aligned to my research purpose. The work of Moustakas elevated the principle of reflective intuitive knowing, defined in six stages to guide my developing awareness within my research space. This awareness has involved a listening stance, developing self- knowledge whilst also listening to others, the formal theorists, the healers, the philosophers, the practitioners like myself who step into conflict zones, and the profound expressions of young people. My research inquiry has, therefore, combined a meditative stance with a listening stance, resonant of the concepts of self and inter-relational self I introduce to my inquiry into trauma responses in chapters one and two.

The challenge to myself as researcher was to find a form of inquiry in which I could combine the different stages and voices of illumination in a measured accountable way. This would require a deep and precise form of both self-awareness and receptivity to others; Nouwen describes this as a form of "experiential transcendence" in which a person can reach the "depth currents of his own life" (Nouwen, 1979:16). These processes of insight, reflection and illumination have become an 'in-dwelling' (Moustakas, 2001) which I carry within me; out of this, a new research language has emerged which can articulate the cycle of human experience and awareness: 'existential trauma', 'cognitive and intuitive awareness', 'therapeutic attunement', 'eco-sociological justice', 'holistic health awareness and attunement', 'restorative therapy'. This, in my words, defines the form of psycho-intuitive social work I seek within the therapeutic holding space.

My discovery was to recognise the implications of taking a deeper inquiry into critical forms of human experience. This changes everything: the writer tone, the researcher stance in the research 'field', the engagement with others in humanitarian concern, and the final critical awareness brought to the understanding of people's expressions as emergent 'data'. One of my early thesis guides was 'Four Arrows', the Native American tribal leader and researcher who claimed the need for subjectivity, personal illumination and insight, the "interpretation of knowledge as spirit" (aka Jacobs, 2008). This taught me that everything that emerges in the external environment is playing against the human instinct as researcher in a state of heightened alertness. Everything is fluid so that the senses, the symbols, the signs and sights create a new sense of knowledge. The expression of words also has this sharpened reality – words are deep, emotionally attuned and profound. Nothing is patterned or faded. Nothing is wasted. Everything that is expressed matters deeply. Time has

stood still in the moment of a new reality which is given to the moment of perception. In this sense, the research space has become a 'sacred space' which confronts the radical edge of the imagination, the possibility that there could be new ways of living and being. A joined-up world approach.

My research reflects the development of this heuristic vision of the cognitive and intuitive self. In Fook's model of knowledge construction, knowledge is embodied and social, and created interactively (Fook, 2007:28), hence in the sharing of narratives of displacement and existence there is the potential for new realisations of connectedness and living. The researcher in this field of inquiry, therefore, is a type of critical reflective writer who takes knowledge into practice response. The theoretical principles of the therapeutic holding space developed in chapter seven of the thesis are influenced by these voices and guide me to elevate the importance of individual reflective instinct within this approach, inviting young people to reconnect with others within a therapeutic space.

I have discovered that the heuristic research project moves through stages of awareness but that understanding is always in a fluid cyclical process…it hovers over the debate….it listens to how others engage with it as well as how the developing sense of research awareness impacts on understanding and 'community'. To transform ourselves is to transform how we think and live in the world. The experience of displacement will take us into an uncertain and complex world which challenges the scientific understanding of a world of continuous progression. Everything is suspended. To claim the uncertain stance takes courage and invites a radical and liberating form of realisation.

I understood heuristic research conceptually at the commencement of my project; at the end of my project, I believe I have learnt it experientially. By this stage, I had developed a writing rhythm which included writing, then pausing and running by rivers and in woodland; within this cycle of cognitive concentration and rhythmic outdoor meditation I found my true writing stance. This combination of deep thought, rhythmic movement and landscape awareness seemed true to my spirit of being.

The contribution

The therapeutic holding space, therefore, provides a tangible response, a framework which guides practitioners holding those who are deeply traumatized. It forms a therapeutic circle. It elevates established principles of social work which are true to the psycho-social and psycho-intuitive orientations of soft therapeutic community practice. Its participatory element challenges the silencing of the oppressed and of the young. Through a range of soft therapeutic, creative and sensory processes, it supports the release of the complex psychological features which occur in displacement working within and across cultural lines. It invites the awakening of the person's own sense of resolution, hence transformation.

Many of the established statutory formations and roles of social workers will have radical shifts as the nature of global and local welfare reacts to changes in socio-political, economic and environmental stability. This will inevitably change the way of conceptualising social work role, identity and response.

I have prioritised the psycho-intuitive lens of social work when operating in complex community contexts and promoted a reflexive response which can listen intuitively to the person's unique experience. The 'hard to reach' child is a familiar concept within the profession. Whether the

therapeutic holding space approach is used within a conflict zone or in a therapeutic school trying to engage with a young person who is displaced from family, community or mainstream education, the knowledge developed in this thesis is an account of therapeutic awareness that can, arguably, bridge the gap between complex experience and resolution.

In the advancement of research-practice responses to youth trauma and displacement, I would conclude my work with the following recommendations:

- There is an essence in social work that holds a form of psycho- intuitive awareness and therapeutic response. It is defined in the psycho-social approach, but there is the requirement for more critical accounts of its application both in statutory formations of child assessment and in international community development team responses.
- It is important to record and publish accounts of these contributions and disseminate findings within the international organisations of social work and allied professional community forums.
- There is a need for more research accounts and theoretical guides of the types of formations of social work practice applicable to work in conflict resolution at both family and community level.
- Within social work education, it is important to include a critical account of the evolution of social work and its different formations in local, national and international contexts. This should include acknowledgement of the international organisational formations of social work and their status both within international collaborative practice and collaborative community research.
- There is a need for more research-based analysis and accounts of how to sustain research-practice interventions in a destabilised or conflict space.
- The international organisation of social work recognises the value of action research within community development approaches. My research demonstrates the specific quality of Participatory Action Research as a social action approach with a distinct experiential platform. It would be beneficial to see more published accounts of this methodological approach used in contemporary contexts of conflict with marginalised or oppressed groups.
- This inquiry supports policy acknowledgement for the development of 'trauma aware' services as defined by the research of Levitti (1998); also, it supports developing knowledge of specific approaches which work with different aspects of the mind-body-spirit approach and involve rhythmic movement, music and other creative expressive art forms.
- The specific account of 'existential trauma' within this research is open to more debate and theoretical analysis. Following the line of Levine's work, there is a need for responses which focus on the 'feeling sense' suggesting the need for interventions at both cognitive (talking therapies) and sensory levels (working with holistic therapeutic approaches). It would be beneficial to explore this partnership, which is currently reflected in UK service responses where community health works with holistic and integrative therapies in a range of practice contexts.

Finally, I have understood how participatory action research has a different sense of beginning and ending. In 2020, the Palestine Youth Trauma project made a successful bid for global pandemic relief at the invitation of the IFSW. The Palestine bid was defined as a response to communities under

siege experiencing the hardship of pandemic when resources and psychological stamina were already worn thin: the ‘Palestine Covid Community Relief Project’.

The Palestinian Union of Social Work and Psychology created a professional distribution team to respond to two causes:

PPE and food parcels for child prisoners in the West Bank.

PPE, food parcels and educational aids for families in hardship, Hebron H2.

In January 2021, the Palestine project team has been invited to apply for a third round of funds. The team proposal is to develop a Palestinian women’s project to look at their contribution to sustaining community infrastructure and how to offer support in the particular issues they face as representatives of family and community life. This will include a precise study of the form of psycho-intuitive social work response used in Palestine in work with people experiencing loss, grief and trauma.

9.2 The final song of my research

My research was always about the song of people, the connection to their earth as a source of sustainability and growth; through this connection comes a deeper awareness which illuminates our human purpose, to be at one with self and others. Living and working with Palestinian people allowed me and colleagues to learn to honour their deep connection to their ancestral land and their sense of culture preserved through community.

My spirit is aligned to the teaching and wisdom of tribal elders such as Four Arrows and Ruiz that I refer to in my thesis. The meditative knowledge such traditions honour resonates for me with the Celtic tribal instinct taught by my father and understood intuitively through my paternal ancestral lines. In my own outdoor meditative practice, I can listen and am taught deeply; I can see, in this, my identity as a Celtic dreamer and wanderer.

I carry a strong sense of ancestry, family and community; this has shaped my sense of belonging and displacement. I experienced the sense of displacement through my recent journey of cancer; by living in the rhythm and spirit of woodland, I felt the deeper sense of connection to all things, deeper and passing through ancestral lines, so that the fragmentation of the present is only a small part of the human journey and the human song.

I learn through listening and reflection on revelation of landscape and nature. At the final stage of my thesis, I walked around the coastline of the Gower. On the first day, as I climbed from the sea through the woods to find somewhere to pitch my tent, I was cold, tired, and uncertain. As I came out of the woods, I met two travellers, who gave me hot tea to drink and a blanket, let me sit by their fire and pitch by their tent - a ‘safe space’. In the morning, I explained what I was reflecting on in my research about trauma and how people find healing and one said: “It is about divine understanding of 1:1:1, perfect mind-body-spirit harmony. When we realise this, we can release the shadows and begin to move into ascension towards light.”

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Author/ researcher publication

Gauci, Joy and Sealey, Clive (2017) *Youth Matters? Social Work Responses to the Trauma Experienced by Young People Displaced in Contemporary Community Contexts.* In: оциальная безопасность и защита человека в условиях новой общественной реальности. Perm State University, Perm, Russia, pp. 13-23. ISBN 978-5-7944-3018-9

Youth Matters? Social Work Responses to the Trauma Experienced by Young People Displaced in Contemporary Community Context

Paper Outline: This paper outlines the importance of the recognition of the new contexts of youth displacement due to socio political change in the international social work community. It recognises youth displacement as a generic concept with a significant potential cause of trauma on any community experiencing socio political change that impacts on young people. This paper argues that social work requires a framework that is reflexive to the variety of causes of youth displacement and trauma in contemporary community contexts, which include family and community conflict, foster or adoption breakdown, refugeeism and migrancy and economic crisis. In particular, it promotes the skills of social work in creating safe places as practice holding places a holding space (Gauci, 2017) which potentially creates the framework for therapeutic encounter to support young people in distress. In doing so, it upholds the profession's understanding about "the knowledge of vulnerable groups that society, and systems, exclude" (IFSW Opening Address, Iceland 2017).

Themes

1. Outlining youth displacement as a generic social work concern.

2. Austerity and Youth Displacement in Developed Countries.

3. Defining trauma through displacement – and the contribution of relational social work practice.

4. Applying social work's model of groupwork based on the Creation of a Holding Space.

5. Therapeutic Encounter for young people in complex transition.

1. Understanding Youth Displacement as a generic social work concern: Current humanitarian reports increasingly recognise the social impact of unequal economic growth on a UK, European and global level; the "growing polarization between the advantaged and the disadvantaged" (Bynner 2005:377). The increasing divide is felt by vulnerable people in communities; children and young people, the poor, disabled and marginalised. This paper outlines two generic features of the social work profession, the 'relational' (Furlong, 2013; Megele et al, 2016) and the 'reflexive' (Adams et al, 2011; Bruce,2013), and explores the potential that these features have in contemporary debates about social work's responses to displaced persons and groups due to causes of community conflict and economic destabilisation.

In these uncertain social climates, social work exists to protect the principles of human compassion, as exemplified by the theme of Social World Social Work Day in 2017 as: "the humanitarian principles of social work are called to address the impact of cultural change and community conflict in the lives of people today. Social work attempts to break these cycles of unresolved trauma and multiple loss". Our concern is with young people. Schapendonk et al's study (2015:52) identifies the unequal effects and excesses of globalisation on the life experiences of young people, and the contrasting realities of power and access (p.50), highlighting in particular community destabilisation and the displacement of young people. "European societies are experiencing a paradigm shift due to economic and social crisis" (IFSW Iceland, 2017). Developing into adulthood in a changing work makes the transition points for young people, arguably, more critical. In the specific context of displacement, it can distort the normal securities, nurtures and expectations of young personhood.

The European Schools of Social Work are calling for new practice understandings of how to respond to the changing community conditions affecting young people in Britain, in Europe and across the world. There is, arguably, the need for the International Social Work Community to develop distinct practice strategies which are culturally transferable, reflexive to particular community contexts and reactive to the specific narratives and experiences of today's young people. Social work has an intrinsic duty to help the young person to "negotiate the world they encounter" (Crouch, 2003:19). Three understandings of social work are therefore relevant: 1. A contemporary concern in social work about current responses to people displaced due to community conflict / environmental crisis / economic and political crisis and division. 2. The heritage of social work practice, knowledge and skills in responding to people experiencing complex transition and loss states (UK / European/ Global context) 3. The reflexive instinct in social work practice which operates, arguably, at a psycho social level – reacting to the social landscape or community context, and to the inner psyche of the person.

2. Austerity and Youth Displacement in Developed Countries: As outlined above, youth displacement not only relates to physical displacement in poor countries, but in more developed countries can also refer to social and economic displacement. This section focusses on the effect of such austerity on young people in the UK. It highlights how austerity has led to the social and economic displacement of young people in the UK, in comparison to other groups, and the impact this has had on them. It also briefly highlights how a social work response focussed on the 'social' could be used to overcome this displacement. 2.1 Austerity in an international context Global forces in trade and economic investment have led to a widening gap between rich and poor not just between countries,

but also within countries including economically rich and highly developed countries, leading to increasing hardship and new contexts of displacement for young people.

This type of displacement is different from the types caused by conflict, wherein the displacement is more social rather physical, and so requires different types of responses. This has become evident in the policy response to the severe economic crises that have affected many European countries since 2010, as various governments have enacted a variety of 'austerity' policy measures, such as in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and the UK (Rudig and Karyotis, 2013). Busch et al (2013) have identified that these austerity policies are having a significant impact on the European Social Model in terms of causing growing unemployment, falling real wages, cuts in the social security system and privatisation of public property across the EU as a whole.

While it is important to note that these austerity measures are affecting different groups in different ways, the impact on young people can be seen as particularly deleterious. For example, according to Antonucci et al (2014: 14), in contrast to previous generations, young people in contemporary Europe are experiencing a fragmented and uncertain reality, meaning that young people in contemporary Europe are perceived as the first generation to do worse than their parents (Hamilton, Antonucci and Roberts, 2014).

3. Austerity in the UK: It was the election of the 2010 UK Coalition government which signalled significant austerity measures in public expenditure and specifically social policy expenditure. For example, since 2010 there have been £36 billion (approximately 2.6 trillion ₽) worth of public expenditure cuts to the end of 2014, with another £55 billion (approximately 4 trillion ₽) worth of cuts planned for between 2015-2019 (OBR 2014). A consistent and totemic slogan from UK Government in relation to its austerity measures is that 'We're all in this together', denoting that the impacts of austerity have been shared (equally) among different groups. However, this claim has been challenged by a number of authors (see for example Bradshaw and Main 2014; O'Hara 2014; Steans and Jenkins 2012). In particular, the counter claim is that austerity in the UK has affected different groups in various ways, and it is young people for whom the cuts have had the most deleterious effect in a number of ways. For instance, according to Blanchflower (2015) it is the young who have been the biggest losers of austerity in the UK, as they often fail to get jobs, and even when they do they are often temporary, low-paid and with fewer hours than they would like. For example, youth unemployment has been at a record high, three times higher than unemployment for older adults (Hills 2015).

The younger generation have also suffered from continuous cuts in terms of social benefits and continual changes in their entitlement to social policy benefits in several ways (Unison, 2015). More recently, the social policy marginalisation of young people has continued, as evident in recent proposals such as removing entitlement to housing benefit from some of those aged 18–21, and the tightening of the system of entitlement to jobseeker's allowance for those aged under 21. Young peoples' benefits have also been cut and made more selective, such as in relation to the Connexions careers advice service, and the Youth Service which as seen up to 2000 jobs lost and around 350 youth centres closed (Unison 2014). But perhaps the most evident social policy change has been the package of changes made since 2011 to higher education, most notably the tripling of Higher Education tuition fees from £3000 to up to £9,000 per year. The estimate of debt from the Institute for Fiscal Studies for students leaving university following these changes is over £44, 000

(approximately 3.5 million ₽.). Changes in the November 2015 Budget reinforced this even more, as the Government abolished Student Maintenance Grants and replaced them with a single system of Student Loans.

Perhaps not surprisingly in the context of such austerity, young people's subjective experiences suggest that that the current welfare system is failing them in a number of ways (YMCA 2014). As Sealey (2014, 89) observes 'This and other changes [have] eroded young people's social rights in important areas of social welfare, such as employment and housing, [resulting] in a shift for young people away from dependence on the state to a prolonged period of dependence on themselves and/ or their family'. This has resulted in a weaker social welfare provision, higher dependency of younger individuals on family support, and greater individualism which can lead to further intensified experiences of social exclusion (Sealey, 2014), as 'those on lower incomes and those in younger age groups are now less financially secure than on the eve of the downturn' (Broughton, Kanabar, and Martin 2015, 4).

Specific social policies have also widened the intergenerational gap between young people and the older generation, meaning that the younger generation has not been able to secure forms of social, political and economic privileges enjoyed by previous generations. As a result, any kind of austerity measures aiming at a present or future change of social, economic and political circumstances leaves them more exposed compared to older generations, who might (although not necessarily) have had the chance to secure some kind of safety net (through education, employment, pension rights, secured property). These factors highlight the significant changes which austerity social policies have disproportionately had on young people in the UK, which has led to the creation of the social displacement of young people. It also suggests that the social, economic and psychological development of young people in the UK are less of a priority than for other groups, hence the question of whether youth matters in the UK.

In the longer term, this transformation of prolonged austerity measures and policies into a youth displacement will have implications for the prospect for prosperity for the UK, as a consequence of its effect of limiting the younger generation's ability to the shape and plan its own future. In this context, the question is what should the social work response to this situation be? What is evident from the displacement of young people in the context of EU and UK is the way in which the notion of the 'social' appears to have been taken out of social policy discourse (Porter, 2000). This is evident in the way in the intergenerational gap between young and old has been made apparent in policy, meaning that changing patterns of identity are deemed more significant to policy than forms of collectivity, leading to more individually tailored welfare service (Page, 2007a; 2007b).

Thus, an emphasis on the importance of the social as argued above, rather than individual, is necessary to capture the inescapably 'social' essence of the displacement, and should move policy and theory away from the evidently flawed emphasis on its displacement towards the creation of a safe place for young people to flourish and thrive. This means that there is a need for greater emphasis towards co-ordinated activity to counter young people's social displacement, and this calls for greater state involvement to counter some of the deleterious effects of such austerity in general. To some, this might seem counterintuitive as such failure of institutions in the creation of displacement suggests a need for greater emphasis on individual actions, however, as Bauman (2008:3) observes: A state is 'social' when it promotes the principle of the communally endorsed,

collective insurance against individual misfortune and its consequences. It is that principle … that lifts the abstract 'society' to the level of 'real', tangible, felt-and-lived community, and thereby replaces (to deploy John Dunn's terms) the mistrust-and-suspicion-generating 'order of egoism' with the confidence and solidarity-inspiring 'order of equality'. And it is the same principle which lifts members of society to the status of citizens.

4. The contribution of relational social work practice to youth displacement: Having considered the universal economic changes which are causing generic concerns for young people across cultures, this article now concentrates on the young people who are most vulnerable due to the psychological impact of displacement hence have a reduced sense of their citizenship, and potentially, their self-worth. The conventional models which influenced social work's heritage are still relevant in understanding the psychological needs of young people facing displacement today. Bowlby's theory of a "secure base" (1988) lay the foundation for realising the importance of interpersonal relationships as a foundation for belonging, security and well-being; Bion's work (1965) on understanding the matrix of human experience laid the premise for his work on space, place and position in relation to the importance of constancy in the early state of identity, feeling and being. These positions developed a psychological instinct in social work practice, which engaged with the young person in a way which recognised the impact of displacement on their sense of security, composure and worth.

In contemporary practice, the forces causing displacement can create greater disturbance for young people as they challenge and potentially damage family and community infrastructure. Hence the need for distinct models of therapeutic relational practice which engage with the young person in a way which can transform their sense of self at times of adversity and engage with their spirit of hope and resourcefulness Social work, as a profession, has always held a protective instinct for young people who are particularly exposed to hardship due to the socio-economic infrastructure, for example, young people who are looked after, excluded from education, or in the youth justice system. It uses a relationship based approach to engage with the young person and "hold" them emotionally during their adverse circumstances.

Young people experiencing trauma reactions to displacement are likely to require a deeper relational approach based on therapeutic understanding. Trevithick (2012) identifies the "relational" as an equal partnership where both participants have an emotional influence on each other. Although this principle is claimed in all holistic models which have a personcentred focus, the risk with vulnerable / emotionally distressed young people is that their behaviours, in reacting to complex life circumstances, risk practice approaches which are more directive, structural, universal and pragmatic rather than deeply holistic. However, in circumstances of forced displacement, the young person is likely to be deeply challenged and disorientated.

In contemporary conference debates and literature on therapeutic understandings of refugeeism and migrancy, the primary focus on pragmatic and crisis relief needs to be combined with models which focus on therapeutic engagement; models of practice which can step into a destabilised community context and provide effective emotional engagement. This first wave of pragmatic relief is recognised in Papadopoulos (2002); his editorial of a collection of essays by the Tavistock Clinic social work practitioners, London UK collectively claims the importance of "therapeutic care" for refugees. Megele, Rees and Morley (2016) argue for the importance of emotional resilience as a

holistic strategy which aids the ability to develop the psychological, emotional and cognitive abilities of young people. Resilience has been described as a "dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luther, 2003).

Contemporary writers highlight the need for new types of practice which are "reflexive" to current contexts and concerns, (Bruce, 2013; Megele, Rees an Morley, 2016) , calling for social work to develop the skills and knowledge to react to the diverse and different circumstances causing distress for today's young people. Betts' (2010: 52) study of youth migrants indicates the need for diversity of understanding due to the "multiple mobilities" of people and the caution against "common analytical frameworks…suggesting a new way of both understanding, and forming practice approaches. This is a move away from conventional models, due to the importance of the "use of strategies to handle risk and uncertainty", highlighted by Shapendonk et al, 2015:52. The experience of marginalisation and displacement challenges the conventional rights and expectations of people, and for young people, this denial of need comes at a point of vulnerable life transition and psychobiological change. In studies of human displacement, (Maoz 2005) identifies the "inversion of the normal" and the isolation of the young people from any sense of "family project" (Aples 2011).

Children and young people who are exposed to trauma are more susceptible to post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety (Ursano, McCaughy, and Fullerton, 2008). Rae's work (2013) highlights internal and external predisposing risks for young people which impact on their mental health and sense of well-being. Schapendonk et al's study (2015) emphasizes the "transformative capacity" of the young person, observing that the emotional intensity of the transition can be "more than the young person can handle or prepare for" yet equally a passage towards resettlement and restoration (2015:55).

Focusing on capacity and the motivation to change could be important mechanisms for young people who are marginalised and disadvantaged in terms of building their resilience and restoring their sense of self-worth. Schapendonk et al's study connects the journey of the young person to the "rites of passage" from youth into adulthood (Noy & Cohen, 2005); It holds the potential for deep personal change and transformation, building strategies to prevent risks, establish reorientation and even find tranquilities (2015; 62). It is equally important to recognise the experience also holds the potential to create positive transformation. The need for flexible responses to diverse circumstances is a challenge for any universal service engaged in community practice, yet social work has always held an interest in "street corner" practice which responds to need as it presents.

Current literature on community service responses to displaced young people recognises the importance of understanding the trauma caused by displacement for young people who are less likely to access structural services in community contexts (Wood & Hine, 2009). The therapeutic instinct of the practitioner is therefore crucial to recognise symptoms of distress and trauma and to respond in a flexible individual way drawing on resources from the community infrastructure and the capacities of the young person.

5. The formation of a practice model as a "holding space" for "therapeutic encounter": Pascal (2010) highlights the importance of space, place and psycho-social well-being for the young person. The importance of a holding space, therefore, is as a therapeutic practice forum to specifically treat symptoms of trauma in the displaced young person. This can be achieved by adopting a relational approach which builds their emotional resilience (Luther, 2008), develops their sense of belonging

and actualisation (Pople and Rees, 2016), and secures their sense of legitimacy and worth (Chenoweth et al, 2005). The search for a relevant practice model rests on the importance of the creation of holding spaces; practice spaces which allow young people to meet and exchange experiences to make sense of the journey through displacement. These practice spaces allow individuals to be supported to express their sense of loss and grief, inviting insights which build new resilience to combat pain and loss, strengthen the capacity for attachment and relationships of trust, and regain a sense of belonging and hope (Lindenfield, 2006: 5).

The groupwork principle, combined with a social work relational instinct, addresses the emotional grief carried in the experience of displacement; creating a safe place as a meeting point with others framed by shared understandings and held by therapeutic insight. Echoing the concept of retreat, the holding space allows the young person to step out of the place of trauma or conflict and potentially find a sense of safety. This safe space will hold the potential to build a "therapeutic alliance" (Baylis, 2011:79) or "therapeutic engagement" (Di Croce et al, 2016:259) with the young person. Using the therapeutic social work instinct, this can then form a practice space for responding to expressions of emotional distress, grief and uncertainty.

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Appendix 2: Ethics Consent (Samples)

Participant Information Sheet – Practitioners in IFSW / AASSW

Title of Project: An action research study into the therapeutic value of holding space to support young people experiencing distress through community conflict and displacement.

Invitation

We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this carefully and ask the researcher if you have any questions.

If you work for an organisation you will be required to seek permission to engage in the research.

The project will run between January 15 and January 16 at stage 1.

What is the purpose of the study?

My research inquiry is into the value of space, a holding space as a place of emotional engagement in relational practice with young people in distress states due to family and community destabilisation. I want to gain understanding of this interface, how it is formed and how it helps the person in their experience.

Framed as an action research project, my thesis will form a community of practice to share understandings and frame a new model of practice applicable to contemporary community practice. Through dialogues with others, workshops and conference debates I will trace particular forms of therapeutic and relational community practice which use a form of holding space as a potential approach to restoration and transformation.

.Research Question:

What does social work contribute to the formation of holding spaces as a form of relational therapeutic practice for young people experiencing trauma due to community destabilisation?

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have received this invitation because of your role as an educator / practitioner or researcher involved in the international schools of social work and community development. You are part of an IFSW Community of Practitioners engaged in effective ways of responding to youth trauma in destabilised communities.

As you will be attending my workshop presentation, I wish to invite you to participate in:

I. the follow up group discussion as a part of my research inquiry

2. a follow up interview or questionnaire (your choice)

In these two processes, the inquiry is:

a. what is your experience of AR as an approach, and how do you think social work contributes to this approach in destabilised communities?

b. how do you respond to the concept of a holding space I have presented on in the workshop; the holding space being designed on Heron's model of the circle of inquiry?

c. what are your understandings of features of youth trauma in destabilised family and community contexts and effective practice approaches?

d. what is the specific contribution of therapeutic social work in conflict areas?

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part in this study. You can decide not to take part or to withdraw from the study at any point until 2 weeks after your research engagement. If you wish to have your data withdrawn please contact the researcher with your participant number and your data will then not be used. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What will happen to me if I agree to take part?

- If you agree to take part you will participate in the follow up workshop discussion and then choose to undertake an individual interview or complete a questionnaire.
    - Your first name and role will be recorded but your precise details protected.
    - Your transcript will be sent to you and you will have 2 weeks to decide if you are content that it is an accurate record. After this date, the researcher will reserve the right to carry forward and publish the approved data.

The method if inquiry in stage 1 will be a group discussion as a follow on to the IFSW Conference workshop in which I will outline my research inquiry and methodology.

The method of inquiry in stage 2 will be semi structured interviews or questionnaires using a series of core themes outlined below:

Trigger questions:

- In your practice, what are the contemporary concerns about youth displacement?
- What do you understand social work to contribute in practice with communities experiencing destabilisation?
- What do you think social work, as a profession, offers to action research approaches?
- How would you define therapeutic social work and do you see this approach being used with young people in community projects you have been involved in. What effective

features of this approach have you seen?

- What is your understand of the importance of practice holding spaces with young people who are displaced and experiencing trauma?
- Do you think the psychological needs of young people with trauma have distinct features in destabilised community contexts? What factors do practitioners need to take into account in effective therapeutic engagement in a conflict zone or destabilised community?
- What do you feel the International Community of Social Work contributes to current formations of community development?
- Why is it important to work as an international practice team in communities with complex needs?

Are there any disadvantages risks to taking part?

In the initial contract meeting the researcher will have discussed support structures and their identification will be part of the contract. If you work for an agency, you will be invited to identify support structures / contacts within the organisation. If you are freelance, you will be invited to identify any support structures you use formally or informally.

In addition, the researcher will provide contact for support services at Worcester University.

Will the information I give stay confidential?

The information you give may be used for a research report, but it will not be possible to identify you from our research report or any other dissemination activities. Personal identifiable information (eg. name and contact details) will be securely stored and kept for up to the project end in January 2021 and then securely disposed of. The research data (eg. interview transcripts) will be securely stored and may be used for further research purposes.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

This research is being carried out as part of my PHD at the University of Worcester. The findings of this study will be reported as part of my dissertation and may also be published in academic journals or at conferences.

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings please contact the researcher.

Who is organising the research?

This research has been approved by the University of Worcester Institute of Health Ethics Committee.

What happens next?

Please keep this information sheet. If you do decide to take part, please either contact the researcher using the details below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information

If you decide to take part of you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study please contact one of the research team using the details below.

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IoHS ETHICS REVIEW FEEDBACK

17th April 15

Dear Joy

Re: An action research study into the value of holding places to support people experiencing distress through transition and displacement.

Thank you for submitting this project for review by the IoHS committee. The committee has now undertaken a peer review of the project work and would be happy to grant this project ethical approval to proceed.

Your REC approval code is GAUCI 2013/2014 103. You should keep a record of this approval code as you may need to refer to it with future correspondence or include in any final project reports.

Thank you for submitting your research project to the IoHS ethics committee and good luck with your research.

Kind regards

Eleanor

Professor Eleanor Bradley CPsychol AFBPsS

Professor of Health Psychology

Chair, Institute of Health and Society Ethics Committee

IHSEthics@worc.ac.uk

Appendix 3: IFSW Interviews

Interview Participant 1

Roxana, Independent Social Worker and Action Researcher, Romania.

- In your practice, what are the contemporary concerns about youth displacement?

I have worked in action research teams building community support infrastructures in Romanian Gypsy Camps where whole families have experienced displacement. The camps are resettlement camps and the young people often have deep emotional and psychological needs.

I have also used the action research approach in work in the Calais camps. This is crisis work and often the main practice focus is on humanitarian aid and practical support. But my practice is therapeutic and I developed a team approach working with young people who were isolated from family and community groups in the camps – carrying traumatic features of complex grief.

My main concern is a belief that the traumas intrinsic to displacement have raw physical manifestations. These physical features often get responded to but the deeper psychological need requires depth engagement and time which is not often available. Crisis services tend not to prioritise psychological relief and the gulf between the young people experience and the practitioner can eb vast so that trying to find a point of therapeutic contact is difficult, very complicated. These can deter practitioners.

- What do you understand social work to contribute in practice with communities experiencing destabilisation?

I have worked in different European countries and always see social work as a community practice located where there is deepest need – engaging with local people and community leaders to try and hold and stabilise circumstances; the listening instinct of social work as a profession.

We are enshrined in a belief that our practice should always prioritise vulnerable children and young people first.

And we have individual and groupwork models but in an IDP camp I feel the groupwork model is the preferred approach to try and meet across a range of needs in a time effective way and also to give young people a sense of shared understanding and identity. Groupwork as a community formation.

- What do you think social work, as a profession, offers to action research approaches?

I think social work has a natural alliance to action research approaches; it is not an anathema. AR promotes cultural identity and cultural diversity so has both a locality instinct and a breadth of transcultural awareness. This dual edge frames groupwork in a specialized way so that it is an organic, transformative way of meeting and exchanging stories and visions.

It also provides a sense of social justice and commitment to community cohesion. In the refugee projects I have participated in as a social worker, some individuals have lost their sense of alliance to a group of community so the action research approach, in bringing the group together and holding processes of exchange recreates this sense of the inter-relational. It echoes holistic practice and

mirrors the rhythm of community. This sense of coming together is very powerful after months of separation and social isolation.

- How would you define therapeutic social work and do you see this approach being used with young people in community projects you have been involved in. What effective features of this approach have you seen?

I think social work is therapeutic at heart and in spirit. It is based on Rogers' principle of unconditional human regard so if we deeply receive young people who have been displaced we are expressing to them their sense of value and inviting them to reclaim their sense of identity and self worth.

The groupwork model has this effect – all are members of the circle and equal in the circle.

I have seen and used this type of "street corner " approach to practice where young people have no sense of place – so to invite them into the room and share food and activities then talk and share about deeper thoughts, needs, feelings creates a therapeutic space. It is an invitation, based on locating young people and building up their sense of trust so that they can talk again. Fear takes people inwards.

It is very important we share practice knowledge of effective treatments for these types of traumas – it is a very challenging type of practice and practitioners need precise frameworks as everything they see and hear will be overwhelming so the approaches need to hold the moments of engagement.

- What is your understand of the importance of practice holding spaces with young people who are displaced and experiencing trauma?

In an IDP camp all the movements are untroubled and uncertain so there is a constant sense of disturbance. New people come and have raw emotions – existing settlers compete and there is tension all around so to invite young people into a measure space where the practitioners and community leaders can hold the space – is a protection for them. It also gives a sense of purpose and a sense of stillness. I am familiar with it as a practice concept. I have used it and seen others use it.

- Do you think the psychological needs of young people with trauma have distinct features in destabilised community contexts? What factors do practitioners need to take into account in effective therapeutic engagement?

Each young people has a different story of trauma in their journey. they are all looking for someone or concerned about someone and fearful for themselves. I think the Western understandings of trauma have a different approach – more individual, more based on premises of measured engagement and an assumption the young person can manage this approach. In a destabilised community there is no measure, no rules, no patterns. So models need to allow for this and be deeply watchful and alert to the symptoms of this young people. Some of the symptoms of trauma will be more pronounced and have physical manifestations. These will not always be accepted by others in the camps, eg. agitated and disinhibited behaviours.

But one of my concerns is the internalising effect – the traumas are so raw and recent that the person is still in shock – then see the echo of their shock in the symptoms of others.

The important thing is to make room for therapeutic engagement – to be alongside people. To watch. To note their symptoms and needs.

- What do you feel the International Community of Social Work contributes to current formations of community development?

It is difficult to move into a destabilised community context as a freelance practitioner – the international social work community gives an identity and sanction to the individual's practice. social work internationally is respected within community development movements and therefore it is also status.

It also takes a political stand which is essential in current neo liberal and capitalistic movements which risk destabilising community infrastructure and expose marginalised groups to greater vulnerability and oppression.

- Why is it important to work as an international practice team in communities with complex needs?

I think we are developing our research knowledge of approaches to the current global crisis of displaced young people. Collaboration allows for deeper awareness and shared research and practice techniques.

I am cautious about some of the risks of international collaboration and Western world dominance. We must not undervalue the local community instinct and healing spirit. Part of our practice approach is to listen to this spirit and to engage with local practitioners, community leaders and young people to understand their community framework.

I think we need to welcome indigenous approaches and eastern models of practice. The potential of an international team working in a specific location is that it will be more universal and objective in its approach. But there is always the risk of cultural dominance.

I think eastern models remind us of the spiritual features of loss and grief; this is an essential framework in community destabilisation and work with young people experiencing deep traumatic loss.

The international team supports local practitioners who might be experiencing the trauma themselves.

- How you been part of an action research team? What features of this approach do you find effective? What do you think social work, as a profession, offers to action research approaches?

I have spoken about my two experiences of action research and think it is very effective in destabilised contexts which need a different set of principles. The participatory approach combats the sense of exclusion. The idea of collaboration invites the sense of community surrounding the young person and the practitioners become the facilitators of this network approach. The environment becomes a relevant point of reference.

I think social work is well placed to contribute to AR. It is a community practice with deep principles of participation and collaboration.

Participant 2

Joe Irish social work Lecturer and Transcultural Research Project Worker

- In your practice, what are the contemporary concerns about youth displacement?

Social Work as an international body has a humanitarian conscience; we have to be concerned about the extent of the crisis and the way young people are so targeted and oppressed, both in conflict communities but also in their experiences once displaced.

- What do you understand social work to contribute in practice with communities experiencing destabilisation?

I think our sources of knowledge in these contexts of conflict communities are under-developed in the Western world in particular. We hold, in Western practice, a strong sense of the therapeutic social work model, the "case worker" model, so we know the principles of the profession in terms of respectful engagement and reflexive practice. But we don't know how to respond to young people with deep levels of trauma in camps and community contexts which are themselves destabilised so that everything is uncertain and untroubled. In the Western world we rely on structural welfare service formations which are largely not present at all in a conflict context; therefore we need more innovative reactive and creative ways of working. Grassroots practice.

- What do you think social work, as a profession, offers to action research approaches?

I think social work is intrinsically communitarian and participatory in its approach. It frames its awareness on sources of knowledge drawn from lived experience and alternative realities for people and groups pushed to the edge of society. Social work understands and promotes core values of anti-oppressive and diverse partnerships to create greater forms of social justice. It is political, supporting representation of diverse voices and recognising social restrictions and cultural nuances. These principles create their own practice formation and hold a congruence with the principles and processes of action research in forms of co-operative inquiry, understanding and human advancement.

- How would you define therapeutic social work and do you see this approach being used with young people in community projects you have been involved in. What effective features of this approach have you seen?

I would define therapeutic social work as deeply respectful face to face practice where the young person holds the story, the insight, the instinct about their need for recovery or restabilising. The therapeutic instinct of the practitioner is the practice conscience – holding the engagement, listening for the effects of the trauma, the disturbances and the hidden fears. So the two voices come together in a dialogue which is an exchange, a contract of trust and respect with a desire for some positive change state.

- What is your understand of the importance of practice holding spaces with young people who are displaced and experiencing trauma?

I think that holding spaces offer a sense of partnership; therapeutic partnership which is a contract for change based on principles which are features of the space – listening space, retreat space, space which tells the person they matter as an individual.

The formation of practice spaces holds a contrast to the complexity and contradictory face of a destabilised community. We know this in the history of Northern Ireland and how practitioners recognise the intergenerational trauma through families because of the conflict and separations of family and community life in the past. Holding spaces are a measured place, a space framed with therapeutic understanding and acknowledgement, a retreat space to build trust and express anguish and fears.

- Do you think the psychological needs of young people with trauma have distinct features in destabilised community contexts? What factors do practitioners need to take into account in effective therapeutic engagement?

Again, there is knowledge in practice approaches in Northern Ireland and a need to acknowledge but also to try and change the cycle of trauma for a new generation of young people so that the narrative of pain and distrust does not continue to unfold.

Therapeutic engagement is always a practice which seeks to be transformative and to invite different perceptions and new realities.

- What do you feel the International Community of Social Work contributes to current formations of community development?

Most of my practice and research is transcultural and so I believe it is always deeper and holds more potential for transformation. The international framework creates a heightened awareness and test against linear and mono cultural approaches. It also challenges uniform judgements and responses.

- Why is it important to work as an international practice team in communities with complex needs?

As stated above, to look more deeply, but also to use a heightened lens of awareness which might pick up on new meanings or needs that have been overlooked. Within practice contexts, an international team also holds the potential to have more breadth of research and practice knowledge of effective approaches in conflict zones.

Appendix 4: Kingston conference presentations (sample extracts)

Kingston Conference 14 Nov 15 – Rethinking Trauma and Resilience in the Context of Political Violence: New Directions for Research and Practice.

Key Conference Themes: Trauma under military rule; youth detention; trauma & resilience cycle; inter-generational trauma; fear and resilience; community framework.

Sir Vincent Fean British Consul-General Jerusalem; Patron of Britain and Palestine friendship network

We extend from the Kingston Conference to Palestinian people the message they are not alone, they have friends around the world, they have hope. All life is sacred and all human beings are equal in value.

Opening Address, Kingston Conference.

****

Palestinian youth accounts:

Account 1: *They say we have the right to walk to school safely. But no – they steal our rights to walk the streets. But I have – in heart, mind, belief – ways of holding my human rights to me* (Amil 15).

Account 2: *Mother – why do you go on the march?*

Boy – because I need to, it is my place, it is my future

Mother – your place is here in the home; you are young.

Boy - I am not young…. I go there to defend the homeland. I go there to see Palestine. But I also hide there so they won't shoot me.

Boy -I will die and the march is life. Gaza is no life. 12 yr old boy.

Account 3: *young people - I do not need to go to Haifa. I do not need to see Haifa. I see it in my mind and in my mother and grandmother's eyes.*

Mother – but then you need to go on the march to protect the future of Haifa.

young people -I want to be – and not not to be –so I will go …. and then I will return. I do not want to go to the march and get shot and go back in a wheelchair. 14 yr old girl.

***Account 4**:If I don't play I will die.* Palestinian child

These accounts are from an empirical study evaluating the spirit of Palestinian young people reflected in their courage and fear of participation in the Friday peace marches.

Zeina Amro, PhD Project: Palestinian Youth Participation, Institute of Community & Health, Birzeit University.

Presenter 2: *The march echoes the walk of return – a transitional space of profound emotion and fantasy –an invitation to build an imagination that can overcome. The march to return – the return to safe childhood…to humanity…..connecting the generations of a culture and a community. Yet the risk of shooting and maiming… If illogical – very logical in a context of uncertainty and terror.*

Samah Jabr, Gaza Trauma Clinic Medic. Presentation Paper: 'The Children of Palestine: Struggle and Survival under Occupation'.

Presenter 3:

Boys arrested in the night

If parents stand in way harassed and threatened

Cruel and inhumane treatment at point of arrest / and in detention.

Interrogated in Hebrew, without representation

Forced to give names of classmates and family members.

Post prison:

Broken attachments.

Pain of deprivation and scarcity of inner resilience.

Trauma revisiting arrest and detention memories.

Violent environment a reminder of the hostile experience and risk of recurrence.

Fear of re-detention.

Affect on family life stability – specifically, the challenge of fathers by boys who have not felt they protect them at point of arrest.

Constant anxiety of mothers guarding the homes from night raids.

DCI records, Hebron 2015. Conference Presentation by Riad Arar, Director of Child Protection and Social Mobilisation, DCI Hebron.

Presenter 4:

Palestine context – protracted conflict – psychological conflict – mutual fear, mutual distrust. 5 million people who have been occupied for 47 yrs. Longest occupation in modern history. Building of colonies – demolition of housing: ethnic cleansing. Genocide against everything that is called Palestine. How is such a dislocated community going to react normally?

The conflict runs in our veins.

Prof. Manuel Hassassian, Conference Presentation: *'*Understanding the Palestinian Conflict from within'. Gaza Community Mental Health Programme.

Presenter 5:

The world will not leave us – someone will so something

I was a *child in the 2 nd Intifada yet arrested and spent 40 days in jail.*

For what self of myselves am I going to live for? Conflict between you and the life you dream of. Fear to be married, to have a child and bring them into the conflict.

This conflict runs in our veins….. Slow suicide if you emigrate – so you stay here.

Rama Yayad, Kingston Conference Presentation: 'Youth and Political Conflict Research Project', Tennessee University.

Presenter 6:

Persistent humiliation is a neglected form of political violence that is best represented as

direct acute and high grade trauma whose particular injury is due to the violation of individual

and collective identity, rights…. justice and dignity.

Is post traumatic growth possible? Acceptant and forgiveness? But how do we achieve this in perpetual oppression.

To what degree do mental health policies or therapies for Palestinians acknowledge the contextual source of this primary form of political violence?

Intergenerational trauma / sustained trauma – more locked depression, more PSDT features, ambivalence in accounts of trauma caught up in the collective-political narrative.

Terror of trigger effects / intrusive memories……trying to carry / contain the trauma reflects the collective-cultural narrative

Brian Barber Presentation: 'Youth and Political Conflict research project', Tennessee University.

Presenter 7:

The Last Resistance; Always already dying children; Bodies – the emblem of trust. The body becomes an inhabited space.

250 settlements affect the physical and psychological well being and safety of Palestinians.

Check points break the line of support between child…family…extended family…school…mosque…orchard…..olive grove.

The exclusion of face to face dialogue where sound and voice are swallowed by the mechanical…….results in demonization and criminalisation.

Muthana Samara Kingston University. Presentation: 'Children's Journey from War to Refuge'.

Presenter 8:

The cycle of loss and grief of a community under siege

Sabotage of water and medical supplies

Destruction of homes and crops

Children pulled out of bed in the night and sent to prison camps.

Mohammed Altawi Presentation: 'The fracture of resilience; the Palestinian Community'. UK-Palestinian Mental Health Network.

Presenter 9: P**alestinian theories of trauma and response**

The right to play and feel secure and nourished

The child and the un childing of childhood

The voice and the unvoicing of a community

The right to freedom of expression and the trauma when this is oppressed within a community as a whole.

MH Practice (in Palestine) have a different entity. Aspiring another world with radical openness and psychological resistance.

One cannot work in Gaza or West Bank without the sense of deep respect for the dignity of local communities and local practitioners.

It confirms we are colleagues world wide – so we want to be psychologists together, do psychology rather than impose psychology.

David Raines, Cognitive Behaviour Therapist, Kingston Conference.

Presenter 10:

Children s voices – everydayness, mixed with flashes of deep trauma and fear.

Trauma discourse – we as Palestinians were evicted from the trauma discourse. Children are in it. It should not be.

Dr John R. Van Enwyk, Conference Presentation: Psychological Therapies in Gaza & Sri Lanka

Presenter 11

Gun to body is all persuasive – to mind, psyche…..the trauma is the point of collapse of the political possibility of freedom into the mind of the child.

Political interests have become greater than the interests of children.

Muthanna Gaza Medic, Gaza Community Mental Health Programme.

Research processes strive…. *"to objectify the imagination. To challenge the dispossession of the child's imagination".*

Samah Jabr Gaza Medic.

Appendix 5: Palestinian interviews (sample) and chart of thematic analysis (sample)

INTERVIEW: Fayez Sharat, Head of Psychology Community Services, Palestine.

There are emergency teams for schools in danger zones in Palestine, West Bank.2.1 At present, the hight risk is R*** and H2*** so it is now difficult for us to reach the children in these areas. 2.2 When a district is at risk, the children are more isolated and fearful, and so are there counsellors in their own family circumstances. It is very difficult to treat the children in the school in an at risk area because they are always watchful and tense expecting a military raid into the school. So there is no safe treatment place 2.3 and the teachers and counsellors are also traumatized. 2.4 This is their community and their school is being attacked.

Children in Palestine experience enduring trauma. We believe it is inter-generational 2.9 and has become the fabric of our community experience and daily life 2.10. we welcome counselling techniques which influence the experience and recognise culture-specific trauma; 2.11 different age methods of intervention. We specifically need group and individual trauma strain relief techniques for the build up of features of enduring trauma and the strains in the environment. 2.12 The strategies are how to deal with the trauma when often services cannot reach them and how children understand that healing comes from within. 2.13 They cannot be reliant only on our service due to access difficulties but also our teams need specialized interventions that take the strain of environment of siege and military rule into account. 2.14

Family therapy approaches are important; 2.15 to build resilience and strengthen the families 2.16 but also for parents and older children to know symptoms of trauma and support each other; especially younger siblings. 2.17 The older boys ask how they can learn the techniques to treat the younger boys in their cells in prison.2.18 This is why we see them in our project as action researchers in knowledge alliances. 2.19 It is a community strategy. 2.20 What we draw on is the strength of cultural issues and community solidarity. 2.21

We use rhythmic stories and songs 2.22 and use of motion and music 2.23 to give the children self relaxation processes 2.24. We also give mentorship where a trained counsellor or social work will work through specific features of trauma 2.25 with a group of children for a period of time. But this is labour intensive; we have 200 school counsellors in W Bank and this is not enough. We do not reach many of the children and we always have to change our tactics and operate in a district at high risk – so then the work is always crisis work. 2.26 Trying to keep the children safe, advocating for them if they are detained; 2.27 it is very difficult the for our service to be measured or work effectively with the deeper traumas in a measured way 2.28.

Use of motion 2.29; music 2.30; story telling 2.31; mediation 2.32; parachute – 2.33 to decrease the tension the students are surrounded by.

Sequences have a beginning – invitation 2.34; middle – expression 2.35; end – hope / resolution 2.36. We always try to give the children the sense of a pathway. 2.37

What do you think of the holding space technique we are using with the children in Hebron?

It has important features for our children 2.38. They are together in a safe space with both practitioners they know, and outside practitioners so that they feel very safe and very respected.

Then they build dignity and self belief 2.39 – they see how you value them and then they feel special. 2.40 They have all been in prison 2.41; they feel hunted and they feel this deeply. 2.42. The circle gives them dignity 2.43 and sense of who they really are – 2.43 not prisoners but children. The games are significant for them – to give them a sense of self and each other 2.44 To celebrate this; to relax for a while; 2.45 they won't forget – the circle is meaningful for them 2.46 and deeply significant 2.47.

We use it too – but in a different way.

The creative arts they know because lots of international researchers and street therapists use these techniques here. 2.48 But your team and out team do this with a shared alliance of trauma approaches and features so we are always watching their responses and seeing how to support them 2. 49 so it is not just a celebration and entertainment but specialised art forms which express deep psychological needs 2.50. They know our professional specialisms – so when we watch them use expressive arts they know we listen with a therapist's eye. 2.51.

Themes	Coding
Conflict Context	2.1 2.1
Military tactics and Psychological impact	2.2 2.3
Military tactics and impact on practice approaches	2.4
Invasion of childhood and childhood rights	2.5
Invasion of family and family trauma symptoms	2.6 2.7 2.9
Feature of destabilised and hostile environments on practitioner tactics	2.8
Threat to a measured therapeutic service	2.11
Practitioner symptoms of trauma and vicarious trauma	2.14 2.4
Trauma in conflict zone / occupied territory enduring and intergenerational trauma	2.9 2.10
Safe Space	2.4 2.38
Holding Space	2.43 2.44
Group Work Space	2.16
Family and community therapy approaches	2.15
Pyscho Social Work	2.21
Threat to family and community 'Safe Space'	2.2 2.5 2.15
Childhood invasion and childhood resilience	2.41 2.42
Action research approaches and participatory theory	2.18 2.19
Creative arts	2.30 2.31 2.32 2.33
Transcultural practice alliance and contribution	2.54
Protective and restorative practise approaches	2.15 2.13

Appendix 6: PAR Team Interviews

PAR Team Interviews (Post Hebron Project).

Title / profile: Mick - Community educator and therapeutic arts practitioner

What is your view of the effectiveness of the holding space as a circle of inquiry and interaction with the young people?

1.How could it respond to the situations of conflict we experienced on arrival in the landscape around us (physical and human?)

There is something deeply transformative in this type of approach. Going in without a script but with an affinity – we developed an approach which reflects the idea that I have had in teaching to look at any group of learners – the process is going to be a co-operative teaching and learning experience and if this is effective, then the process becomes the outcome. This desire for deep respectful interaction comes before therapy – it is primeval. The need to engage – human curiosity and compassion. The deep intuitive instinct.

There is always a celebratory element when the practice group comes together across cultures as the celebration of shared humanity and the richness of this when realised across cultures. Creative arts expresses this richly.

This participatory intuitive approach is dynamic; it is instinctive and human whereas the therapeutic can feel like a formal art and more of a science than an art in essence responding to set frameworks and parameters.

It echoes the idea that everyone has a story to tell, a valid insight and it is that drive to invite that which is within.

2. What is the effectiveness of the holding space as a circle of inquiry and interaction with the young people?

The holding space – that approach allowed it to work in any space; the features are that you are open to the expressive and creative needs of the group and there is a point in the interaction where you lead them into a space until the moment where they feel composure to take the lead. That approach is going to work in any context – it is not dependant on a formal structure but needs therapeutic and creative skills.

The principles of non hierarchical participation are essential. The circle mirrors the tribal circle around the fire in the coyote story.

3.What was effective in the creative arts forum?

Although the PAR team held the initial stage of the delivery with practitioners day 1 and day 2, it was given as an offering – to be received – then taken off us as the local practitioners took a lead. The stone in the centre of the room (Joy – Palestinian limestone) and the threading game across the room started the conversation about creation and existence, about landscape and land rights,

community and co-operation. The drawings of home with local practitioners and young people opened up home space, society, life, family dreams, community as a source for celebration

The PAR leadership has always to hold the space – local people are too involved, emotionally, have multiple investments whereas the PAR international team should be held to their central purpose. The local practitioners constantly vetted us – discussed (in Arabic) our approaches and where uncertain, questioned the appropriateness of the approach. In this way, we felt as an international practice team, we would only be permitted to engage with the young people through their gateway. They had a boldness – at any point, they could have said. "This is not for us". They often discussed our engagement in Arabic – while we waited, without translation. It suggested although it was a partnership across cultures, they would discriminate and reserve the right to control the intervention.

At the Ministry of Education this was taken off us literally when the counsellors took my drum that I was going to use for the native American beat – and turned it into a Palestinian song, a Moslem song which was their way of showing us the vibrancy of their culture.

Features of the circle

It is our expectation and belief in the creative song, the creative urge and need for expression. I think it is a compulsion.

As a creative arts therapist, my intention was to use creative arts forums in two stages – an opening stage which our team prepared, moving into a second stage in which the young people would design the creative arts platform. My principles are: poetry and expression, creative energy, power and release, transformation. Inviting a story that involves a journey so that rhythm and movement create change and invite transformation. Giving the narrative back to the young people…… walking into a space and letting the participants shape what is going to happen through their instinctive need for creative expression.

The essentiality of expression in human dignity and self-esteem, and the importance of this with young people who are oppressed and experiencing trauma.

We used rhythm and movement to mark out the circle each day. We begin with the assumption that people are happiest and most fulfilled when they can express themselves creatively: the focus is on the invitation to nurture the participant's innate creativity and curiosity.

The therapeutic aspect is the total absorption in the process.

Therapeutic element

If traumatised you are in survival mode – it might take time to come out of yourself.

I framed the invitation into creative arts. The circle was near the convention of street dance – we set up the circle so that the young people could step into the circle and perform. Some of them did street dance movements. The Head of Counselling did a cartwheel. They took our script and adapted it into a forum they knew; but also into a forum that had a deep purpose and intent. They wanted to

show us, through creative arts, their story and what it was like. To celebrate their community. But also to express their anxiety and pain. This was the therapeutic element – they moved from relaxing and going into celebration to a slower pace where they trusted us enough to show us their true and deeper feelings.

The role plays and mindmaps – volunteered by them – had a more serious intent. To show the shadows of their lives. This was very open for young people – they needed virtually no invitation, there was a readiness and maturity mixed with playfulness. Documentary drama / psycho drama approaches – conveying street scenes and real experiences, particularly encounters with armed soldiers. The one encounter wasn't about the treatment of young people but the treatment by the soldiers of an older man; emblem of a health society. Documentary in style – neutral, credible accounts without interpretation. Just showing us so we could receive. In acting the traumatic scenarios out to an audience of international practitioners with a therapeutic watchful instinct, there was a sense of working out elements of occupation and elements of oppression which do impact on their daily life.

Psycho dramatic element – moving the narrative and role plays to work through or realise through acting out, and then objectifying.

Transformative Element

To do with self discovery within a group; within a group that was mutually supportive.

Being invited into the circle, and being held in the circle gave a message of self worth.

The creative arts allowed a psychological transformative process to unfold – acting out triggered release – which was acknowledged and held by the three groups – the young people, the local practitioners, the international team. The coming together - the combination of different forms of communication – the visual (images), the rhythmic bonds, the words, the songs, the dance. There was a lot of mutuality, somebody sharing something and others connecting with it. There was no evidence of competition or undermining.

PAR Team approach and contribution

The transcultural alliance is sustaining – it is so rich when it works well it almost transcends time and culture. The vibrancy of the two way processes of sharing- in the small things like sharing bread in the break time, to sharing a time of mourning when one of the children had died during the training day we lead.

There is an element of international witness; the value they felt in sharing their culture with us – their songs, faith, sense of community. Not feeling closed to the world. In Palestine, the significance of this – they are enclosed, almost locked in time and arguably, in a point of historical oppression.

This is a true account and I give permission for it to be used in research processes.

Signed ***

Date 28.12.15

Interview 2 - Debbie Ryding PAR Team Participant, Palestine Project.

Title / profile: Debbie ** Trauma recovery therapist, psycho therapist and social work**

What is your view of the effectiveness of the holding space as a circle of inquiry and interaction with the young people?

How could it respond to the situations of conflict we experienced on arrival in the landscape around us (physical and human?)

Stepping into an international practice space when that is in a state of flux – affects everything. It felt as if the practitioners were trying to normalise everything as a control method – but as we developed our involvement with them this triggered signs of deep emotions: panic, uncertainty, watchfulness, the pain of shadows of traumatic memories. There was heightened alert – making it difficult for them to sit in the group and engage at times yet also showing a deep commitment to the interaction with our team; wanting to share feelings of hope and community and to balance the sense of negativity in the room when we first engaged with them.

It was as if they wanted to gain something from our interaction with them that would sustain them and nurture their sense of hopefulness; knowing that their attempts to develop practice and sustain effective practice are always affected by lack of resources, lack of access and clear communication lines.

Very knowledgeable and articulate about their trauma approaches and a specialized context they are the experts in – they had invited us to develop trauma knowledge together but it felt they often wanted to share stories and engage at a human level rather than therapist level – to take “time out” from the traumas they address and the constant protection over their community. To let us be the therapists.

2.What is your view of the effectiveness of the holding space as a circle of inquiry and interaction with the young people?

The circle was effective in terms of us as a team being able to go into it with the yp and meet them in a measured place that they had created.

The momentum developed once we got into exercises – broke barriers – this created a change in atmosphere.

The participatory element of the circle – their receiving us into it – was a deep symbol of participation. Holding space – it brought those they saw in authority down to an equal level. In their culture, and in the context of occupied territory with all the tactics of military suppression of young people, this is immensely powerful and significant. The equality was essential – it changed the interaction radically and allowed the interaction to move into inquiry. How they are and feel, what they need for their community. They also conveyed to us the participatory principle – they did not talk of individual scripts but about each other, their neighbours and communities.

Also, how they are in themselves – they have little space to express this as individuals – the circle gave them the space.

H2 Hebron, where they met with us, was the most destabilised place at that time and their mind maps showed us this. They framed their narratives and expressions within Human Rights; this echoes the IFSW practice community approach in advocacy with C & young people in conflict zones. Their role plays also showed how their human rights are affected in daily life. It was a powerful representation but not done for dramatic effect. Realism.

Human Rights was an important framework to work with in the circle. The circle gave them back their HR. That has huge effect on their mental health – if they are more relaxed more likely to go into describing their living circumstances in a deep and honest way to express the tensions and fears.

Once these are acknowledged, they can be worked with so it is the start of transformation.

3. Creative arts approaches / therapeutic approaches

The principle of participation allowed the young people to become equal. They weren't holding in – they could express and play – and become children. Right to play. This again is an important message for them as freedom in the streets and the right to be children and to play is suppressed. As international practitioners we could acknowledge their human rights as children; but also protect them to regain them during the project as we were an international witness or practice shield.

Creative arts forums – mindmaps and role plays – it is the narrative. They take control. They are able to tell their narrative and voice their trauma. They can then begin to heal. But you have to have someone to listen and hold the trauma narrative for them. The mindmap – you draw it, you speak it, you act it – writing for recovery – moves through the processes to allow the trauma to come out. Then it is taken away – it is held by the circle.

It takes courage in a withdrawn state to express thoughts and feelings – the rhythmic exercises, the images (light, rock of landscape, fire, circle) allowed them to relax and take these messages of hope and resilience into themselves.

To play, to have fun, to use humour is the emblem of hope.

Everything in a conflict zone is moving so fast that the young person's trauma symptoms can be overlooked as if they are in a locked or withdrawn state, they are hard to reach. Again, the participatory level of inquiry and interaction showed they mattered as individuals as a form of 'therapeutic interest'.

The workshop approach mirrored the trauma recovery framework for conflict zones:

Inviting the young people to go into an imaginary place – a safe space for a while.

Sustainable and transformative?

Tensions – you are giving them the sense of equality and safety but there are two processes in the intervention – the immediate and the sustaining.

Risk they would go back into their state.

Importance of sustaining the circle – giving them something that they can adapt and use themselves.

Collective and individual resilience skills – for use in the circle and use as individuals.

4. What elements of having a transcultural approach were effective / potentially transformative?

The transcultural alliance of local and international practitioners created a deep sense of affinity across cultures with understanding of a commitment to therapeutic response to young people in troubled community contexts. But really the process is to develop practice understandings and to hand this back to local practitioners.

This approach is sustainable. Important they don't feel left or left out. This gives the intrinsic messages of respect. Not to underestimate the level of participation and democracy in the circle in their culture and within occupied territory.

This is a true account and I give permission for it to be used in research processes.

Signed: D Ryding Date: 28.12.15

Appendix 7: A/HRC/34/38

Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem
27 February-24 March 2017

United Nations A/HRC/34/38

General Assembly

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Human Rights Council

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27 February-24 March 2017

Agenda items 2 and 7

Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 31/34 on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It focuses on the recurrence and persistence of human rights violations and the underlying policies leading to such patterns.

* The present report was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent developments.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution 31/34 of the Human Rights Council, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of that resolution, with a particular focus on the recurrence and persistence of human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the underlying policies leading to such patterns, including those involving forcible displacement. It covers the period from 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016. Fifty years after the start of the occupation, the patterns and persistence of human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory can be seen clearly. The present report provides a non-exhaustive overview of the most pressing human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, highlighting the connection with the Israeli occupation. The recommendations encourage all duty bearers to comply with their obligations under international law.

2. Recent reports of the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights provide a more in-depth analysis of the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[1]

II. Legal background

3. International human rights law and international humanitarian law are applicable in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, namely Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

4. Israel is a party to most of the core international human rights treaties[2] and ratified the four Geneva Conventions.[3] On 1 April 2014, the State of Palestine acceded to the same core human rights treaties as Israel, as well as to the four Geneva Conventions, their Additional Protocols and the Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land.[4]

A. International human rights law

5. As a party to most of the core international human rights conventions, the State of Palestine is responsible for implementing its human rights obligations within its jurisdiction. The authorities in Gaza also bear human rights obligations, given their exercise of government-like functions and territorial control.[5]

[1] See, e.g., A/71/364, A/71/355, A/HRC/34/36 and A/HRC/34/39.

[2] Israel has ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights , the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

[3] Israel is not a party to the Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land nor to the 1977 Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions.

[4] See A/HRC/12/37, para. 7, and A/HRC/8/17, para. 8.

[5] See A/HRC/8/17, para. 9.

6. The human rights obligations of Israel within the Occupied Palestinian Territory stem from the jurisdiction and effective control exercised by Israel as the occupying power.

7. The scope of application of international human rights law does not only depend on a State's territorial limits, but also on the exercise of its jurisdiction or effective control, even outside of the State's sovereign territory.[6] Israel has rejected the applicability of its human rights obligations outside its national territory.[7] However, the applicability of its human rights obligations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (i.e. the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip) has been continuously asserted in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly,[8] in reports of the Secretary-General[9] and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights[10] and by various human rights treaty bodies.[11]

8. As the International Court of Justice stated in 2004 that, because Israel exercises territorial jurisdiction over the Occupied Palestinian Territory as the occupying power, it is bound by human rights obligations in respect of the local population.[12] The International Court of Justice also observed that the obligations of Israel under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights included "an obligation not to raise any obstacle to the exercise of such rights in those fields where competence has been transferred to Palestinian authorities".[13] The accession of the State of Palestine to human rights treaties does not affect the obligations of Israel under human rights law within the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[14]

9. The applicability of human rights law in a situation of armed conflict or occupation concurrently with international humanitarian law has been widely affirmed. The International Court of Justice first addressed that issue in 1996 and then reiterated the concurrent application of international humanitarian law and human rights law in its advisory opinion on the wall, including in respect of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[15] A situation of armed conflict or occupation does not release a State from its human rights obligations.[16]

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[6] See *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, *Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004*, p. 134, para. 109.

[7] See, e.g., E/C.12/1/Add.27, para. 8. See also *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall*, para. 112.

[8] See, e.g., General Assembly resolution 71/98.

[9] See A/69/348, para. 5, and A/HRC/28/44, para. 6.

[10] See, e.g., A/HRC/8/17, para. 7, and A/HRC/12/37, paras. 5-6.

[11] See Human Rights Committee general comment No. 31 (2004) on the nature of the general legal obligation imposed on States parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, para. 10. See also E/C.12/1/Add.90, para. 31, CCPR/C/ISR/CO/4, para. 5, CRC/C/ISR/CO/2-4, para. 3, CAT/C/ISR/CO/4, para. 11, and CERD/C/ISR/CO/14-16, para. 10.

[12] See *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall*, paras. 110-113.

[13] Ibid., para. 112.

[14] See A/HRC/28/44, para. 6.

[15] See *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 1996*, p. 226, para. 25, and *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall*, para. 106.

[16] See A/HRC/12/37, para. 6.

B. International humanitarian law

10. The Occupied Palestinian Territory is a territory under belligerent occupation to which international humanitarian law applies. Israel is bound by the obligations of an occupying power set out in the Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, the Fourth Geneva Convention and customary international law,[17] as confirmed by numerous international entities.[18] International humanitarian law applies to the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in other words to Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. East Jerusalem remains an integral part of the West Bank and the Security Council has repeatedly affirmed the continued application of the Fourth Geneva Convention to East Jerusalem.[19]

11. Further norms of international humanitarian law, particularly those relating to the conduct of hostilities, must be respected by all parties to a conflict, including Palestinian armed groups.[20] In particular, all parties to a conflict have to respect the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.[21]

12. States parties to the Geneva Conventions have the duty not only to respect the Conventions but also to ensure respect for them.[22] The obligation to ensure respect implies an obligation to take measures to prompt States that have violated the Conventions to act in compliance with international humanitarian law.[23] It is on this obligation that the Security Council, the General Assembly and the majority of States parties to the Geneva Conventions have relied when calling upon third States to react to international humanitarian law violations by Israel.[24]

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[17] Although Israel is not a party to the Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, the rules contained therein are applicable as they are considered customary law. While Israel has disputed the de jure application of the law of occupation based on an interpretation of article 2 common to the Geneva Conventions (an interpretation that has been rejected by various international entities), it has nevertheless been applying selected provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

[18] See *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall*, para. 101. See also Security Council resolutions 1860 (2009) and 2334 (2016), among others; General Assembly resolutions 62/181 and 63/98, among others; Human Rights Council resolution 10/18, among others; reports of the Secretary-General A/HRC/12/37, para. 9, and A/HRC/8/17, para. 5, among others; and the declaration of 17 December 2014 adopted by the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

[19] See Security Council resolutions 478 (1980) and 476 (1980) and General Assembly resolutions 70/88 and 71/96.

[20] Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions.

[21] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Customary International Humanitarian Law (Volume I: Rules)* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), rules 1-3.

[22] Article 1 common to the Geneva Conventions.

[23] See ICRC commentary to article 1 common to the Geneva Conventions, 2016, para. 154 (https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/full/GCI-commentaryArt1); the declaration of 5 December 2001 of the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, para. 4; *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall*, paras. 158-159; and *Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States of America), Merits, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1986*, p. 14, para. 220.

[24] See, e.g., Security Council resolutions 2334 (2016) and 465 (1980); General Assembly resolution 70/89, paras. 9-10; and the declaration of 17 December 2014 of the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, para. 4.

III. Recurrent violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

13. The Palestinian population of the Occupied Palestinian Territory is specifically protected by international humanitarian law.[25] As the occupying power, Israel has the duty to protect the population of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to uphold public order and safety.[26] That obligation is commonly understood as including an obligation to ensure the welfare and well-being of the local population.[27] Israel bears the obligation to meet the needs of the protected population[28] and to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need.[29] It is also under an obligation to treat the protected population humanely, without any discrimination.[30] In all circumstances, it is obliged to respect the fundamental rights of protected persons, that is their right to physical, moral and intellectual integrity.[31] The obligation of Israel, as an occupying power, to protect the Palestinian population is in line with its obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of the Palestinian population without discrimination.

A. Violations of the obligations of the occupying power

14. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel disregards the law of occupation and its obligations as an occupying power. The law of occupation is guided by the principle that the *status quo ante* has to be preserved as far as possible within the occupied territory.[32]

15. A central violation of the law of occupation in the present context is the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The continued expansion of settlements not only undermines the possibility of a two-State solution, but is also at the core of many human rights violations in the West Bank.[33]

1. Settlement expansion in the West Bank

16. Since the early years of the occupation, Israel has pursued a policy of establishing illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[34] With a current total settler population of at least 590,000 in the West Bank (around 386,000 in some 130 settlements in Area C and

[25] Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 4.
[26] Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, arts. 43 and 46.
[27] David Kretzmer, "The law of belligerent occupation in the Supreme Court of Israel", *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 94, No. 885 (Spring 2012), pp. 216-217.
[28] Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 55 (1) regarding food and medical supplies; see also art. 56 regarding the duty to ensure and maintain medical services and art. 50 regarding the duty to facilitate the proper working of education institutions.
[29] Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 59, and ICRC, *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, rule 55. As consent of the occupying power remains necessary, it cannot be withheld on grounds other than those set out in article 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
[30] Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 27.
[31] Ibid., and ICRC 1958 commentary to article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, p. 201.
[32] ICRC, "Contemporary challenges to IHL — Occupation: Overview", June 2012.
[33] See A/HRC/34/39 and A/71/355, para. 34.
[34] See S/13450 and Corr.1 and 2.

208,000 in East Jerusalem), the population of settlements has more than doubled since the beginning of the Oslo process in 1993.[35] In addition, approximately 100 illegal outposts have been built without the formal approval of the Government of Israel in Area C and efforts under way in Israel to legalize some of them.[36]

17. Besides allocating land for the purposes of constructing settlement housing and infrastructure, Israel supports the maintenance and development of settlements through the delivery of public services and the encouragement of economic activities, including agriculture and industry. Population growth in Israeli settlements is stimulated by housing, education and tax benefits. Similar incentives are provided for settlement industries.[37] The development of archaeological sites, national parks and other tourist sites aimed at attracting Israelis further contributes to settlement growth and Israeli control of land in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.[38]

18. Moreover, Israel supports outposts considered illegal under its domestic law and other unauthorized constructions through the provision of funds, infrastructure and security.[39] Settlement expansion is also compounded by the failure of Israel to maintain public order and ensure accountability for harassment and violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers.

19. Settlements amount to the transfer of a State's population to the territory it occupies, which is prohibited by international humanitarian law.[40] Any act that would facilitate population transfer is also prohibited under international humanitarian law.[41] Such transfer stands in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and is recognized as a war crime that may lead to individual criminal responsibility.[42] The illegality of settlements under international law has been confirmed by various international bodies, including the International Court of Justice, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.[43]

20. In addition, settlements and related activities have repercussions on human rights. The ongoing expansion of settlements severely impedes

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35 Report of the Middle East Quartet of July 2016, p. 4. Available from www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/middle_east/Report-of-the-Middle-East-Quartet.pdf.

36 Ibid., p. 5. See also A/HRC/34/39, para. 33, and A/71/355, paras. 10-14.

37 See A/68/513, para. 24, A/71/355, para. 4, and A/HRC/22/63, paras. 19, 22 and 97.

38 See A/69/348, paras. 33-35, A/70/351, paras. 33-36, and A/71/355, para. 4.

39 See A/68/513, paras. 15-16, and Talya Sason, "Summary of the opinion concerning unauthorized outposts" (10 March 2005).

40 Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 49 (6).

41 ICRC, 1958 commentary to article 49 (6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, p. 283.

42 Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 147, and Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, art. 8 (2) (b) (viii).

43 See *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall*, para. 120; Security Council resolutions 2334 (2016) and 465 (1980); General Assembly resolution 70/89 and Human Rights Council resolution 31/36, and earlier resolutions; and the declaration of 17 December 2014 of the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, para. 8.

the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and seriously deprives them of natural resources.[44]

2. Unlawful seizure and destruction of property

21. As set out in the Fourth Geneva Convention, the occupying power must administer public property according to the rules of usufruct. The occupying power can thus use and enjoy public property as long as doing so does not alter its character.[45] Private property must be respected and cannot be confiscated;[46] the destruction of property by the occupying power is expressly prohibited by international humanitarian law.[47] The seizure of property, as well as the demolition of Palestinian houses, infrastructure and orchards, in order to establish, develop and maintain settlements and provide access to the latter are flagrant violations of the rules of usufruct.

22. Exceptions to the rules are only permitted if those rules specifically provide for them. In the absence of active hostilities in the West Bank, any exception to the rule prohibiting the alteration or destruction of private and public property appears difficult to invoke. [48]

3. Demolitions and forcible transfer of Palestinians in the West Bank

23. International humanitarian law not only prohibits the transfer of the population of the occupying State into the occupied territory, but also individual or mass forcible transfer or deportation of the population of an occupied territory regardless of the motive.[49] Such transfer amounts to a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and is also considered a war crime.[50]

24. Over the years, the Secretary-General has reported on cases where the forcible transfer of Palestinians may have taken place within the West Bank and on the situation of individuals and communities at risk of forcible transfer, primarily Bedouins and other herder communities within Area C of the West Bank. Cases of forcible transfer are generally documented after the demolition of homes and infrastructure that leads to forced evictions,[51] in violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.[52]

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[44] See *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall*, para. 122; General Assembly resolution 71/247; and A/HRC/22/63, para. 38.

[45] Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, art. 55, Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 53, and ICRC, *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, rule 51.

[46] Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, arts. 46 and 56, Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 53, and ICRC, *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, rule 51.

[47] Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 53, and ICRC, *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, rule 51.

[48] ICRC, 1958 commentary to article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, p. 302.

[49] See the Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 49 (2), for exceptions.

[50] Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 147, and Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, art. 8 (2) (b) (viii).

[51] See, e.g., A/HRC/25/40, paras. 18-21, A/69/347, para. 26, and A/67/372, paras. 36-37.

[52] Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 53; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 11; and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 17.

25. Having destroyed or seized 986 structures between 1 January and 31 October 2016 (more than twice for the number compared with the same period in 2015), in 2016 the Israeli authorities demolished more Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, than in any year since 2009, when the United Nations began to monitor the issue systematically. The majority of demolitions affected vulnerable Palestinian Bedouin and herding communities. Overall, 1,596 Palestinians were displaced in 2016, including 759 children, and 6,398 others were affected, including 2,007 children, by the demolition of residential and livelihood-related structures. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, official data released by the Israeli authorities indicates that over 11,000 demolition orders in Area C were outstanding as of 2014, concerning an estimated 17,000 Palestinian-owned structures.[53]

26. Most structures have been demolished because of the absence of building permits issued by the Israeli authorities, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain. In previous reports, it has been noted that the Israeli zoning and planning policy in the West Bank, which regulates the construction of housing and structures in Area C, is restrictive, discriminatory and incompatible with requirements under international law.[54] Provided that international humanitarian law is otherwise respected,[55] territorial planning has to be undertaken to enhance the life of the protected population, which is not the case in the present situation. The implementation of the zoning and planning regime cannot be invoked by Israel to justify any violation of international law.

27. The destruction of donor-funded humanitarian assistance to vulnerable communities spiked in 2016, when 292 donor-funded structures were demolished or seized by the Israeli authorities in Area C — a rate over 165 per cent higher than in 2015. Affected relief items included shelters and tents, water cisterns, animal barracks and other basic structures needed for survival and to gain a livelihood. Such actions are irreconcilable with the occupying power's obligations to allow and facilitate humanitarian access for civilians in need.[56]

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[53] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, official data on demolition orders in Area C. Available from http://data.ochaopt.org/demolitions.aspx.

[54] See A/HRC/31/43, para. 45, referring to A/HRC/25/38, paras. 11-20; see also A/68/513, paras. 30-34. The implementation of the Israeli planning and zoning regime is problematic with regard to the prohibition of discrimination enshrined in human rights law and the right to adequate housing (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 11), including the prohibition on forced evictions and on unlawful or arbitrary interference with privacy, family and home (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights general comment No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions, para. 3).

[55] In particular, the Israeli planning and zoning regime may violate the obligation of the occupying power under international humanitarian law to ensure public order and safety while respecting the laws in force in the occupied territory (Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, art. 43).

[56] Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 59; see also ICRC, *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, rule 55.

28.Forcible transfer does not necessarily require the use of physical force by the authorities but may be triggered by specific circumstances that leave individuals or communities with no choice but to leave. The existence of such circumstances constitutes what is known as a coercive environment.[57] Any transfer that occurs without the genuine and fully informed consent of those affected is considered forcible. However, genuine consent to a transfer cannot be presumed in an environment marked by the use or threat of physical force, coercion, fear of violence or duress.[58]

29.Palestinians have been forced to move owing to the existence of a coercive environment within Area C of the West Bank[59] and the area of the city of Hebron under Israeli control (H2).[60] Coercive factors such as home seizures and demolitions leading to forced evictions, movement and access restrictions, instances of excessive use of force by Israeli security forces and settler violence have also been reported in East Jerusalem.[61] Forcible transfers have also been documented following the revocation of residency permits in East Jerusalem,[62] as well as the transfer of Palestinian detainees to Israeli prisons.[63] Human rights violations, for example of the rights to freedom of movement, privacy and family life,[64] as well of a range of economic, social, and cultural rights,[65] may also be violated within the context of forcible transfers.

4. Collective punishment

30.In June 2007, following the takeover of Gaza by Hamas, and in the context of continued attacks emanating from Gaza against Israeli civilian targets, Israel significantly tightened restrictions on movement by land to and from the Gaza Strip, adding to the prohibition of any access by air or sea since 1967. Despite a gradual easing of some restrictions since 2010, Israel continues to maintain a tight closure policy,[66] leaving 1.9 million Palestinians locked in Gaza, largely unable to access the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the outside world. The impact of that blockade is exacerbated by the almost continuous closure by Egypt of the Rafah passenger crossing (despite some loosening of restrictions over the past year) and by the increasing refusal by Jordan to grant passage to Palestinians from Gaza through the Allenby crossing.[67]

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[57] See A/HRC/34/39, paras. 40-57.
[58] See A/67/372, para. 37, and A/HRC/24/30, para. 29.
[59] See A/HRC/31/43, para. 46, A/69/348, para. 16, and A/67/372, para. 37.
[60] See A/71/355, paras. 25-64.
[61] See A/70/351, paras. 25-51, and A/HRC/16/71, paras. 20-22.
[62] See A/67/372, para. 39, and A/HRC/16/71, paras. 23-24.
[63] Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 78. The transfer of prisoners into the territory of the occupying power is forbidden by article 76.
[64] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 12 and 17.
[65] See A/HRC/16/71, para. 24.
[66] The term "blockade" is used here to describe the imposition by Israel of prolonged closures and economic and movement restrictions in the Gaza Strip (see A/71/364, para. 5, A/HRC/24/30, paras. 21-23, A/69/347, paras. 30-34, and General Assembly resolution 69/93).
[67] See A/71/364, para. 28.

31. The closures imposed on Gaza are contrary to international law and may amount to collective punishment, as it penalizes the entire population without regard to individual responsibility.[68] It has a serious impact on the right to freedom of movement and on economic, social and cultural rights.

32. Following an attack against Israelis, the Israeli authorities frequently employ measures that may amount to collective punishment that affect the members of the family or the community of the attackers or alleged attackers.[69] The use of such measures has increased during the past three years in a context of heightened violence. Among the measures used are the following: punitive demolitions, the cancellation of travel and work permits and other administrative actions, the withholding of bodies and the closure of Palestinian towns and villages.[70]

33. Collective punishment is expressly prohibited by international humanitarian law.[71] That prohibition does not apply only to criminal sanctions but also to harassment of any sort, including administrative measures, carried out by the police or the military.[72] Several human rights are negatively affected by such practices, including the right to a fair trial and other due process guarantees, including the principle of individual responsibility and the presumption of innocence.[73]

5. Settler harassment and violence, and impunity

34. Settler harassment and violence against Palestinians, and the failure of Israel to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable, has been an ongoing issue in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[74] Such instances include verbal harassment, physical attacks causing casualties and damage to or destruction of Palestinian property, with Palestinian-owned trees (mainly olive trees) being specifically targeted.[75]

35. The phenomenon has been directly linked to the continued existence and expansion of illegal settlements throughout the West Bank. Documented cases of settler attacks, trespassing and forceful takeover of land suggest that violence is often carried out as part of an effort by settlers to push Palestinian farmers off their land.[76]

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[68] See A/HRC/31/40, para. 36, and A/HRC/24/30, para. 22, with references.

[69] A/HRC/34/36 and A/HRC/31/40.

[70] See A/71/364, paras. 25-26, A/HRC/34/36, paras. 31-33, and A/HRC/31/40, paras. 29-33. See also www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20082&LangID=E.

[71] Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, art. 50, and Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 33.

[72] ICRC, *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, commentary to rule 103.

[73] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 11-12, 14 and 17. See also the Fourth Geneva Convention, arts. 71-73.

[74] E.g., A/71/355 and A/HRC/31/43, among numerous previous reports. See also Talya Sason, "Summary of the opinion concerning unauthorized outposts".

[75] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Israeli settler violence in the West Bank", November 2011.

[76] See A/69/348, para. 39. See also Yesh Din, *The Road to Dispossession: a Case Study — the Outpost of Adei Ad* (February 2013), and Kerem Navot, *Israeli Settler Agriculture as a Means of Land Takeover in the West Bank*, (August 2013).

36. As the occupying power, Israel is obliged to uphold public order and safety within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to protect its inhabitants, notably from all acts of violence, threats and insults.[77] Harassment and violence by settlers impedes the enjoyment of numerous human rights by the affected Palestinian population, including the right to life and physical integrity, the right to privacy, family and home and the right to an adequate standard of living.[78]

37. Under its duty to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all individuals within its jurisdiction, without any discrimination, Israel has the obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute, punish and remedy any harm sustained by Palestinians, whether it is caused by officials or private persons.[79]

38. Moreover, Israel should do its utmost to ensure prompt and effective investigations into alleged violations and to prosecute suspected perpetrators.[80] However, it is very rare that police complaints filed by Palestinians in the West Bank lead to an investigation, let alone an indictment.[81] The Israeli authorities have recently made efforts to address the issue of settler violence, including through intensified law enforcement activity and the increased presence of elements of the Israel Defense Forces.[82] These measures have been linked to a steady decline in recorded incidents of settler violence over the past three years. That trend nevertheless is in contrast with the exceptional violence of some of the attacks committed in 2015.[83]

6. Application of Israeli law in the West Bank

39. In the West Bank, Israeli domestic law is applied extraterritorially to Israeli settlers, while Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law in addition to the Palestinian legal system. The resulting differentiation is particularly problematic as regards criminal matters.[84] While Israeli settlers are tried under Israeli penal law in civilian courts in Israel, Palestinians are prosecuted under Israeli military law for security offences and other crimes as defined by military orders. It is notable that Israeli domestic law provides more procedural guarantees to suspects and defendants than Israeli military law does for the same offence.[85]

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77 Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 27 (1), and Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, art. 46.

78 See, e.g., International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 7 and 17, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 11, and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, art. 5.

79 See *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall*, para. 110, CCPR/CO/78/ISR, para. 11, and Committee on Civil and Political Rights general comment No. 31, para. 8.

80 See A/71/355, para. 19, and A/HRC/25/38, paras. 42-43.

81 Yesh Din, "Law enforcement on Israeli civilians in the West Bank", data sheet, October 2015 (referred to in A/71/355, para. 19).

82 See A/71/355, para. 20, and A/HRC/31/43, paras. 40-43.

83 See A/HRC/34/39 and A/71/355, para. 18.

84 See A/HRC/28/44, para. 53, and A/HRC/22/63, paras. 41 and 46.

85 Differences notably pertain to the authority to arrest, the maximum period of detention before being brought before a judge, the right to meet with an attorney, protections for defendants during trial, maximum punishment and release before sentence completion. Israeli military law also provides for additional offences that are not part of Israeli criminal legislation, such

40. The application of two different legal systems in the same territory, on the sole basis of nationality or origin, is inherently discriminatory.[86] It also violates the principle of equality before the law, which is central to the right to a fair trial.[87] The application of Israeli domestic law to settlers and of Israeli military law to Palestinians in the West Bank also raises concerns regarding the obligation of the occupying power to respect the laws in force in the territory it occupies, unless it is absolutely prevented from doing so.[88]

B. Obligations of all parties related to the conduct of hostilities

41. Since 2007, there have been three major escalations in Gaza, which have resulted in 3,808 Palestinian fatalities, including 928 children.[89] During the most recent escalation of hostilities, in July and August 2014, 1,460 civilians, including 556 children, were killed, and 82 hospitals and 295 schools were either destroyed or damaged. In total, 90 Israelis, including 11 civilians, were killed.[90]

42. More than two years after the 2014 escalation of hostilities, serious concerns persist concerning the lack of accountability by the Israeli and Palestinian authorities with regard to alleged violations of international humanitarian law, including alleged war crimes, and violations and abuses of international human rights law. No meaningful investigation has been announced by the Palestinian authorities so far.[91] A high number of cases involving the Israel Defense Forces will not be subject to criminal investigation as they were closed by the Office of the Israeli Military Advocate General for lack of reasonable grounds for suspicion of criminal behaviour, despite serious allegations.[92] When investigations are opened, concerns remain as to whether they meet human rights standards, especially in view of the small number and the low rank of alleged perpetrators that are eventually brought to justice, facing mainly lenient indictments and sentences.[93] As for civil remedies, victims have no prospect for compensation either.[94] This overall lack of accountability contributes to fuelling the conflict.

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as stone-throwing or assaulting a soldier. See Association for Civil Rights in Israel, *One Rule, Two Legal Systems: Israel's Regime of Laws in the West Bank* (November 2014) and B'Tselem, "Dual system of law", 1 January 2011.

86 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 2.

87 Ibid., art. 14.

88 Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, art. 43, and Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 64. The possible passage of a bill in the Knesset that would enable the retroactive legalization of outposts built on Palestinian-owned land is of additional concern, as it would be the first time that the Knesset enacts legislation to be specifically applied in the West Bank.

89 Figures from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

90 A Thai national was also killed.

91 The report of the Palestinian Independent National Committee established to follow up on the recommendations addressed to the Palestinian Authority by the independent commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1 (see A/HRC/29/52) was reportedly handed over to the Palestinian President on 8 January 2017.

92 Israel Defense Forces, "Decisions regarding exceptional incidents that occurred during Operation Protective Edge". See A/71/364, paras. 38-41.

93 See A/71/364, para. 40.

94 Ibid., paras. 56-57.

C. Further recurrent human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Impunity as a driver of violations

43. Despite various measures taken by Israel to address impunity,[95] the failure to ensure accountability creates an environment of impunity where victims and families have little or no redress, which may encourage further abuses on all sides.

44. Ensuring accountability for violations committed by all parties would be key to breaking the cycle of violence.[96] Few Israeli security personnel are indicted for their actions. Incitement to violence remains an issue. Palestinians who commit attacks against Israelis are glorified by parts of the population and representatives of ruling parties.[97]

Excessive use of force by law enforcement officials

45. Since September 2015, there has been a new escalation of violence in the West Bank, with attacks committed by Palestinians against Israelis. In that context, there appears to have also been a sharp increase in incidents of excessive use of force, both in the context of clashes and in response to attacks or alleged attacks by Palestinians against Israelis.[98] In many instances, it appears that Israeli security forces do not make use of firearms against Palestinians only as a last resort, even where there is no imminent threat to life or of serious injury.[99] Similar concerns of unlawful killings arise in the context of the access-restricted areas in Gaza (where elements of the Israel Defense Forces routinely use firearms against bystanders and protestors), along the Israel-Gaza fence and at sea against small fishing vessels.[100]

46. Such use of firearms and the large number of resulting casualties raise serious questions as to whether the rules of engagement of the Israel Defense Forces comply with international law, whether they are properly implemented and respected and whether appropriate sanctions are imposed for non-compliance.

47. In law enforcement operations, the use of lethal force has to be limited to situations when it is strictly necessary and in accordance with the principle of proportionality. It should be restricted to situations of last resort, i.e. as a response to an imminent threat of death or serious injury.[101] Use of force that does not comply with those principles and results in the death of the suspect amounts to an arbitrary deprivation of life.[102] Under international humanitarian law, this may constitute an act of wilful killing.[103]

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95 See CAT/C/ISR/5 and A/71/364, paras. 61-63.
96 See A/71/364, para. 71.
97 Report of the Middle East Quartet, p. 3.
98 See A/HRC/31/40.
99 See A/71/364, paras. 8-10, and A/71/355, paras. 38-43.
100 See A/70/421, paras. 30-38, and A/71/364, paras. 13-15.
101 Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, arts. 2-3, and Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, principles 5, 9 and 13-14.
102 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 6.
103 Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 147.

48. The Secretary-General has expressed serious concern regarding the excessive use of force and unlawful killings by the Israeli security forces, including apparent extrajudicial executions.[104] Concerns remain regarding accountability in law enforcement operations.[105] Since the escalation of violence in September 2015, only one case has led to an indictment and subsequent conviction, despite the fact that, as at 31 October 2016, 169 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces following an attack or alleged attack.[106]

Torture and ill-treatment in detention

49. Allegations of ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian detainees have been regularly reported over the years.[107] These occur largely during arrests, transfers and interrogations, particularly by the Israel Security Agency. Common forms of ill-treatment include sleep deprivation, placement in stress positions, sexual harassment and physical assault. In 2015, The Public Committee against Torture in Israel documented 38 complaints of torture in Israeli detention facilities.[108] The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and partner organizations also documented 58 cases of West Bank children reporting ill-treatment by Israeli security forces in 2015.[109]

50. International human rights law prohibits torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.[110] That prohibition is absolute and there cannot be any derogation from it, not even in a situation of armed conflict.[111] The occupied population is also specifically protected by international humanitarian law.[112]

51. Israeli law does not specifically prohibit, define or criminalize torture.[113] Despite improvements, for instance with the creation of semi-independent accountability mechanisms, the "necessity defence" is commonly invoked to prevent any criminal investigations.[114] The number of complaints of torture or ill-treatment involving the Israel Security Agency has quadrupled since June 2013, but not a single complaint has led to a criminal investigation.[115] Israel views the presentation of such complaints as a method to burden and hinder its security agencies in their ongoing fight against terrorism.[116]

52. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has consistently received and documented reliable

104 See A/71/355, para. 43, A/71/364, paras. 8-9, and A/HRC/31/40, paras. 10-15.
105 See A/71/364, paras. 42-50.
106 See A/71/355, para. 45, and A/71/364, para. 45. Elor Azaria was convicted for manslaughter on 4 January 2017; as at the time of writing, it was not clear whether there will be an appeal to the judgment.
107 A/HRC/28/80, A/HRC/31/40 and A/71/364.
108 Update provided by the Public Committee against Torture in Israel.
109 See A/HRC/31/40, para. 47.
110 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 7.
111 Ibid., art. 4.
112 Fourth Geneva Convention, arts. 27 and 32.
113 See CAT/C/ISR/CO/5, paras. 12-13, and A/71/364, paras. 41 and 59.
114 See A/71/364, para. 59 (with references).
115 Ibid., para 60.
116 See CAT/C/ISR/5, para. 11.

allegations of torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees in the West Bank and in Gaza, including cases that have led to death.[117] In the West Bank, political opponents and activists, including students perceived to be linked to Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, appear to be particularly targeted by the Palestinian Authority.[118] In Gaza, the ruling authorities and armed groups have reportedly resorted to such practices.[119] Credible investigations into allegations are rare.

Administrative and arbitrary detention

53. Since 2014, the number of Palestinians in detention has significantly increased; detainees have no prospect of charge or trial. As at 31 October 2016, it was reported that 720 Palestinians were being held in Israeli administrative detention,[120] after their number had peaked at 750 earlier in 2016, the highest number since early 2008.[121] Some administrative detainees have resorted to hunger strikes to protest their detention.[122] In July 2015, the Israeli prisons act was amended, allowing judges to authorize the forced feeding of a detainee on hunger strike.[123] Forced feeding has been qualified by human rights experts as being tantamount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and a violation of the right to health.[124]

54. OHCHR has also documented a growing use of administrative detention by Palestinian security forces, in some cases on the basis of orders issued by provincial governors, or simply to justify delays in bringing the accused before a judge.[125] In Gaza, the authorities have resorted to arbitrary detention against perceived political opponents, including members of Fatah and former personnel of the Palestinian Authority, with cases of incommunicado detention reported, including by armed groups.[126]

55. Human rights law guarantees to everyone the right to liberty and security. This implies that no one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest or detention, and that any deprivation of liberty should occur on the basis of legal grounds and follow strict procedures as established by law.[127] Detainees should be promptly charged or released. Administrative detention is only permitted in exceptional circumstances and should

[117] See A/HRC/31/40, paras. 60-62, and A/HRC/34/36.
[118] See A/HRC/31/40, para. 61, and A/HRC/34/36.
[119] A/HRC/34/36.
[120] See www.addameer.org/statistics. Three Jewish-Israeli men were also held in administrative detention in 2015.
[121] See www.addameer.org/statistics/20160730 and www.btselem.org/administrative_detention/statistics.
[122] See A/HRC/31/40, para. 44, and A/HRC/34/36, paras. 21-22.
[123] See A/HRC/31/40, para. 45.
[124] Joint statement of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, available from www.ohchr.org/RU/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16269&LangID=E.
[125] See A/HRC/31/40, para. 58.
[126] A/HRC/34/36.
[127] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 9, and Human Rights Committee general comment No. 35 (2014) on liberty and security of person, para. 15.

never be used as an alternative to criminal proceedings.[128] Stringent safeguards should be applied to prevent arbitrary detention, including basic procedural guarantees, such as the rights to be informed promptly and fully of the reasons for the detention, to take proceedings before a court, to challenge the legal basis of the detention and to be presumed innocent. Breaches should give rise to compensation.[129]

56.The way that Israel makes use of administrative detention often leads to indefinite detention without charge. Hearings for administrative detainees are often conducted in closed session, with detainees regularly held on the basis of secret evidence to which neither they nor their lawyers are given access. That practice has been widely condemned, including by the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Committee, all of whom have called for its end.[130] In addition, such practice is inconsistent with the exceptional nature of detention provided by international humanitarian law.[131] Most administrative detainees are held in Israel, in violation of the prohibition of forcible transfer.[132]

Arrest and detention of children

57.Each year hundreds of Palestinian children, some as young as 12 years of age, are arrested and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system. Charges usually involve stone-throwing and, more recently, incitement to violence based on social media posts.

58.The number of children in detention has more than doubled in the past year.[133] The peak figure of 440 children held in Israeli detention at the end of February 2016 was the highest number of detained children since January 2008.[134] Administrative detention of children resumed in October 2015, a practice not seen since December 2011.[135] There are concerns as to whether child detention is being used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period, as required by human rights law.[136]

59.The fact that Israeli military law applicable in the West Bank permits the detention of Palestinian children from the age of 12 years is at odds with the specific protection granted to children as members of a particularly vulnerable group and the general rule that any decision affecting them must have their best interest as a primary consideration.[137]

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128 Ibid.
129 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 9.
130 See A/HRC/28/80, para. 33.
131 Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 78.
132 Fourth Geneva Convention, arts. 49 and 147. See A/HRC/31/40, para. 43.
133 See A/HRC/34/36, para. 24.
134 See A/71/364, para. 36.
135 See A/HRC/31/40, para. 41, and A/71/364, para. 34.
136 Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 37 (b).
137 Ibid., art. 3 (1).

60.A number of legal developments also appear to target children in East Jerusalem in contravention of international standards.[138] In August 2016, the Knesset approved amendments to the Israeli youth law that make it possible for prison sentences to be issued for children aged between 12 and 14 years for specific, serious crimes.[139]

Death penalty

61.Under Palestinian law, the death penalty is permitted for a large number of offences and is mandatory for a smaller number of offences. The President is required to confirm the death sentence. Although there is no formal moratorium on executions, in the West Bank none have been carried out since an announcement by the Palestinian President in 2005 that he would not confirm any death sentences.[140] Both in the West Bank and in Gaza, however, courts continue to issue death sentences. In Gaza, executions resumed in 2010, and 22 of the 101 death sentences pronounced since 2008 have reportedly been carried out, despite not having been approved by the Palestinian President.

Freedom of movement and economic, social and cultural rights

62.Palestinians' freedom of movement within the Occupied Palestinian Territory is significantly restricted by a complex and multilayered system of administrative, bureaucratic and physical constraints, including permit requirements, checkpoints and physical obstacles affecting almost every aspect of daily life.[141]

63.Movement restrictions are particularly prevalent in the vicinity of settlements. East Jerusalem is isolated from the rest of the West Bank through the use of permit requirements, as are areas of the "seam zone", i.e. areas west of the wall in the West Bank. The wall[142] remains a key obstacle to freedom of movement. In Gaza, the continuing closures and the related permit regime impose strict limits on Gaza residents wishing to exit Gaza and, to a lesser extent, on West Bank residents wishing to enter Gaza.[143]

64.Freedom of movement is guaranteed under international human rights law.[144] As previously highlighted, restrictions on freedom of movement may also amount to collective punishment, in violation of international humanitarian law.[145] While that right may nevertheless be restricted to address legitimate security needs, any limitation has to be

[138] See A/HRC/31/40, paras. 49-51.
[139] See A/HRC/34/36, para. 29.
[140] Ibid., para. 57.
[141] See A/HRC/31/44, paras. 12-43.
[142] In 2002, Israel started to build a wall between Israel and the West Bank in order to prevent attacks from Palestinians within Israel. Some 85 per cent of the wall nevertheless runs into the West Bank. Once fully completed, the wall would isolate 9.4 per cent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
[143] See A/HRC/31/44, paras. 12-20.
[144] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 12 (1).
[145] Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, art. 50, and Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 33.

necessary and proportional to the end sought and must be applied consistently with protections afforded by human rights.[146]

65. Freedom of movement is a precondition for the exercise of several other human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights. Access restrictions have a negative impact on the rights to education, health, work and family life throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[147]

66. Limitations on movement and other restrictions also prevent the development of the Palestinian economy. The agricultural sector has been particularly affected, as farmers have been denied access to agricultural areas, water resources and domestic and external markets.[148] Impediments to Palestinians' economic, social and cultural development also affect the exercise of the right to self-determination.[149]

67. The closures in Gaza, together with successive military campaigns by the Israel Defense Forces and the use of force in access-restricted areas, has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, severely undermining any effort at development and resulting in recurrent violations of human rights. The closures have had a negative impact on basic human rights and economic prospects, as well as on the availability of essential services, exacerbating poverty and aid dependency.[150] Access to health, education and broader economic and social rights have been restricted. The situation has caused growing frustration and despair, with an ongoing breakdown in societal ties accompanied by an increase in diseases, crime rates, family disputes, domestic violence and cases of self-harm. The living conditions of people displaced by the conflict have also resulted in an increased risk of violence against women and children.[151]

68. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 1.3 million people in Gaza were in need of humanitarian assistance as of November 2016.[152] However, efforts by humanitarian actors to address the most pressing needs following the 2014 escalation of hostilities, such as housing, health, education, and water and sanitation services, have been hampered by restrictions on the import of goods considered by Israel as "dual-use" items. Those are civilian goods, such as construction materials or medical equipment, that Israel

[146] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 12 (3), and Committee on Civil and Political Rights general comment No. 27 (1999) on freedom of movement, para. 14.

[147] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, arts. 6 and 11-13. See A/HRC/31/44, paras. 44-73.

[148] See A/HRC/22/63, para. 89.

[149] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 1, and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 1. See A/HRC/31/44, para. 11.

[150] See A/71/364, para. 5.

[151] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Needs of women and girls in humanitarian action in Gaza: gender alert for the 2016 response plan", August 2015, p. 2.

[152] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "The Gaza Strip: the humanitarian impact of the blockade", 14 November 2016.

considers to also be of military use.[153] These restrictions constitute a violation of the obligation of Israel as an occupying power to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need.[154]

Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly

69. Significant concerns remain regarding violations and abuses by all duty bearers of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Israeli and Palestinian authorities impose restrictions and subject both Israeli and Palestinian human rights defenders focusing on the Occupied Palestinian Territory to pressure and harassment.[155] Palestinian activists are regularly arrested, assaulted and harassed by Israeli security forces, in addition to facing physical attacks and harassment from settlers, particularly in Hebron.[156] Israeli human rights organizations advocating for Palestinians' human rights have come under attack from Israeli politicians, whose statements may amount to incitement to violence.[157] Of additional concern is the recent growing intimidation of non-governmental organizations that have been calling for the use of foreign jurisdictions and international justice mechanisms to ensure accountability for Israeli violations.[158]

70. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, political tensions often lead to human rights abuses, with restrictions on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, in addition to the targeting of political opponents through harassment, threats, arbitrary arrests, assaults, ill-treatment and torture. OHCHR regularly receives reports of human rights violations perpetrated by the Palestinian security forces and the authorities in Gaza, particularly against individuals and groups critical of the authorities.[159]

71. Throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, social media is monitored, and journalists and activists are harassed, arrested, detained and, in some cases, subjected to ill-treatment or torture.[160] Authorities in both the West Bank and Gaza have also imposed restrictions on peaceful assemblies. Such practices contribute to the creation of a repressive environment and promote self-censorship among the Palestinian population.

72. International human rights law guarantees freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.[161] Although restrictions on the exercise of those rights are permitted, they must be provided by law

153 See http://gisha.org/publication/4860.
154 Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 59, and ICRC, *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, rule 55.
155 See A/HRC/34/36, paras. 39-42.
156 See A/HRC/31/40, para. 52, and A/HRC/34/36, para. 39.
157 See A/HRC/34/36, para. 42.
158 See www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/human-rights-defenders/1026-al-haq-under-attack-staff-members-life-threatened and www.mezan.org/en/post/21475.
159 See A/HRC/31/40, paras. 66-67, and A/HRC/34/36, paras. 51-53.
160 See A/HRC/31/40, paras. 56-57, and A/HRC/34/36, para. 49.
161 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 19 and 21-22.

and have to be necessary for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others and for the protection of national security and order.

IV. Conclusion

73. **Chronic violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by all parties persisted during the reporting period. Violations by Israel of the fundamental provisions of the law of occupation continued, particularly with the closures in Gaza and the consolidation and expansion of settlements, suggesting clear patterns and policies. The transfer of parts of the Israeli and the Palestinian populations, and the lack of respect for public and private property, have profoundly altered the status quo in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.**

74. **The absence of law enforcement and accountability against Israeli perpetrators further contravenes the obligation of Israel as an occupying power to ensure public order and safety and to protect the Palestinian population in all circumstances. Moreover, the application of Israeli national law to Israelis in the West Bank raises concerns under international law.**

75. **In 2013, experts denounced the "creeping annexation" of the West Bank, preventing the establishment of a contiguous and viable Palestinian State and undermining the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.**[162] **The devastating impact of the Israeli occupation on the rights of the Palestinian population can only be reasserted.**

76. **International law violations by the Palestinian Authority, the authorities in Gaza and Palestinian armed groups are also of concern. The obligation of the Palestinian authorities to uphold human rights in the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian Territory has to be emphasized as an essential element of the governing role of the State of Palestine.**

V. Recommendations

77. **All violations and abuses of the human rights of the Palestinian people must immediately cease and be promptly, impartially and independently investigated and those responsible must be held accountable. All parties must respect international law and comply with their obligations and responsibilities under international human rights law.**

78. **All parties, including Palestinian armed groups, shall respect the applicable rules of international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and ensure accountability for all violations.**

[162] See A/HRC/22/63, para. 101.

79. **All previous recommendations of the United Nations human rights treaty bodies and other mechanisms of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that remain valid, as well as the recommendations of commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, must be fully and promptly implemented.**

80. **All States parties to the Geneva Conventions should take measures to ensure the respect of the Conventions by all sides.**

81. **Israel must end and reverse all settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and lift the situation of blockade in Gaza.**

82. **In ensuring its legitimate security needs, Israel must respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law.**

83. **The Palestinian authorities should take steps to encourage national political parties to resolve the political disunity that obstructs the equal implementation of the human rights obligations of the Government of the State of Palestine throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory.**