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Hidden Voices

Journeying towards trauma-informed practices in community music

Catherine Elizabeth Birch

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

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School of the Arts

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DEDICATION

For those whose voices have been *hidden*; may you be heard, may you be seen, may you have the courage to speak your truth to the world, and may you find acceptance, validation, and healing.

‘Always remember your value is beyond measure. Your voice is important and has more meaning than you could possibly imagine. You have a song in you no one else could sing.’ (Charlie Mackesy)

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ability to adapt to the changing shape of our lives. Your creative energy, sense of fun, and crazy humour, have kept me smiling and laughing, and I am so very grateful that life is so rich and beautiful with you in it. I love you and am immensely proud of you all.

ABSTRACT

Trauma, as a global phenomenon, affects individuals and communities, leaving deep-rooted impacts. The effects of traumatic experience are not always visible and can be masked through social and cultural constructs, as well as an individual's inability to speak the *unspeakable*. This thesis is based on the assertion that across the multiplicity of contexts in which community music takes place, prior traumatic experience is statistically likely to have affected many participants. Additionally, many community music practices operate in spaces where participants have been marginalised, stigmatised, and oppressed. This thesis therefore sets out the proposition that trauma-informed practice is a necessary consideration for facilitators to promote safe and responsive practices. The five values of trauma-informed care create the conceptual lens, with notions of safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice integrated throughout the research process, design, methodology, and data analysis.

Explorations for this thesis revealed a significant gap in critically reflective research around trauma-informed community music practice. Theoretical understandings of trauma-informed practice are varied, and the concept has unhelpfully become a buzzword in recent years. To respond to the guiding research question - *what is trauma-informed practice and how might it be applied to facilitated music making?* - the research design utilises Case Study Research with critical examination of contemporary music-making projects offering insight into both formalised structures of trauma-informed practice and projects where there has been little or no engagement.

Findings suggest an inconsistency of approaches, and that against the changing global landscape, it is no longer sufficient to ignore the potential for participants' experience of prior trauma within community music practices. Trauma-informed practice is found to be the most

effective when contextually driven and responsive to the specific needs of individuals and communities. Conclusions suggest that, with an integrated mantra of *do no harm* trauma-informed practice is an ethical response that can support music facilitators to sharpen their focus and learn how to attend to the *hidden* voices of their participants. The five values of trauma-informed care form an interconnected entity that can support application of musical, relational, and pedagogical aspects of practice. This thesis, therefore, aims to open constructive and critical dialogue around trauma-informed practice, and its application within community music.

CONTENT WARNING

It is important to acknowledge that this thesis contains sensitive and difficult content. I have given careful consideration as to what to include and what to omit from the final text. Some disclosures from the research participants, specifically explicit content, have been excluded. I have edited, or paraphrased sections to ensure a tone that is appropriate and respectful to the individuals involved. I have endeavoured to give appropriate space for the voices of the participants while making decisions to support the overall purpose of the thesis, bearing in mind those wanting to engage in the material. It may not always be a comfortable read, but my hope is that the bigger picture of working towards trauma-informed practices that support the needs of participants, is a motivation to stay committed to the journey, of which this thesis is a part.

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MICHAEL'S STORY

Being able to tell a person's story is rich for personal development as well as for those bearing witness to an individual's story. By sharing a story, a teller gets the experience of being heard, possibly for the first time for some. This process demonstrates that a story and its teller have value, value in the story as well as value in being heard. (Michael, 2022)

Michael (a pseudonym) stated that 'One of the biggest issues we have as survivors is not being heard.' As a preface to this thesis that, in part, explores notions of *silencing* and *hiddenness*, commonplace for those who have experienced trauma, it is important to me that there is space for a survivor's voice to be heard. Michael's story as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse (hereafter CSA), and first-hand encounters of trauma-informed services create a striking viewpoint from which to start the explorations of this thesis. Michael's experiences varied hugely depending on each professional he had interacted with, and some interactions were intensely problematic.

Michael spoke about the profound impact CSA has on survivors, where building deep connections or trusting relationships is challenging. As he said, 'it makes navigating normal, everyday social situations really, really difficult.' The implication of the *hidden* voice is highlighted when Michael explained that children who have experienced sexual abuse have often been told by the perpetrator that they will not be believed. They have been continuously gaslit¹, and as Michael reflected, 'So, you know, constantly, there's this inner struggle with

¹ Gaslighting is a colloquialism associated with abusive behaviours, where the victim is manipulated and confused by the perpetrator to the point that they doubt their 'version' of events. It is an effective way for a perpetrator to silence a victim and maintain control.

thinking there's no point saying that, because they're not listening anyway, they don't want to listen.' The act of being silenced causes deep-seated isolation.

Michael stated, 'I hate the word trauma informed. It means everything, and yet means nothing.' He explained that his experience of mental health services (purported to be trauma informed) diminished his trauma symptoms and instead he was diagnosed with a personality disorder. He had ongoing wrestles with connected symptoms such as shame, disgust, anxiety, and fear. He did not feel heard or validated and had to battle to keep post-traumatic stress² (hereafter PTS) as part of the diagnosis on his medical records. Michael described a very heated discussion with one clinician, saying,

Eventually I went, I just turned around to the ward psychiatrist and, you know, excuse my language, it was like, "Why the fuck won't you accept that I've been abused, I'm suffering from trauma. Trauma is causing these symptoms. So, these symptoms are causing these behaviours. You're calling those behaviours a personality disorder, but you refuse to accept here is where it's being driven from." He got up out of that meeting. Came back five minutes later. Absolutely whacked down a ream of paper in front of me, goes, "That's the ICD³ definition of post-traumatic stress disorder. Clearly you don't meet those conditions." The language was rather choice following that.

For Michael, this encounter, and others like it where he was not listened to and his experiences dismissed by a professional in the field of mental ill health⁴, was not only not

² Post-traumatic stress (PTS) is a combination of symptoms (such as flashbacks, mood swings, and extreme anxiety) that are connected to traumatic experience (van der Kolk, 2014), explained more fully in Chapter 2.

³ The World Health Organisation's (WHO) International Classification of Diseases.

⁴ Mental ill health is a phrase utilised in the UK-context to describe the experience of mental illness.

trauma informed but perpetuated his sense of mistrust and isolation. Michael described the first time a psychiatrist suggested that trauma was causing his symptoms, saying, 'I think that's probably the best example of trauma informed I've ever had because it wasn't even a label then. And she got it. You know, she totally, totally got it.' This was not, however, a common experience for Michael, and he had to continuously fight over many years to get the treatment and support he needed.

Alongside the clinical services Michael was connected to, he described discovering art making as a therapeutic tool, a means of bearing witness, not a cure. Michael has understood the personal benefits of co-creation and collaboration, in helping him to form positive connections with others, as well as feeling heard and validated telling his story. Michael reflected on the complexity of facilitators labelling themselves as trauma informed. One facilitator he has worked with defined trauma-informed practice as 'We go into the room, understanding that there's people and trauma within that room' with no additional discussion as to how they adapt their practice in response. Conversation with Michael alerted me to three important issues: firstly, trauma-informed practice is understood in different ways; secondly, the term can be used glibly and without critical thought; and thirdly, that facilitators can self-identify as trauma informed without a deep understanding of what trauma-informed practice is.

Michael was clear in articulating how he considers trauma-informed practice, as a working definition and as an applied concept, asserting, 'Actually, I think you'll find trauma informed is to understand the individual because each individual's response to trauma may well be very different from the metrics.' The importance of responsiveness to individual needs as a fundamental facet of trauma-informed practice, was a concept that Michael mentioned

repeatedly. As he explained, individual experiences of trauma cannot be compared, and therefore the importance of listening to the individual and what they need, rather than trying to apply a framework of theoretical knowledge to their experience, is paramount.

Michael stated, 'It's about risk and reward. And so maybe trauma informed is yes, it's about being safe. But not so safe, you overwrap somebody in bubble wrap and you can't get through and make changes that need to be made.' Alongside this concept of 'risk and reward,' Michael emphasised the importance of participation as a choice, an 'act of freewill,' that supports a survivor to explore positive risk taking. He emphasised that ritualistic, repeated structures in applied practice can support participants' sense of safety and security and reflected on vulnerability as a way of opening up and connecting with others creatively.

On reflecting what he has most needed as a survivor, Michael said,

But I want to say that I think most survivors want, I really want to say *all* survivors, at the very base level, want to be heard, want to be believed, want to be respected. You know but isn't that a basic human need anyway? But it's sort of more significant when trauma is involved particularly when it comes to sexual violence because there's so much violence and gaslighting and just total destruction of the young person or child. So that's why I think the being listened to, being heard, being believed is significantly more important, although it's a base need for everybody in life. It's probably even more critical for survivors.

Michael highlighted the importance of a holistic approach saying, 'You need to be more than person-centred. You need to be sort of person centred on steroids.' Michael additionally

spoke about the importance of a facilitator admitting to making mistakes and then making amends for them. In Michael's experience, the relationship is more important than a model of practice. As he said, 'Having models just creates buzzwords. Buzzwords just create resentment.' He suggested,

How about just be human. Reach out when someone needs you to reach out. Give them space when they need space. It's like I say, if you tell me what you need, and I can find ways to facilitate that, then you are starting to actually tick off Harris and thingy. Yeah, you are starting to tick off the checkboxes. But you're not, you're not deliberately coming out to tick off checkboxes. You are just being human. You are responding. You are offering compassion, support, empathy, you know?

Michael emphasised that putting the participants' needs in front of anything else creates a space where the five values of trauma-informed care (Fallot & Harris, 2008, 2009) can be nurtured rather than a framework-first approach to practice. In addition to responsiveness, Michael highlighted adaptability as key. He was clear that planning needs to be flexible, and a facilitator needs to be prepared to change tactic.

Michael explained that he can still have trauma reactions. He said, 'So, you know, even if you're healed, I found it surprising that there is still remnants of you know, basically reflexes created from, as a reaction to trauma. It's that fight or flight thing.' As someone who is not only a participant in creative work, but also a facilitator, Michael's self-awareness is vital; he knows what can act as personal triggers and is clear to communicate these when needed.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Prologue – Living from The Inside Out

At the beginning of this PhD thesis, I want to give a positionality statement to clarify the underlying rationale for this study. I need to be honest about the fact that I did not intentionally set out to research trauma-informed practice. In fact, I actively tried to resist it, and for the first eighteen months of my project, I was working with an alternative proposal, connected to voice and identity, albeit a proposal that I was struggling to find a way forward with. But the thing about research, as I now understand it, is that true motivation and drive for a subject area is often deeply and personally rooted. As I come to the final stages of this incredible, inspiring, and sometimes intensely difficult, research journey, I acknowledge that this project has been profoundly, personally driven.

The seeds of this research journey began in the Spring of 2017, at a point I was considering a question that had been on my mind for several months; could community music support those who have experienced trauma? As a singer, songwriter, trained high school teacher, choral conductor, senior lecturer, and community musician, working in the United Kingdom, I have learnt from and developed my practice in varied settings, within the context of interventionist models (Higgins, 2012) but with my practice segueing between both formal, and non-formal pedagogies. With experiential understanding that community music making can support social change, improve participant wellbeing, be used as a tool for empowering individuals, develop skill and confidence, and create conditions conducive of psycho-social benefits, I wondered if it could be inferred that an individual who has experienced trauma, could connect with a structure that enables steps towards healing and recovery?

During this period, I was journeying alongside people close to me who had experienced prolonged, interpersonal trauma. As a response to these circumstances, I now understand in retrospect that I was attempting to take steps towards becoming trauma informed. I was reading about trauma, its impacts, and manifestations as a way of understanding what I was observing. There was a real and immediate situation that required me to pay attention and draw on the specialist knowledge and advice of those with expertise and training. The philosophical, ideological, and existential questions raised during this time, have remained with me, and form the basis of the reflections of this thesis. My perceptions and perspectives have been re-shaped and re-formed.

I now understand that traumatic experience is far more prevalent than I had previously thought, alongside which I now also understand that it is not always possible to know what someone has experienced or is still experiencing. I understand that trauma, particularly in the case of interpersonal trauma, is often *hidden*, and that survivors of trauma will have been silenced, either through the *unspeakable* nature of their experience, or because of the control and coercion of another.

During the initial eighteen months of my PhD, in 2018 and 2019, several coinciding factors brought my attention back to the question on my mind. The York St. John University Prison Partnership Project¹ received a year's funding from West Yorkshire Police Violent Crimes Division for a new singing and songwriting project. I was offered the opportunity to set this

¹ The York St. John University (hereafter YSJU) Prison Partnership Project was set up in 2013 by Rachel Conlon, Theatre Practitioner, Drama Therapist and Senior Lecturer in Applied Theatre at YSJU. Originally a theatre programme operating in two local women's prisons, it was designed as a 'transformative learning experience which emphasizes creative collaboration and addresses issues of social concern' (Conlon, 2020, p. 174). The singing and songwriting project, Emerging Voices, was set up in response to a request from some of the women for a singing group. For more information, please see <https://www.yorksja.ac.uk/working-with-the-community/prison-partnership-project/>

up, and through engaging in the project, received formalised training in trauma-informed practice specific to working with women in the UK criminal justice system. Through this training, I was introduced to the five values of trauma-informed care (Fallot & Harris 2008, 2009) and immediately connected with these: safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice are core components of community music practice, although have not previously been conceptualised as interconnected values within the scholarship.

Throughout this time, I was experiencing a decline in my own mental and emotional health, with heightened anxiety, sleeplessness, anger and irritability, and strong reactions to any imagery or conversation connected to interpersonal trauma and violence. Through a process of engaging in therapy, I now understand that what I was experiencing was vicarious trauma, in response to hearing first-hand the trauma narrative of those close to me. This revelation alerted me to the knowledge that even if not experienced directly, the impacts of trauma can be far reaching, including for those offering support.

I began to consider wider application of trauma-informed practice, based on the ubiquitous nature of traumatic experience and the potential risks of vicarious trauma for those journeying alongside. Would one model of trauma-informed practice be sufficient for effective use across all contexts in which community music projects operate? Do all facilitators need to engage in trauma-informed training, given the prevalence of traumatic experience? These were not carefully crafted questions, but a starting point from which to develop the research questions for this thesis.

In considering these questions, I could no longer ignore the wider context of my life, and the impact that was having on my research journey. I could also no longer ignore the internal and

growing motivation towards supporting facilitators in their understanding of traumatic experience, how that might affect what is happening within the music making, and how to create a space in which safety is a priority, both for them and their participants.

This journey towards becoming trauma informed has been deeply personal, and yet has highlighted the need for more generalised understanding, across all contexts of practice. I am conscious of being clear that I am not a specialist in trauma, trauma theory, counselling, or psychotherapy. I am a community musician, who has experienced the deep and painful impacts of trauma in a specific way. I do not understand every traumatic experience, and I do not think of myself as an expert in trauma. However, I am passionate about engaging in dialogue about trauma-informed practice and how it can be applied to community music and am grateful for the opportunity to engage others in the conversation through this doctoral research.

The Upside Down

In the American science fiction horror drama, *Stranger Things*², *The Upside Down* is an alternative dimension, a version of reality that exists ‘in parallel to the human world’ (https://strangerthings.fandom.com/wiki/The_Upside_Down). Characters in the TV drama, find themselves caught in *The Upside Down* and unable to find their way back to the surface and the version of reality they have accepted as normal. *The Upside Down* mirrors the real world, but exposes the true depth of horrors that exist in the under-world darkness. Those who find themselves in this unsafe and unpredictable terrain begin to realise that it has

² *Stranger Things* was created by The Duffer Brothers, and first released on Netflix on 15th July 2016 (weblinks accessed 9th August 2023).

existed alongside the surface level reality all along, they just did not know it was there. Characters living in *The Upside Down* are hidden from view, without being able to communicate with those on the surface; they are alone in their ordeal until such a time as they can find a way out.

To understand trauma-informed practice, one first must understand trauma. *The Upside Down* can be used as a metaphor for the experience of trauma where it may be possible to exist at surface level for a length of time, without acknowledging the presence of *The Upside Down*. There may be flashes of the alternative reality, moments of flashback, triggered by a sound, a smell, a voice. The body's protective mechanisms can keep someone in a dissociated state, at surface level, to shield them from the potential overwhelming pain and darkness of acknowledging the reality of the under-world and the horrors that exist there. To journey to *The Upside Down*, is to be isolated, hidden, cut off from others and unable to be seen or heard, an experience that is impossible to describe, is, in the words of trauma theorist Judith Herman (1997), '*unspeakable*' (p. 1, italics mine).

The Tip of The Iceberg

The changing global landscape of the past few years renders this inquiry both timely, and imperative. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the world has seen dramatic shifts, individual and communal trauma on an unprecedented scale. Lockdown restrictions, unimaginable death toll, social distancing, protective face coverings, health services struggling under the weight of demand as admission of Coronavirus patients escalated, was a daily reality throughout 2020, and much of 2021 and 2022. The murder of African American George Floyd by a white police officer, on 25th May 2020, ignited renewed intensity for the

Black Lives Matter campaign, significantly highlighting the need for activism against systemic racial injustice.

On 24th February 2022, Russia began a full-scale invasion of neighbouring Ukraine. The world watched the atrocities reported through the media, and countries began to respond to the influx of Ukrainian refugees. More recently, in October of 2023, the conflict between Israel and Palestine was reignited with ongoing and horrifying repercussions. Prior to these events, the #MeToo movement started a tidal wave of response on social media, following on from the high-profile allegations of sexual abuse against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein in October of 2017. Both individuals and communities, local and global, have been experiencing *The Upside Down*, and it is no longer possible to ignore the prevalence of trauma in our world.

The impacts of the global crises of the times we are living in are far reaching, with the subsequent fallout reflected in political divisiveness, economic crisis, climate crisis, and how these are manifested in significant rises in mental ill health across all ages, racial, and cultural contexts. Throughout this time, the notion of trauma has become more widely recognized as a ubiquitous issue, impacting individuals and the social fabric of our communities (see for example: Birch, 2021; Bradley, 2020; Covington, 2015, 2016; Hess & Bradley, 2020; Higgins, T. 2020; Levenson, 2017; van der Kolk, 2014). While it is positive that there is a greater understanding of traumatic experience and its impacts, there is also the potential for meaning to be diminished by overuse of the word trauma, and associated terms. Trauma-informed practice within community music is becoming a buzzword (Humphrey, 2023) with the possibility for its meaning and usefulness to be misunderstood, misused, or made nebulous.

The *hidden* and *unspeakable* nature of trauma means that many survivors must navigate their world at surface level, like the tip of an iceberg. Hidden beneath the depths, out of sight to a casual observer, remains the most significant proportion of the mass of ice, and metaphorically, the most significant part of a survivors' being. This unseen, weighty, bulk of matter, is concealed under the surface, but is impactful not just to the individual, but to anyone or anything else close by, and can create risk for those unaware of its existence. What is visible is not the whole story. In the journey towards becoming trauma informed, an awareness of trauma and its deep impacts, even if not always visible or understood, is the first step. The danger of the Single Story³, where we could miss critical understanding of another, only seeing the surface level of the *other's* narrative, needs careful consideration by community musicians moving towards being trauma informed.

Visiting The Upside Down

With greater understanding of the pervasive nature of traumatic experience, it is not surprising to find a growth of community music projects in contexts where participants are known to have experienced trauma (for example, see Balfour, 2018; Birch, 2020; Burnard et al., 2018; de Quadros, 2011; Hesser & Bartleet, 2020; Howell, 2013, 2018; Knapp and Silva, 2019; Laurila & Willingham, 2017; Marsh, 2019; Palidofsky, 2010; Sunderland et al., 2016). Organisations and projects employing trauma-informed practice are found to be connected specifically to working with known trauma survivors, for example, in carceral or detention settings (Birch, 2020, 2021; Palidofsky, 2010). When considering the statistics surrounding trauma in the United Kingdom (see for example, Covington, 2015, 2016) and beyond,

³ See Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TEDx talk https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en (accessed 10th February 2024)

however, the reality is that many more people have experienced trauma than may be visible. I argue through this thesis, therefore, that for community musicians, trauma-informed practice needs to be understood as an appropriate pedagogical response to the ubiquity of trauma.

Community music, with its non-formal, empathic, collaborative, negotiated, and non-hierarchical processes, is demonstrated to be a space in which participants can form positive connections, their voices can be heard, and their stories validated (see for example, Barney & Mackinlay, 2010; Burnard et al., 2018; Higgins, 2012; Howell, 2018; Marsh, 2010). These are vital needs for survivors of traumatic experience, as highlighted in Michael's story. My concern, however, is that without a lens of trauma-informed practice, could community musicians be inadvertently creating harm for their participants, particularly when trauma is *hidden*? Development of trauma-informed practice could be significant to the field, but my research determined there is little within community music literature to suggest carefully considered application of trauma-informed approaches.

Trauma-informed pedagogy is being driven from within the field of music education (see for example, Bradley & Hess, 2022; Griffin & Niknafs, 2023; Hess & Bradley, 2020). Whilst there are many points of similarity and connection between music education and community music, and my practice has overlapped both, I am conscious that robust scholarship around trauma-informed practice is missing from community music literature. The field can draw on and learn from key principles of trauma-informed pedagogy within music education, and vice versa. I posit, however, that a contextually appropriate framework of trauma-informed community music practice should thus be considered on the assumption that there will likely be participants who are trauma survivors, regardless of context.

My intention for this inquiry is that it provides the opportunity for increased critical engagement in, and constructive dialogue around trauma-informed practice for community musicians. I envisage that the findings will provide a useful starting point for those organisations and individuals who want to sharpen their practice and deepen their knowledge and skill with reflexivity and authenticity. I want to caution against the temptation for practitioners and researchers to jump on yet another band wagon of *trauma informed* as the latest trend, but to understand and embrace the responsibility we have to the individuals and communities with which we live, work, and research.

It is helpful to have a shared language of practice, ideological and philosophical concepts that community musicians can utilise as communal understandings, binding our respective practices. To date, there is no consistent understanding or application of trauma-informed community music practice, thus if I state that I am a trauma-informed practitioner, what does that mean? If I identify as being trauma informed, what does that signify to an organisation looking to hire a musician for a specific project? The caution of any terminology that is liberally applied as a buzzword is that meaning becomes watered-down. Within the field of community music, where there is currently a significant growth in the number of trauma-informed trainings being delivered, but limited publications that can be drawn on to support conceptual understanding, are we in danger of confounding or even idealising the notion of trauma-informed practice? How do we develop a shared language and communal understanding if we do not understand what trauma-informed practice is in the context of community music making?

Community musicians all need to ask the question of how to adapt practice to be responsive to both contextual location, and individual and group needs. In Covid-19, for example, music

facilitators had to respond to the emergent adaptation to remote practices (Crisp, 2021; Foulkes, 2021). In care home settings, a community musician will need to engage in awareness regarding physical and mental health difficulties of participants, including common issues such as dementia, and adapt their practice accordingly. They may need to engage in additional training to do this and will need to work with staff members and those who know the participants and their individual concerns well. They may also need support staff in the space during workshop sessions. Trauma, as a pervasive phenomenon, requires facilitators to be responsive and adapt their practice accordingly.

Thus, how could being trauma informed change community music practice in consideration of the *hiddenness* of traumatic experience? How can community musicians support therapeutic outcomes without crossing unhelpful boundaries of practice? This thesis calls for a much more rigorous, in-depth, and critical analysis of both the practice that purports to be trauma informed, and the literature where claims are made of music's potential to heal traumatic experience without careful or detailed examination of practice. A survivor's ways of knowing, perceiving, and experiencing the world are changed forever due to traumatic experience. A facilitator's role, therefore, is to understand the existence of *The Upside Down* and find appropriate strategies, musical, relational, and pedagogical, that best support participants. Throughout this thesis, I argue that trauma-informed practice provides a critical opportunity for a facilitator to sharpen the lens of their practice and be responsive to individual, group, and contextual need.

As a final note on language, while others may refer to such terms as trauma pedagogy, trauma-responsive practice, trauma-specific practice, and trauma awareness, I very deliberately use trauma-informed practice in this thesis as connected to the Harris and Fallot

(2001) model. It is the earliest publication available that details application of trauma-informed practices into services supporting those with mental ill health. It is also the first model of trauma-informed practice I encountered, as utilised by Covington (2015, 2016) in designing a framework for working with women in the criminal justice system⁴. Explorations of the original Harris and Fallot (2001) model and the subsequent five values of trauma-informed care (Fallot & Harris, 2008, 2009) will be examined in the literature review in Chapter 2.

Research Questions

The question guiding this research inquiry is *What is trauma-informed practice and how might it be applied to facilitated music making?* This question is deliberately framed to be clear, accessible, and to directly focus on the key research problem, that of a lack of critical examination of trauma-informed practice within community music discourse. Of course, any considerations of practice and facilitation strategies are hugely complex, and the subsidiary questions are designed to respond to these complexities:

1. What contextual conditions need to be taken into consideration when designing specific models of trauma-informed practice? i.e. How do community musicians deliver contextually responsive work and adapt their practice accordingly?
2. What are the limitations for community musicians working with trauma-informed

⁴ Important to this PhD research, is the historical silencing of women and lack of belief in their experiences of domestic trauma (Bradley, 2020; Herman, 1997). This is particularly impactful, explored through trauma statistics connected to incarcerated women, as discussed in Chapter 4, but is also threaded through this entire thesis as a *haunting* or *trace* significant because of my experiential understanding of domestic abuse and interpersonal trauma. For the purposes of this inquiry, focusing on broad application of trauma-informed practice in community music, is a deliberate decision. I wanted to consider the musical, relational, and pedagogical aspects of practice that can have generic application but can also be adapted for specific contextual, including gender-responsive, considerations. This thesis, therefore, is supportive of trauma-informed practices for all survivors of traumatic experience, regardless of gender.

practice and how can these be appropriately navigated and ethically considered?

3. What are the ethical considerations and ethics of care needed by community music practitioners and researchers knowingly working with trauma? How can community musicians work with the *hidden* voices and *difficult knowledge* (Britzman, 1998) of participants, without causing further harm? How can we avoid the potential unhelpful tendency towards well-intentioned arrogance (Cohen, 1985)?

Conceptual Framework

My first encounter with the five values of trauma-informed care (Fallot & Harris, 2008, 2009) was through the Covington publications (2015, 2016) during the pilot project of the Prison Partnership (detailed in Chapter 4). Safety, trust⁵, collaboration, empowerment, and choice resonated with me as core components of community music practice. These are values that are utilised across music making projects but have never been conceptualised as five co-existing, interacting, interdependent facets of practice. As I have engaged in research around trauma-informed practice, I have come to realise that the five values of trauma-informed care are highly significant. Trauma-informed practice, as I now understand it, is concerned with application of the five values of trauma-informed care into any contextual location. Safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice, therefore, form the conceptual lens for this inquiry.

⁵ The original model uses the word trustworthiness (Fallot & Harris, 2008, 2009). I decided that the notion of trust better supports the purposes of this thesis, as a more contemporary understanding, and as a word regularly utilised in the literature as a core value of community music practice (see, for example, Bartleet & Higgins, 2018; Higgins, 2012; Willingham, 2021). I therefore replace trustworthiness with trust throughout the text unless using a direct quotation.

Outline Of Chapters

Chapter 1 Introduction

In the first chapter, I begin by contextualising trauma and trauma-informed practice through the narrative of a survivor of CSA. It was imperative to me that a survivor's voice is the first to be heard in this thesis, and I feel very privileged to be able to include Michael's Story. The following parts of the introduction are concerned with background, context, rationale, and significance of study, alongside highlighting the guiding research questions, and development of the conceptual lens. These sections are fronted by the Prologue as my positionality statement, acknowledging the importance of reflexivity in research, and are completed by the Outline of Chapters.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The second chapter operates as a critical reflection of literature relevant to this study. Trauma-informed practice is theorised and located from within associated disciplines (with consideration of both neurological and social models) such as social work, trauma therapy, neuroscience, and psychotherapy, alongside fields of practice such as criminal justice and mental health settings. I use the literature to develop working definitions of trauma and trauma-informed practice. I include exploration of trauma responses, physiological, emotional, and relational, that can be detrimental to participants engaging in music making. I consider conceptualisations of trauma-informed practice within community music literature briefly discussing the potential benefits of music as a tool to support trauma recovery. I develop the conceptual framework of the five values of trauma-informed care, as a lens for

inquiry through which to view the research findings. Limitations of the literature review are discussed with a rationale behind decisions of what to include and what to exclude.

Chapter 3 Research Design And Methodology

In this third chapter, I consider my chosen research design and the strategies and methods utilised for the *why* to inform the *how*. I explain how Case Study Research informs the design and includes two main facets: data gathering, and data analysis, utilising reflexive thematic analysis. This chapter highlights the challenges, limitations, and ethical considerations of the chosen methodological framework, alongside the importance of operating as a responsible methodologist (Kuntz, 2015) when dealing with sensitive and difficult content. I explore notions of phenomenology and narrative inquiry as interpretive lenses of inquiry, through which to view my own and others' experiential knowledge and understanding of trauma-informed practice.

Chapter 4 Case Study One: Voices from The Inside: Working With The Hidden Trauma Narratives Of Women In Custody

Chapter 4 explores my practitioner-researcher reflections on the model of trauma-informed practice used within the YSJU Prison Partnership Project, considering elements of contextual significance, including statistics of traumatic experience pertaining to women in the UK criminal justice system. The application of the five values of trauma-informed care within the singing and songwriting project, Emerging Voices, is the focus of reflective and reflexive writing exploring the weekly practice whilst considering the complexities of the music making context. Safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice are examined in their

multiple facets, with notions of hospitality, welcome, bearing witness, dialogue, vulnerability, empathy, co-creation, risk taking, and unconditional positive regard of the other highlighted as key concepts connected to application of trauma-informed care.

Chapter 5 Case Study Two: Protecting The Experience And Wellbeing Of Everyone: Safeguarding, Consent, And Trauma At Ethno World - Redacted

This chapter explores considerations of safeguarding, consent, and trauma-informed practice within an international organisation, supporting the growth and development of traditional music making with young people, representative of diverse social, cultural, economic, political, and religious contexts. Using the lens of the five values of trauma-informed care, this section of the thesis deals with the challenges in music making programmes when trauma-informed practice is not applied. Safeguarding will be contemplated alongside trauma-informed practice, as a distinct entity but with overlapping qualities, positing the question of whether trauma-informed practice is necessary within organisational structures, in addition to clear safeguarding policy and procedure.

Chapter 6 Case Study Three: Hidden Voices: A Case Study of Stone Flowers Torture Survivors' Collective

Chapter 6 examines Stone Flowers Torture Survivors' Collective as an exemplar model of practice, with an incorporated methodology of which trauma awareness is an integral part. As a participant observer in the weekly music making sessions, the case study presented an opportunity to explore the idea of not just researching but researching *with*. Emergent themes highlight the potential for positive wellbeing outcomes for participants. The importance of

lived experience of the music facilitators plays a substantive role in creating safe, trusting, and supportive conditions for the music making.

Chapter 7 Illustrative Case Studies

This chapter shines a spotlight on seven illustrative case studies, exploring discrete practice contexts and focusing on the perspective of the community musician/music facilitator. A spectrum of practice is examined, from highly seasoned and experienced facilitators working with context-specific trauma-informed approaches, through to those with no formalised training. Each locus of music-making activity supports participants who have experienced trauma, with some of the contexts more explicitly focused towards supporting trauma survivors than others. Facilitator values, attributes, strategies, training, and positionality are all highlighted alongside how each of the seven illustrations connects to and compliments the three main case studies.

Chapter 8 Thematic Analysis and Discussion

This chapter is concerned with the five values of trauma-informed care as a conceptual lens for reflexive thematic analysis. I consider the meta-analysis as connected to the three case studies, and seven illustrative case studies, utilising literature to support findings. The thematic overview connects emergent themes arising from the meta data, within each of the five values of trauma-informed care. Findings suggest safety as the number one consideration of practice when working with those who have experienced trauma, but that the five values are interconnected and operate as an interdependent entity. Musical, relational, and pedagogical applications are examined alongside the risks of not engaging in trauma-

informed practice. Findings are collated to support a framework of trauma-informed practice for community musicians, with the potential for application into any facilitated music making context.

Chapter 9 Conclusions

This chapter draws together the conclusions based on the findings. The thesis concludes that trauma-informed practice, with a mantra to *do no harm*, can be applied into all facilitated music-making contexts. Application is not a *one size fits all* approach - it needs to be contextually driven (culturally, socially, politically, spiritually), non-hierarchical, and collaboratively designed, if possible, with survivors involved in the process. There is not one ‘right’ way as to how the pedagogy is ‘informed’ or how musical and relational structures can be adapted to support survivors. The breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding needed is guided by context. The five values of trauma-informed care support wellbeing in broad strokes, with care taken around objectives and goals of music making so boundaries of practice are recognised and respected. Supervision and self-care for the facilitator are a necessity to avoid risks of re-traumatisation for participants or vicarious trauma for facilitators, alongside teamwork as a safety net of practice. The implications of the research and next steps are detailed, and the thesis closes with the epilogue, *Revisiting the Upside Down*.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Responding to the question, *how is trauma-informed practice conceptualised in the literature?* the Literature Review is intended: first, to outline trauma and its effect on mind and body; second, to explore the first published theoretical model of trauma-informed practice detailed by Harris and Fallot (2001); third, to examine how trauma-informed practice is conceptualised within community music scholarship; and fourth, to develop a robust conceptual framework, where the five values of trauma-informed care (Fallot & Harris, 2008, 2009) are operationalised as connected to community music making and as a conceptual lens for inquiry. Three explorations have formed the basis for the Literature Review as detailed in Figure 1, below:

- A review of literature connected to trauma theory and trauma-informed practice;
- A review of community music literature that includes reference to trauma and/or trauma-informed practice;
- Development of a conceptual framework, using a keyword search of the five values of trauma-informed care across all the literature to support discussion and critique.

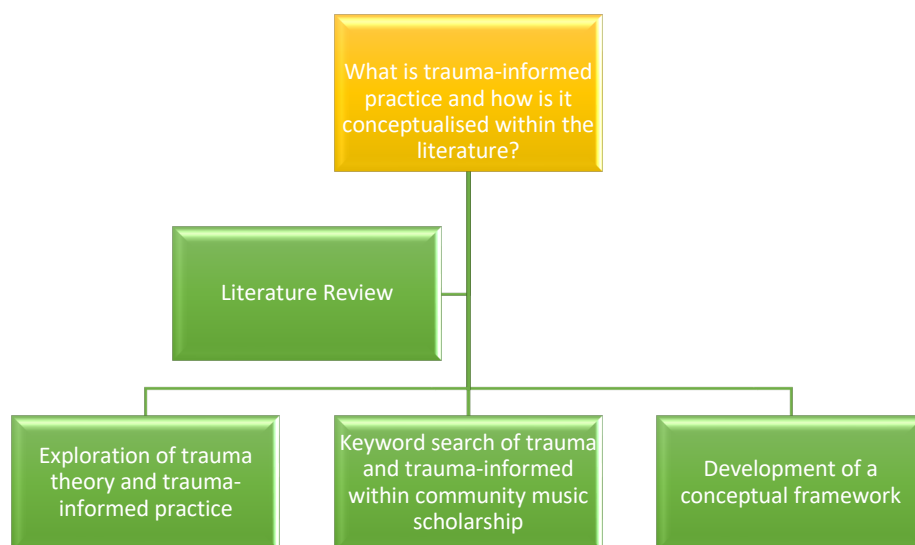


Figure 1 Outline of Literature Review Design

The intention of the Literature Review is to address the provocation of the thesis, that trauma is prevalent, deeply impactful, and often hidden; therefore, application of trauma-informed practice is an appropriate pedagogical response for those engaged in facilitated music making. To understand trauma-informed practice, one must first understand trauma. The initial part of the Literature Review is concerned with developing working definitions of both concepts. I then examine how trauma and trauma-informed practice are conceptualised within community music literature.

A Literature Review can never be an exhaustive search, and there had to be a finite cut-off to explorations in tandem with the wider PhD research process. More articles and publications around trauma-informed arts-based practice are being produced at a progressive rate of increase. I would suggest that the current global landscape, including the pandemic and related experience of communal trauma, has had an impact on this snowball effect of interest in the topic. This thesis intentionally crosses into the fields of psychology, psychotherapy, social work, and trauma theory, drawing from areas of applied work that have engaged in trauma-informed practice for significantly longer than within the arts. I draw on some music education and music therapy literature, as fields connected to community music, to support discussion.

At the time of writing, a new and important work has just been published. Griffin and Niknafs (2023) *Traumas Resisted and (Re)Engaged* edited collection came from a call for contributions following on from a Narrative Inquiry in Music Education (NIME) conference, held online in October of 2020. This 7th NIME conference event was focused on the theme of *Trauma, Resilience, and (Re)Engagement in Music Education*. The editors were the conference co-chairs and are passionate about continuing the conversation around

considerations of trauma and trauma-informed practice within the field. Whilst I cannot include detailed reference to this work within my thesis, due to the timing of its publication, I want to acknowledge its importance for the field and significant contribution to the discourse.

Trauma

In this section I unpack conceptualisations of trauma and the body's response to trauma, developing a working definition of trauma to support explorations of this inquiry. Trauma is a constructed concept. Depending on contextual, cultural, sociological, political, and other epistemological understandings, the term *trauma* will be viewed through many different lenses. Experience of trauma is not all the same. It is not a neatly packageable notion. The literature supports understanding that not all experiences of trauma are the same, and that trauma responses are individually manifested (Bradley & Hess, 2022; Caruth, 1995; Herman, 1997; van der Kolk, 2014). Alongside a global increase in understanding and discussion connected to trauma, however, with significant engagement in social media platforms, there is an unhelpful tendency towards over-use of the terminology. Liberal application of the word trauma can be connected to banal circumstances such as waiting in long queues, or a “traumatic experience” with delayed or cancelled public transport. Trigger warnings and content warnings are regularly utilised in social media posts.

There has become a generalised understanding without necessarily the experiential, theoretical, or critical knowledge to support. In short, trauma, and by extension, trauma-informed practice, have become unhelpful buzzwords in recent years. Connected to buzzwords that are used within the field of community music, Humphrey (2023) states, ‘buzzwords are often unconsidered, being used interchangeably without any clear meaning.

They become overused, and over time their meaning often becomes tokenistic' (p. 6). These tokenistic understandings add further to the potential for isolation and mistrust experienced by so many survivors. If popularised notions of trauma are a commonplace part of language, someone who is living with the deep impacts of trauma may feel less able to share their experiences with others.

Big T, Little t

In conversation with a colleague regarding the communal trauma of the Covid-19 pandemic (Higgins, T., 2020), we contemplated the idea that on a global level, most people during that time experienced *trauma* with a little *t*. Lockdown restrictions, isolation from family and loved ones, living with constant fear and uncertainty, especially in the early days when so little was known about coronavirus and how it might impact on an individual basis, all contributed to this *trauma*. We spoke about people who experienced *Trauma* with a big *T*. Those who lost loved ones, front line hospital workers, who daily were coping with patients dying at an unprecedented rate, and, prior to the development of a vaccine, working with a constant shadow of fear for their own lives. This conceptualisation of the potential for smaller, little *t* experiences of trauma, as opposed to big *T* Trauma is simplistic but reinforces the notion that there is not one kind of trauma, but any trauma can be impactful.

In my interview with Michael, he described a conversation with a police officer involved in his case. The officer was telling him about two other instances of sexual abuse he had been dealing with. One involved a woman who had experienced prolonged, ritualised sexual violence over many years, *Trauma* with a big *T*. As the officer described to Michael, it was one of the most disturbing cases he had ever been involved with as a child protection officer.

Michael explained, ‘But this person was actually quite grounded, quite matter of fact, you know? And somebody came in and had been groped, just a one-off grope, but that completely emotionally destroyed the person.’ The policeman was struck by the responses of these two women, that the one-off experience (that could be *considered* as *trauma* with a *little t*) had induced a response that was immensely detrimental to her mental and emotional health. Michael reflected on this idea of multiple responses to trauma saying,

But that sort of reinforces that one trauma may be different from the other. But one’s not more significant, or you know, it’s how the survivor responds to that trauma. Those levels of trauma are, you know, you can’t say one trauma is worse than the other, you can say one trauma is different from another. And that is something that trauma informed often also does seem to neglect.

Michael’s reflections mirror my understandings of the nature of traumatic experience, and thus, the importance of understanding and responding to individual survivors. It is not our place to judge whether we think someone’s experience of trauma is *Trauma* with a big *T* or *trauma* with a little *t*. Therefore, if trauma is an identified notion, rather than viewed as someone’s personal experience, is there a danger that an individual’s response may not fit a neat box and thus, response to individual need may go overlooked? Community musicians need to learn to be attentive to difference of experience and be open to responding accordingly. A facilitator may never know the details of someone’s trauma narrative, but if we are focused on attunement¹, it can support our responsiveness to individuals and specific manifestations of behaviour.

¹ As a literal meaning, attunement can be understood as ‘bringing into harmony’ (etymonline.com). As a relational concept, often utilised within a therapeutic context, attunement is about being aware, connected, and responsive (Wise & Nash, 2020).

Reflexivity in practice is vital where our frame of reference will colour (and sometimes cloud) our perspectives of what we consider to be deeply impactful trauma. Community music facilitators must learn to understand the importance our positionality plays in shaping the way we view participants, be prepared to set aside our preconceptions, perspectives, and prejudices, and listen attentively to the stories of our participants, whether implicitly or explicitly told.

What Is Trauma?

The word *trauma* is taken from the Greek, translated as ‘a wound, a hurt; a defeat’ (etymonline.com). In the 1690s, the Latin translation implied ‘physical wound’ but ‘[the] sense of "psychic wound, unpleasant experience which causes abnormal stress" is from 1894’ (etymonline.com). Interestingly, the first part of the word ‘trau-’ is an ‘extended form of root *tere- "to rub, turn," with derivatives referring to twisting, piercing, etc.’ (ibid.). When you consider those descriptions in an emotional context, the implications of psychic trauma on a person’s internal processes and wellbeing are more easily imagined. Also interesting is the connection to the word ‘vulnerable’, from the Late Latin *vulnerabilis* (c. 1600), meaning ‘wounding’. Those who have experienced trauma (in the form of deep-seated physical, emotional, and psychological wounds) are often immensely vulnerable.

Cathy Caruth is Professor of English Literature at Cornell University. She uses a psychoanalytical lens to explore literature as a way of theorising the notion of trauma, with a focus on the belated or delayed component of traumatic experience (1995, 1996). Caruth (1996) explains that the voice that is *hidden* still ‘cries out’ (p. 4), and it is possible to hear and attend to this deep-seated, visceral utterance. She additionally suggests that there is a

‘plea by an *other* who is asking to be seen and heard, [a] call by which the other commands us to awaken’ (Caruth, 1996, p. 9, italics mine). Contemporary Italian philosopher, Adriana Cavarero (2005) additionally describes the voice as the unique, unrepeatable, distinct embodiment of an individual. Community musicians journeying alongside survivors need to try and listen to each unique voice, each unspoken plea and unheard call, where sonic communication and language connect in speech, and where hidden meaning remains perceptible, but out of sight.

Caruth (1996) describes the psychic wound as ‘the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world’ (p. 3). Trauma can be so deeply impactful as to transform how we feel about ourselves, our relationship to others, and the world around us. As Caruth (1996) states, trauma creates ‘a central problem of listening, of knowing, and of representing that emerges from the actual experience of the crisis’ (pp. 4-5). Trauma fractures our ability to listen, to know, and to represent. We can be unaware of trauma in our bodies, and feel completely disconnected from the event itself, until the unknown, *hidden* presence makes itself known in ‘belated impact’ (p. 7).

Trauma can be understood as a situation or event that is deeply distressing with the potential for lasting impact (examples in Caruth, 1995, 1996; Herman, 1997; van der Kolk, 2014).

There is recognition of the potentially subjective nature of responses to traumatic events. In the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)* (2013), it is stated that, ‘Psychological distress following exposure to a traumatic or stressful event is quite variable’ (p. 265). Herman (1997) suggests that ‘there is a spectrum of traumatic disorders, ranging from the effects of a single overwhelming event to the more complicated effects of prolonged and repeated abuse’ (p. 3). Adverse Childhood Experiences

(hereafter ACEs), for example, can continue to negatively impact individuals long into adulthood (for example, Burke Harris, 2018; Felitti et al., 1998). However, there are common features in how our bodies, and in particular our brains, respond to trauma.

Trauma can be: associated with a one-time event (a car crash, a natural disaster); experienced on an individual level (a debilitating illness, a bereavement); or experienced interpersonally (in the event of war, sexual violence, and domestic abuse). Trauma can be experienced firsthand, but it can also be experienced as secondary traumatic stress, vicarious trauma, and intergenerational or inherited trauma (Wise & Nash, 2020). In these examples, physical trauma symptoms will be present. Trauma response is key: there are many variations and a ‘range of reactivity and recovery trajectories’ (Porges, 2017, p. 22). Everyone is different, and will respond differently, even if the traumatic event was experienced communally. For those working with survivors of trauma, the event is not a key factor, but the individuals’ response to the event is the crux of the matter.

Trauma is pervasive in our world, and it is likely that every person will experience trauma of one kind or another at some point in their lives. When you consider some of the statistics surrounding types of traumas, this becomes more apparent. For example, as cited in Covington (2016), in the UK: ‘one in four youth ... report having at least one experience of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect by a parent or care-giver during childhood’ (p. 10); ‘approximately one in five women in England and Wales have been sexually assaulted since the age of sixteen’ (p. 12); and ‘approximately one in three women experience domestic violence in their lifetimes in England and Wales’ (p. 12). Trauma can have a long-lasting internal impact, and the following sections sheds light on the invisible and internal processes trauma sets in motion in the body.

The Body's Response to Trauma

Trauma, as the response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms the body's natural coping mechanisms, causes feelings of helplessness, a diminished sense of self and the inability to feel a full range of emotions and experiences (Ahonen, 2021; Caruth, 1995, 1996; Covington, 2015, 2016; Garrido et al., 2015; Herman, 1997; van der Kolk, 2014). Trauma affects brain functions and structures of the brain, activating the fight or flight response, and causing physical and emotional reactions, including hyper-arousal, hyper-sensitivity, intense social withdrawal, dissociation, panic attacks, anxiety, and restlessness (van der Kolk, 2014). Trauma is an adaptive response; it is what the body activates in reaction to a traumatic event.

American-based psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk, has devoted his career to researching trauma responses and post-traumatic stress. His 2014 publication, *The Body Keeps the Score*, has supported readers all over the world, not just academics, in understanding trauma and its impacts on our bodies. Regarding trauma in the body, he states:

We have also begun to understand how overwhelming experiences affect our innermost sensations and our relationship to our physical reality - the core of who we are. We have learned that trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience on mind, brain, and body. This imprint has ongoing consequences for how the human organism manages to survive in the present. (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 21)

This concept of an imprint is of particular importance when considering that trauma responses can be present long after the event. The body carries the memory of trauma.

For survivors of traumatic experience, the ongoing potential for triggers, activated by stimulation of our conditioned memory through visual, olfactory, auditory, and other sensory pathways (Hess & Bradley, 2020; van der Kolk, 2014), flashbacks, and related repercussions, is profoundly impactful. The connected latency is described by Caruth (1995) as a ‘crisis of truth’ (p. 8). As Ahonen (2021) explains, ‘A flashback makes us feel we are in danger even though we are perfectly safe’ (p. 296). Flashbacks preserve the freshness of an intense emotional reaction to trauma – we can relive it as though it has just happened, even if the experience was many years ago. The crisis of truth connects to the fragmented storying of difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998). Traumatic memory is broken up and stored in fragments in different parts of the body (van der Kolk, 2014). Crisis of truth also connects to the concept of alexithymia, described by Hess and Bradley (2020) as ‘the inability to identify and describe emotions experienced’ (p. 12). This difficulty in communicating emotions and feelings, can also physically manifest, where survivors of trauma can find it very difficult to hold and maintain eye contact.

Dissociation is a common symptom of trauma. American psychologist, neuroscientist, Professor of Psychiatry, and author of *The Polyvagal Theory*, Stephen Porges (2017) explains, ‘Dissociation is a process of losing a sense of presence resulting in experiencing a disconnection and a lack of continuity between thoughts, memories, surroundings, and actions’ (p. 11). Essentially, dissociation enables a trauma survivor ‘to function without interference from the past’ (Hess & Bradley, 2020, p. 9). Ahonen (2021) explains further, ‘trauma is a wound of the soul caused by horrific experiences. If so, it is natural that a traumatized person would try hard to avoid any reminders of those experiences and to suppress the feelings related to them’ (p. 289). Ahonen (2021) highlights connected elements of trauma, which alongside physical and/or emotional pain, helplessness, feelings of unsafety

and being out of control, includes a ‘lack of empathy’ (p. 290). She describes how survivors find it hard to make sense of the world, explaining that ‘Chaos and violence usually happen outside of our expectations. When they strike, they throw us into a state of shock, confusion, and powerlessness. The world we know has collapsed’ (Ahonen, 2021, p. 290).

Staci Haines, American author of the 2019 publication, *The Politics of Trauma: Somatics, Healing, and Social Justice*, works in somatics, healing, and embodied leadership. She describes how experiencing trauma kicks in our ‘survival strategies’ (p. 134) that will take precedent over other important physiological and psycho-social needs. Haines explains how we are ‘internally set at odds with our own non-negotiable needs’ (p. 134) and lists the trauma symptoms that ensue, such as depression, anxiety, lack of trust, and shame. These survival strategies also elicit responses of fight, flight, freeze, or fawn (Bradley & Hess, 2022; van der Kolk, 2014). The fight (where the body prepares for action against a perceived threat) or flight (where the body gets itself into exit mode) responses, have similar physiological implications, where adrenaline is released, heart rate increased, and breathing becomes fast and shallow. The freeze response (also known as the immobility response) is a complete shutdown, with numbness, heavy limbs, slow heart rate and slow breath, dissociation, and withdrawal. The fawn response is a placatory response, where a person under threat will use strategies to appease the one threatening.

Below is a visual representation of these states to support understanding with notions expanded on by Porges (2017). He explains the three connected levels of response to stress in the body as follows:

Dorsal Vagal State	Spinal Sympathetic State	Ventral Vagal State
Frozeanness	Hyper-arousal	Healing
Shutdown	Hyper-vigilance	Safety
Dissociation	Hyper-sensitivity	Social engagement
Intense social withdrawal	Restlessness	Mindfulness
Immobility response	Panic attacks	

Figure 2 The Body's Response to Stress

The Ventral Vagal State is where we are ideally situated in a state of healing and safety where we can connect fully with ourselves and others. An experience of trauma will lead to the Spinal Sympathetic State. The fight, flight, and/or fawn responses are activated here to help an individual move back to the Ventral Vagal State. If successful, they will not stay in a permanent state of trauma. Over time and with continuous repetition of traumatic experience (as in the case of domestic violence for example) the body will shut down into the Dorsal Vagal State, where the freeze response is activated, and symptoms of PTS will occur. Repeated and continuous trauma is also known as complex trauma (van der Kolk, 2014).

The Spinal Sympathetic State is like the on switch – in this state, there is low cortisol production (the anti-stress hormone). The Dorsal Vagal State is like the off switch (complete shut-down). Someone who has experienced complex trauma (for example prologued CSA) can get stuck oscillating between the two states. To move back through the states, the bridge (Spinal Sympathetic State) needs healing. Trauma recovery depends on activities that can support the body coming out of fight or flight responses, regulate heart rate and breathing, and produce hormones that decrease stress. Alongside debilitating mental and emotional

responses, complex trauma and PTS can cause inflammation-based illnesses such as lupus, irritable bowel syndrome, and digestive issues (van der Kolk, 2014).

In relation to the notion of the *hidden* voices of trauma survivors, van der Kolk (2014) explains that ‘Trauma almost invariably involves not being seen, not being mirrored, and not being taken into account’ (p. 59). He describes how specialised cells in the brain’s cortex, called mirror neurons, support development of empathy, synchrony, and language. We can be ‘in sync’ picking up each other’s emotional cues. Mirror neurons enable our neurobiology to interact with one another, so we sit, stand, talk like, are ‘in sync’ with those with whom we spend a lot of time. Van der Kolk (2014) explains that the mirror neurons ‘also make us vulnerable to other people’s negativity’ (p. 59). To be able to have fully activated mirror neurons means we need safety in interactions so we can engage without taking on the negative emotions of others. It is why our self-care and individual strategies as community musicians is so key to effective work with those who have experienced trauma. That we can support and be with them, working creatively, without our neurobiology being negatively impacted by theirs or vice versa.

For facilitators, the importance of some level of knowledge of these trauma responses is twofold: to help support recognition of participants’ trauma manifestations (as opposed to viewing them as challenging behaviours); and to enable understanding of the role music making can play in supporting those who have experienced trauma. Music therapists understand how music can support physiological, mental, emotional, and neurological healing (see for example, Ahonen, 2015, 2021; Ansdell & DeNora, 2016; Stige et al., 2010; Sutton, 2002). Detailed explorations fall outside of the scope of this thesis, but important to note, are the claims made by community musicians on music’s ability to *heal* trauma. In the

following sections I examine some of these claims within the literature, alongside explorations of trauma and trauma-informed practice as connected to community music discourse.

Trauma-informed Practice

The first published model of trauma-informed practice was edited by Maxine Harris and Roger D. Fallo² in 2001. *Using Trauma Theory to Design Service Systems* is concerned with creating trauma-informed environments for mental health service users across a range of contexts. The rationale the editors state in developing trauma-informed practice, is that of understanding the potential for *hidden* trauma of those with mental ill health. For a clinician to acknowledge that what they are seeing being presented by the client (or patient) may be connected to experience of trauma, will change the course of treatment. Knowing that someone has mental ill health because of experience of CSA rather than a personality disorder, as in the case of Michael's story for example, will inform the practice of the clinician and any other staff involved with that individual. Harris and Fallo (2001) detail application of trauma-informed practice into contexts such as in- and out-patient mental health services, housing services, addiction services, and address the important issue of care of the clinician (pp. 91–98).

For community musicians, the same principle applies: if we understand that individuals' behaviour or presentation is connected to experience of prior trauma, we will adapt our

² Maxine Harris and Roger Fallo were co-directors of the organisation Community Connections in Washington DC, America, at the time of writing their 2001 publication. Seen as the pioneers of trauma-informed practice, their work at Community Connections focused on providing support for those experiencing mental ill health, addiction, trauma, and victimisation. See <https://communityconnectionsdc.org/history> for more information (accessed 23rd February 2024).

practice accordingly. Two distinctions for community musicians, as opposed to clinicians, is that firstly, we may not always know if our participants have experienced trauma (and it may not be appropriate for us to know) and secondly, our role is not to treat the trauma. We can, however, gain insight from the original conceptualisation of trauma-informed practice, and consider how the core principles could support development of a model that can be effectively operationalised within facilitated music making. The following section is concerned with expanding on the original model to enable understanding of the core principles and begin to consider how they could be applied to community music making.

Trauma-informed practice is stated by Harris and Fallot (2001) to:

- Take the trauma into account.
- Avoid triggering trauma reactions and/or re-traumatising the individual.
- Adjust the behaviour of counsellors, other staff, and the organisation to support the individual's coping capacity.
- Allow survivors to manage their trauma symptoms successfully so that they are able to access, retain, and benefit from these services.

Trauma-informed practice is a strengths-based framework grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment (Hopper et al., 2010). If to inform is to 'train or instruct in some specific subject' or 'to educate,' (etymonline.com) then to be trauma informed is to be trained or educated in understanding what trauma is and the implications of its presence for those with whom we work.

Fallot and Harris (2009) set out a rationale for trauma-informed services as follows:

- I. Trauma is pervasive. The authors state that ‘The experience of trauma is simply not the rare exception we once considered it. It is part and parcel of our social reality’ (Fallot & Harris, 2009, p. 1).
- II. The impact of trauma is very broad and touches many life domains. The authors suggest that complex manifestations of traumatic experience can include difficulties of mental and emotional ill health, substance abuse, issues of physical ill health, interpersonal difficulties, intense vulnerability and/or aggressive tendencies. The authors reinforce the notion that no one experience of trauma is the same, and individuals will respond in different ways.
- III. The impact of trauma is often deep and life-shaping. The authors reinforce the life-altering experience of trauma, especially for those who have experienced prolonged and/or interpersonal violence at the hands of those who should be providing safety and care. The authors posit that ‘Physical, sexual, and emotional violence become a central reality around which profound neurobiological and psychosocial adaptations occur. Survivors may come to see themselves as fundamentally flawed and to perceive the world as a pervasively dangerous place. Trauma may shape a person’s way of viewing and being in the world; it can deflate the spirit and trample the soul.’ (Fallot & Harris, 2009, p. 1)
- IV. Violent trauma is often self-perpetuating. The authors discuss the complexity around the cycle of violence and trauma, seen specifically within the criminal justice system,

and the continued cycle of abuse perpetuated by individuals within families, communities, and institutional structures.

- V. Trauma is insidious and preys particularly on the more vulnerable among us. Fallot and Harris (2009) suggest that ‘People who are poor, who are homeless, who have been diagnosed with severe mental health problems, who are addicted to drugs, or who have developmental disabilities—all of these groups are at increased risk of violent victimization’ (p. 2). This certainly connects to statistics pertaining to women in the criminal justice system, as explored in Chapter 4, and speaks to the importance of trauma-informed practice for community musicians working with vulnerable and marginalised communities.
- VI. Trauma affects the way people approach potentially helpful relationships. This assertion supports the rationale of why safety and trust are so crucial within practice. A survivor’s tendency towards wariness and hyper-vigilance directly mitigates against formation of healthy and positive relationships. The facilitator’s role therefore is to create the environment of safety and to build and develop trust, being willing that this might take a substantial amount of time, depending on the individual and their experience of trauma.
- VII. Trauma has often occurred in the service context itself. The authors suggest that ‘Involuntary and physically coercive practices, as well as other activities that trigger trauma-related reactions, are still too common in our centers of help and care’ (p. 2). Michael’s story as a powerful example of completely mis-informed and mis-guided practice; a clinician responding angrily and aggressively towards a survivor,

exacerbating rather than ameliorating, their feelings of unsafety, and lack of trust in the system that was meant to be supporting his recovery.

- VIII. Trauma affects staff members as well as consumers in human services programmes. Secondary traumatization and vicarious trauma are big risk factors in work that is centred around those with experience of trauma, especially in contexts of complex and ongoing traumatic experience like in post-war conflict zones and carceral settings. ‘Being asked to do “more and more with less and less” becomes a pervasive theme underlying work experiences that may threaten to overwhelm coping abilities’ (Fallot & Harris, p. 2). The question for facilitators (addressed in Chapter 8) is how can we avoid this in our practice?

Fallot and Harris (2009) state that trauma-informed services ‘seek “safety first” and commit themselves to “do no harm”’ (p. 2). Connected to the Hippocratic oath, the commitment to *do no harm* can act as a helpful mantra in consideration of trauma-informed practice. If we are committed to *do no harm*, we will reflect on our practice with a sharpened lens. Related to this is Harris and Fallot’s (2001) helpful distinction between trauma-informed and trauma-specific services. This can be a useful demarcation when considering the boundaries of practice that exist between community music and music therapy practice. Community music (alongside any other facilitated music making programmes, including in formalised education contexts) can become a trauma-informed service, based on the rationale of understandings set out by Fallot and Harris (2009) above, and on developing ‘an understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma and the complex paths to healing and recovery’ (p. 2).

Music therapy, conversely, can act as a trauma-specific service on the assertion that ‘Trauma-specific services are those whose primary task is to address the impact of trauma and to facilitate trauma recovery’ (Fallot & Harris, 2008, p. 6). Community music therapy can also be trauma-specific, and I would argue that much of the published literature looking at music interventions connected to working with those who have experienced trauma, falls into this category (for example, Ahonen, 2015, 2021; Aigen, 2018; Ansdell & DeNora, 2016; Mastnak, 2016; McFerran et al., 2020). Thus, when a music project is suggested to have transformative and healing potential for its participants, it is important to consider the context of the music making, how it is being facilitated, and who is it being facilitated by.

The authors posit that trauma-informed services can be integrated into ‘*Any* human service program, regardless of its primary task ... by making specific ... modifications in practices, activities, and settings to be responsive to the needs and strengths of people with lived experience of trauma’ (p. 6). If *service* or *serving* is considered as ‘assistance, help; a helpful act’ ([etymonline.com](https://www.etymonline.com)), in this context, we can broadly understand facilitated music making as a service, and therefore apply the same logic; that *any* music making programme or project can become trauma-informed. Music making, is an inherently human practice, and considered to be fundamental to human existence (specified for example in Bartleet & Higgins, 2018; Hess, 2019; Higgins, 2006, 2012).

Fallot and Harris (2009) describe the paradigm shift necessary in becoming trauma-informed, that ways of knowing, of thinking, and perceiving, have to be repositioned to make space for a new lens with which to view services (or practice) - that of the understanding and acknowledgement of trauma and its deep and long-lasting impacts on those individuals and communities who have experienced its sometimes hidden but forceful and pervasive presence

in their lives. I argue therefore that working with those who have experienced trauma, and to respond effectively to the needs of our participants, it is our responsibility as music facilitators, to become trauma informed, given the ubiquity of traumatic experience, and the hidden voices of trauma survivors statistically likely to be present in any music making context.

An important strategy of trauma-informed practice is explained by Fallot and Harris (2009) as shifting focus from the question, ‘What is your problem?’ to ‘What has happened to you? And how have you tried to deal with it?’ (p. 6). Another key aspect is that of dispelling unhelpful hierarchies. Rather than practice that assumes a stance of helpfulness towards the *other*, a top-down approach to facilitation that adopts a perspective of *working on* rather than *with* participants (Higgins, 2012), Fallot and Harris (2009) suggest that collaboration is much more powerful, where ‘a trauma-informed approach asks, “How can you and I work together to meet your goals for healing and recovery?”’ (p. 6). The authors highlight the importance of implementation across all areas of practice, including the physical setting and the personnel involved, ‘in order to welcome, engage, and sustain helpful relationships with consumer-survivors’ (p. 6). This is important to note as connected to notions of welcome and hospitality in community music practice.

The Five Values of Trauma-informed Care

The five values of trauma-informed care (safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice) were collaboratively selected as core principles to act as guidance to those wanting to integrate trauma-informed practice into their services and organisational structures. The collaboration, facilitated and described by Fallot and Harris (2009), importantly included

‘consumer-survivors’ (p. 6), those with experiential understanding of trauma, alongside other service professionals. The authors propose a set of four guiding questions that have been developed to support an organisations’ self-assessment when it comes to implementing trauma-informed services:

To what extent do current service delivery policies, practices, and settings:

1. ensure the physical and emotional safety of consumers? Of staff members? (*Safety*);
2. provide clear information about what the consumer may expect? Ensure consistency in practice? Maintain boundaries, especially interpersonal boundaries, appropriate for the program? (*Trustworthiness*);
3. prioritize consumer experiences of choice and control? (*Choice*);
4. maximize collaboration and the sharing of power with consumers? (*Collaboration*); and emphasize consumer empowerment? Recognize consumer strengths? Build skills? (*Empowerment*).’ (Fallot & Harris, 2009, p. 6, italics in the original).

Additionally, and important to the explorations of this thesis, any organisation looking to implement trauma-informed practice into its daily operations should collaboratively consider the following five principles:

1. Ensuring a welcoming and hospitable environment;
2. How to avoid re-traumatisation for individuals;
3. A person-centred approach ‘[to maximise] experiences of choice and control’ (p. 6);
4. Integration of strategies to support self-regulation of participants; and
5. Focusing on affirmation and uplifting content.

The authors assert that any collaborative approach to planning and implementation of trauma-informed practice should include survivors in the conversation. Policies, processes, and structures all need to be considered within organisational design. Safeguarding policies are a good example of this, alongside trauma-informed training and care for all staff involved. The authors do not suggest that any of these significant mindset shifts and changes can be made overnight and posit that it can take several years for full structural implementation and integration of trauma-informed services. The key to any alteration in mindset is understanding of trauma. The authors state that,

Education about trauma and its impact has proven, not surprisingly, to be central in virtually all change efforts. All staff, including support and administrative staff, can benefit from an understanding of trauma-related concerns and the factors that facilitate recovery. (Fallot & Harris, 2008, p. 7).

Fallot and Harris (2008) posit that certain factors play an important role in ensuring a trauma-informed environment. They suggest that staff responses to individuals, especially if they are emotionally distressed, ‘not only avoids escalating conflicts but also contributes to their own safety and sense of competence’ (p. 7). The authors highlight the importance of self-care for staff suggesting that trauma-informed practice should support staff experiences of safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice. Qualitative findings from consultations the authors facilitated, demonstrate that in implementing trauma-informed practice, ‘The most common theme, one that is echoed across various groups, is an experience of greater collaboration and trust’ (Fallot & Harris, 2008, p. 7). The positive holistic experience of trauma-informed services was described by the authors in relation to one consumer’s experience as ‘[the possibility] for her to “bring her whole self” to the program’ (p. 7) where

she had previously felt the need to mask the impacts of her trauma experiences. Trauma-informed practice ideally supports an openness to, and engagement with, the full experiences of trauma survivors.

Broader Application of Trauma-informed Practice

Trauma-informed practice has developed across several fields including psychotherapy and traumatology (Berger & Quiros, 2014; Goodman et al., 2016; Wilson et al., 2015), social work and sociology (Hopper et al., 2010; Knight, 2014; Levenson, 2017; Paper Dolls Research Group, 2019), criminal justice (Covington, 2015, 2016) and, more recently, music education (Bradley & Hess, 2020, 2022; Hess, 2022; Waltzer, 2021), community music (Birch, 2020, 2021, 2022; Foulkes, 2021) and other applied arts practices (Conlon, 2020; Sunderland et al., 2022). Within the fields of music therapy and community music therapy, some literature discusses models of practice for working with trauma survivors but does not detail trauma-informed approaches (Ahonen, 2015, 2021; Aigen, 2018; Ansdell, 2014; Austin, 2002, 2015; Sutton, 2002). At the time of my initial literature review, through 2019 and 2020, I was not able to find any mention within community music literature of trauma-informed practice.

Governmental documents supporting trauma-informed practice have been published in recent years. The National Health Service (NHS) Education for Scotland (2020) governmental document, *Trauma-Informed Practice: A Toolkit for Scotland*, sets out guidelines for practice ‘to support all members of the Scottish workforce’ (p. 67). With the rationale of ‘Trauma is everyone’s business and every member of the Scottish Workforce has a role to play in understanding and responding to people affected by trauma’ (p. 67), the document not only

preceded the English equivalent³, but is significantly more detailed. The five values of trauma-informed care form foundational principles of practice, and in conjunction with the development of the toolkit, there is a National Trauma Training Programme.

The first step in this programme is to become trauma informed, with an additional Trauma Skilled practice module that supports more detailed engagement with trauma theory and neuroscience combined with understanding when an individual may benefit from more ‘trauma specialist intervention’ (p. 78). Specific resources connected to dealing with the impacts of Covid-19 and Psychological First Aid are included. Trauma Enhanced and Trauma Specialist modules address the needs of workers who are known to be supporting trauma survivors and are providing advocacy and interventions. The Trauma Specialist module is aimed at supporting those who ‘provide specialist interventions or therapies for people known to be affected by trauma with complex needs’ (p. 80). These incremental trainings with increased development and depth at each level, are significant to support research findings as discussed in Chapter 8. Training includes focus on specific contexts of work, for example, schools, working with refugees and asylum seekers, and working with children and young people in care.

Within the documentation developed for NHS Scotland, initial focus is on trauma survivors and what they have said about their own recovery. This includes significant statements like ‘trust is the biggest issue,’ and ‘we don’t heal because we see a psychologist, I heal because I have been given the skills to release the pain’ (p. 68). Survivors’ testimony also includes examples of the personal skills of those working with them, such as ‘[She] is a tremendous

³ Refer to <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice> (accessed 28th January 2024).

listener, she really hears me. She remembers, she knows,’ and ‘[She was] genuine, calm, fair, truthful. Never reactive when I have been defiant and unreasonable. I can trust her judgement. She can tell the truth and even if I don’t like it I will take it’ (p. 68). These statements are of particular importance when considering the role of the facilitator, and an individual’s qualities and skill that will most positively support those who have experienced trauma. The documentation includes related content to practitioner self-care with the rationale of ‘To be able to look after others safely and effectively, we first have to take care of ourselves’ (p. 73), demonstrating cognisance that protecting wellbeing of the workforce is a fundamental issue when working with those who have experienced trauma.

Trauma-informed Practice In Community Music

The five values of trauma-informed care are inherent core values in community music practice. Community musicians build safety and trust into their practice (for example, Higgins, 2008, 2012; Howell, 2013, 2018; Mullen & Deane, 2018) as well as enabling creative collaboration, choice, and empowerment (for example, de Quadros, 2011; Humphrey, 2023; Marsh, 2019; McFerran & Rickson, 2014; Palidofsky, 2010). If these values are already an important consideration in facilitated music making, why then is trauma-informed practice important?

Through the Literature Review, I argue that trauma-informed practice can be engaged with and utilised by *all* music facilitators. The model Fallot and Harris (2008, 2009) put forward focuses on the needs of the trauma survivor, as well as supporting any personnel engaging with them. Detailed engagement in the five values of trauma-informed care, with the acknowledgement of trauma and its impacts, alters considerations of practice and focuses

application. I suggest that trauma-informed practice can be discretely applied into any community music context with music making as the aim but with potential for therapeutic benefits, as opposed to trauma-specific practice, understood as music therapy with healing and recovery as the goal.

Within community music literature, the first publication to deal specifically with trauma-Informed practice was my article in the *International Journal of Community Music* (IJCM) (Birch, 2021). The rationale for this work, in the early stages of my PhD research, was that I could not find any writing within the field addressing the notion, despite numerous articles and chapters where there were known survivors of traumatic experience within the context of music making (see for example, Balfour, 2018; Barney & Mackinlay, 2010; Burnard et al., 2018; Howell, 2013, 2018; Marsh, 2018, 2019). I identified five themes arising from the reviewed literature in relation to the potential for positive benefits of music making for trauma survivors: expression and validation, connection, personal growth, positive social change, and healing. Through close examination of these themes, I was able to draw conclusions that support music making as beneficial for known trauma survivors. The concern I had, however, is that in much of the scholarship I examined, not enough attention is paid to scrutinising facilitation strategies when working with those who have experienced trauma, and there is a lack of critical engagement with trauma-informed practice and its application into community music.

It is of note that trauma-informed practice was first mentioned in the field of music education by Juliet Hess and Deborah Bradley in 2020, just one year prior to publication of my article. Their work, independently and together, has created a catalyst for conversation, with attention being drawn to the challenge of students' trauma histories, and the responsibility

music educators have in offering an appropriate response. Bradley's (2020) article, 'We are All Haunted: Cultural Understanding and the Paradox of Trauma', is significant, as the initial explorations for the text were carried out in 2010. When Bradley first began to research the phenomenon of trauma, her article was refused publication as she was told it was 'deemed to be "too outside the range of music education concerns"' (p. 6). As Bradley (2020) explains, her paper is an 'attempt to restart the conversation' (p. 6). It is important to note that within the period between 2010 and 2020, so little scholarly focus has been given to the significance of trauma and its impacts within both music education and community music.

Several community music texts detail projects connected to working with those who have experienced trauma (Bartleet & Higgins, 2018; Higgins, 2012; Higgins & Willingham, 2017; Veblen et al., 2013; Willingham, 2021). Since publication of my 2021 IJCM article, very few articles or chapters have been written specifically connected to trauma-informed practice in community music. There are three recent texts I can find that I will expand on here (Foulkes, 2021; Harrison et al. 2019⁴; and Sunderland et al., 2022).

Emily Foulkes' (2021) article explores the impacts of an online singing and mindfulness project during Covid-19. Foulkes documents the challenges to mental ill health exacerbated during the pandemic, connecting these to symptoms of societal trauma and isolation. As a singing for health practitioner, Foulkes explores the facilitation process for the online sessions, drawing from trauma theory and neuroscience to support her practice. She underlines personal qualities important to the work, stating that 'Being empathic and engaging in active, non-judgmental listening helps us to feel heard and our feelings validated'

⁴ Harrison et al. (2019) was omitted from my IJCM article as it is in the *Journal of Applied Arts & Health*, not specifically in a community music publication where I focused my explorations.

(p. 299). She notes the importance of both the preparation and flexibility a music facilitator needs when working online and states the session objectives to promote a ‘relaxing, fun, and uplifting’ (p. 299) space.

Foulkes is clear that both trauma- and mental health-informed practice underpins her work, to support emotional regulation and ‘a state of calm alertness’ (p. 300) for the participants. Her engagement with the neuroscience connected to traumatic experience is evident, and Foulkes is clear about why she utilises certain strategies. For example, she states, ‘Facilitating the engagement of the pre-frontal cortex of the brain, with trauma-informed approaches, assists with emotion regulation’ (p. 300). She does not, however, give practical examples of how this facilitation is carried out, for instance in breath work (suggested by Porges, 2017; and van der Kolk, 2014). More importantly, there is no unpacking of the concept of trauma-informed practice, or the trauma-informed approaches stated to be used.

Foulkes does suggest that ‘Playfulness is a component in trauma-informed practice, promoting the release of brain chemicals such as oxytocin and dopamine’ (p. 304). She explains how bringing in fun and laughter ‘promotes social bonding and increases opioid production’ (p. 304). Foulkes’ understanding of models of neuroscience to support certain strategies for practice in her music sessions is clear, but it is interesting that these explorations seem to be more in keeping with theoretical underpinnings of music therapy, not community music practice.

Foulkes’ use of the term trauma-informed practice does not seem to be connected to trauma-informed practice as conceptualised within this thesis, based on Harris and Fallot’s (2001) model and the five values of trauma-informed care. I am not suggesting that Foulkes does not

implement the five values of trauma-informed care within her practice. In fact, she specifically talks about facilitating safe space in her article. I am suggesting that it is evident that her approaches to practice are more therapeutically driven. The language used to describe future project development as the ‘Singing Clinical programme’ (p. 305) also alludes to more therapeutic intentions. This is important as it highlights the differences of conceptualisation of the term trauma-informed practice, demonstrates the importance of contextually driven approaches to facilitation, and supports the notion that development of communal language of practice is helpful.

Foulkes’ self-identification as a ‘Singing for Health, Mindfulness and Trauma Informed’ (p. 305) practitioner is indicative of the focus of her work, but her understandings of trauma-informed practice, rooted in theories of neuroscience, lean much more towards notions of music therapy than they do towards community music. Foulkes is clear that her practice rests firmly on a foundation of research. Foulkes does detail ‘embedding reflective practice and a reflexive approach’ into the project’s ‘design and implementation’ (p. 305) and discusses her development of the practice growing with experience and with conscious ‘reflecting “in action”’ (p. 305).

Harrison et al.’s (2019) article explores the use of integrated trauma-informed practice within a songwriting project with refugees and asylum seekers. The authors infer that music can be supportive of ‘holistic healing,’ (p. 148) through songwriting, with a rationale of traumatic experience being a sensory encounter, bound in time, place, and space. Trauma-informed approaches used during delivery of the songwriting workshops, included re-iterating *choice* to the participants, for example, over how much to share of their personal narratives. The authors posit that, ‘When working with people who have trauma backgrounds, it is important

to take into account the ethics of doing so and the vulnerabilities of people who have experienced trauma' (p. 151), rationalising the importance of utilising trauma-informed practice as part of their ethical response to working with trauma survivors.

The authors' view of trauma-informed practice is based on the conceptualisation of the social work model explored by Knight (2015), who describes the importance of the awareness of trauma without it being the key focus. This approach enables facilitators to understand any potential manifestations of traumatic experience within the context of the participants' trauma history (whether specifically or generally known), and to be able to enact an appropriate response in respect of participant need. Other trauma-informed approaches the authors note included communal meal sharing (to ensure participant comfort), regular wellbeing check-ins (supporting emotional safety), consideration of the physical space (making it welcoming and accessible), and 'offering as much agency and choice as possible in terms of decision-making in the workshop' (p. 152). The project connected with the Finnish Red Cross in case additional support or counselling was needed for participants, and the facilitating team included researchers with musical skill as well as one with a social work background.

The authors discuss the importance of avoiding re-traumatisation, detailing how they considered this within the songwriting sessions. For example, they used more 'abstract' (p. 159) concepts as stimuli for the creative process. One of the facilitating team commented further on this strategy saying, 'I think it's also very interesting that even when you're very careful not to bring up certain things, they still arise, but they arise on the terms of the people' (p. 160), highlighting that it is impossible to avoid all triggers and trauma responses, but they can be managed appropriately in the context of the workshop. The facilitators enabled choice over level of participant engagement. The authors posit that using abstract (or metaphorical)

stimuli for songwriting additionally avoids songs that are too individually focused or identifiable, '[producing] songs intended to resonate with human experience more broadly' (p. 162). They conclude that trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive approaches to songwriting can enable positive steps to trauma recovery.

Sunderland et al.'s (2022) article, 'Trauma Aware and Anti-Oppressive Arts-Health and Community Arts Practice: Guiding Principles for Facilitating Healing, Health and Wellbeing' is a recent and important text for any music facilitator wanting to engage more deeply and reflexively in trauma-informed practice. The collaborative team of authors is an interdisciplinary group comprised of researchers, social workers, musicians, and those involved in medical professions, including a First Nations midwife with specialist skills in trauma recovery. The paper provides a scoping review of literature connecting trauma-aware, trauma-informed, and anti-oppressive practices within the context of creative arts programmes. The authors' findings demonstrate importantly that 'no specific guidelines for trauma aware practice in arts-health or community arts were found' (p. 1), but they offer principles and values of practice that can be implemented across arts-practice settings that seek to be trauma informed.

Alongside existing literature in trauma-informed practice, arts and health, and community arts, the authors explore the idea of anti-oppressive practice, as significant to considering the spaces in which collective trauma so often resides. The authors use anti-oppression as a lens by which to view their findings, given that, as they assert, 'being culturally, politically and economically marginalised and disadvantaged greatly increases individuals' and groups' likelihood of experiencing complex and intergenerational trauma' (p. 4).

The scoping review was designed based on two guiding questions:

1. How are arts-health and community arts professionals and researchers implementing trauma aware and informed practice in their work?
2. Which guiding principles for creative, anti-oppressive and trauma aware practice emerge from existing literature? (p. 5)

The authors' findings include the importance of contextually designed programmes, understanding of the multi-layers of complexity related to specific communities, responsiveness to participant need as a key element of practice, collaborative approaches to enhance support for both practitioners and participants. *Holding space* is identified as a key component of trauma-informed practice. As the authors explain, 'Holding space generally means that we generate a safe, non-judgemental and non-directive context for others to self-heal: that is, we do not seek to 'fix' others but facilitate spaces where they can make self-directed choices for their own healing, health and well-being.' (p. 8). This understanding connects to the NHS Scotland (2020) document, where a survivor explains that they have been 'given the skills to release the pain' (p. 68), and Herman's (1997) assertion that a survivor is the 'author' (p. 133) of their own recovery.

Demonstration of care by facilitators towards participants is noted to be important. Mindfulness, embodiment, and grounding practices are key themes focusing on both somatic/physical and internal/deep listening activities to support recovery from traumatic experience. Deep listening was also proposed to focus on others, validating and bearing witness to their stories of trauma. Safety was a key theme connected in the literature with

specific strategies of practice given as examples of how safety can be facilitated, for example through ‘referral pathways’ (p. 9) where further specialist intervention is needed.

Potential occupational risk factors for practitioners are identified as burnout and secondary traumatic stress, where confidence levels are low due to lack of consideration of training needs or expectations that are far too high on what practitioners can and/or should be responsible for. This was particularly evident in schools-based programmes where ‘educators working with children and young people who have experienced trauma are often required to work beyond their professional skill level when attending to the social-emotional needs of students’ (p. 10) (corroborated by Smith, 2022; and Waltzer, 2021). The need for ‘self-care and supervision’ (p. 10) alongside related strategies to support ongoing wellbeing of workers was identified. Intersectional and gender-responsive approaches are highlighted as important strategies to integrate within trauma-informed and trauma-responsive practices.

Key principles of practice are identified as ‘allyship, care-giving, caring communities, choice, collaboration, comfort and challenge, complexity, cultural affirmation and connection, diversity, holding space, intersectionality, Multisensoriality, embodiment, and emplacement, and safety’ (pp. 12–15). The authors identify that there is no consolidation of trauma-informed practice across creative arts interventions. ‘Practice wisdom’ (p. 15) is acknowledged to be missing from their research. The article concludes with both the acknowledgement of the growing number of arts-based practices focused on healing, health, and wellbeing, but also the limitations of specific trauma-informed ‘frameworks and guidance’ (p. 16). Their table of findings is hoped to offer ‘interim guidance’ (p. 16) to those arts practitioners looking for more direction to support their work.

Community Music and Trauma

In this section, I update the explorations of my 2021 IJCM article by discussing several key community music texts published in recent years that engage with music making in contexts where participants are known to have experienced trauma, but without specifically engaging in trauma-informed practice. This is important, as it suggests that despite the growth of projects working with known trauma survivors, trauma-informed practice is currently an under-developed and under-utilised lens within the field. There are, however, useful references to facilitation strategies, and values of practice that connect with the five values of trauma-informed care, to support development of the conceptual lens, and subsequent discussions in Chapter 8.

Lee Willingham is Professor of Music Education at Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario, Canada, coordinating the postgraduate community music programmes. His 2021 publication, *Community Music at the Boundaries*, was compiled following an international community music conference hosted at Wilfrid Laurier in 2017. Significantly, the text includes trauma, not trauma-informed practice, in the index. The discussions below relate to chapters that are included in this edited volume followed by exploration of additional community music texts from the past few years that focus on music making with trauma survivors.

Lindsey Castellano's (2021) chapter directly addresses the trauma faced by the homeless community she worked with through an after-school programme in New York City. At the time of writing, Castellano was a PhD candidate at Teacher's College, Columbia University. She explains how many of the children and their mothers who participated in the music making were fleeing from situations of domestic violence and abuse. Castellano

contextualises trauma experiences of homeless populations and draws on literature to support the supposition that ‘musical intervention has the power to heal victims of trauma’ (p. 48). This connects to my earlier suggestion that there is a lack of critical engagement within the literature around the assertion of the power of music to heal trauma. Castellano describes the positive impact music making can have on participant wellbeing and engagement, alongside the potential for supporting self-regulation of participants.

Castellano highlights that music making is fundamentally human, and as such, is useful in supporting social connections, which ‘increases feelings of self-esteem, decreases a sense of isolation, and assists in recovery from trauma’ (p. 49). Based in a family centre, participants from a local shelter were invited to join the group. The project involved two music facilitators (including the author as practitioner-researcher) with two social workers known to the project participants on hand to support as needed. At the end of the project, a performance was held at Teacher’s College, Columbia University. Castellano’s findings suggest that responsiveness to participant needs is key when working with those who have been traumatised, and she emphasises a collaborative approach to the work. Of note is that the author interviewed Nigel Osborne as an ‘academic specialist’ (p. 64) for her project responding to questions of effective pedagogical strategies designed to support those ‘enduring daily stresses’ (p. 53). Osborne’s approaches to trauma-informed pedagogy have had a profound impact on practice, as discussed in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

Phil Mullen’s (2021) chapter addresses working with children and young people in challenging circumstances. A UK-based community musician, Mullen has worked across

many different contexts, including schools, pupil referral units⁵ (PRUs), criminal justice, and youth justice settings, focusing his practice on issues of social exclusion. Mullen is known in the field for his work with young people in challenging circumstances (for example see Mullen, 2017, 2022). Of note is Mullen's description of the 'deep trauma' experienced by some young people and his suggestion that 'community musicians need to employ emotional intelligence' (Mullen, 2021, p. 113). The acknowledgement for the potential for traumatic experience to be deeply impactful is evident, but without any specific strategies for facilitation expounded on. In Mullen's (2022) most recent publication, he does include trauma-informed practice in the index with one mention. In the chapter entitled 'Musical Ideas And Leadership', Mullen includes a quote that refers to trauma-informed practice as a 'tool box' (p. 156) to support facilitators working in PRUs. No detail is given as to what trauma-informed practice is, or how it should be considered in this context.

Kelly Laurila's (2021) chapter explores the collaboration between an Indigenous women's and children's drum circle and a male police chorus in Ontario, Canada. At the time of writing, she was a PhD candidate at Wilfrid Laurier, with the focus of her practice as song-carrier for the drum circle. She describes the importance of her research 'in learning how song can contribute to reconciliation' (p. 262). Her doctoral work in this area brought her to the concept of ethical space (Ermine, 2007) as key to understanding how 'one's truth (or subjectivity) is shaped by one's worldview' (p. 265). Laurila's explorations supported understanding that encountering, listening to, and attending to *the other* are crucial in developing ethical space, where a willingness to learn from and be open to different, or even opposing, epistemological understandings is paramount.

⁵ In the UK, pupil referral units (PRUs) are also known as exclusion units and operate as specialist schools for young people who have been excluded from mainstream education.

In choosing to move into this space, the entities can also choose *how* to engage with each other. They can make a moral choice to learn about each other, about the other's history, and about what has led to the divisions that are creating the harms and hurts. Through this process of engagement and dialogue, both may come to realize that their understandings and experiences may be different from the other's. (pp. 265–266)

Laurila connects understandings of ethical space within community music making as notions of '*building bridges through song, song as a space to bear witness, and creating dialogue within music*' (p. 266, italics in the original). Laurila describes some of the sense of belonging and connectedness experienced within these ethical spaces where there is possibility of change and positively transformative impacts to support 'peace and cooperation' (p. 267). Laurila describes the challenges of building trust between the police chorus and the drum circle, stating that 'I'm not sure that all of us in our drum circle ... believed that trust was possible' (p. 269).

Laurila describes a particular moment that enabled safety and trust to be built between the two groups. They had been rehearsing together in a church and after one rehearsal when the men from the police chorus had left, the pastor came in and made racist comments towards the women and children in the drum circle. Compromised in their feelings of safety, Laurila knew they could no longer meet in that space. She messaged the police chorus to let them know, who promptly moved to action finding another venue for rehearsals. She describes the moment they arrived for their first rehearsal in the new space, saying,

When our drum circle came to the doors of the Mennonite Church, the pastor was standing there waiting for us! His first words were, "Welcome, please come in." I

cried then, and it brings tears to my eyes now as I write this. Those words were exactly what we needed to hear. (p. 270)

This example connects the growing trust in relationship between the drum circle and police chorus to the need for the participants' safety being met in a genuine and authentic welcome. Laurila explains the change in relationship between the two communities following from this incident, saying that, 'We were no longer just singing partners; we were human beings relating to one another on a heart level' (p. 270).

What is also of importance in this chapter is Laurila's descriptions of how the men of the police chorus responded to the needs of the women of the drum circle, being sensitive and attuning to key issues of lack of safety and trust connected to the women's experiences of systemic trauma and oppression. She speaks about observing the men developing their awareness of the complex challenges faced by Indigenous women, beginning to understand the significant part they could play in redressing some of the injustices and harm by making an '[effort] to help the women and girls feel safe and welcome in their presence' (p. 270). Working together, the two communities were involved in the ongoing challenge of finding 'a new way ... to see each other' (p. 271).

Laurila is clear about the impact of performances on the wider community, where audience members come and chat to the group, engaging and asking questions. As Laurila suggests, 'Asking questions is a great start to dialogue and understanding' (p. 272). She is motivated in the work, that in those moments of ethical space, there is room 'to create a new critical consciousness, which in turn can lead to social change' (p. 272). Laurila describes how crucial 'mutual and respectful' (p. 273) engagement is to this process, not just a willingness

to interact through singing together, but of conscious steps to connect with the *other* being made from both sides.

Naomi Sunderland is an Associate Professor of Social Work, musician, and researcher with the Music and Communities Research Area, Griffith University, Australia. Sunderland et al. (2016) explore the role of collaborative planning and delivery of music making in what the authors describe as ‘complex community music programmes’ (p. 224). Complex communities are described by the authors as those with ‘participants who experience significant and ongoing trauma and negative social and political conditions’ (p. 224). The authors assert that complexity of context necessitates an interdisciplinary facilitation team with a broad representation of professional skill and experience to be effective in responding to participants’ histories and individual needs. The authors explore the concept of *epistemic communities* as a professional network of those from interconnected disciplines, housing the skill and experience to collectively work with and address whatever specific systemic, social, or political issues are present within the participant group.

Shared values are foundational to this conceptualisation of a facilitation team operating within complex community settings. The values are dependent on the specific complexities of each context, and subsequent issues for participant experience. The article explores how facilitation teams connected to complex community music programmes could be viewed as epistemic communities, and how these can support awareness of and advocacy for more broad notions of social justice, as connected to social and political inequities, such as in the case of refugees and asylum seekers.

To further this exploration, a facilitation team such as the Prison Partnership Project could be described as an example of an *epistemic community*. The context is significantly complex, participants with often multiple experiences of complex trauma in their histories as well as the propensity towards re-traumatisation in their current context of incarceration. The facilitation team, as an *epistemic community*, comprised of experienced music facilitators (working alongside and mentoring the student volunteers), as well as the project director (an applied theatre practitioner and drama therapist) plus seasoned prison staff (prison wardens and those staff within the education programmes) all with significant training in trauma-informed practice specifically designed for use with women within the UK criminal justice system. The five values of trauma-informed care form the core principles of the values-based practice supporting both content planning and delivery, alongside broader conceptualisations of the project.

Development Of a Conceptual Framework

The following section develops a conceptual framework based on the five values of trauma-informed care. Safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice are conceptualised to create a lens through which to view both explorations of practice and data analysis.

Unpacking of these values as connected to community music making additionally supports the argument that trauma-informed practice, as a values-based framework, can be engaged with and utilised by *all* music facilitators and applied into *any* music making context. The interconnected, interdependent, and complementary nature of the five values of trauma-informed care is emphasised, with musical, relational, and pedagogical aspects examined.

Safety

Because of the experiences of trauma, most people need to relearn and heal around safety. We need to learn to assess safety based on current time, generate safety from the inside out, and develop a wide range of skills to take care of our own and others' safety and well-being. (Haines, 2019, p. 139)

The etymology of safety describes 'freedom or immunity from harm or danger; an unharmed or uninjured state or condition' ([etymonline.com](https://www.etymonline.com)). Safety includes notions, from the Old French word, *sauvete*, of safeguarding, salvation, and security. The Latin word, *salvus*, means 'uninjured, in good health, safe' from the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root meaning 'whole, well-kept' ([etymonline.com](https://www.etymonline.com)). The word safety, therefore, includes both conceptual and active inclinations when the foundational constructs are considered as verbs— to safeguard, to keep secure, to protect from harm. Haine's assertion of '[generating] safety from the inside out' supports this understanding of conceptual and active components of the notion. Highlighted also are the relational aspects of safety, and the responsibility we have to 'develop ... skills to take care' of ourselves and each other, alluding to the importance of self-care of the facilitator, to protect the safety of others.

It is interesting to me that so much emphasis is placed on physical safety when considering the workshop space, whether in a school, care home, hospital, or prison. Risk assessments are carried out, equipment is checked and maintained for safety reasons. However, this minimised conceptualisation of safety reduces understanding and focuses on only practical and physical elements. While physical safety is, of course, vital, *wholeness*, *wellness*, and *good health* as priorities change the parameters of conceptual meaning. It thus becomes impossible to ignore holistic aspects of safety such as mental, emotional, and spiritual

wellbeing. Yerichuk and Krar (2021) emphasise this holistic notion of safety, suggesting that ‘creating a safe space may also be about psychological or emotional safety’ (p. 24).

Safety is described as an ‘inherent need’ (Haines, 2019, p. 133) of humanity. To reiterate this concept further, Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological model that places safety after fundamental physical needs (such as food, drink, rest, sex, and warmth) but before psycho-social and relationship needs (such as love, friendship, and accomplishment). It is identified by Maslow as a basic but imperative necessity, connected to our survival. As simplistic as the model is, and even with the modifications made over the course of Maslow’s lifetime, safety is given a prominent position as a primitive need of humanity. Castellano (2021) emphasises the importance of meeting the safety needs of participants as the number one priority, explaining that if they felt safe, ‘they felt secure and encouraged to engage’ (p. 51). Castellano additionally reflects on Maslow’s Hierarchy, suggesting that ‘as the participants’ basic and psychological needs were fulfilled, the focus could change to self-fulfilment needs’ (p. 51).

Haines (2019) further develops the concept of safety by adding belonging (‘to properly relate to’ ([etymonline.com](https://www.etymonline.com))) and dignity (‘state of being worthy’ ([etymonline.com](https://www.etymonline.com))) as integral human needs. Belonging is a relational imperative of humanity, and dignity is a validation of our humanity. We are worthy (important, deserving of positive regard) because we are human; because we are human, we have a deep-seated need to belong. Haines explains how trauma can radically and negatively affect our sense of safety, belonging, and dignity and argues that ‘we are at our best when we have, and can offer, all three’ (p. 133). Haines describes that healing from trauma is about reconnecting these three basic needs and ‘bringing our selves (bodies, actions, emotions, relations) into current time ... not as a

concept, but as a felt reality' (p. 134). Safety, belonging, and dignity enable us to view ourselves as valued and valuable, and support meaningful connections with others.

Safety is identified as a key element of practice when working with trauma survivors (Bradley & Hess, 2020; Green, 2011; Herman, 1997; Porges, 2017; van der Kolk, 2014).

Difficulties with the notion of *feeling* safe, however, are identified in the literature, especially where traumatic experience may alter our ability to assess the reality of our situation (see for example, Hess & Bradley, 2020; Haines, 2019). Van der Kolk (2014) explains that our 'gut feelings signal what is safe' (p. 96). Someone who has experienced trauma, however, will have feelings of unsafety in their bodies that is not necessarily based in factual safety. For example, someone in an abusive relationship may *feel* safe at points in the other's company, even if they are not. The same person can *feel* unsafe in safe situations. This connects to the idea that those who have experienced trauma may take unprecedented risks in certain areas of their lives but be overly cautious in others (see for example, Covington 2015, 2016; van der Kolk, 2014). Haines underlines the almost impossible task of creating a safe space and how problematic over-claiming safe space can be, particularly 'if what you mean is to have all the participants 'feel' safe' (p. 137).

Safety as connected to belonging, is compromised for someone who has experienced trauma. Fear, shame, and anxiety around being misunderstood can keep trauma survivors in a place of deep-seated isolation. The need for connection, belonging, and safety in relationships is at risk when a survivor questions their own worth and feels hidden from others. Herman (1997) describes the immediate necessity of physical safety for a trauma survivor, followed by supportive relationships from those with whom the survivor feels safe. To offer a supportive relationship, facilitators must respond to individual participant need, offering a space where

they can listen attentively, whether to implicit or explicit communications. Reflective and reflexive practice protects both facilitators' and participants' safety.

Porges (2017) asserts that welcoming, open, and hospitable gestures in the form of body language and facial expressions are crucial for establishing safety for those who have experienced trauma. He states that,

The face-heart connection provides humans and other mammals with an integrated social engagement system that detects and projects features of "safety" to conspecifics through facial expressions and vocalisations that are covariates of autonomic state. Within this model, how we look, listen, and vocalize conveys information about whether we are safe to approach. (p. xvi).

Within Polyvagal Theory Porges explores the body's social engagement system that supports relational attachment. Porges posits that 'Prosodic voices, positive facial expressions, and welcoming gestures trigger ... feelings of safety and trust' (p. 2). As facilitators, how we positively use our voices, facial expressions, and gestures to enable safety with our participants is even more crucial where participants have experienced trauma, and therefore have 'deficits in feeling safe' (p. xvi). Porges suggests that we develop 'strategies that will enable us to become more welcoming as we invite others to co-regulate on a quest for safety' (p. xvi). Of note is Porges's connection of the notion of welcome with that of facilitating safety for others.

O' Neill (2018) connects a welcoming environment with establishing conditions of safety, positing that a safe space should be 'supportive, fun, caring, and challenging' (p. 397) and

enable risk taking for participants. Notions of welcome and hospitality are theorised within Higgins' (2012) publication, with connected concepts of kindness, affirmation, choice, guest, greeting, invitation, hospitable action, and ethical action (pp. 137–138). The *welcome* in community music making is described by Higgins (2012) as 'a philosophical position drawing from the thought of Levinas (2006), who would describe this as a humanism of the other according to which being-for-the-other takes precedence over being-for-itself' (p. 138). When we consider the importance of emphasising another's humanity (Freire, 1970) and facilitated music making as a human practice, the notion of welcome becomes even more crucial in consideration of those who have experienced the *dehumanising* impacts of trauma. The selflessness or being-for-the-other is of note as connected to developing an ethics of care.

Trust

Etymological explorations of the word *trust* reveal that the earliest meanings are understood as 'reliance on the veracity, integrity, or other virtues of someone or something' (etymonline.com). The Old Norse *traust* means 'help, confidence, protection, support' (etymonline.com) alongside additional understandings of 'reliability [and] faithfulness' (etymonline.com). As 'that on which one relies' (etymonline.com), trust implies a relationship, the confident dependence on another. Trust is seen to be formed on the truthfulness, *integrity*, and *virtues* of another. It is not a baseless notion and is built upon values that support understanding of one's *trustworthiness* in relation to another. This is a key consideration for music facilitators, looking to build trust with the individuals and communities in which they work. Do we have truthfulness, integrity, and positive values that enable us to be *worthy* of our participants' trust?

The word *community* ‘has at its heart the search for human belonging’ (Higgins, 2012, p. 142). The notion of community challenges ego-centric tendencies and creates opportunity for us to think about others in a generic sense, as well as the *other*. As Higgins explains, the Latin term *communitas* encapsulates a sense of belonging. Connections are made in community, where safety and trust are established. Modern understandings of community have, in some instances, moved away from cultural, linguistic, location-based notions, towards the idea of social connections. Higgins (2012) explores this concept in relation to German sociologist and philosopher Tönnies’ articulation of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) (p. 134). Contemporary thought around the nature of community ‘recognizes the importance of diversity in the modern space of communal relationships’ (p. 136). In community music making, this emphasis on celebration of diversity highlights the vital need for cultural democracy in our practice (see for example, Graves, 2018; Higgins, 2012). This is particularly pertinent when considering spaces that have a diversity of social, cultural, linguistic, religious, and political representations.

Haines (2019) describes three main components of developing trust as intention, competency, and reliability (p. 251). Intention demands a deep reflection on why we are doing what we are doing. When applied to our practice, this is an important question, especially in relationship to contexts with layered complexities due to participants’, and potentially facilitators’, trauma histories. Competency refers to the skills we bring to our work— are we equipped in all the ways needed to deliver effectively? As music facilitators, do we bring both critical musical and personal skills, as well as experience, that can be utilised effectively in community settings? Reliability is where we demonstrate we are trustworthy by doing what we said we would, showing up at the time we agreed, setting clear expectations and boundaries around our practice over an extended period.

These three components interact to support development of trust, but if one is missing, trust can be compromised. For example, if we have all the intention and skill required for the work, but are unreliable, and show up late or miss sessions, our participants will lose trust. If we are reliable and have good intentions, but don't have the skill to deliver, participants will lose trust in our ability to confidently support them in making and creating music. If we have musical skills and are reliable but have the wrong intention and motivation in the work, sooner or later, the participants will understand that we are not authentic in our practice.

To add into this combination of trust development is the notion of power. There are always power dynamics at play, whether we want to admit it or not. To be trustworthy in our practice, we need to not only acknowledge our power, but be prepared to reflect on how best to use it given the context of the work. For example, relinquishing of power (Higgins & Shehan Campbell, 2010) can be an effective way of supporting creative collaboration with our participants and empowerment of individuals within the group. Conversely, a facilitator who wants to give all their power to the group can end up in a situation where their lack of confident leadership⁶ can lead to a deficit of trust and safety.

Trauma creates damage to trusting relationships (van der Kolk, 2014); therefore, trust is very difficult for trauma survivors to establish within social interactions. Mistrust feeds into a survivor's vulnerabilities, to the extent that they may feel the need to guard themselves emotionally, mentally, and physically against intrusion. At the most basic level, as McKay and Moser (2005) state, 'People need to know that you understand and care for them, that you have experience and that if they trust you they are safe' (p. 6). Herman (1997) suggests that

⁶ I use leadership in its broadest sense here — not to diminish facilitation, but to reinforce the notion that skilled facilitation carries an element of leadership, not as the 'most prominent' in the group, but as the 'guide' (etymonline.com).

to form meaningful connections, ‘the survivor [must regain] some capacity for appropriate trust’ (p. 205). Herman additionally highlights the importance of stages of recovery from trauma, where incremental steps towards rebuilding connections are a necessity.

Development of trust as friendship that is ‘warm and caring’ (Higgins, 2012, p. 157) is vital to practice that endeavours to support individuals’ wellbeing and sense of belonging, as well as highlighting the human aspect of group interactions. This becomes more challenging to navigate when participants have experienced trauma, where their sense of trust in others has been eroded. Trauma survivors may have difficulties in developing authentic and healthy relationships, oscillating between an inability to connect, and a tendency towards vulnerability and over-dependence on others.

Higgins (2012) identifies friendship as a theme of the empathic encounter between facilitator and participant. The root of the word friendship, understood as ‘mutual liking and regard’ (etymonline.com) emphasises the reciprocal nature of the relationship, as well as connecting to Carl Roger’s notion of the unconditional positive regard of the *other* (see Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990). Several factors interact in this conceptual understanding of the therapeutic relationship. It can be helpful to understand the different facets contained within the idea of unconditionality in relationship, to create healthy boundaries around the concept as connected to practice. To have unconditional positive regard is to agree with the ideological and philosophical position that all humanity deserves safety, belonging, and dignity (Haines, 2019). To offer a space that enables these concepts to be facilitated involves non-judgemental approaches to practice, as well as vulnerability. It also, however, involves establishing clear boundaries around the facilitator-participant relationship, as explored further in Chapter 8.

Music, as an inherently human activity, can support development of positive connections, friendships between facilitators and participants within the group. Inability to connect with others is an ongoing challenge for trauma survivors. However, as Herman (1997) suggests, recovery depends on being able to make connections, it ‘cannot occur in isolation’ (p. 133). Music brings people together; it is ‘an inherently social act’ (Murray & Lamont, 2012, p. 76). According to Howell (2018), shared music-making experiences also have the capacity to ‘entrain energy and emotions, increase feelings of courage, safety and fellowship, and build a sense of community’ (p. 49). This connectedness and belonging through music can bring people together through a shared experience of trauma (Crisp, 2021) as well as facilitating positive communication and creation of new meaning (Ansdell, 2014; Marsh, 2019). Community music can reduce isolation and facilitate belonging, vital for recovery from trauma.

Porges (2017) explores the relationship between establishing safety in the therapeutic space, and that of listening attentively as crucial in ‘communicating mutual safety and trust’ (p. 49). Listening is a way of paying attention to the face of the *other* (Levinas, 1969; 2006), attending to the uniqueness of their person, looking carefully, and being responsive. Listening enables facilitators to bear witness, validating the stories and hidden narratives of participants who have experienced trauma. Escobar (2011) asserts that trust must be modelled before mutual trust can be developed. Understanding that we work in creative partnership, listening with respect and openness, helps us establish trust in the space with participants, enabling us to ‘fight at their side’ (Friere, 1970, p. 39).

As a phenomenological concept, dialogue, conceptualised as ‘across’ or ‘between’ speech (etymonline.com) can be understood as the flow of meaning. As such, it connects to notions

of listening, bearing witness, conversation, and voice. Freire (1970) highlights the importance of dialogue, suggesting that ‘dialogue characterizes an epistemological relationship. Thus, in a sense, dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task’ (p. 17). What is illuminated here is the social aspect of dialogue in the process of knowing. If we are to cultivate trust with our participants, dialogue is a way we can engage in the reciprocal process of knowing to break down some of the potential hierarchical, cultural, and social barriers. For a trauma survivor, the process of building trust will be more challenging. A facilitator will need to support individuals responding with incremental steps, that repeatedly reinforce an environment of trust, and are built over time.

Collaboration

Within the process of creative collaboration, we experience an ‘act of working together,’ a ‘united labor’ (etymonline.com). The active noun from the Latin, *collaborare* means to ‘work with’ (etymonline.com), reinforcing concepts of non-hierarchical practice, aspired to within non-formal music making. Higgins (2012) reinforces the notion of collaboration by introducing the concept of *corresponsibility*. As he explains, ‘group members are responsible for one another without their personal or individual responsibilities being reduced in any way’ (p. 140). Stige et al. (2010) additionally posit that ‘musicking is exemplary of collaborative “respect-in-action”’ (p. 281), mutual respect as a value of practice needed to facilitate co-created and collaborative musical processes.

Collaboration is a core element of co-created music making, and as an active, respectful, united, and responsible process, can support those who have experienced trauma. Community musicians place emphasis on collaboration as both an inherent value of practice and a

pedagogical strategy (for example, see Bartleet & Higgins, 2018; Higgins, 2012; Veblen et al., 2013). Collaboration is identified as key to ‘inclusive’ (Higgins & Willingham, 2017, p. 168) practices in non-formal music making, important because being included can increase a sense of belonging and connection for those who have been isolated due to their experiences of trauma.

Freire’s (1970) model of education, emphasising humanising practices, recognises the importance of creative collaboration. This negotiated and reciprocal approach again highlights how vital engaging in conversation is. In his explorations of dialogue, Escobar (2011) states, ‘Knowledge is co-created in conversation. In dialogue, the exchange of ideas is mutually transformative and enhances understanding of selves and others’ (p. 17). This concept of co-created meaning that deepens our understanding of ourselves and each other can help to explain why creative collaboration can be so powerful. As asserted by Etherington (2004), ‘In discussion with others, we can co-construct new meanings in response to their critical reflections and our own’ (p. 29). In collaborative approaches, a mutual understanding is reached so that the music does not belong to one person but is a culmination of the creative discourse. With those who have experienced trauma, engaging in dialogue in the creative process can therefore have transformative potential for both facilitator and participants.

Van der Merwe et al. (2019) assert that ‘the transformative value and benefits of musical participation enhance a community’s emotional, mental, physical and social well-being’ (p. 251). They also detail the musical benefits ‘for the wellness of a community [in providing] relief from suffering’ (p. 252). This is echoed by Higgins and Willingham (2017), who state that the ‘communal nature [of music making] creates a space that enables [participants] to

meet some of their spiritual, emotional, mental and physical needs' (p. 152). This potential for individual needs to be met can enable a positive shift in narrative of the whole community. It connects to the importance of shared experience and common goals, a concept supported by trauma theorists (for example, Herman, 1997; van der Kolk, 2014), linking to the fourth value of trauma-informed care, empowerment.

Empowerment

Like safety and belonging, our need to be dignified is part of our somatic and human inheritance. We want to be of value, to live as inherently worthy, to not question our right to exist. We want to have merit, to be known to have skills, presence, and worth that contribute to others. (Haines, 2019, p. 145)

Empowerment as an 'act or fact of being given power or authority' (etymonline.com) can be viewed as a way for survivors to regain self-empowerment. The human desire for belonging, dignity, worth, and value is continually undermined for someone who has experienced trauma. As Herman (1997) states, 'Trauma robs the victim of a sense of power and control; the guiding principle of recovery is to restore power and control to the survivor' (p. 159). Community music can offer a space in which to support a trauma survivor in discovering strategies for self-empowerment.

Exploring the complex relationship of music and those who have experienced trauma, Bradley (2022) asserts that 'Artistic endeavours provide a vehicle for expression that does not depend upon an ability to verbalize one's feelings' (p. 67). Those who have experienced trauma as an *unspeakable* phenomenon may not be able to use words to communicate their thoughts and emotions. The arts, and specifically music making, can provide a space in which

self-expression is facilitated. Community music making has long been understood as a location for individual and group expression (see for example, Sound Sense, 1998) and can offer opportunities for expression, where ‘no words are capable of explaining trauma’ (Marsh, 2019, p. 304). Self-expression as a fundamental aspect of giving voice to our thoughts, ideas, and feelings can be a powerful way for a survivor to be heard and validated.

As an example of this, Meade Palidofsky (2010) describes her musical theatre project, *Storycatchers Theatre*, working with incarcerated girls in youth detention in the United States, as a ‘public acknowledgement of trauma [and] a gateway to therapy’ (p. 123). The idea that trauma can be acknowledged through community music is also explored within the work of Marsh (2019), where she describes music as a way of ‘deeply witnessing the stories and emotions of another’ (p. 304). Facilitation of bearing witness to trauma within community music practice connects to the idea of group validation as a crucial part of trauma recovery (Dieckmann & Davidson, 2019; Marsh, 2019; Palidofsky, 2010). Herman (1997) posits the notion of group processes as significant for the affirmation and validation of survivors of trauma, through bearing witness without necessarily interacting directly with trauma narrative. Bearing witness is an act of acknowledgement—and acknowledging the trauma histories of our participants is the first step in becoming trauma informed.

Engaging in participatory music-making projects can sanction the individual processing of emotions and ‘release deeply repressed trauma’ (de Quadros, 2011, p. 66). It is of interest that collaborative musical activity, rather than independent musical performance, can be a significant factor in facilitating self-expression (see for example, Burnard et al., 2015, 2018; Marsh, 2019). There is also the opportunity within group processes to appropriately express communal trauma (van der Merwe et al., 2019) and experience ‘group catharsis’ (Marsh,

2019, p. 306). Creative collaboration can enable new material to be developed which expresses and communicates both participants' emotions and their personal stories (for example, Burnard et al., 2015, 2018; Hess, 2019).

Freire emphasises the importance of the pursuit to 'be more fully human' (p. 55) as part of a process of transformation (p. 12). Enabling the self-empowerment of our participants holds significance when we also understand what Freire describes as the 'culture of silence' of the dispossessed (pp. 30–32). Those who have experienced trauma have an 'invisible but indelible mark' (Bradley & Hess, 2022, p. 1), the *hidden* wound that cuts them off from others and negatively impacts their ability to create deep interpersonal connections. As facilitators, we can support individuals by empowering them to find their voice and give space for expression to those who have been silenced. We can enable creative interactions where participants can begin to feel heard, understood, and valued, as opposed to silenced, stigmatised, or oppressed.

Higgins (2012) suggests that 'songwriting can provide empowering and transformative learning experiences for participants' (p. 145). Singing, as a specific mode of musical expression that positively interacts with our nervous system (see for example, Osborne, 2009, 2017; Porges, 2017; van der Kolk, 2014), is detailed as a way of enabling participants to express 'their deepest fears and joys' (de Quadros, 2011, p. 66). Singing together can also be a motivator and regulator of emotion such as grief, loss, and trauma (for example, Mullen & Deane, 2018; Osborne, 2009, 2017). As stated by Lee et al. (2016), 'Singing provides a structure to explore and reflect on emotions, to work through difficult times and communicate with others' (p. 193). Singing together connects us to our sense of identity and authorship, enabling a voice for the marginalised, as described by one participant, 'Song gives me a

voice' (Laurila & Willingham, 2017, p. 149). This experience of personal expression and validation through song can explain how community music activities, specifically singing and songwriting, could enable a deeper sense of self-worth and self-empowerment for participants who have experienced trauma.

If music can be understood as a 'force for change' (Ansdell, 2014, p. 28), this can help us to acknowledge the potential for positive personal growth and development for participants. Positive personal growth can be connected to the development of new skills, as well as a sense of accomplishment in participation and performance (see for example, Palidofsky, 2010). Music-making projects can facilitate self-empowerment 'because every act of expression is an act of authorship and self-affirmation' (de Quadros, 2011, p. 67).

Imagination is vital to this process as a fundamental aspect of creative processes as connected to the concept of 'future possible selves' (Henley & Cohen, 2018, pp. 156–158). Imagination, released through music making, is suggested by van der Kolk (2014) to be a powerful tool for survivors of traumatic experience.

Sunderland et al. (2016) explain how music can be used for "self-regulation" of emotions and moods; "shaping self-identity" [and] "matters of being" (e.g. increasing imagination)' (p. 225). In understanding the importance of self-empowerment and self-regulation for trauma survivors, it is possible to reflect on how music making opportunities can support individuals in trauma recovery, especially where a survivor's sense of losing control can be overwhelming. Additionally, community music publications refer to the personal growth of participants who have experienced trauma. Music making is observed to facilitate self-contentment, self-acceptance, confidence, self-regulation, self-management, self-competence,

self-responsibility, and self-affirmation (see Cohen, 2010; Mastnak, 2016; van der Merwe et al., 2019), all key to the self-empowerment of the individual.

Choice

Cattanach (1992) suggests that ‘To have your rights disregarded is to become invisible, not to count, so the sense of self is eroded’ (p. 17). The Old English, *cyre*, meaning ‘choice’ or ‘free will’ (etymonline.com), suggests a freedom in choosing: to exercise choice is to exercise liberty. In enabling choice for our participants, we are supporting their visibility, understanding their need to be seen and heard. As facilitators, we need to know when to let go, when to support, and when to step back, giving space for independence. As Higgins & Shehan Campbell (2010) describe, we need to know when to ‘relinquish control’ (p. 5).

Freire (1970) also explores this idea, stating:

Those who work for liberation must not take advantage of the emotional dependence of the oppressed—dependence that is the fruit of the concrete situation of domination which surrounds them and which engendered their unauthentic view of the world. Using their dependence to create still greater dependence is an oppressor tactic. (p. 66)

The importance of choice therefore is crucial to working with those who have experienced trauma, in order not to adopt *oppressor tactics*. As Freire goes on to say, ‘Libertarian action must recognize this dependence as a weak point and must attempt through reflection and action to transform it into independence’ (p. 66). Our responsibility in relinquishing control

and enabling the choice of our participants can also provide a greater sense of accomplishment, where individuals can feel a sense of pride in their contribution to the creative work. It necessitates reflective and reflexive practice, gauging when to step into or out of the creative process, and considering whether directive or free flow approaches best suit participant needs.

Choice, as a principle of practice, is asserted by Hess (2022) to ‘acknowledge that people who have experienced trauma may not have had the autonomy to make decisions in their best interests. Trauma inhibits choice’ (p. 28). Thus, choice as a key principle of trauma-informed practice, Hess explains, is entwined with the interacting principles of empowerment and voice. Marsh (2010) explores the importance of choice in music education contexts, explaining, ‘choice may be as simple as whether to participate in a musical activity or not, a choice that is often not readily available in other facets of [the children’s] lives’ (p. 155). Hess (2022) additionally reinforces ‘a right of refusal to participate’ (p. 29) as a core component of choice in trauma-informed pedagogy, stating that this strategy of practice ‘places students in charge of their own wellbeing’ (p. 29). Hess connects the right to opt out of activities as dependent on the trust and respect between teacher and student.

Summary

Explorations of the Literature Review have brought into focus notions of trauma and trauma-informed practice. Trauma is understood as both an event and a response to the event/s. Individuals’ responses to trauma are varied and unpredictable, with impacts that can be long-lasting. The body’s response to trauma affects physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing and can prohibit a survivor from being able to comfortably interact socially,

rendering them isolated from others. Trauma-informed practice is an acknowledgement of trauma and its impacts, and an ethical commitment to adapt practice to better support survivors. Potential for secondary traumatisation and vicarious trauma are presented as serious challenges when encountering difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998). Application of trauma-informed practice is viewed as significant in minimising risk.

Trauma-informed practice in community music has been found to be under-theorised, with varied interpretations of meaning and application into practice. There is growing interest in the field, and community music projects knowingly working with trauma survivors are showing positive wellbeing and psychosocial outcomes, however with very little rigorous and critical consideration of how trauma-informed practice could be integrated into all aspects of project design and delivery.

The five values of trauma-informed care have been operationalised as a conceptual lens to view both the practice and data analysis in light of deeper understandings of these core values. They are seen to be vibrant, interacting, interdependent components of practice, with both unique and overlapping facets. In Chapters 4-7, I will explore practical application of the five values through three case studies and seven illustrative case studies. Chapter 3 details the Research Design and Methodology utilised for this study, informed by the findings from the Literature Review.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I present Case Study Research as the chosen research design and methodological framework for this study. Responding to Kuntz's (2015) statement, 'Our times require engaged researchers who can openly articulate the link between the work they do, the methodologies to which they subscribe, and the type of social change they envision' (p. 14), I explore the rationale and motivation behind the research design as connected to my philosophical and ideological standpoints. Based on the findings from the Literature Review, I explore how these have informed the methodology, in particular the conceptual lens of the five values of trauma-informed care. I consider how I have utilised reflexivity in research as a key epistemological strategy and unpack the research methods used to support exploration of trauma-informed practice within facilitated music making. There are two key areas of research design:

Data gathering - with the guiding question, how is trauma-informed practice conceptualised and applied to facilitated music making? I consider what data I collected, where, and how.

Data analysis - with notions of narrative inquiry and phenomenology as an interpretive lens, I discuss how I analysed the data findings using application of reflexive thematic analysis (hereafter known as reflexive TA).

These are examined as complimentary facets of the qualitative and interpretivist¹ research methodology that underpins research design. The rationale, challenges, and limitations for the chosen methods are explored alongside ethical considerations and the responsibility I had towards the research participants.

¹ Interpretivism is a philosophical position and qualitative research method that analyses events in society based on the specific value-system of the society or culture they occur in (see Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Impacts Of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has been both positively and negatively impactful to this inquiry. In the early weeks of lockdown in 2020, I remember being mindful of the Chinese character for *crisis* being the same as that of *opportunity*. Within the context of this research, the pandemic both created a sense of *crisis*, with complete overhaul of research design and restricted access to music making projects, and *opportunity*, with a chance to explore projects further afield through remote working, gaining broader perspectives for the research. Research participants had more time in lockdown than within normal day-to-day circumstances, therefore interviews could be longer and more in-depth.

The lockdown restrictions to slow the spread of the virus were not imposed equitably across our communities in the UK. Within the criminal justice system, measures were put in place from March of 2020, that meant non-essential personnel were prohibited from access to prisons for over two years², and residents were kept within their cells for twenty-three hours a day. The Prison Partnership Project weekly sessions ended abruptly, necessitating an entire overhaul of the research design for the case study. I had to come to a decision regarding this thesis: the Prison Partnership would play a significant role as a reflective case study based on my perspective as practitioner-researcher. This meant that I could use data generated from my weekly reflections from the eighteen months of the project prior to the first 2020 lockdown.

The Ethno case study was severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, as travel restrictions were applied, Ethno gatherings cancelled, and all communication moved online. The wider Ethno Research project was entirely redesigned. For my discrete case study, the original

² See <https://howardleague.org/blog/two-years-of-lockdown-in-prison/> for more details (accessed 29th January 2024)

design included attending two separate Ethno gatherings during the summer of 2020, providing intensive sites for ethnographic research. These gatherings did not take place so opportunity for ethnographic research was removed. The new design included an open call for interviews across the Ethno World networks, with all interviews conducted via Zoom during the lockdown restrictions of 2020 and 2021. In hindsight, it is notable that there were benefits of the shift to working online, as the open call for interviews created the potential for a response from a wider participant base, not restricted by a specific contextual location of music making.

At the time of attending Stone Flowers rehearsals, and engaging with Music Action International, the group had only been reformed in person for a month, since March 2022. The sessions had moved online during the two preceding years, with generation and publication of songs all taking place remotely. YouTube recordings of original songs created during this time were released but there were no live gigs. The group had yet to settle into a new face-to-face format, and this particularly impacted participant numbers as well as group dynamics in this fledgling project.

My intention with the illustrative case studies was to explore UK-based projects and go in-person to meet with music facilitators, observing music making where possible. Again, this could not take place within the imposed social distancing restrictions. However, the opportunity for redesigning this portion of the research meant that I could consider explorations of practice outside of the UK. I decided to include an example of practice in York, practice in the wider context of the UK, and international projects. With regards to access, some of the research participants for the illustrative case studies are individuals with whom I was able to easily connect due to the wider networks of the ICCM. This provided

opportunity, but I am aware that there are many community musicians in the UK and beyond who do incredible work with communities where participants have experience of prior trauma.

With the significant change in research design for the Prison Partnership Project, impact on Ethno World and Stone Flowers, as well as the illustrative case studies, I decided to shift from what was originally a practice-as-research approach to a more traditional thesis format. This has enabled remote exploration of practice when necessitated by continuing alterations in restrictions imposed due to the pandemic. Ethnography is the social anthropological approach to qualitative research as a form of inquiry, where the researcher is not the expert but is *learning from* the individuals and communities in which they are immersed (Spradley, 1980). While this would have been a key methodological strategy across the sites of research, with no or limited access to in-person music making during 2020-2022, and the desk-based restrictions of lockdown, it has not been possible to conduct full ethnographic studies. Ethnographic principles, however, have been applied as detailed in the section on case studies below.

Reflexivity In Research

What we know, how we come to know, is never socially neutral, never absent the import of the ethical frame (Kuntz, 2015, p. 26).

Understanding that our positionality directly impacts epistemological understandings is key to reflexivity in research. One of the earliest publications I engaged with during the first year of my PhD was Kim Etherington's (2004) *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher; Using Our Selves in Research*. At the time, I was heavily involved in the Prison Partnership Project, and

was writing long and detailed weekly reflections, supporting development of reflexivity in my practice. As stated by Etherington (2004),

Reflexivity is ... an ability to notice our responses to the world around us, other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications, and understandings. To be reflexive, we need to be *aware* of the personal, social, and cultural contexts in which we live and work, and to understand how these impact on the ways we interpret our world. (p. 19)

Reflexivity as ‘the fact of someone being able to examine their own feelings, reactions, and motives (= reasons for acting) and how these influence what they do or think in a situation’ (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/reflexivity>)³ has an important part to play in qualitative research, and I have wanted to be mindful throughout this study of how my positionality (my feelings, reactions, and motives) has impacted both the methodological and analytical choices I have made. As Higgins (2006) articulates, ‘The traces of my life are always embedded within this text’ (p. 14).

To be aware of these *traces* requires a deep level of reflection and honesty, and it has taken me a long time to acknowledge where my motivations for this study are rooted. Having a better grasp of my *reasons for acting* has enabled a more truthful platform for consideration of reflexivity as a means of countering my propensity towards bias in this research, but bias cannot be completely removed. Kuntz (2015) explores the importance of Foucault’s notion of *parrhesia* (‘truth-telling with the aim of intervening within normative practices of knowing

³ Accessed 6th September 2023.

and being' (p. 22)) in research, highlighting truth-telling as a key facet of social justice in research, research with an orientation towards social change.

Kuntz's assertion is that *parrhesia* supports a *relational engagement* within research methodology emphasising elements of *relationality*, *risk*, and *citizenship*, connected to embodied and relational epistemological understandings. This concept of *Parrhesia* is not to be confused with factual, logical ways of knowing that underpin positivist methodologies; rather connecting to the belief that 'reality is socially and personally constructed' (Etherington, 2004, p. 27). This understanding enables us to *deconstruct* (Derrida, 1981) notions of truth and embrace more tacit, intuitive, relational ways of knowing in research practice. As Etherington asserts, 'Narrative research encourages the inclusion of the researcher's story, thus making transparent the values and beliefs that are held, which almost certainly influence the research process and its outcomes' (p. 27).

I have had to learn to put distance and objectiveness (which I understood research to necessitate) in their place, thinking carefully about when to lean into more subjective, relational, and emotionally driven ways of knowing. I have come to see the value of vulnerability and risk in the process, and of how forging honest and open relationships with research participants (being mindful of the five values of trauma-informed care) has enabled a more *interventionist* and authentic approach to research practice. This is an imperfect craft, and I am conscious I still have much to learn on this journey of becoming a reflexive researcher. Kuntz's (2015) assertion that 'We are more than our extractions. We are relational. We have material experiences' (p. 21) supports the notion that as relational beings with a plethora of emotional, sensory, and aesthetic experiences, we bring greater value to the research process when we acknowledge these. In the case of this research project, my own

lived experience of *The Upside Down* has challenged and refined ways of knowing and being. I am cognisant that the research would look different without the specific epistemological and ontological lens I apply, whether consciously or not.

Sites For Data Gathering

Case study research as a key research method, responds to the question, *How is trauma-informed practice conceptualised and applied to facilitated music making?* The research design includes three case studies, seven illustrative case studies, and Michael's Story, with application of the five values of trauma-informed care as a conceptual lens to support the analysis, as seen in Figure 3 below. This section highlights the rationales, opportunities, challenges, and limitations connected to each area of practice.

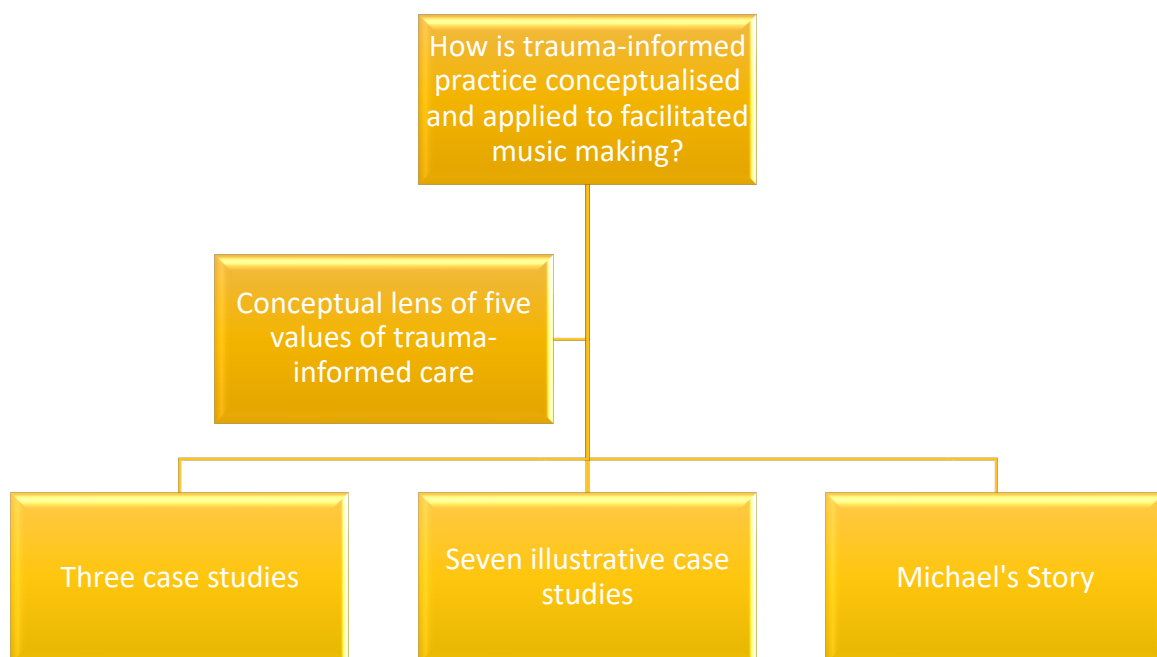


Figure 3 Case Study Research Design

Connecting to the importance of representation of both individual and collective voice within the research, Etherington (2004) states, ‘When we use our own stories, or those of others, for

research, we give testimony to what we have witnessed, and that testimony creates a voice’ (p. 9). There are *hidden* voices in the narratives shared, those who could not participate, but are represented by individual facilitators or the projects they are connected to. This representation in part is supported by the notion of working *with* not working *on* the research participants (Denzin & Giardina, 2016), tying in with the parallel ideological stance taken by Higgins (2012) when envisioning community music making.

In considering this notion of working *with* the individuals and projects I chose to be part of the study, I pondered on how the values of community music making support the methodological framework and methods utilised, and how this influenced my ethical approach throughout. Furthermore, in working with groups and individuals where there was known experience of prior trauma, I decided that it was essential to have the five values of trauma-informed care as a lens for the inquiry, utilising a trauma-informed methodology that has the core values of safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice as key principles of my research practice.

Three Case Studies

Case study strategy (Barrett, 2014) as a research method explores relationships and processes rather than outcomes and end products. I positioned case study research with Kuntz’s (2015) statement that, ‘A differently engaged orientation of working *with* re-imagines responsibility as contextually situated and relationally aligned’ (p. 18, italics mine). Each of the three case studies were chosen to explore specific, real life (Yin, 2003) music making contexts—as both complementary, connected, and contrasting sites of research. Complementary, because each project has a specific role to play in responding to the guiding question, *How is trauma-*

informed practice conceptualised and applied to facilitated music making? (as detailed for each case study below). Connected, because each project involves facilitated music making⁴. And contrasting, due to the respective contextual locations, alongside the differences in language used to describe the music making:

Prison Partnership Project is a *community music* project, with non-formal, negotiated, inclusive practices, facilitated by *community musicians*;

Ethno World highlights non-formal approaches to music making, with peer-to-peer learning facilitated by *artistic mentors*;

and Stone Flowers operates as non-formal, therapeutically driven music making, with practitioners identifying as *music facilitators* not community musicians.

Case study research involves in-depth observation across often short-term engagement where exposure to the field is not as intensive as in the case of ethnographic research. It takes a holistic, rather than isolated, view and utilises multiple methods of data collection, detailed below for each of the three projects. The focus of case study research is that of ‘Comprehension of a person’s lived experiences within distinct and individual social, cultural and theoretical contexts’ (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Each of the three case studies for this inquiry have a focus on the experiential knowledge of research participants within their respective contexts. The case studies draw from ethnographic principles; for example, participant observation, field notes, and reflections of practice, as detailed in the following sections.

⁴ Ethno World and Stone Flowers are connected as internationally focused projects, with all the cultural, social, political, religious, linguistic, and ethnic diversity entailed. Stone Flowers and Prison Partnership are connected as projects in *complex* contexts with collaborative songwriting as the focus. Both projects have trauma-informed/trauma-aware practice embedded into their design and delivery.

Case Study One: Voices From The Inside: Working With The Hidden Trauma Narratives Of Women In Custody.

The rationale for this case study is to shine a spotlight on a specific model of trauma-informed practice from my perspective as a practitioner-researcher. I facilitated a weekly singing and songwriting project, Emerging Voices, as part of the YSJU Prison Partnership Project, from October 2018 until lockdown restrictions were imposed in England on 23rd March 2020. Using participant observation and reflections of practice, the Prison Partnership Project as a site of research connects both the theory and practice of trauma-informed pedagogy. Designed for working with women within the criminal justice system in the UK, the discrete trauma-informed model of practice rests on the five values of trauma-informed care.

The site of research is of value to this inquiry, in part, as participants of the singing and songwriting project have complex trauma histories and are continuing to experience re-traumatisation within the context of incarceration (Covington, 2015, 2016; Lempert, 2016). Trauma-informed practice is necessitated in support of creative delivery, with both training and mentoring a requirement of engaging in the work. The data set was generated predominantly by my weekly reflections. Student facilitator reflections and the participating women's pre- and post- project evaluations (in the form of written questionnaires) were also considered, to try to redress the balance of my perspective as the dominant viewpoint. Tacit knowledge and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) form the basis of this case study. I was there, I experienced the music making as the facilitator of the project, observed, interacted with, and worked alongside the women in their space, their context, and with their invitation.

As facilitator on the singing project, I have been able to position myself as a researcher ‘deeply involved in the research relationship’ (Barrett & Stauffer, 2010, p. 12).

Case Study Two: Protecting The Experience and Wellbeing of Everyone: Safeguarding, Consent, And Trauma At Ethno World

The Ethno Research *Protecting the Experience* case study considers issues of safeguarding, consent, and trauma-informed practice within an international organisation that supports young people’s engagement in traditional music through offering music making gatherings. At the time of writing, no clear model of trauma-informed practice or safeguarding policy was being utilised within the organisational structures, causing many challenges and difficulties for individual attendees as well as the administrative and creative teams facilitating the gatherings. The case study examines data collected from both an open call for interviews and targeted interviews responding to data from the Ethno Research Pilot Case Studies.⁵

The value of this case study to the inquiry is that of examining a contrasting perspective where trauma-informed practice has not been consistently applied within the music making or organisational structures. This raises the question of the rationale for trauma-informed practice in contexts not explicitly for participants who have experienced trauma, but where trauma is still present, whether acknowledged or not. The Ethno case study provides an opportunity to explore issues of safeguarding, consent, and trauma-informed practice within the context of cross-cultural musical exchange, highlighting social, cultural, ideological, and philosophical differences that inform how these notions are seen, perceived, and understood.

⁵ See <https://www.ethnoresearch.org/publications/> (accessed 6th September 2023).

Data set generation included semi-structured interviews (Denscombe, 2003) that were fluid in nature, with participants who responded to an open call communicated across the Ethno World networks ($n = 10$). The call asked for responses from anyone interested in speaking about safeguarding, consent, and trauma with respect to Ethno activity. Ten of the twelve people who responded to the call took part in semi-structured interviews during June and July 2020, eight women and two men. Of these, a range of nationalities were represented, with four from majority world countries, and six from countries in the global north⁶. There was also a mix of Ethno organisers ($n = 2$), artistic mentors ($n = 1$) and participants ($n = 7$).

Additionally, I conducted targeted interviews with participants selected in response to data from the initial pilot case studies in 2019 ($n = 5$), to understand in more detail how issues of safeguarding, consent, and trauma are considered and facilitated within Ethno gatherings. I interviewed four organisers and one artistic mentor, two women and three men, all from European countries. The interview questions were designed to explore current processes, structures, and values in relation to individual Ethno gatherings to gain a greater depth of understanding from those in decision-making roles within the organisation.

With all the interviews, I had to gain trust and create a sense of safety very quickly, especially with those participants I had never met in person and only met for this one encounter. The semi-structured interview process enabled the opportunity for collaboration where I could be guided by the participants and negotiate the flow of conversation. All interviews were carried out and recorded remotely, using Zoom as the online platform. The

⁶ To clarify, the term global north is representative not of geographical area (although much of the global north is located north of the equator) but of relative distribution of the world's power and wealth. Global north refers to areas such as North America, Europe, and Australia. Majority world as a term is gradually replacing what has been known as the global south i.e., geographical areas that are identified as developing countries that represent a significant majority of the world's population.

interview data, audio recordings, Zoom files, and transcriptions, have been stored on a password-protected personal laptop, in order to protect confidentiality. For the purposes of this case study, names of all interviewees are anonymised using pseudonyms.

Two documents were reviewed closely to support explorations:

1. Ethno Values and Commitments was created following from the Ethno Committee meeting, December 2019, by a team comprising Committee members and the head of Ethno World. Originally conceived as a Code of Conduct, the Ethno Values and Commitments document was developed collaboratively over the course of several months during online meetings of Committee members.
2. Alongside Ethno Values and Commitments was creation of the document, Protocols of the Ethno Values and Commitments, which sets out the procedure for how to report incidents as well as step by step guidance of how to deal with potential issues and disclosure.

The two documents were reviewed with the intention of eliciting greater clarity around existing structures and processes within Ethno World with regards to issues of safeguarding, consent, and trauma.

Case Study Three: Hidden Voices: A Case Study of Stone Flowers Torture Survivors' Collective

Stone Flowers case study offers the opportunity to develop greater insight into how trauma-informed practice is currently considered and applied within a facilitated music-making project. Based in Manchester, UK, and one of the earliest projects of the organisation Music

Action International, Stone Flowers is a singing and songwriting project working with survivors of war and torture. The design of what is referred to as a methodology used within Stone Flowers is of particular importance, alongside the specific nuances of language, and conceptual, philosophical, and ideological underpinnings. An analysis of Stone Flowers methodology supports understanding of how specific strategies, including refugee and trauma awareness, have been developed based on contextual location. Stone Flowers participants are from a range of cultural contexts, so consideration of cultural needs, and responsiveness to diverse social, language, and religious practices, is of utmost importance within the creative project space, with exploration of intercultural creativity (Burnard et al., 2018) a key factor.

I examined the practical and pedagogical approaches utilising ethnographic strategies as a participant observer (Spradley, 1980), to gain insight into Stone Flowers methodology and specifically, application of trauma awareness. I took part in Stone Flowers sessions as an additional, supportive musician in the space between April and July 2022. I made field notes and used reflective tools for each week of engagement in the project to keep a record of the music making sessions I observed. Explorations focus on how the music facilitators address the wider social, mental, emotional, and physical complexities connected to prior traumatic experience.

Semi-structured interviews with both facilitators and participants of Stone Flowers provide the foundational data generation for this case study. There were eleven research participants in total: Director of Music Action International $n = 1$, clinical psychologist $n = 1$, music facilitators $n = 4$, participants from previous iterations of Stone Flowers $n = 2$, and questionnaires for current participants $n = 3$. Current members of Stone Flowers were invited to respond to a post-project evaluation questionnaire with the support of the music facilitators

(including me), who acted as scribes to help overcome both language barriers and difficulties of illiteracy.

The music facilitators have a good relationship with participants and a level of safety and trust that has been developed over time. I had been working with the participants in their weekly music sessions over the course of a few months prior to the evaluation process. Participants responded to questions, and the facilitators and I wrote their answers as they spoke, checking for accuracy and clarity, enabling a collaborative approach to the process.

I developed the project proposal collaboratively with Director, Lis Murphy. She supported the research design, and we discussed all aspects of potential data generating strategies. I was dependent on Lis's insider knowledge in this instance, as I was approaching the work as an outsider. Lis acted as both gatekeeper and safe guarder of the project, enabling access to the music sessions, as well as ensuring that I could interview a range of research participants, including those with lived experience of forced migration, war, and torture ($n = 6$). The Stone Flowers participants Lis invited to be involved in the more in-depth interview process are those she deemed to be in a mentally and emotionally strong place to be able to respond to questions without the potential for re-triggering of trauma responses. Lis and I developed a good enough level of trust through our conversations that she understood I would conduct the interviews in a way to protect the safety and wellbeing of the participants. Pseudonyms are used throughout, apart from for Lis, to support participant anonymity.

Illustrative Case Studies

Semi-structured interviews form the basis of data generation for the seven illustrative case studies, alongside a review of connected websites and publications (for example, Burnard et al. 2015, 2018; Eck, 2013; Hassler & Nicholson, 2017; Howell, 2013, 2018; Laurila, 2021; Laurila & Willingham, 2017). The rationale for inquiry not only highlights the similarities and differences in trauma-informed approaches but give a sense of the wealth of contexts in which these approaches are being used. Examples of practice are situated as distinctive illustrations, operating in specific contexts, and highlighting a spectrum of understanding and application of trauma-informed practice.

As a practitioner interviewing other practitioners, I am a definite insider (Braun & Clarke, 2021) for this part of the research journey. Despite interviewing community musicians in international contexts different to my experience in the UK, there are threads of commonality that bind our perspectives and perceptions of practice. All the practitioners I interviewed are native English speakers, and while not all were known to me personally before the start of this process, I selected individuals knowing a little, or in some cases a lot, about their work from publications, and networks in the field. I sent each of the research participants information about my PhD research in advance of meeting, and this information detailed my work on the Prison Partnership Project. I am aware that the participants' perception of me may have been shaped by this prior knowledge, and that as we spoke, a level of trust was potentially easier to build knowing that they were speaking with someone who *does* the work and has a practical understanding of applications of trauma-informed practice. I also operated as an outsider in the sense that I am not involved in any of the projects I interviewed practitioners about.

I acknowledge that I came into this process holding various assumptions about the potential findings and expectations of black and white responses to the questions. I have loved being immersed in a process that has been surprising, thought-provoking, and at times challenging and am so grateful for the generosity of the nine practitioners who gave of their time, experience, reflections, and carefully considered insights.

Each of my first choice of practitioners agreed to interview, and while there are many others who would have had equally valuable contributions, there were specific areas of practice I was keen to focus on, that I had identified during initial early searches of the literature. For example, projects in post-war conflict zones, with refugees and newly arrived, projects with incarcerated and Indigenous populations, projects supporting those with mental ill health, and young people in challenging circumstances. I was keen in this section to have projects and individuals self-identified as being trauma-informed alongside practitioners working in areas where trauma is prevalent but have not received any kind of formalised training.

Prior to selecting people to interview, I imagined a spectrum of practice with one end being less experienced practitioners with little or no formalised training, and specifically no trauma-informed training, through to organisations with highly skilled, experienced practitioners, with trauma-informed practice woven into the fabric of the projects' daily workings. Working with the data has been like mining a seam of precious gems, and I am so grateful for every offering that has added colour and brought to life understandings of trauma-informed practice, illuminating the pathway for me and hopefully others to follow.

About Michael's Story

Michael's Story brings a crucial element to the conceptualisations of practice. A mental-health service user, survivor of CSA, and someone who has experienced trauma-informed services first hand, Michael's perspective illuminates practice from the inside out, highlighting a survivor's experiential understanding. The data generation included a single interview via Zoom to support my understanding of his story and therefore his current perspectives coloured by his lived experience.

Limitations

The Prison Partnership data set was severely limited by Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. The original research design included interviews and focus groups with participating women, prison staff members, and the YSJU Prison Partnership team. This is a case study with mine as the single voice, but with many *hidden* voices that do not have the space I would have wanted them to. There is scope for further research within the Prison Partnership Project, where those voices can be represented appropriately. My intention for this case study, despite the limitations, is that it will be of use to music facilitators who wish to engage more deeply in trauma-informed practice, and specifically for those working within criminal justice contexts.

The Ethno case study participant sample size is relatively small for an organisation with such a large, international reach, even though the call was sent out to everyone in the networks. The sample is representative of some but not all countries connected to Ethno World, and the directors of Ethno World and Jeunesse Musicales International (hereafter JM International) declined to engage in this study; therefore, their voices are missing from the

findings. I am conscious that people had more time to offer during the Covid-19 pandemic, and while it is hard to know how that impacted the data set, the interviews were often three times longer than when on site for the Ethno Denmark Pilot Case Study (Birch, 2019).

The 2022 iteration of Stone Flowers was much smaller than prior to Covid-19. The group I volunteered with sometimes had only three participants attending, placing significant limitations on the number of research participants with whom I was able to engage. Many more participants have been involved over the years who had not re-joined the group post lockdown restrictions. One Stone Flowers participant was not able to make the Zoom interview, despite it being set up and facilitated by Music Action International staff at the offices in Manchester. Of the six facilitators, three are involved in the current Stone Flowers project, and three were part of the original core team.

For the illustrative case studies, there was a plethora of individuals and projects to choose from, and I did consider a much larger-scale questionnaire I could send out across numerous global networks in the field. I decided to opt for depth of inquiry, rather than breadth, focusing on the rich data source of people's shared experience and expertise in the practice. There are contextual limitations of the sites of research as, apart from Musicians Without Borders, they are viewed from one person's perspective, and so are not representative of the many voices of other co-facilitators and participants involved. The limitation of Michael's Story as representative of one perspective is also the strength of this part of the research, as it offers an intense and deep reflection of experiential knowledge that Michael was willing to share.

Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2021) consider the importance reflexivity in data analysis. One crucial point of reflexivity in research is that of positionality—are you an insider or outsider (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015; Hellowell, 2006)? In consideration of this, it is important for a researcher to reflect on associated questions, such as *How might the research participants perceive me? What difference could this make to their responses? What aspects of my positionality, life experiences, and assumptions connect to the topic? What positions of privilege and marginality do I hold in relationship to the research, the participants, and the music making projects?* As both insider and outsider I have endeavoured to adopt a reflexive lens to the research process, and in this section, explore how this has shaped and coloured the thematic data analysis.

An initial point of import is that of my theoretical position for the thematic analysis. As a reflexive researcher, it is necessary to ask the question, how am I approaching the coding process to capture the meaning from the data? While possible to adopt one position, Braun and Clarke (2021) suggest that reflexive thematic analysis (hereafter reflexive TA) is not always about binary choices. The authors set out two differing approaches to constructing meaning from data:

1. Inductive approaches are data-driven; the dataset is the starting point. As the authors explain, ‘it’s evoked by the idea that qualitative data can ‘give voice’ to participants and tell their stories in a straightforward way’ (p. 56). Inductive approaches are seen as ‘essentialist/experimental, semantic’ (p. 9) and as explicitly expressed meaning.

2. Deductive approaches ‘refers to a more researcher- or theory-driven approach, in which the dataset provides the foundation for coding and theme development, but the research questions asked—and thus the codes developed—reflect theoretical or conceptual ideas the researcher seeks to understand through the dataset’ (p. 57).

Reflexive TA enables a flexible approach and I have used both deductive and inductive approaches. In consideration of these two approaches, meaning can be derived semantically (participant-driven, descriptive) or latently (researcher-driven, conceptual). As Braun and Clarke (2021) explain, ‘Semantic codes capture explicitly-expressed meaning; they often stay close to the language of participants or the overt meanings of data. Latent codes focus on a deeper, more implicit or conceptual level of meaning, sometimes quite abstracted from the obvious content of the data’ (pp. 57-58).

Applying a deductive, top-down approach, I have taken an experiential and critical epistemological stance for analysis of the practice, using the five values of trauma-informed care as a conceptual lens, thus actively looking for themes that connect to notions of safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice. The research questions I designed did not explicitly focus on these concepts, however, as I wanted participants to respond to questions of core values in their practice without my prompting. I have also utilised an *inductive*, bottom-up approach, considering the explicit and experiential meaning expressed by research participants that enabled a breadth of understanding. The combination of approaches and fluidity of being able to move between the two is set out in the following section detailing systematic handling of the data.

Systematic Data Analysis

Each interview was conducted via Zoom as the online platform. I used Otterai audio transcription software alongside, to support development of the interview transcriptions. This is not a flawless system, especially when interviewing those for whom English is not their native language. I therefore went through each interview in detail, using the audio recordings, to check for accuracy and clarity. I uploaded each interview transcript into NVivo software for coding, keeping the projects separate (for example Stone Flowers interviews were housed in a separate document to the illustrative case studies). This meant I could employ systematic coding across interviews for different sections of the PhD research, using the conceptual lens of trauma-informed care to elicit findings.

I coded emerging themes connected to the respective case studies or areas of practice being analysed, attempting to address explicit understandings as well as unearth tacit knowledge in professional practice (Schön, 1983). As Braun and Clarke (2021) explain, ‘Codes are heuristic devices we use, to foster our engagement, to enrich understanding, and push ourselves into interrogating the dataset and our meaning-making with it’ (p. 59). My experience of coding the data certainly enabled me to make new discoveries and develop my understandings and conceptualisations of trauma-informed practice. I used analysis of each area of practice to then inform the meta-analysis for the discussions in Chapter 7. Light editing has been used on quotations for the purposes of clarity but not to lose meaning from the original intention.

Reflexivity In Analysis

In using reflexive TA it is important to reflect on what questions researchers need to ask ourselves, to hold ourselves accountable, and to have a deeper understanding of our interpretation of what we do. As an exclusively qualitative research project, I acknowledge the value and validity of the research participants' interviews, their stories as comprised the raw data set that enabled me to find and interpret common threads and meanings that informed the thesis conclusions. As Braun and Clarke (2021) suggest, 'Qualitative analysis is an interpretive, rather than mechanical, process, so absolute rules are impossible' (p. 59). This was certainly my experience of the process. Each interview I had with a research participant was a privilege, but I was also deeply aware of *my* privilege in the process. Individuals exuded generosity in sharing themselves, their stories, and their perspectives, contributing to an inordinate amount of data collected during the research process.

In every interaction it was like being presented with a bag of precious stones, for me to return to and examine again and again. But the privilege I became more conscious of through this process was that of sifting through and deciding which stones were the gemstones to be polished and used as shiny examples, and which were ordinary rocks to be discarded along the way. What I mean to say is that I am aware that the 'precious stones' of the data generated in this project were a gift that I examined with my positionality, and the traces of my life significantly impacting what I took to be gems of great relevance and importance, or those of lesser worth to be discarded like rubble. In saying this, I do not intend to diminish the pragmatics of the research process. There will always be far more data than is practicable to include in a dissertation bound by time and word count. But I do want to highlight the

process as both limited and subjective, subject to be flawed and imperfect, and ultimately human.

Conceptual Lens

Working on the basis that ‘Our interpretations can be better understood and validated by readers who are informed about the position we adopt in relation to the study and by our explicit questioning of our own involvement’ (Etherington, 2004, p. 32), it is important to explain how I applied the five values of trauma-informed care as a lens through which to inform my research practice. The principles underlying each value of practice, as explored in the Literature Review, formed the conceptual lens through which to view the practice. So, for example, with notions of safety, I actively looked for and considered how reflective and reflexive practice were utilised, alongside facilitation of welcome and hospitality. With trust, for example, I explored if and how participants were listened to and validated, and how much emphasis was placed on development of social connections within the groups. For each of the five values, including collaboration, empowerment, and choice, this process enabled a sharpened focus on elements of practice that connect to each concept as explored through the Literature Review.

Additionally, considerations of trauma-informed care were applied throughout the research process by providing a supportive frame for interactions with research participants in the following ways:

Safety: I endeavoured to provide a welcoming and hospitable approach in all interactions, with active and attentive listening, ethics of care for research participants, empathy, warmth, and responsiveness.

Trust: I focused on enabling ‘embodied’ respect (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2000, p. 57), shared understanding, bearing witness and validation of participants’ stories, keeping confidences (i.e., not including ‘off the record’ conversation), authenticity, and vulnerability in approach.

Collaboration: This included ensuring continued conversation and transparency around the research process, engaging in dialogue,⁷ and developing a shared sense of purpose.

Empowerment: Semi-structured interviews supported self-expression for the research participants, enabling them to lead the conversation, aiming for equity in the research relationship; i.e. not establishing myself as the expert, but the research participant as the expert of their own experiences of practice

Choice: I carefully chose questions, avoiding leading questions to enable choice as to how much *difficult knowledge* participants wanted to share. I aimed to enable reciprocity in interaction, offering guidance but letting go of trying to control the flow of conversation, and offering an opt out at any stage of the process.

Interpretive Lenses For Data Analysis

Philosophical approaches of narrative inquiry and phenomenology, to support experiential understandings, have been used as interpretive lenses for the data analysis, as detailed below.

⁷ I sometimes worried that I talked too much in the interview process. Some of the Zoom ‘statistics’ showed a roughly 50/50 split in the percentage of time between me and the research participant! But to meet people online, develop an immediate rapport, and build enough trust to ask them to speak about potentially difficult subject matter, in some cases was consciously facilitated through my own vulnerability and by sharing experiences of practice.

Narrative Inquiry

The three case studies utilise narrative inquiry as an interpretive lens in considering this specific locus of music making activity. As a rationale for narrative inquiry, Hess (2021) asserts that ‘Narrative research holds the potential to communicate difficult knowledge, particularly when engaging stories of trauma and injustice’ (p. 87). Narrative inquiry for these case studies served as an ethical platform to represent the ‘underrepresented voices’ (p. 87). Narrative inquiry informs both my positionality as the researcher and the method of interaction with the research participants. Hess (2021) states that, ‘Within the narrative community, the desire to represent unheard and marginalised voices runs strong; however, in narrative inquiry, responsibility to the individuals participating demands more than a compensatory impulse, more than providing an opportunity for voices to be heard (p. 22).’ As Bowman (2010) suggests,

The narrative researcher cannot, given the fundamentally personal nature of all narratives, assume a position of privilege with regards to what is said, or how, or what it “really” means. As such, the relationship between researcher and research subject in narrative inquiry is deeply collaborative, consultative, cooperative, reflexive, and governed by profoundly ethical obligations. The “truth” or veracity of the researcher’s representation requires the research subject’s verification and assent. To this extent, the meaning and significance of narrative work is co-constructed. (p. 213)

In considering my responsibility as a researcher, approaching the work collaboratively was of utmost importance as well as considering my ‘ethical obligations’ in the co-construction of meaning.

Hess (2021) encourages researchers to be mindful of researching *with* individuals and groups. For example, the decision to engage in participant observation and to work with Stone Flowers as an additional musician/volunteer in the space was a response to this notion of researching *with*, getting to know the participants, and taking care that they did not just become the ‘object of [my] gaze’ (p. 87). It was also a way of trying to avoid the danger of the *single* story⁸, to spend time with the group and to see them as unique individuals, not just asylum seekers, refugees, or torture survivors. Hess (2021) encourages researchers to consider ‘the ethical dilemmas of narrative research when stories involve difficult knowledge’ (p. 87). Use of narrative inquiry as an interpretive framework is a way of trying to redress this notion of *difficult knowledge* and find a balance for the research.

Barrett and Stauffer (2010) suggest that in engaging in narrative inquiry, and listening to the stories of others, we can both find connection and ‘recognise that different perspectives, voices, and experiences exist and *can inform*’ (p. 2, italics in the original). The authors argue that as narrative inquirers, it is not enough to simply listen *for* and *to* stories. We need to listen *in* and *through* stories ‘to find meaning, to experience resonance and troubling, and ultimately, to prompt further consideration of what it might be to be “wide-awake” in and through music’ (p. 3). The assertion here is that narrative inquirers can engage more fully in the challenges behind the stories, be they systemic, societal, political, or cultural issues. Narrative inquiry is a way of knowing more deeply and constructing meaning from that knowledge.

⁸ See Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TEDx talk https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en (accessed 10th February 2024)

Phenomenology

I engaged with phenomenology to support conceptual understandings of practice.

Phenomenology, as a particular philosophical movement concerned with experiential knowledge and being (Moran, 2000; Moran & Mooney, 2002), caught my attention early in the research process, in part because of Higgins' (2012) explorations of phenomenological concepts as connected to community music. Applied to the data findings to support conceptual understandings of practice, my interest in phenomenological ideas is as a way of being/existing with each other, how we interact and communicate, and the ideas, beliefs, and values that have consequences for our actions and behaviours towards others. Application of these ideas into the relationships between facilitator and participant, for example, gives life to how these notions are understood and integrated into practice. Phenomenology, as an experiential understanding, connects deeply to practice, and enables me to consider more reflectively and reflexively how musical, relational, and pedagogical aspects are facilitated in relationship to working with those who have experienced trauma.

Whilst I cannot claim specialist knowledge in this philosophical area, I want to briefly acknowledge here the phenomenological concepts that I have been drawn to through this research process, as I have considered how trauma-informed practice can be applied to facilitated music making. I have engaged with a composite of phenomenological concepts, as opposed to engaging in depth with individual phenomenologists. Phenomenological concepts in which I could see significance as connected to the practice include *face-to-face encounters*, *welcome* and *hospitality*, the *other*, *dialogue*, the *trace*, *Alethia*, and *authenticity*. The inclusion of these, by nature, excludes certain phenomenologists and their ideas. It is not an exhaustive exploration but has supported the drawing out of themes for discussion,

reinforcing meanings, thereby contributing to epistemological understandings for the purposes of data analysis. These explorations of phenomenology (expounded in more detail throughout the case studies, and subsequent discussion in Chapter 7) have provided an interpretive lens through which to view experiential knowledge of practice.

Ethical Considerations

Braun and Clarke (2021) encourage researchers to think about the ethics of their research practice. The authors suggest that,

Ethical thinking includes consideration of where, how, and from whom we collect data While *doing* analysis using reflexive TA, your ethical thinking should be primarily around your responsibilities to participants and the power dynamics inherent in representing stories of participants, particularly those from socially marginalised groups ... We encourage TA researchers to pursue a complex and sophisticated *reflexive* approach to research ethics. To exemplify *best practice* with regard to relating to and representing participants, especially around questions of difference. And, to conduct research that is genuinely inclusive, culturally sensitive and politically astute. (p. 28)

This challenge of ethical responsibility and acknowledgement of power dynamics in the research relationship is one I have grappled with during this research project. The very nature of the hidden voice intensifies this responsibility, especially (as stated earlier) with regards to the Prison Partnership Project. With the Ethno and Stone Flowers case studies, I tried to amplify the voices of participants alongside those of the music facilitators. I endeavoured to

use reflexivity in the research processes. I have utilised a combination of inductive (driven from the data set) and deductive (driven by a theoretical or conceptual lens) approaches to derive meaning and create space for the voices of the research participants. Braun and Clarke (2021) suggest that pure induction is impossible in qualitative research, stating that,

We bring with us all sorts of perspectives, theoretical and otherwise, to our meaning-making, so our engagement with the data is never purely inductive. We cannot simply give voice, because who we are always shapes what we notice about our data and the stories we tell about them. (p. 56).

This notion of who we are shaping our (re)telling of the stories of research participants connects to the idea of the trace running through this inquiry and supports reflexivity in research as a means by which the trace is appropriately acknowledged.

Ethical Procedure

The York St. John University ethics panel approved each of the three case studies, the illustrative case studies, and Michael's Story. To create as secure an ethical procedure as possible required additional layers connected to the Prison Partnership Project, including permissions sought from the Ministry of Justice and the Governor of His Majesty's Prison New Hall, where the Emerging Voices project took place. Anonymity of the research participants is supported by use of pseudonyms throughout, apart from the illustrative case studies where permission was sought to use participants' real names. Interview transcripts, Zoom, and audio recordings have been stored on a password protected laptop. Consent forms

were adapted for different research participants with the content expanded on or minimised depending on the context.

I was conscious of ethical procedure when working with, and potentially asking questions about, sensitive content. I intentionally never asked leading questions to procure someone's trauma narrative but was open to listen attentively if participants wanted to share stories containing difficult knowledge. I was conscious of the need to be trauma informed in the process, applying the five values of trauma informed care into how I facilitated the interview process, ensuring the emotional safety of participants as a priority of research practice.

Summary

Using a doubled-edged approach to research design, I have explored how reflexivity in research has been consciously applied across data gathering and data analysis. Case study research was utilised with mixed-methods approach, and a change of research design was imposed by the severe restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic. I have discussed the ethics of working with difficult knowledge and how I applied the five values of trauma-informed care as a conceptual lens through which to view the data findings, to support the ethical integrity of the research process, and to safeguard and protect both myself and the research participants.

CHAPTER 4 CASE STUDY ONE

Voices From The Inside: Working With The Hidden Trauma Narratives Of Women In Custody

This case study examines a particular locus of creative musical engagement within a maximum-security women's prison in the north of England. Using the illustration of a singing and songwriting project and with the conceptual framework of the five values of trauma-informed care, I unpack and examine the five values of trauma-informed care and the musical, relational, and pedagogical approaches to practice. Drawing on reflections and observations from the project, I explore what it means to be trauma informed as a community music practitioner. Defining clear boundary lines around the responsibility of bearing witness to trauma, as opposed to providing a remedy for the traumatic experience, the paradoxical complexity of this practice is situated within a wider discourse of both trauma theory and community music literature.

My role in running the weekly sessions has enabled a deep level of reflection, reflexivity, and understanding of the participants, the context, the creative processes, and me as a practitioner immersed in the work (Adler & Adler, 1987; Etherington, 2004; Merriam, 1988). The writing that follows is a lightly edited version of my chapter of the same title in Hess and Bradley's (2022) Routledge publication, *Trauma and Resilience in Music Education; Haunted Melodies*, with narrative interludes from my chapter in Griffin and Niknafs' (2023) *Traumas Resisted and (Re)Engaged: Inquiring into Lost and Found Narratives in Music Education*.

Vignette

February 2019, HMP New Hall – YSJU Prison Partnership Project – Rowan House

The women were on lock-down until about 2:20 p.m. today, plus line route was called early. My students and I had to condense the session and work with the time we had. We structured more time for getting-to-know-you games to try to regain the fledgling group dynamic from two weeks ago. The creative songwriting was a lot more effective—we had images and quotes based around the idea of resilience, courage, and hope, responding to the women's input last week.

We gave the group space to reflect and share their work together. One of the women had written a beautiful poem, based on the idea of 'Do Not Give Up'—it was like she was not only speaking to herself but encouraging the other women to do the same. One woman had taken a picture of a tiny seedling growing out of a crack in the desert and reflected on how amazing trees are to grow against the odds from something so small. Another woman had written about music and what it means to her, using some striking imagery and metaphors. We re-clarified Ways of Working¹ this week, re-iterated the ability to opt out, and spoke about keeping the space safe when reflecting or sharing responses or ideas. I had set myself a personal task of being more observant of the group and reading the room better.

There was a tense moment where one of the women (J) challenged another on her writing—saying she should have written in the first person, implying it would have been more

¹ The Emerging Voices project followed the same structural and pedagogical strategies as the Prison Partnership theatre programme including Ways of Working. This is a group contract collaboratively devised and agreed on by the women in the first week of a new ten-week project. The women decide on group values and how they want to work together throughout the creative process. Previous examples from the Ways of Working include respect, confidentiality, listening to each other, not swearing, and being able to opt out if needed. Ways of Working is revisited at the beginning of each session to remind the women of the shared responsibility of enacting the agreed values and to alter the list or add in new values if needed.

powerful. The other woman dealt with this incredibly well and was gracious in her response, explaining her decision-making process. I was also getting upset about a typo in the lyrics and I am recognizing she really dislikes things being out of order.

There is some boundary pushing going on but a lot less than last week, and the women did seem more able to voice their feelings, including in things like Pat on the Back². One of the women wanted to explain her reaction to the warmup last week—it was obviously a trigger for her, and we will know not to use it again. The physical space in Rowan House, as always, makes such a difference to the project—the women were commenting a lot today that they can forget where they are; they can come out of the wings and feel like themselves.

It felt like today's workshop for me was one long moment of reflexivity, and I was doubly conscious of all that was going on in my head at different moments. The creative stimuli this week definitely felt like the right level of obliquity—weaving a path around that acknowledges what is under the surface but does not go into the minefield that is there. Our timings felt better today, which is ironic considering we had less time.

Introduction

Echoes of trauma are not always visible. Long after the traumatic event, the resounding 'inadvertent and unwished-for repetition' (Caruth, 1996, p. 2) lingers on in the bodies and minds, soma and psyche, of those who bear its wounding. Trauma, as an 'unspeakable'

² Pat on the Back is another strategy of practice that happens at the end of each Prison Partnership session. Sitting in a circle, the women take turns to encourage the person on their left by pointing out all the things they did well in the session. Examples could include someone trying hard despite not feeling in the best spirits when they arrived at the session, or that one of the women has written some fantastic lyrics. It is an uplifting and supportive moment for the group before the women leave the space.

(Herman, 1997, p. 1) phenomenon, can remain veiled, masking its presence yet leaving traces, concealed in the flesh of its survivors. Complex trauma, experienced through repeated exposure such as adverse childhood experiences or domestic violence, manifests deeply and can lead to a continued cycle of re-traumatisation (Covington, 2015, 2016; van der Kolk, 2014). Within the context of the criminal justice system, the cause and effect of the trauma narrative are becoming more widely understood. Those who have experienced trauma in the form of prolonged adverse childhood experiences (Felitti et al., 1998), domestic or sexual violence, especially within what should be the safe construct of familial relationships, are more likely to end up demonstrating destructive and risky behaviours that lead to criminal activity (Covington, 2015, 2016; Lempert, 2016).

Recent statistics around incarcerated citizens identify a high proportion of the current prison population in the UK who have experienced prior trauma (Covington, 2015, 2016).

Pinpointing more specific data to support the explorations of this chapter, the Prison Reform Trust³ states that ‘women in prison are highly likely to be victims as well as offenders. Over half the women in prison report having suffered domestic violence, with 53% of women reporting having experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse as a child’ (Prison Reform Trust, 2021). The significance of these statistics is becoming more widely understood and acknowledged as impactful both in the enacting of crime and the continuation of traumatic experience in its aftermath.

³ Founded in 1981, the London-based charity, Prison Reform Trust, seeks to ‘build a just, humane and effective penal system [by reducing] the use of prison, [improving] conditions for prisoners [and promoting] equality and human rights in the criminal justice system’ (<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk>). The charity has a specific Women’s Programme, considering how to cater for the needs of women in custody and acknowledging a change in the system is warranted.

Sentenced women live with a ‘narrative of belated experience’ (Caruth, 1996, p. 7) and exposure to the potential for re-traumatisation throughout their incarceration. Women with lived experiences of trauma have often been silenced (Belenky et al., 1986), their suffering hidden from view, cutting them off from others and negatively impacting their ability to create deep interpersonal connections. The enclosed space of a prison cell further reinforces this silence and separation; the hidden narratives remain buried, only ‘to haunt the survivor later on’ (Caruth, 1996, p. 4).

For these women, can ‘the moving and sorrowful voice that cries out’ (Caruth, 1996, p. 2) be heard and understood? Can those who facilitate creative activity seek to bear witness to their trauma narrative, and in thus doing, validate the ‘memory of the trauma’ (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 194) even if it is not presented as a cohesive account⁴? As a community musician working within this contextual location, is there a way to redress the inequity and imbalance of participants’ experiences? What creative interactions with the women might enable them to begin to feel heard, understood, valued, as opposed to silenced, stigmatised, oppressed?

Context

It is always the story of a wound that cries out (Caruth, 1996, p. 4)

In the autumn of 2018, I piloted a singing and collaborative songwriting project under the banner of the YSJU Prison Partnership Project. The original intentions of the singing project were to give the women opportunities for self-expression, create a sense of community, and

⁴ Traumatic memories are not presented by trauma survivors as chronological and coherent stories. They become fragmented, hard to piece together and are often dissociated. This, in part, explains why there can be a concern for those who have experienced traumatic events, particularly in the case of physical or sexual abuse, that they will not be believed. The disjointed narratives can be misunderstood, and gaps in the retelling viewed with suspicion. For more information on how the brain processes traumatic memory, please refer to van der Kolk (2014), Chapter 12.

to build positive working relationships through mutual trust and negotiation of the creative process. Our weekly workshops entailed activities designed to build group cohesion as well as support the development of vocal technique, breath control, posture, and physical relaxation. We worked with groups of up to 12 women for a period of 10 weeks, focusing on learning vocal repertoire and writing collaborative songs. I facilitated the sessions supported by undergraduate community music students from YSJU, and we worked with responsive, negotiated curriculum, tailoring the program to the specific needs of the women with a non-formal pedagogy inherent in community music practices.

We ran three 10-week projects within the academic year, and each new project presented a fresh set of challenges for forming and maintaining a positive group identity. The women who attended had signed up to the project or had been referred by a staff member or special services (for example, trauma-informed services) within the prison. There was little racial diversity within the groups we worked with (the majority of the women were White), but the economic and class diversity was interesting to note. I had expected to be working with women from socially and economically deprived backgrounds, and there were certainly representatives of that demographic. However, we also worked with well-educated, middle- and upper-class women, women who had professions and a family life prior to their sentencing. Interactions with the women challenged any preconceived ideas that incarceration is an issue for a particular sector of society; it also challenged the notion that trauma (particularly trauma and abuse connected to significant relationships) is reserved for only one social class.

In hindsight, it is now possible to reflect more deeply on my observations of those early sessions and recognise the hidden trauma narratives the women carried with them, the

wounds that were crying out (Caruth, 1996). The word trauma implies vulnerability, connecting to the late Latin *vulnerabilis* meaning ‘wounding’ (etymonline.com). There were visible signs of trauma and immense vulnerability: for one woman, in the bandages used to seal up slices of her self-harm; in others, problems with obesity, poor health, lung problems, all attested to the prolonged experience of prior trauma (Burke Harris, 2018; Covington, 2015, 2016; Felitti et al., 1998); difficulties with mental health, low mood, anxiety, fatigue, lack of confidence, shame; behavioural issues such as disruptive, aggressive behaviours that created moments of tension and unease, both for the facilitators and the other women present. Lack of self-care was apparent in some of the women, with unkempt appearance, unwashed hair, and dirty clothes, the vulnerability in their wounding starkly evident. There were moments of dissociation, the *blank* moments where the women were not fully present. Trauma triggers associated with songs or activities were common, and there was both heightened emotional release and emotional withdrawal. Flashbacks occurred (van der Kolk, 2014), wherein the women displayed physical tension and lack of eye contact.

Trauma narrative is fragmented and often inaccessible. The women carry with them fractured and disjointed remembering of their stories as ‘damaged mosaics of the mind’ (Langer, 1991, p. 34), making it hard for them to piece together a cohesive account (Caruth, 1996; Herman, 1997; van der Kolk, 2014). What I observed in those early days of the project told a hidden story, ‘narrative threads’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 70) woven together that were not readily accessible. What was visible was not always comprehensible—the women’s pain veiled, their cries muted. Their hidden trauma narratives were speaking, whether or not I could hear them or was able to acknowledge their presence. Looking back, I now recognise that it was I who needed to learn how to attune and attend to the internal ‘reality or truth that is not otherwise available’ (Caruth, 1996, p. 4). The weighty responsibility as a facilitator

working with women in custody required as much understanding of the context as possible, including a way of conceptualising traumatic experience and trauma responses. This necessitated developing an approach to practice that enabled a secure environment, responsiveness, and reflexivity, whereby the veiled trauma narratives could be heard, acknowledged, and validated within the creative process.

Trauma-informed Practice In The Criminal Justice System

We are dealing with a dual reality: the reality of a relatively secure and predictable present that lives side by side with a ruinous, ever-present past (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 195)

Women within the criminal justice system have been described as ‘some of the most neglected and misunderstood individuals in our society’ (Covington, 2015, p. 13). This recognition necessitated the need to design an appropriate trauma-informed and gender-responsive framework of practice developed on the understanding of the body’s response to trauma. Within the tool kit developed by Stephanie Covington for the One Small Thing initiative⁵, the five values of trauma-informed care are broadly unpacked in relation to working with incarcerated women in the UK. To be trauma informed as a practitioner does not require a direct engagement with trauma narrative. It does, however, mean being responsive to the women’s physical and emotional signals and attempting to avoid triggering or re-traumatising individuals.

⁵ One Small Thing is a UK-based charity set up to facilitate understanding of trauma and its impacts on those within the criminal justice system, delivering trauma-informed training for criminal justice professionals. One Small Thing partnered with Doctor Stephanie Covington to design discrete courses in acknowledgment of the differences for men and women in custody. For more information, please see www.onesmallthing.org.uk and www.centreforgenderandjustice.org.

During the years of working on the Prison Partnership Project, I have spent much time considering how these values might be developed as a conceptual model of trauma-informed community music practice. In the following sections, I explore each value in turn, considering not only how they connect together but also how their distinctive facets are significant when working with survivors of traumatic experiences. I reflect on how these values are embraced and embodied within the weekly practice musically, relationally, and pedagogically.

Narrative Interlude One

I sit here, when I lived with James

He was always being cruel

And playing sick games

22 years man died

All that for compulsive thrive

I said he's been playing cruel and brutal games

Now I'm 29 years old, he ain't going to play no more brutal games

I said he ain't going to play no more brutal games

(Emerging Voices, February 2020)

The example of lyrics above, from the Emerging Voices project, was written by Chloe who had not been in custody for long. She was simultaneously wrestling with the immense challenges of transitioning into prison life, painful withdrawal from prolonged substance abuse, and separation from her young child. Chloe joined the singing project a few weeks into her incarceration, while experiencing high levels of anxiety, sleeplessness, and depression. Engaging in that project were several women who had been through the theatre

program of the Prison Partnership Project and were a few years into their sentences. Some had very similar experiences to Chloe, recognizing she mirrored their own previous fear and anxiety. I watched as they came alongside her in welcome and open conversation, giving her advice about how to deal with the intense substance withdrawal, and how to manage the methadone and its side effects. I also saw them recognise someone who had a gift for singing and begin to encourage that in her. As we worked together over the weeks, sometimes she just needed to come and cry, express her distress in her current circumstances, and be comforted by the group. As she began to engage in the music making, joining in with the group singing, there was a determination and commitment that grew.

The lyrics above were written in a songwriting session about halfway through the 10-week programme. When Chloe shared them with the group, it was clear that her level of safety and trust were such that she was able to be vulnerable. The women's lyrics are not always transparent and often veiled in metaphor. The clarity of Chloe's previous abusive relationship was stark, as was her defiance and sense of finality that the cruel games would stop. It is moments like these where in a tangible way, one could see, hear, and bear witness to the women finding their voices.

Safety

Survivors feel unsafe in their bodies. Their emotions and their thinking feel out of control.

They also feel unsafe in relation to other people (Herman, 1997, p. 160)

The women we work with have 'deficits in feeling safe' (Porges, 2017, p. xvi) and wrestle with ongoing issues with their mental, emotional, and physical health; by contrast, we seek to create a welcoming, hospitable, and inclusive environment. The intention in the singing

sessions is to facilitate an ethics of care (Noddings, 2013) in creative collaboration and facilitation of ‘a deep, respectful and relational approach’ (Conlon, 2020, p. 175). The ongoing nature of the project is crucial: to provide continued reinforcement of positive values and a weekly creative anchoring for the women.

Herman (1997) asserts that the first stage of recovery from trauma is that of establishing safety (p. 155). It is important to understand that the women may feel entirely overwhelmed when they first come to a singing session and that safety, connected to trust, must be established carefully and over time. I have noticed the women gravitating toward those in the group they know or to the warden who works with us. It can take time—for some a period of weeks or months—before they begin to relax their guard in each other’s presence.

Safety is facilitated at the start of a session with the Focus Game. This involves initiating eye contact with each participant, using their names, and establishing positive group identity by ‘Looking, listening, witnessing’ (Porges, 2017, p. 48). It can help establish a sense of fun and solidarity, and as the weeks progress, individuals in the group can choose to take the leadership role, reinforcing their sense of ownership and developing their self-confidence.

Herman (1997) explains that group solidarity is a robust defence for those who have experienced trauma. I have certainly observed this solidarity as the women learn to feel safe with me and with each other. As Erikson (1995) explains,

Still, trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can. There is a spiritual kinship there, a sense of identity, even when feelings of affection are deadened and the ability to care numbed. (p. 186)

The safety and solidarity of the group are, in part, connected to a shared understanding, a communality, even if this acknowledgment is unspoken. However, some of the participants are not able to feel safe within the group and may choose to leave the project. For some women, their disruptive or bullying behaviour reduces the safety of others, and, after repeated warnings, they are asked to leave. This is deeply challenging as a community music practitioner, where the intention is toward genuine welcome, inclusion, and openness, but it also responds to the contradictory nature of hospitality:

It should be noted that hospitality could paradoxically mean both “host” and “stranger,” its root common to both “host” and “hostile.” It is from within these tensions, a welcome from the host while hostile toward the stranger, that community music practices operate. (Higgins, 2012, p. 138)

Our hospitality is contained within the boundary lines of ethical practice. To give a genuine welcome, there has to be an understanding of the parameters: where the tensions of host and hostility meet, where exclusion may serve a greater purpose, even when it is deeply uncomfortable.

Herman (1997) recognises that everyone’s journey of recovery is distinctive and can be both impactful to and impacted by the group. I have observed women join the group before they are ready to engage in any meaningful way, sometimes in the early stages of a life sentence. As the level of safety develops over the course of a project, the women are able to open up more. I have noticed that there is a desire to communicate with greater freedom around the circumstances of their incarceration, for example. As the women understand that they will experience acceptance and lack of judgment from the facilitators, they begin to share more

deeply the ins and outs of their daily experiences. ‘The general deadening routine and intrusiveness of prison life can all work to de-motivate, shut down and shut off women from themselves, others and their environment’ (Hughes, 1998, p. 49). Within the safety of the group, they can begin to connect; they can begin to trust.

Narrative Interlude Two

I listen to the voice inside,

The music is a part of me

A voice from deep within

Waiting to be heard, setting me free

I turn the music loud and sing above the sound

And in that moment I can understand ... why ...

It calms me down and it sets me free

It builds a passion inside of me

(Emerging Voices, November 2018)

Coral was one of the first women I met on the project. In the early weeks of our interaction, she appeared to be chaotic and alternately aggressive or withdrawn. Eye contact was immensely hard for her, and I observed her gravitating towards those she knew and with whom she evidently felt safe. She was suspicious of new people and that included me. She did not like being put on the spot or singled out in any way, and when one of the student facilitators made an insensitive comment critiquing her technique during a warmup exercise, she shouted and aggressively pushed past into a smaller room adjacent to the main workshop space. The prison warden who supervises the singing project knows Coral well and followed her out to help de-escalate the situation. I remember feeling vulnerable and noticing that the

other women were looking alarmed at this sudden and unexpected outburst. I also remember that I felt the need to go and see if Coral was okay and emphasise that she was still welcome in the group.

Leaving the student facilitator to continue the session, I went through to the side room and found Coral in tears. It was apparent that her aggression was covering up a deep-seated fear and insecurity, and, as she explained to me, she had been the target of some serious bullying and offensive behaviour within the prison. Being, as she considered, picked on by the student facilitator, threatened her sense of safety and she reacted accordingly. As I worked with Coral over the coming weeks and months, I noticed a shift in her behaviour and outlook. It turned out that she loves writing and is a published poet⁶. It is an important creative outlet for her. She collaborated with a small group of women on the lyrics above, as they responded to the question, ‘what does music mean to me?’ Over the months, I watched Coral becoming freer in her interactions with the group, more confident in herself, and much calmer emotionally.

Trust

They learn to trust in an environment that renders them constantly vulnerable (Lempert, 2016, p. 132)

Trust, a verb from the Old Norse *treysta*, means to ‘rely on, make strong and safe’ (etymonline.com). The entwined values of trust and safety abide concurrently within the framework of trauma-informed practice, enabling both the women and the facilitators to develop reliability and strength in the social and creative fabric of the work. For incarcerated

⁶ Coral’s poems are published in a collection called *Seen and Heard* (Baldwin & Raikes, 2019) written by parents and children impacted by incarceration.

women, their immediate environment is not one conducive to trusting relationships (Lempert, 2016). The women's concealed trauma narratives provide an additional challenge to developing trust, preventing them from being able to interact freely with one another. The facilitators conceal elements of our lives, as to share openly in that context has the potential to be unsafe, both for us and the women⁷. Developing and maintaining connections within these veiled relationships can be an arduous task. We skirt around conversations, alternately enacting dialogical dexterity or a stilted and uneasy discourse.

Trust, however, is imperative in developing an environment conducive to creative potential. A community musician needs to work collaboratively, which involves 'giving up control' (Higgins, 2012, p. 148) and maintaining a flexible, two-way approach to trust. The women will not grow in their trust in me if I am not willing to grow in trust toward them. The values of trust and collaboration intersect in the relinquishing of control, where artistic potential may begin to grow. In developing trust, learning to listen is a way to pay attention to the face of the *other* (Levinas, 1969). It is a way of attending to, literally stretching toward those with whom you are interacting. As I work with the women, I strive to listen attentively, waiting in expectation for even the smallest move toward creative vulnerability and openness. This listening, attentiveness, and observation can, in turn, develop responsiveness. As I develop in responsiveness, I am better equipped to facilitate a space in which trust can grow. As trust grows, the women become more responsive; thus, creative and social capability is enhanced.

⁷ Within the context of the Prison Partnership Project, there is a clear expectation of both professional conduct and ongoing consideration of safeguarding. We are working in a highly complex environment and consideration of the women's trauma experiences, how these manifest, and the care that needs to be taken in trying to avoid re-traumatising individuals is of paramount importance. To disclose personal information, for example, around family life and children, has the potential to be triggering for the women, for whom issues of motherhood can be a source of re-traumatisation (Conlon, 2020). In addition, as a community music facilitator in this context, I am not a trained criminal justice professional with the expertise and understanding of the processes and structures used to support rehabilitation from crime. I must therefore be clear about my role and understand the boundaries needed to enable facilitation of a safe and secure environment.

I have observed women at different stages of this journey of trust and witnessed the intense lack of trust, both of the facilitators and of each other. I have seen a lack of trust in the system and heard stories of lack of trust of authority. But I have also observed growing assurance as the women understand that the weekly workshop space is confidential, enabling trust to develop at a deeper level. From his reflections on working with children who have experienced the trauma of war and displacement, Osborne (2009) states:

But music also generates trust: if someone sings to you, they clearly mean you no harm; they make themselves vulnerable, “bare their soul” and offer sympathy, empathy and a kind of care and love. Then there is the power of music to bring social cohesion—by consent—from chaos, and both to synchronize and to entrain. (p. 343, italics in the original)

Singing together can enable the ‘prosodic voices, positive facial expressions, and welcoming gestures [that] trigger feelings of safety and trust’ (Porges, 2017, p. 2). For women who have engaged in the singing project over several months, I have observed moments when they feel safe enough to immerse themselves in a song, shutting their eyes and becoming fully absorbed in the moment. Some women have felt a deep enough level of trust to clap and dance to the music, raising their hands and swaying. The sense of social cohesion following these moments has been profound. The women each tend to wear “masks” within the larger context of prison life, hiding their fragility and trauma behind a fixed and rigid covering. In choosing to connect to the music, the women have an opportunity to lower their “masks,” enabling them to make a move towards healing and recovery.

Narrative Interlude Three

*I'm living in the moment, I go back in the past
And I know in my soul that the music will last
Expressing myself I feel free in my mind
Take the good with me, leave the rest behind*

*My soul is lost in the rhythm
My heart skips to the beat
When I'm feeling happy, or angry or sad
I think of music and the good times I had
I need music to feel alive
I need music to keep me strong
I need music to help me survive
I need music to know I belong*

*Music means the world to me
It's a burning feeling, it's part of my healing
Music means the world to me
A voice from deep within*

(Emerging Voices, October 2018)

Sophia loves singing. She came to the group having taken part in the Prison Partnership theatre program, and, as I later discovered, had experienced serious and prolonged abuse, both as a child and in her significant adult relationships. She was nervous about writing.

Responding to the question, “what does music mean to me?” she did not know where to begin. I encouraged her to engage in free-writing, and not to think too carefully about what came out, essentially to trust in the process. She reluctantly agreed to try, and what happened over the next few minutes was a deepening of focus and concentration as she poured her thoughts onto the page. She agreed to share with the group what she had written, and her free expression had emerged like the text of a poem. Every line began with the words, I need music. The other women loved what she had written so much that, after some refining and input from the group, it became the chorus of the first collaborative song, I Need Music.

This moment had a profound impact on Sophia, and she stayed with us on the project for a year, committing wholeheartedly to the weekly sessions, and encouraging others to fully engage even when they were lacking in confidence. Her story impacted me as I was able to observe a tangible shift in her during that time, witnessing her ‘courage to move out of the constricted stance of the victim’ (Herman, 1997, p. 202) towards an individual growing in consciousness of her identity as a creative being.

Collaboration

The restoration of social bonds begins with the discovery that one is not alone. Nowhere is this experience more immediate, powerful, or convincing than in a group (Herman, 1997, p. 215)

For the women, collaborative songwriting can be the most potentially daunting part of the session but also, ultimately, the most rewarding. As Herman (1997) suggests:

The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation. (p. 133)

This quotation goes some way to explain both the initial reticence toward, but also the subsequent unrestrained joy, in collaboration.

Within the songwriting process, a ‘restoration of social bonds’ (Herman, 1997, p. 215) can begin to emerge. Sometimes this restoration follows a period of deterioration occurring in clashes of personality, tensions I have perceived as the women grapple with working closely with others (during much of their week they exist in isolation); women who find listening to others an immense challenge, and others who find they do not have the courage to speak up. Facilitating this work can cause internal conflicts: encouraging one of the women’s creativity may appear to be at the expense of another’s. It is not a perfect art form; navigating these tensions is part of the skill in trauma-informed practice that need to be developed.

A connection exists within collaborative songwriting processes to bearing witness, giving validation to the truth of another’s experience, to another’s trauma narrative (Anderson, 2016). This can be powerful for women whose narratives have been doubted, shut down, and ignored. The jagged and fragmented trauma narrative can present as a confused and broken tale. Validating the women in the context of the project—creatively, personally, musically, and relationally—goes some way toward bearing witness, to validating the truth of their trauma narratives, without engaging directly in the narrative itself.

This can be complicated for songwriting processes, but in furthering this idea of validation, we make music in relationship, in encountering one another in song. Austin (2015) states, ‘Our voices resonate inward to help us connect to our bodies and express our emotions as they resonate outward to help us connect to others’ (p. 622). In singing together with the women and collaborating in writing songs, these connections can be formed, recognising that songwriting can be a platform for the safe exploration of emotions (Hess, 2019). Building positive connections within the group is critical to this work in maintaining the women’s mental and physical health and in developing individual and group empowerment.

Narrative Interlude Four

Life ebbs and flows,

That’s just how it goes

‘Cos that’s how we grow, how we grow

Ignore life’s rejections

Make friends and connections

‘Cos that’s how we grow, how we grow

When the dark clouds bring you down

Don’t face life with a frown

‘Cos after every storm there’ll be a rainbow

Instead of hiding from the rain

Let it wash away your pain

‘Cos after every storm there’ll be a rainbow

(Emerging Voices, March 2019)

The ‘collective empowerment’ (Herman, 1997, p. 216) of collaborative songwriting is key to the creative work with the women. Helen had previously taken part in the Prison Partnership theatre program, and was, on the surface, friendly, open, and confident. She had no difficulty in speaking up in the early days of the project, was able to be clear about her musical tastes, expressed severe dislike over some of the repertoire I brought to share with the women, and became a significant spokeswoman for the group. I was concerned, however, by Helen’s need to control group processes, and that she could get easily upset and angry if she felt others, including me, were disagreeing with her. What was less clear to me at the start of the project was Helen’s deep-seated need for approval, her difficulty in navigating any kind of conflict, and, as was exposed following a session that she had missed, a fear of not being needed, of having no value to the group.

What is intriguing to me about the song lyrics above, created from the project in which Helen took part, is the recognition of the ups and downs, and the inevitable twists and turns of life. Helen’s input into this collaborative song was significant, and she openly wanted the song to be uplifting, as well as communicate a positive message. It is interesting to me that within the text are words such as ‘rejections,’ ‘hiding,’ ‘dark,’ and ‘pain.’ These are balanced with hope, however. The text ‘make friends and connections,’ is important to note, as I observed the importance of these connections for Helen in the context of the project. In realising that the women in the group (including me) were on her side, valuing her contribution, and treating her with respect, she was able to release a little of the control she felt the need to exert over the group, and enable others to step forward and shine creatively.

Empowerment

The first principle of recovery is the empowerment of the survivor. She must be the author and arbiter of her own recovery (Herman, 1997, p. 133)

The project facilitators strive to create an environment wherein each individual can experience a sense of care, support, and value, which enables the opportunity for self-expression and self-empowerment. The power dynamics present within the daily context of the prison can be stifling and oppressive. The women are used to authoritarian structures and can come into the singing sessions with the expectation that these will continue to be enacted by the facilitating team. Challenging those expected power dynamics takes time and continued reinforcement. The Prison Partnership Project operates on the basis of social and artistic equality and bridges often profound social barriers (Conlon, 2020). The women in the project have opportunities to develop their self-empowerment, thereby making steps towards regaining a sense of value and self-worth.

Singing has been described as ‘an act of generosity’ (Zeserson, 2005, p. 125) and, as such, can be released in the women’s voices, in the courageous expression of their songs (Barnwell, 2000). I have observed moments of individual and collective empowerment in the singing sessions. As Conlon (2020) states, ‘Letting sound and voice out of a body that can feel like it wants to hide is an act of hope, of faith in being heard’ (p. 180). The act of singing together can bring physiological and emotional changes to support victims of prior trauma (Porges, 2017). I use exercises in vocal technique and breath control that are deliberately tailored for the women. For example, breathing exercises with shorter inhale, holding the breath, and a long, sustained exhale, enable heart rate to slow, blood pressure to lower and, over time, can enable a reduction in levels of anxiety, as well as deal directly with the body’s response to

trauma (van der Kolk, 2014). Some women have spoken of practicing these exercises during the week and of the improvement in overall wellbeing they have experienced as a result. These are important moments when a participant can ‘author her own recovery’ (Herman, 1997, p. 133).

I have also learned the importance of play. It is interesting that within the confines and restrictions of the prison, humour, and playfulness can offer moments of bonding between participants. As van der Kolk (2014) states, ‘When we play together, we feel physically attuned and experience a sense of connection and joy. The moment you see a group of grim-faced people break out in a giggle, you know that the spell of misery has broken’ (p. 215). This can, in turn, enable the women to feel connected and empowered in a way that can support them through the rest of the week. The women have spoken of how they spend half the week looking back on our last singing session and the other half of the week looking forward to the next one. In those moments, lasting connections were formed.

In addition, working within the context of the group enables the opportunity for what Herman (1997) calls ‘collective empowerment’ (p. 216). For example, when the women develop the group contract, Ways of Working, at the start of a new project, they decide how we will work together over the course of 10 weeks, what values are important, what they will tolerate or not, and how to define the creative space. We revisit this contract at the start of every session, with the opportunity for the women to revise the list. The women sign their names, formalising the agreement, a crucial act when the group dynamics can be challenging and hard to shape positively in the early weeks. I have observed a tangible shift during those moments of collaboration, witnessing the ‘recreation of an ideal self [with the] courage to

move out of the constricted stance of the victim' (Herman, 1997, p. 202) to 'the author and arbiter of [their] own recovery' (p. 133).

Narrative Interlude Five

Let me stand unafraid in the rain

Free from hurt

Free from pain

Where my dreams take me to new exciting places

Not tangled in a mind that always races

Don't let it bring you down

My heart beats too fast

Holding onto moments I know can't last

I wanna feel on top of the world

With my feet still on the ground

Don't wait for the storm to pass

Dancing in the rain x2

It's raining, raining, raining x3

(Emerging Voices, July 2019)

I met Mary in January 2019. Contrary to my perception that women in prison were predominantly from a low socio-economic background or socially deprived, Mary challenged me by being confident and well-put-together. There was an ease in her interactions with me

and the group, and she ventured to talk about her life outside of her custodial sentence, in a way that not many of the women did. She also told darkly humorous stories of life inside the prison walls. Mary was coming to the end of a life sentence and was in a wing of the prison that facilitated more open access and independence. Women in this wing had keys to their own rooms and could interact with one another socially as they wished, cooking and cleaning together and spending time in the communal spaces.

Mary loved music and singing and spoke repeatedly of her desire to find a singing group in the community, post her release. She contributed significantly to the group song, *Dancing in the Rain* (above), by telling the group a story about a recent experience she had on the open wing. Mary had ventured out for a walk one day, within the enclosure of the high fences surrounding the wing, a reminder that her freedom was limited. As she walked, it began to rain; not drizzle, but huge raindrops poured down on her as she stood outside. Rather than running into the shelter of the wing, Mary chose to stand in the rain and let it wash over her. After the event, she explained to the group that she loved the inspirational quote I had brought to one of our sessions: *Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass ... it's about learning to dance in the rain*. As she let the rain fall on and around her, she reflected on this quote and was moved to share it. The other women were inspired by this idea, to the extent that it became the basis for one of our collaborative group songs.

Choice

To have your rights disregarded is to become invisible, not to count, so the sense of self is eroded (Cattanach, 1992, p. 17)

If to exercise choice is to exercise liberty, as discussed in the Literature Review, the paradoxical nature of an act of liberation within the confines of incarceration, where the women have had many of their rights taken away, suggests why this third value of trauma-informed care has the potential to be powerful. Within the weekly workshop sessions, choice is enabled in song repertoire, opting in or out of activities, choosing themes and creative stimuli for songwriting, choosing to commit to the creative process, or deciding not to return to the group. This is not a flawless system. We are bound by certain restrictions within the constructs of the prison environment. But in each act of choosing, the women can regain a semblance of freedom and take steps towards building self-confidence and agency.

The women's choice around the texts they create for our collaborative songs is an opportunity to use their imaginations with freedom of expression. Van der Kolk (2014) states, 'Imagination gives us the opportunity to envision new possibilities' (p. 17), connecting to the idea of 'future possible selves' (Cohen & Henley, 2018, pp. 156–158). For women in the criminal justice system, envisioning new possibilities and reimagining their narratives represents a powerful way to build self-efficacy and positive social engagement. Using metaphor, imagery, and agreed thematic stimuli, the women can choose to explore their stories within the safer creative constructs of oblique and non-direct approaches. van der Kolk (2014) suggests that freewriting supports accessing internal thoughts and hidden emotions:

In freewriting, it is as though you ask your editor to leave you alone for a while [and] things will come out that you had no idea were there. You are free to go into a sort of trance state in which your pen ... seems to channel whatever bubbles up from inside. (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 238)

I have noticed the focus, the intense concentration and silence that can descend during a freewriting session with the women. The connection between being able to choose the words that spill out of them—pen onto page—and the free will exercised in those moments can create a sense of suspension, as though time has stood still. In those parts of the workshop, it is important to be flexible, not to rush the creative outpouring, and to trust in the effectiveness of the exercise.

When I eventually draw the group back together, there is often a profound moment of sharing. Sometimes this happens in pairs, especially with newer groups or women who are less comfortable in each other's presence. At other times, the women are keen to read the prose or poems that have flowed from pen to page. There are also women who struggle with illiteracy and need others to capture their thoughts, but they can still surprise themselves with their choice of language and what they choose to communicate. When the women write, opening up their inner world of imagination, they involve others in their journey and, in some cases, begin to repair an eroded 'sense of self' (Cattanach, 1992, p. 17).

Summary

Trauma isolates; the group recreates a sense of belonging. Trauma shames and stigmatizes; the group bears witness and affirms. Trauma degrades the victim; the group exalts her. Trauma dehumanizes the victim; the group restores her humanity. (Herman, 1997, p. 214)

Working within the hospitable and collaborative structures of the singing and songwriting project, trauma-informed approaches are key to developing an effective framework of practice in an environment where trauma is an ever-present but invisible companion. The five values of trauma-informed care overlap and intertwine and are hard to separate from one

another, each building on the next. Throughout this case study, I have explored these values as a supportive framework for women in various stages of trauma recovery while they concurrently navigate the immense challenges of their custodial sentences.

I have endeavoured to capture examples of how the singing group helps to ‘recreate a sense of belonging’ (Herman, 1997, p. 214). In an environment where acts of hospitality (Higgins, 2012) are contrary to many of the women’s personal encounters, the community musician’s ability to reinforce a welcoming, inclusive, and trustworthy workshop space is crucial for enabling positive connections to be made. The tensions of holding the known and unknown impacts of trauma, the visible and hidden, necessitate reflexivity and responsiveness, sensitivity, and empathy. The shadows and hauntings of the past cannot be ignored, but neither is the practice centred around bringing them to light.

The community musician can bear witness to the women’s hidden trauma narratives by understanding and acknowledging their presence, and in this way, facilitate affirmation within the group. Having experienced silence, separation, and isolation, the women can encounter connection, collaboration, and belonging through sharing with and learning from each other. A trauma-informed framework of practice can enable the development of positive and constructive working relationships and facilitates an opportunity for the women to develop their individual and collective voice. Approached thoughtfully with an ethic of care, there is great potential to connect, for positive encounters with each other and to offer the women the chance to be fully heard. As Caruth (1996) states:

But we can also read the address of the voice here, not as the story of the individual in relation to the events of his or her own past, but as the story of the way in which one’s

own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound. (p. 8)

Developing trauma-informed approaches is a journey, as much of self-discovery as of solidifying the knowledge and understanding that frames our practice. It is also a journey that benefits from walking with others. Our own histories and complicated, tangled dealings with trauma can become messy if not resolved through regular supervision and self-care. We need to be more aware of our own internal processes and the potential they have to both disrupt and to be positively impactful in our practice (Etherington, 2004). Becoming trauma informed is not an individual task but a relational and collective responsibility, strengthened by shared insights and collaborative practice.

Through working with trauma-informed practice within the prison, we encountered the women not just as incarcerated citizens but as trauma survivors. The dehumanising effect for the women of both the current context and experience of prior trauma can be eradicated to an extent as the 'group restores her humanity' (Herman, 1997, p. 214). As Ahonen-Eerikainen (2007) states:

It is like voiding the spell of an old grotesque image of something that made them freeze, preventing them from being visible, audible, liveable, or loved. It is like giving them permission to be different, to be themselves, to show their true self, to become visible and audible. (pp. 179–180)

As a community musician working within this context, I have had the immense privilege of observing this emergence of ‘true self,’ of witnessing the silenced becoming audible and the hidden becoming visible. I have also recognised the responsibility I have in developing trauma-informed practice to facilitate this emergence. Against the backdrop of incarceration, the singing and songwriting project offers a vital layer of support within the negotiated practice of the creative community.

CHAPTER 5 CASE STUDY TWO

Protecting The Experience and Wellbeing of Everyone

REDACTED

CHAPTER 6 CASE STUDY THREE

Hidden Voices: A Case Study of Stone Flowers Torture Survivors' Collective

We have been labelled like criminal because we came to this country to seek for protection, and we have flown from our country of origin. So, I said, "No, this is not right. I am not a criminal. I am a leader, a Pastor, with all of value and positive quality. Why shall I be labelled like a criminal? I was not a criminal." So, joining the project gave me the opportunity now to spread that message, that reaction, that response to what I've read here in 2009, the year I came in this country. So, I wrote a song, Ngunda¹, just to say, A refugee is a human being. He's not a criminal, he's not what you say. He is not a criminal, is a human being like you, and among refugee we have doctor, musician, politician, physician, mathematician, everyone can be a refugee, but everyone is not born refugee. So being a refugee is something that can happen to everyone. (Rabbin, Stone Flowers member)

Context

Refugees who have survived war and torture endure the ongoing impacts of traumatic experience, as well as repeated exposure to trauma in their new environments (Harrison et al., 2019; Marsh, 2018). Heidi Ahonen's (2021) chapter, *Processing Refugee Journey and Promoting Self-Healing with Music and Art*, explores the immense challenges faced by refugees. Known as '*triple traumatization*' (p. 290, italics in the original), Ahonen sets out the interconnected challenges for refugees: the trauma experienced in their original context, being uprooted from their homes, and the ongoing processes associated with seeking asylum

¹ One of the early Stone Flowers albums launched in 2014, was named Ngunda, after the original song Ngunda Azali Mutu (a refugee is a human being), based on Rabbin's experiences and reflections. The track can be found on YouTube via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HBIY8JDcLA&t=50s>.

in a new country. She addresses the significant stigmatisation, isolation, silencing, and potential victimisation faced by refugees in their new communities. Ahonen describes the difficulty torture survivors may have in telling their stories, stating that this ‘Unfortunately ... undermines their credibility’ (p. 292). Additionally, Caruth (1995) describes how a crisis of trauma can also be interpreted as a crisis of survival, ‘that *survival itself ... can be a crisis*’ (p. 9, italics in the original). This is a complex notion, but one particularly relevant to those who have experienced war and torture, when family, friends, and members of their communities may not have survived.

Ahonen (2021) explores trauma symptoms specific to refugees, specifically torture survivors, stating that they ‘have come face to face with a breach of humanity—it was other human beings who intentionally caused their suffering’ (p. 290). She points out that the crimes committed against these individuals have often been carried out ‘by the same authorities who in normal circumstances would have protected them (i.e. police, army, or clergy)’ (p. 290). Ahonen suggests that there are specific physical, sociological, and emotional difficulties for refugees, including additional challenges for children and young people, such as ‘pedagogical neglect’ (ibid., p. 290) due to lack of regular schooling.

Ahonen (2021) details common trauma symptoms such as PTS with avoidance symptoms alongside other difficulties of mental ill health like depression and anxiety, physical pain, emotional numbness, and hyper-arousal described as ‘insomnia, anxiety, irritability and jumpiness, anger outbursts, and poor concentration’ (p. 291). Ahonen states that ‘Refugees often feel a continuous mortal fear’ (p. 291), explaining guardedness and watchfulness as ‘scanning for threats,’ making sense of why an individual can be easily startled. Ahonen describes the potential for ‘profoundly negative beliefs and expectations about themselves or

the world’ (p. 291) and the interconnected issues of lack of hope, purpose, and enjoyment in everyday activities. The deep-rooted sense of isolation, shame, and guilt, along with ‘strong responses to reminders of the traumatic event’ (ibid., pp. 291-292) create a debilitating combination, serving to keep survivors disconnected from others, including those reaching out in genuine welcome and positivity. Refugees and torture survivors do not feel safe (Harrison et al., 2019)

Introduction

This discrete case study focuses on the work of Music Action International’s (hereafter MAI) Stone Flowers project. A UK-based charitable organisation whose tag line is *Make Noise, Create Peace*, MAI have a clear aim to ‘create life-changing music programmes with survivors of war, torture and persecution’ (musicaction.org). MAI have programmes both within the UK and internationally and work with adults in the community, as well as young people in schools and youth settings. They have a detailed methodology underpinning their music programmes, tailored in response to each unique context.

The Stone Flowers project, established in 2011 by MAI Director Lis Murphy in collaboration with the charity, Freedom from Torture, has been designed to provide a creative space for survivors of war and torture to explore music making and songwriting together. As the project has evolved, ‘Survivors began to write original songs with messages of hope, peace and resilience’ (<https://www.musicaction.org/stone-flowers/>). With an understanding of the deep, and ongoing, impacts of traumatic experience, Stone Flowers operates as a therapeutic space, facilitated with a clear methodology that supports refugee and trauma awareness.

A foundational belief of Stone Flowers is that of providing space for the participants to be heard, to be validated and valued, and given a platform for expression and advocacy through creative collaboration. This enables the potential to discover a renewed narrative and the opportunity for ‘narrative repair’ (Barney & Mackinlay, 2010, p. 8) in songwriting; one that acknowledges an individual’s past and present experience of trauma, but also supports them in recognising their own uniqueness and value through creative engagement. Underpinning the explorations of this case study is the understanding that music can not only support narrative but that ‘song exalts the voice and its potential’ (Cavarero, 2005, p. 5) and can go beyond communication of the spoken word and limitations of language. Music is fundamentally part of our human existence, and songwriting can be used as a powerful tool in redressing inequities, enabling voice, self-expression, and advocacy for those who have been silenced.

Stone Flowers encompasses the complexity of an intercultural space, where interculturality is a key focus. As Burnard et al. (2018) explain,

‘Interculturality’, in community music practice resides both in a location—whether geographical, spatial, or corporeal—and in an in-between space, among and within individuals, milieux, social constructs, and cultures (Lauder et al., 2006). Intercultural creativity refers to possibilities, as well as practices of making and creating.

Intercultural creativities produce possibilities for intercultural translation. (p. 229)

Stone Flowers operates within this *liminal*, ‘in-between’ space where the co-created processes involve intercultural interaction. Explored in this case study are the ‘in-between’ spaces of Stone Flowers rehearsals where values connected to ‘love, care, and solidarity’

(Burnard et al., 2018, p. 233) are considered as fundamental to the practice as the quality of the music making. ‘Respect, belonging, and inclusion’ (Burnard et al., 2018, p. 231) are all identified as values inherent in interculturality connecting to notions of safety and trust as core components of trauma-informed care.

Harris and Fallot (2001) give clear guidelines on how to set up safe and supportive environments for those who have experienced complex trauma and are dealing with ongoing trauma symptoms including difficulties of mental ill health. To ensure physical safety, Harris & Fallot suggest the importance of: ‘same gender staff; separation of male and female consumers; availability of safe and comfortable time-out space; respect for personal space and individual boundaries; respect for personal modesty; training for staff in the strategies of safe deescalation’ (pp. 37-39). Strategies to support emotional safety are categorised as: ‘keeping consumers fully informed; identifying emotional triggers; identifying and developing soothing behaviours; avoid retraumatizing practices’ (pp. 39-44). This case study examines the strategies of practice utilised within the Stone Flowers methodology that responds to the five values of trauma-informed care, demonstrating a model of practice with trauma and refugee awareness at its core.

Stone Flowers Methodology

The Beginnings Of Stone Flowers

The initial inspiration for Stone Flowers and subsequent methodological structures that support the project originate from the time Lis Murphy spent in Bosnia in the late 1990s. She worked with Nigel Osborne’s project through the Pavarotti Centre in Mostar, and Lis

acknowledges the impact of her time in Bosnia, both as a creative anchor point and as profoundly influential to her current work. Lis' reflections on the music making she observed stayed with her as key aspects of the collaborative, inclusive, equitable, and quality values she aspires to apply to her practice, as well as to bridge cultural divides. Lis' experiences in Bosnia shaped the ideological evolution of Stone Flowers, including how the music facilitation team is set up. Lis observed how hierarchical structures could be problematic and how a collaborative, skills-sharing approach could be more effective where 'you get all the knowledge that's in the space' (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022). Collaboration is a key value of practice where everyone's contribution is valued.

Lis' experience of vicarious trauma from her time in Bosnia has been hugely influential to the development of Stone Flowers methodology. She explained,

I heard all these personal stories of people that I worked with. It had actually happened to them. And that was just absolutely heart-breaking. And I didn't realise when you're an empathetic person ... that was actually traumatising me, but I didn't know that. (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022)

Caruth (1995) describes the risk of listening to trauma narrative as 'the danger of the trauma's "contagion," of the traumatization of the ones who listen' (p. 10). Lis knew something was 'wrong' for ten years before understanding what had happened to her. During the early stages of collaboration with Freedom from Torture, she was able to access clinical support. The awareness of the potential to be so deeply impacted by stories of those who have experienced trauma profoundly shaped how Lis considered facilitation of Stone Flowers, where supervision and wellbeing sessions for the facilitating team are integral.

Important to the collaborative process in setting up Stone Flowers is that both musicians and clinicians worked together to make decisions connected to project design and delivery. The clinicians acted as gatekeepers to safeguard and protect the participants, all of whom were clients of Freedom from Torture. The musicians brought skill and passion focused on how music making can support wellbeing. Performance was highlighted as a key element of the methodology, with opportunities for raising awareness and advocacy as crucial components.

The following sections detail findings regarding the Stone Flowers methodology and explore the interconnected values of safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice as connected to musical, pedagogical, and relational aspects of the practice.

Safety

No problem, no problem, no problem x4

No accommodation - no problem

No money - no problem

No food - no problem

No status - no problem

No problem, no problem, no problem x4

Many charities helping me - no problem x2

One day I'll get status - no problem x2

No problem, no problem, no problem x4

Elokote, elokote, ezalite x2

Wapi wapiyeh, wapi, wap yango x2

Don't handcuff me, I am free x2

People they don't know me, they don't see my heart

I am black, I love everyone x2

No problem, no problem, no problem x4

Elokote, elokote, ezalite x4

Elokote

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Safety, as the first consideration of trauma-informed care, is understood within Stone Flowers methodology to be a vital aspect of practice, given the complex trauma histories of the participants. Lis highlighted the core values represented in the methodology as focused on participant wellbeing: inclusivity, generosity, being welcoming, making people feel comfortable, collaborating, setting of clear boundaries, and maintaining safety as key components. As Lis explained,

And then the other thing around methodology is like, ways of creating a safe space.

So that would be around the sort of, a lot of non-verbal like energisers and relaxation exercises. And then encouraging people to show us songs that they know in their own language. (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022)

Lis understands facilitation of safety as a pedagogical consideration as well as emotional and relational considerations. The following sections explore how both physical and emotional safety are enabled within the facilitation structures, musically, relationally, and pedagogically, as connected to the Harris and Fallot (2001) guidelines stated above.

Ensuring Physical Safety

Gender-responsive Practice. The composition of the facilitation team is of utmost importance within the Stone Flowers methodology. The team has a mix of genders alongside considerations of musical, cultural, and experiential knowledge. The first iteration of Stone Flowers had separate groups for men and women. The rationale for this was that the women had all been sexually abused in their country of origin, and that to keep them physically and emotionally safe, they needed a space with just women. After a few months, the women started questioning the separation, saying that they wanted to be with the men. In responding to their choice, Lis and the facilitating team felt that there was enough safety and trust developed to enable the groups to come together without any negative impact on emotional safety or wellbeing.

Challenges to safety came when boundaries of practice were not adhered to by some of the less experienced facilitators in the early days of the project. Evelyn, a clinical psychologist who worked with the first iteration of Stone Flowers, explained that people who have experienced complex trauma often have difficulty establishing their own personal boundaries. This can be manifested as rigid boundaries to keep the survivor safe and be seen in intense social withdrawal, lack of eye contact, and avoidance. Paradoxically, difficulties with creating secure and appropriate boundaries can be seen as a longing and desperation for

attachment, over-familiarity, and, as Evelyn explained, the propensity towards ‘falling in love’ with those in supportive, caring roles, such as the facilitating team would be viewed. She also explained the ‘false sense of intimacy’ created by making music together, a theme reiterated by other facilitators who talked about ‘getting close very quickly’ with the participants.

The facilitating team is responsible for protecting and maintaining interpersonal boundaries between different genders, and they work hard to establish clarity in this area. In the early days of Stone Flowers, however, one facilitator who did not take this responsibility seriously was let go from the project, as he was overstepping his professional boundaries and posing a risk to one of the female participants.

Respect For Personal Space and Individual Boundaries. Lis explained that as part of the safeguarding structures to protect both the facilitating team and the participants, strict boundaries exist around things like not sharing personal contact information. The team clarify roles and responsibilities. The therapist’s role is to support the participants, thus removing responsibility from the facilitators to enable them to focus on the music making. Evelyn was on-hand to ‘spot if things were triggering’ (Evelyn, interview, 15th July 2022) and to ensure the artistic focus of the team is to support the maximum benefit for participants. The facilitation team always includes a trained therapist to look out for individuals, take someone out of the room if they are struggling, or suggest a break if needed. As one of the facilitators described, ‘because there's things that can happen that we can't handle, because we're not trained so we don't have that expertise’ (Kamia, interview, 13th July 2022).

Another facilitator stated, ‘You need a professional psychologist to be able to deal with some of those very complex needs that can come out of someone who's dealing with that type of trauma and how we can use music to keep people in, you know, a calm environment’ (Oliver, interview, 19th July 2022). Oliver is cognisant of his role in the space as a musician, not a therapist, and clear about music making as the goal saying, ‘But as musicians, as facilitators, we’re able to try to engage them within musical practice’ (Oliver, interview, 19th July 2022).

The Stone Flowers project exists within the tension of these boundaries of practice. With wellbeing as the principle focus of practice, both music facilitators, music therapists, and clinicians working in the group share a common goal, but with different skills and strategies to support getting there. These potential tensions of practice need special consideration and negotiation in a space where the participant group has a significantly complex set of needs. One of the Stone Flowers participants explained the importance of the facilitators deliberately not crossing boundaries of practice, asking personal questions, or offering therapeutic advice.

The facilitating team protect participants’ boundaries by never asking them to share their trauma histories or disclose anything they do not want to talk about. Trauma narrative is not addressed directly, and personal information is not asked for. One facilitator explained that the team never asks where participants are from, but instead they might ask what language they speak or if they have a song they would like to share. Personal information is restricted by the clinical team, and facilitators are only told what they need to know to ensure the physical and emotional safety and wellbeing of the participants. Lis explained how they support participant safety through creating physical boundaries of practice, for example, leaving the door to the workshop space open.

Ensuring Emotional Safety

Identifying Emotional Triggers. Stone Flowers methodology responds to the understanding that the participants will not naturally feel safe and may be easily triggered. Awareness of generic issues surrounding experiences of war and torture, forced migration, and seeking asylum in the UK are important for the facilitating team. Specific understanding of participants is also crucial if emotional triggers are to be avoided. One of the facilitators explained,

Understanding of participants' contexts and the vulnerabilities they face with regards to gaining status, and what that must do to your sense of security, you know? You've escaped a warzone, or whatever the situation was, you've made it here. And you still don't feel secure. That must be one of the most unsettling things in anyone's life.

(Ajay, interview, 20th July 2022)

Stone Flowers methodology has responsiveness to individuals at its core. Research participants spoke of feeling part of the Stone Flowers family having a shared understanding between participants and facilitators. As one participant described, 'I like to meet different people and be in the middle of people. It is a community and friendly, I feel is community, family. It help me, very much' (Kendi, participant questionnaire, 3rd July 2022).

One important factor is that there will always be someone with lived experience on the facilitation team. This creates additional levels of communality, safety, and trust, alongside the potential to be a good role model. As Lis explained, 'it is a space where [the participants] feel completely emotionally safe, because they know that pretty much everyone in that space

is in the same situation as they are ... there's like a shared understanding that they're in the same situation' (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022). The facilitating team is culturally diverse and act as interpreters. As one participant described, it helped him to feel accepted and part of the group. His sense of belonging was increased by working with a facilitator with whom he could communicate in his own language, removing that barrier and enabling him to fully connect and participate in the group. Kamia has lived experience and spoke about the ways in which participants saw her as an insider—especially those from shared cultural and linguistic heritage.

A Stone Flowers member spoke about how the facilitating team supports emotional safety by avoiding triggers. She said, 'They are very protective of the whole group, and yeah, they don't let anything trigger you know, the emotion and the mental health of people, members basically' (Leila, interview, 15th July 2022). The facilitators I spoke to were fully conscious of the process not being perfect. They spoke about the potential to get things wrong and make mistakes and the fear they sometimes felt that they might cause harm to participants.

Key to protecting the emotional safety of participants are the support structures put in place for the facilitating team. They have regular supervisions with a clinician to discuss individual participants and any situations that have been difficult to deal with. As one of the facilitators described, 'That has just shined the light back onto us and given us time, as facilitators, to think about ourselves and our team' (Oliver, interview, 19th July 2022). There are always at least three or four members of the team present for each music making session, in part so that there is a diversity of skill, language, personal qualities, and experiences, but also that there is a safety net in practice. If there are challenges with group dynamics, or a participant who has been triggered, there is a team effort to support the individual and to manage the group.

One facilitator described a scenario in which she could see that a participant was upset, and she did not know what to do. She felt uneasy and internally was panicking. Then she looked at the other facilitators and realised that they were completely calm, fully present, and were enabling the participant a space where he could be heard, his story and emotions validated. This helped her remain calm and understand that the rest of the team were ‘holding space’ (Sunderland et al., 2022, p. 8) at a point where she felt unable. Another facilitator reflected on how openness and empathy are key facilitator attributes and suggested that these qualities are also what might draw someone to the work. He explained, ‘Just that openness, that sensitivity, that empathy to people suffering regardless of trauma, I think that's just a basic human thing that some people have, some people don't’ (Oliver, interview, 19th July 2022).

Lis talked about the potential difficulties in songwriting processes with the participants, explaining, ‘If we give a little bit of space for this person's emotional expression, you don't know what's going to come out. You don't know how that's going to affect other people in the group; it might trigger them’ (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022). She spoke about how carefully the group dynamics need to be managed given the vulnerability of participants. Reflective and reflexive practice are important to this process of reading the room and trying to prevent triggers for participants.

One of the facilitators reflected on the need for self-awareness and the importance of knowing one's limitations, understanding that triggering can occur for the team as well as for participants. Another facilitator commented on the need for self-care, saying, ‘One thing I learned quickly was that I had to look after myself, as well, because I was hearing stories that I really wish I hadn't heard. You know, but that was part of the job, I think, and I had to build some resilience’ (Ajay, interview, 20th July 2022). Lis is committed to training, support, and

supervision for the facilitating team, saying that ‘It's been really important to have that as an intrinsic part of the work, to actually look after the staff that are working with traumatised individuals and communities’ (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022).

Identifying And Developing Soothing Behaviours. Stone Flowers facilitators use musical activities to support participants’ wellbeing; for example, to reduce anxiety. Kamia was clear that the physiological elements are important, but the human aspects are potentially more important, just less easy to qualify. The warmups and breathing exercises are designed for supporting those who have experienced trauma and are created so that participants can take them away and practice them to support their own emotional regulation.

In support of participant needs, Lis carefully considers suitability of the core facilitation team in terms of their musical, relational, and pedagogical qualities. Lis spoke about facilitation skills such as using gentleness in the practice, introducing things slowly and carefully, being ‘super-aware’ of how the participants were responding; for example, if there is any agitation or heightened anxiety. The training the team receive in trauma and refugee awareness enables deeper insight and understanding of what might be presenting in the space as a manifestation of participants’ experiences, how to read body language and emotional responses effectively, and how to apply strategies into the practice that first and foremost support participant wellbeing.

Kamia described how the facilitating team devises warmups to support calming and de-escalating activities in responsiveness to participants, reading the energy levels in the space, and bringing in an activity to counterbalance. She explained,

Because there is a way you can use warmups exercises. For example, we used to do when we come sometimes when you come in a room, you can sense today the energy's low. Automatically you know that I need songs that will lift up the mood. Or you can feel people are tense, which means you need the other way around. You need songs that will calm people down ... it's something they can still do even at home when they are no longer in the context of Stone Flowers. (Kamia, interview, 13th July 2022)

This responsive musical practice enables support of the participants' emotional needs as detailed further in the following section.

Avoid Retraumatizing Practices. Lis described the challenges of the early collaboration with Freedom from Torture: the therapists were cognisant of the vulnerabilities of their clients and committed to safeguarding and protecting their experience in order not to trigger or retraumatise individuals in the group. She explained,

And the therapists were asking us to talk through what we would normally do in the session, how we might run it. ... So we say, "Okay, we do some breathing exercises, just to kind of get people unified, copying something really easy. And that's really good for singing." And they'd say, "Well, actually, that might be really difficult because people might hyper-ventilate, breathing's a really tricky thing when you've experienced trauma ... "Okay, the next thing we normally do with just something to gently introduce people's names. We would do some sort of name game or song or something like that." "Okay, you're gonna have to be really careful with that, because names are used in torture to really humiliate people and to have a sense of power over

people. So you're gonna have to be really careful with your name game.” So we were like, we really had to think through absolutely every single element of what we might do and what the reaction might be, and how we might react if that happened and all that sort of thing. (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022)

This example details the level of consideration given to every aspect of the music making, crucially, with the support of those who have expertise and understanding working with those who have experienced not just displacement, but war and torture. Lis and her team were responsive to this, and although it created initial challenges of project set up, Lis is clear that ‘nothing bad ever happened’ because they had been through this rigorous process.

Reflective And Reflexive Practice. The wellbeing sessions (essentially group supervision) for the facilitating team supports ongoing reflective practice. One of the facilitators explained that these weekly reflective conversations enable the facilitating team to support each other and deal with any difficulties that occurred within the session. He talked about not always having the right skills or knowledge to handle every scenario as it presented, saying that the group sessions have supported the facilitators to understand that ‘It's okay for us to be vulnerable as well ... there isn't necessarily a right way or a wrong way to do it’ (Oliver, interview, 19th July 2022). Evelyn was clear that the team need to keep reflecting on and re-evaluating their practice and consider how strategies can be refined saying, ‘I actually think ongoing support is more useful than training. Because I think, you know, I think people need to reflect on what they're doing, their practice, rather than being taught stuff’ (Evelyn, interview, 15th July 2022).

Kamia spoke about reading the room to understand some of the behaviours and outward signs of trauma. She explained the tangible tension, low energy, mood swings, and body language, expressive of a participants' internal struggle. She identified moments of dissociation, and the challenge for the facilitators when 'They are kind of closed to themselves, or sometimes in the middle of the session or the middle of a sentence or songwriting, they kind of just go blank because something has happened' (Kamia, interview, 13th July 2022). Kamia posited that reading the room, as a strategy of practice, enables the facilitating team to be responsive without having to ask the participants questions, offering the ability to opt out of the session if it looks as though someone needs a break.

Trust

Namona Pasi x2

Yen denge nan denge

Kolala libanda

You come from trouble (trouble)

So much suffering (sleeping outside)

Moon by moon (year by year)

The belly is empty (we pray for sleep)

I walk, I walk, I walk,

I run, I run, I run,

Somebody helped me x4

Nimandi Anke x2

Manita Unake Nimandi Anke x4

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Trust as an integral value of trauma-informed care is seen as vital in supporting development of positive connections in the group, with shared lived experience as important to this process, including the lived experiences of facilitators. For participants to be heard, believed, and validated is a crucial aspect in developing trust in the group, relationally and creatively. Respect, belonging, and inclusion are understood to be fundamental values in the space.

Forming Connections. The importance of building healthy and supportive relationships within the group is highlighted as a key element of practice. Enabling connections to be formed through the music making is a way to establish trust where trust has been broken through experiences of war and torture. As Marsh (2018) explains, ‘Music participation may be seen to facilitate the management of social relationships within situations of social uncertainty’ (p. 176). One Stone Flowers member described the challenges she faced in the early days of joining the project when she was not able to connect or to trust, saying,

Because I remember before that I was very reluctant to make any connections. For example, while I was sitting in the waiting area for my session to start, I didn't want to have any, even I was trying to not making any eye contact with anybody ... But since I joined the Stone Flowers, it just helped me to open my guard basically. And let people in, you know, come near me, and just make that connection with others. (Leila, interview, 15th July 2022)

Leila described how she began to feel safe in rehearsals, partly due to understanding the shared experiences of others in the group, who had ‘gone through something similar what I went through’ (Leila, interview, 15th July 2022).

Many participants commented on connections that were crucially established through music making as the component that makes them feel good and gives them joy. One participant explained, ‘I was learning to make myself happy with singing. If I’m feeling pain, I feel better. I learnt songs from around the world and people in the group. I made friendships in the group’ (Monique, participant questionnaire, 3rd July 2022). This theme of friendship and connection was commented on by another Stone Flowers member who said,

I think what I can say here is that I've learned many things from the project. First of all, to connect with people. The project helped me to connect because music is one of the tools that connect. War, disaster, calamities can destroy, divide. But music is something that connects you to other people. You cannot do music for yourself. You do music for other people. And you are connected with these people via music.

(Rabbin, interview, 23rd September 2022)

Establishing connections through the music making is an integral part of the Stone Flowers project, where a sense of belonging keeps participants engaged and coming back week after week.

Importance Of Lived Experience. Lis explained how the facilitation team always includes someone who is a refugee or torture survivor to support project design and delivery, act as an interpreter, be a role model for participants, and bring musical influences

representative of diverse cultures, creating immediate musical connections in the group.

Sunderland et al. (2022) explain ‘the importance of “bicultural” workers in refugee support programs who [share] deep cultural knowledge with and of participants alongside commitment and compassion for participants’ (p. 9). This knowledge enables deeper levels of trust and connection with participants. As Lis explained, ‘There was something about the fact that everybody, except some of the facilitators in the room, had experienced the same thing. There is this kind of silent support, even if people didn't speak the same language’ (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022).

Lis explained that a lot of the Stone Flowers facilitators are from a global majority background, saying ‘I think that is really important. Because there are other nuances around power, cultural power dynamics, and colonialism, and there's so many layers to things that impact the participants’ (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022). Understanding and dealing with this potential for unhelpful power dynamics in the space enables greater trust to be developed.

Listening And Validation. Kamia explained the difficulties for refugees in being heard, saying ‘Migrants like members of Stones Flower who have experienced trauma in their lives, they feel like they've been shut down ... they were not even allowed to express themselves’ (Kamia, interview, 13th July 2022). Evelyn, however, additionally highlighted the challenges for facilitators of safely listening and validating participants’ stories, saying,

Yeah, I mean, that skill of being able to give someone voice to something really traumatic, but keeping in mind, that this is about music, rather than about therapy or being kind, or being caring, you know, or friendly or whatever, is hard. It's really hard, I think. (Evelyn, interview, 15th July 2022)

Despite the challenges of listening to potentially difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998), the Stone Flowers facilitators are committed to creating space for the voices of their participants, as I observed during one session.

There was a particular moment where the facilitators tangibly held space for a participant. He was triggered by the lyrics of the *No Problem* song and was reflecting on an immensely difficult moment living in England, where he had been arrested by police on a station platform, simply, as he described, for being Black. The sense of injustice he still felt over the incident was apparent, that he had been misjudged and victimised—the danger of the ‘single story’² had been imposed on him. This participant was visibly upset responding to the lyrics “no problem”, as his experience is that there are many challenges he faces, including the ongoing injustice of systemic racism in the UK.

The facilitators paused the music making, holding space for that participant so he could share his experience. Having listened, the facilitators responded saying, “Okay, well, do you want to tell this story? Is this going to be part of the song? This section could be your voice.” Their skill, and empathic support provided a safe and trusting space for the participant to share what he needed and turn an immensely challenging experience into song lyrics, seen above in the verse that begins “don’t handcuff me”. Kamia described the importance of listening to those who have low self-esteem due to their experiences of trauma, saying, ‘So for them, it’s like also there’s still people who will see me as a human being. Because when I was tortured, for those torturer, I was just an animal. But actually, there are people who still see me as a human being’ (Kamia, interview, 13th July 2022).

² See Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TEDx talk https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en (accessed 10th February 2024)

Respect, Belonging, And Inclusion. The Stone Flowers methodology is based on what Kamia described as considerations of ‘human rights’ (Kamia, interview, 13th July 2022). The methodology includes refugee awareness as a core component of practice. In understanding the context of the participants’ trauma narratives as well as ongoing issues such as deep-seated inability to trust others and social isolation (Aigen, 2018), the music making of Stone Flowers is facilitated with appropriate consideration of the participants’ human rights. Structures are put in place to support their feelings of belonging and acceptance where in the wider context of their lives this might be more challenging. For example, they may be experiencing ongoing issues of racism, victimisation, and exclusion within their new communities.

Respect, belonging, and inclusion (as identified by Burnard et al., 2018) are values that can be supported through facilitated music making processes. Respect is a value of practice that is vital within Stone Flowers structures, as Leila explained, ‘There is absolute respect for each other, each other’s language, each other's everything, there is a respect’ (Leila, interview, 15th July 2022).

Collaboration

Je fais ce poeme (I write this poem)

Pour les papas (For the dads)

Et les mamans (And the mums)

Et les enfants (And the kids)

Qui sont massacrés (Who are massacred)

Par les bandes criminelles (By criminal gangs)

A travers le monde entier (Throughout the whole world)

வாருங்கள் எல்லோரும் சேருங்கள்
இந்த உலகை மாற்றுவோம்
வாருங்கள் எல்லோரும் சேருங்கள்
இந்த உலகை மாற்றுவோம்

(Come on everyone unite

We'll change the world

Come on everyone join

We'll change the world)

அடிமை ஜனங்கள் ஒழியவே
இந்த உலகை மாற்றுவோம்
அடிமை ஜனங்கள் ஒழியவே
இந்த உலகை மாற்றுவோம்

(To stop slavery

Let's change the world

To stop slavery

Let's change the world)

We will all come together

To destroy addictions

We will all come together

To end slavery

We will all come together

To stop the killings

We will all come together

To end corruption

We will all come together

To fight injustice

We will all come together

To end dictatorship

Create a new world

Create a new world

Create a new world

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Collaboration In Project Design. Lis considers collaboration a core value of her work. Collaborative processes are at the heart of the Stone Flowers methodology, wherein project design and delivery are approached as a team, including those with lived experience. Lis highlighted the fact that project structures are as crucial as who delivers the work. Planning for Stone Flowers took a year of detailed collaboration with Freedom from Torture before a music session ever took place, speaking to the care and consideration for the process. As both Lis and Evelyn described, it was a reciprocal, organic, and exciting process between two distinct fields of expertise. Evelyn commented,

I mean, it was really quite an exciting time, because I knew very little about community musicians and how they work but was really interested in music. They knew very little about trauma but were very interested about doing that work. And

³ The original lyrics are in French, Tamil, and English, written online via Zoom during lockdown, with the YouTube recording found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hagS0SmSdA4>. This was one of the songs we used for the Stone Flowers gig at Manchester's Band on the Wall performance, 3rd July 2022.

actually, the two fields worked very dynamically together. (Evelyn, interview, 15th July 2022)

The respect each of the musicians and clinicians had for each other during the project planning stage was important in positively addressing the challenges of the collaboration. Lis described the difficulty where, cognisant of their clients' vulnerabilities, the Freedom from Torture staff's commitment to safeguarding and protecting participants' experience could sometimes override the creative process. They had to work through those issues together to come to a place of negotiation of the practice. The ongoing reflections of practice and supportive structures of group supervision for the facilitation team are vital ongoing components of the collaboration. They are there to maintain the safety nets of practice in consideration of all the complexities of the participants' contexts and trauma histories.

Participant-led Co-creation. A crucial facet of the core methodology is that of the creative content being participant-led. Lis wanted to ensure a space for the participants 'where they express themselves, they lead it.' Lis wanted a 'completely open' creative space, 'so that we weren't influencing it culturally, or language, or experience, or political kind of views at all, that it all came really from the participants.' She explained that this decision came from 'a human rights perspective' (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022) to try to avoid hidden influences in the creative collaboration that the facilitators were not even aware of.

Even the name, Stone Flowers, was collaboratively chosen by the participants of the first iteration of the project. They had been encouraged to share songs from their cultural contexts, and an Iranian song (in Farsi) was shared, translated as Stone Flowers. The group used Stone Flowers as the name for their first recorded album.

Collaboration In Songwriting. The collaborative songwriting of Stone Flowers is of significance when considering the context and specific needs of the participants. Stone Flowers members may not be musicians in their home countries, but connection with traditional and folk music is of great importance when refugees have experienced a dislocation from their homeland and ‘cultural erasure’ (Ahonen, 2021, p. 291) due to ongoing situations of war and devastation. As one Stone Flowers member explained, ‘I learned writing from you (facilitator), how to put an order and melody, that’s very good for me, you feel good. If music was not there, I would have died. Music was always very important in my life’ (Joseph, participant questionnaire, 3rd July 2022). This quotation highlights not just the importance of making music but of creating music. Also of note is that the participant acknowledges the role the facilitator played in supporting his creative development.

Burnard et al. (2018) describe the importance to intercultural creativity of ‘interpersonal processes and dialogues’ (p. 231) which enable the personal qualities, including empathy, of those involved. Kamia described how collaborative songwriting can be a challenge to participants; experience of extreme interpersonal trauma and violence can create difficulties in compromising and negotiating with others. She explained that participants can react strongly if they don’t feel their creative offer is accepted by the group. A Stone Flowers member described the internal challenge of this saying,

Before if I made my song, we would sing it and be motivated. But now I give my song, they don’t do anything with it. Before it was better because my ideas were taken on and used. The difficult part for me was that I wanted more attention for my songs and ideas to be heard more and recorded. (Monique, participant questionnaire, 3rd July 2022)

The role of the facilitating team in these instances is to support the overall group dynamics as well as the individuals. One facilitator spoke about the challenge of managing dominant personalities within the group, participants who want to continually input and share, which is potentially detrimental to others' contributions. The complications of complex traumatic experience mean that ensuring space for each individual is crucial, but it is not a straightforward process when trying to enable access and participation for everyone.

The facilitating team works collaboratively to support participants, but as Oliver explained, this process can be challenging. He reflected that he does not always agree with decisions that are made, but that each facilitator brings their own strengths and weaknesses. He considered the positives of teamwork, saying,

So, the fact that we have multiple facilitators and that the power structure of those facilitators is sort of spread out. That makes it easier to come to sort of a balanced approach. It's not just this one person telling them what to do. It's all shared out.

(Oliver, interview, 19th July 2022)

Lis explained that in choosing facilitators, she looks for different qualities, acknowledging that it is helpful to have a mix of personalities and energies in the space. She also ensures that experienced facilitators support less experienced team members, providing peer mentoring through the co-facilitated processes.

Cultural And Linguistic Collaboration In Songwriting. Stone Flowers methodology ensures that participants can maintain a connection to their cultural, spiritual, and linguistic heritage. Rather than insisting on a Western framework for collaborative music

making, songs are created that contain both language and musical features from participants' country of origin. Aigen (2018) describes how using music from a participants' cultural heritage, can 'allow them to be more present in their new culture as whole human beings' (p. 151). These linguistic and musical representations enable strong internal and emotional associations, as well as reassuring participants of the inherent value of their cultural heritage, even when they cannot be physically connected to their homeland.

Evelyn described the incredible experience of creating a fusion of African, Iranian, and Sri Lankan music, saying, 'bringing those together in one song is just, you know, astonishing, I think' (Evelyn, interview, 15th July 2022). Kamia spoke about the joy of weaving different cultural musics together, where 'there is no need for any to dominate' (Kamia, interview, 13th July 2022), drawing attention to the importance of trying to erase the potential for hierarchy in the collaborative process. One participant spoke about music as an activity, stating, 'music does not have a border' (Rabbin, interview, 23rd September 2022). He additionally highlighted how music provides a space where people and cultures are brought together.

Collaborative Agreement. Lis described how Stone Flowers has a collaborative agreement similar to the Prison Partnership Ways of Working. It is devised by both facilitators and participants as a way of establishing group values and putting clear boundaries in place. Lis discussed how they use the agreement, saying,

Then you can read it together. Anything kind of like arguing or putting someone down, or not listening or talking while the creative work is happening. You can always go back to the agreement and say "guys guys, you said here that ..." So you've

got things that you've agreed together for this work ... I think it's a really key part to like, setting the boundaries of this space. You can again facilitate without dominating. (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022)

The collaborative agreement is one of the strategies to facilitate a non-hierarchical workshop space. It is an important strategy of practice in ensuring an equitable space where co-creation can be collaboratively agreed and negotiated. It is also of importance where participants' ability to trust enough to negotiate well may be compromised due to their experience of trauma. It is a way to ensure the facilitators can guide the creative process and remind participants of the values they committed to in order to support full engagement.

Empowerment

Eh eh, hey, hey, hey x4

Duniya so

Ake gaki tonga so

Duniya so

Ake gaki tonga so

Eh, eh, hey, hey, hey x4

Yes, we will prosper

We shall achieve

As we see sunshine

We feel excited

We feel blessed

Joyful indeed, joyful indeed

Joyful indeeeeee

Eh, eh, hey, hey, hey x4

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Empowerment In Performance. Performance is a key component of the Stone Flowers methodology, as a way of enabling space for the voices of participants, both supporting individual and group expression, and providing opportunities for advocacy. Marsh (2010) describes the ‘Echoes of disempowerment and the return of empowerment [...] working with participants who have experienced trauma and neglect, such as refugees’ (p. 154). One of the participants explained how Stone Flowers performances have supported him in the wider areas of his life. As he explained, ‘It made me feel good because I was in a difficult situation with immigration, and music helped me go through that difficult time in my life’ (Joseph, participant questionnaire, 3rd July 2022). Collaborative music making that has performance elements can support the potential for a ‘return of empowerment’ for individuals who have experienced trauma (see for example, de Quadros, 2011; Palidofsky, 2010).

Evelyn acknowledged the impacts of trauma on participants first joining Stone Flowers, and how the public performances supported their confidence and empowerment, saying,

At the beginning there were people who literally couldn't open their mouths that ended up performing and singing. I mean literally, they came in the room, and they couldn't speak because they were so, so anxious ... There were people from Iraq and Iran that were women that were Muslim that really couldn't open their mouths, and then there were people that were just so damaged that they could barely, barely

function. And they ended up doing performances, you know, just incredible, in front of quite big audiences. It was just incredible. (Evelyn, interview, 15th July 2022).

Evelyn had been unsure of whether performance as a strategy would work with participants who were experiencing such extreme anxiety due to their trauma but was struck by how powerful it was. Every Stone Flowers participant I spoke with described how performance is their favourite aspect of the project. For example, Monique said, ‘The best moment was performing on stage to an audience singing songs—with everyone listening’ (Monique, participant questionnaire, 3rd July 2022).

Benefits of musical participation in performance for refugees are identified by Marsh (2018) as ‘a sense of belonging and also looking forward, planning positively for musical performances in the future, instead of looking back to their sometimes traumatic past’ (p. 180). Additionally van der Kolk (2014) states that, ‘Music binds people together who might individually be terrified but who collectively become powerful advocates for themselves and others’ (p. 333). Advocacy is a key part of the Stone Flowers performances with members telling their stories to invited audiences, thus raising awareness. As Rabbin explained,

But all we request, all we want, all we demand is just protection, and dignity. That's all. So, if you protect us and give us a space to perform, so we'll prove who we are. We'll bring what we have as quality, skills. And everything in terms of diversity. (Rabbin, interview, 23rd September 2022)

The connected notions of quality and skill were commented on by one of the facilitators, Amina, who made it clear that they aim for a high standard in performance. Professional

musicians support the gigs, and the participants have high expectations. As she said, ‘They're really good songwriters, they are used to be on stage, they know how good music sounds’ (Amina, interview, 15th July 2022). Leila spoke about the facilitators’ role in removing creative boundaries in songwriting and performance enabling self-expression. She explained ‘And they just give you that freedom of just express’ (Leila, interview, 15th July 2022). This freedom of expression supports both individual and collective empowerment.

Lis described the importance of not just leaving participants ‘on a high’ after a performance but meeting together again the week after a gig to reflect and share experiences and to give participants feedback from audience members. Especially important for the participants is feedback on how performances help raise awareness for audience members, as the gigs are an opportunity for advocacy. Kamia explained the importance of the performance space for the participants, saying,

You feel like I was rejected in my country. When I come here, I'll be accepted. But when it doesn't work for you in terms of getting the right to remain, it becomes again like a second rejection. But when you've got the performance, a platform, for once a platform, it's you leading on things, people are looking at you, they are listening to your songs, to you. So, for once you feel like, for once I've got this opportunity to express myself, to say something, to do to say something that people can listen to. (Kamia, interview, 13th July 2022)

Performance audio and video recordings are shared with participants as a way of supporting their ongoing wellbeing. As Lis explained, ‘the therapists will say that if people were feeling in distress at home or outside the session, they could use these anchors as ways of taking their

memories to somewhere else, which then would change the physiological state that they had' (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022). In this way, the importance of performance is not reduced to a moment in time but is drawn on to support the 'return of empowerment' (Marsh, 2010, p. 154) for participants.

Collective Empowerment of The Group. Herman (1997) writes about the importance of collective empowerment for those who have experienced trauma. Monique explained that 'Being with other people in the session made me feel good. I felt excited and happy to be in the session. I wanted to feel some joy from the project. I like to sing' (Monique, participant questionnaire, 3rd July 2022). As she explains, the joyful feelings are connected to both the singing and the being with others. Kendi explained feeling similarly about the project, where he had been experiencing high levels of stress, but participating in Stone Flowers 'Help me to try to clear my memory, to feel good' (Kendi, participant questionnaire, 3rd July 2022).

Rabbin reflected on the power of music and the strength in collective music making saying,

Music is a tool for activism and advocacy ... I understand that music is a powerful tool ... People use music as a tool to do public demonstration ... every time there is a public demonstration, people are singing. Why they sing? Because they want to be together ... when you are together, you are stronger. So, music is a tool that connect people that ... they give more powerful to the group and then they can deliver one message and fight for one cause ... music is something that can go in deeper in the human being set up. I mean, it can touch your soul. (Rabbin, interview, 23rd September 2022)

In identifying the potential for music to be a powerful tool, Rabbin highlights the strength and empowerment for those who stand together and sing. Oliver described how this collective empowerment is part of the therapeutic process of making music together, and that it also supports the self-regulation and experience of wellbeing of participants. He explained how individual and group expression can support emotional release, enabling individuals to deal with difficulties in mental and emotional health more easily.

Complications Of Power Dynamics. Group supervision is used as a strategy to address issues of power dynamics. Lis discussed the potential challenges of power dynamics for music facilitators saying,

A lot of community musicians think that they are empowering groups, but they actually haven't thought about the real fine bits of power that go on and that they actually are supposed to be experts because they are the musicians. But to manage also the power within that role, and empowering people that are very, very dismissed in the world, it's just really complicated. (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022)

Another facilitator discussed the complications of power dynamics within the group, especially when working with those who have experienced complex trauma. Strategies of practice to address unhelpful hierarchies included sitting in a circle to reinforce unity and equality in the group. The facilitators also learn alongside participants, enabling their expertise in the space, consciously not acting as teachers or knowledge bearers. As Lis explained, 'Because people were writing in their own language, they would then become the teachers of everybody else and sharing something and in a position where they were actually valued, they're actually listened to' (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022). The sense of being

listened to and valued supports participants' sense of self-empowerment in the creative process. As Oliver said, 'We're making sure that there's an equilibrium, which allows us to create, ... a creative atmosphere which is conducive to songwriting, and conducive to the expression of their feelings' (Oliver, interview, 19th July 2022).

Choice

Intifafa ye me byona, ame shyame x2

Jahani porash aremesh x2

Nature is in peace

Rush is on pause

Find it inside x2

The purpose of your life x3

Of your life

Amendi endrom amendi x2

Indu oo lagel x2

What makes you happy

What brings you joy

What is true love

What makes you happy

What brings you joy

What makes you proud?

The purpose of your life x3

Of your life

Hambasdegey - being together x2

The purpose of your life x3

Of your life

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Choice In Songwriting. Ahonen (2021) states that ‘I have found that it is important to use music that the participants like and feel is uplifting’ (p. 299). Kamia described how they enable choice for participants in the songwriting processes. She explained that participants will choose what language they want to write in, saying that sometimes English is chosen, as it supports their language development. Kamia reflected also on the choice of theme saying,

So, they make decision about what they want to write about for example ...

something you want to raise awareness about? So, they have says in, for example, the lyrics, the message of the song, the title of the song, languages in the song, the style, the music arrangement. They might not be musicians, but they can suggest based on their musical tastes, or maybe the genre, the style, the style they are familiar with.

(Kamia, interview, 13th July 2022)

⁴ The collaboration for this song was entirely through remote working during the lockdown restrictions of 2020. You can find a recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNgbNzm4nu4>.

Leila commented on the importance of the collaborative group lyrics, saying, ‘So, basically, all the lyrics comes from the heart’ (Leila, interview, 15th July 2022). She explained how the facilitators ‘make the process of making music very, very easy [...] they give you this, you know, self-confident that you can do it’ (Leila, interview, 15th July 2022). The facilitation team support the participants’ autonomy by continually offering choice in the music making processes. This collective responsibility towards co-creation enables participants to feel connected to the music and a sense of ownership over the group repertoire.

Choice In Participation. Harris and Fallot (2001) suggest the importance of a space where participants can take time out if needed. Stone Flowers methodology supports a flexible approach to participation in response to participant needs. Lis explained the importance of supporting participation by encouraging individuals to have specific roles, helping them feel needed, and increasing their capacity to come back each week. Kamia described the facilitators’ responsive approach to participation saying,

We just, we encourage people to get involved as more or little as they feel. So, if they feel like “I want to participate in writing lyrics, in suggesting ideas, even just in singing, the rehearsing” they can do that. But also, if they feel like today, “I just want to be in the session with the group, but I will most sit back, I won’t sing much but I’ll just be here watching, listening,” they can do that as well. In the session, whenever they feel like maybe “I need fresh air or just need to leave a room for few minutes” for one reason or another, it’s fine, they can do that. (Kamia, interview, 13th July 2022)

Participants' choice to opt in was also discussed by Ajay. He reflected on a participant who initially did not engage musically in the sessions. Ajay could tell that he was listening, even though this participant did not communicate verbally. The team respected his right to opt out by not making comments or trying to cajole him into the music making. This continued over the course of a few months until, as Ajay explained,

And then during one session, we were taking a break, but he stayed in the room. We'd all left. We were coming back to the room and could hear this keyboard being played. And it was him. He was absolutely phenomenal. He was an amazing musician. I just stood there going, wow! And I didn't want to go back in the room because I didn't want to disturb him. And as soon as we walked in, he sort of like stopped. But I think that situation broke something for him. Because after that he started, it still took a while, but he started to get more and more involved. (Ajay, interview, 20th July 2022)

Enabling choice for this participant to engage as much or as little as he wanted was crucial to him finally being able to actively participate in the music making. If the facilitators had had less sensitivity towards, awareness of, and understanding of the participant's needs, they might have made different decisions, pushing him towards engaging before he was ready to do so. Instead, they respected his choice to opt out, which eventually enabled his choice to opt in.

Summary

Through this case study, I have explored the considerable and ongoing challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers. I have considered the methodology of Stone Flowers as a model

of practice, viewing the data findings through the lens of the five values of trauma-informed care. Safety and collaboration are identified as key features of the practice, with trainings in trauma awareness and refugee awareness to support the facilitating teams' understanding and strategic working. Ongoing group supervision and opportunities for reflective and reflexive practice are core components of the methodology.

The complex needs of survivors of war and torture necessitate a discretely designed programme with detailed consideration of all aspects of practice, musical, relational, and pedagogical. Boundaries of practice are seen to be vital in maintaining the physical and emotional safety and wellbeing of both participants and facilitators. Culturally diverse practices are necessary in an intercultural space, along with considerations of language and interpretation. The facilitation team are key in enabling intercultural creativity where there are added complexities of displacement and trauma. The lived experience of the facilitators is found to be vital in enabling shared communality, mutual understanding, and support.

CHAPTER 7 ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDIES

Introduction

The seven illustrative case studies provide a complimentary zoom in on practice to highlight a spectrum of approaches to trauma-informed practice. Situating examples of practice as distinctive illustrations operating in specific contexts, this chapter is concerned with illuminating the practice of community musicians/music facilitators who work in contexts where prior and ongoing experience of trauma is impactful. Facilitator positionality is examined, alongside background, engagement in context-based training, and scrutiny of how each practitioner understands their pedagogy and specific strategies of practice to be informed by knowledge of individual and collective participant need, and/or experience of trauma.

The illustrative case studies resonate with the three case studies in ways that support development of the discussion and respond to the guiding research questions. For example, Kelly and Phil have worked in carceral settings, providing additional perspectives on practice to compliment the Prison Partnership case study. Dan, Phil, Gillian, Emily, and Esme, all work in contexts with young people, many of whom have experienced extreme difficulties of mental ill health connected to trauma, supporting explorations of practice connected to the all three case studies. The work of Kelly, Gillian, and Musicians Without Borders intersect with considerations of cultural diversity, impacting social and relational aspects of the music making, and necessitating adaptation of practice to support participant engagement and access, resonating with both the Ethno and Stone Flowers projects.

The research participants responded to questions that included consideration of the importance of lived experience: if you are working with those who have experienced/are continuing to experience trauma, how important is it that the facilitator has experiential understanding? Discussion of facilitation skills, strategies, and values of practice were key elements of the interview conversations, alongside issues of training, potential risks for facilitators engaging in work with trauma survivors, and how appropriate boundaries of practice can be set.

Illustrative Case Study I: Kelly Laurila
(All web pages accessed 8th June 2023)

Based on the teachings of Community Elder Jean Becker, Mino Ode Kwewak N'Gamowak (Good Hearted Women Singers) began in 2003 in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. The drum circle, comprised of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, meets regularly as a way of supporting and drawing strength from each other, on the understanding that they are stronger together (<https://minoodekwewak.wixsite.com/goodheartedwomen/aboutus>). Kelly Laurila has been the 'song carrier' of the group since the early days, when the original group was designed 'to create a space, culturally safe for Indigenous women and girls to sing in urban spaces.' Kelly described the 'disconnect' felt by Indigenous women, from themselves, their identity, and their communities, and how the drum circle aims to support renewed connection, spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically.

A social worker by training, Kelly brings a wealth of expertise and intuition to the drum circle, whilst simultaneously seeking guidance and counsel from the elders of the community. She is spiritually connected to Indigenous teachings, and these, alongside her social work practice, inform her facilitation of the group. When reflecting on how she considers her role

and responsibility, one key feature is an Indigenous teaching of *knowing yourself*. Kelly explained, ‘the more that I am aware of who I am, where I come from, and how I’m taking care of myself, that will impact others.’ She reflected on the necessity of kindness and humility as essential qualities when working with Indigenous communities, as well as the importance of acknowledging the impacts of colonisation.

Kelly described challenges the participants are facing for example, addiction, past and present experience of trauma, homelessness, and how this can impact the relationships within the group. She explained,

When people are coping with traumas, of course, they're not always walking in a good balanced way. So, they can bring their anger, they can be ready for a fight and, and they don't maybe treat each other well.

Kelly reflected that key to working with people who have experienced trauma is an understanding of their context. Understanding can serve to inform the practice, creating a space ‘where people can connect or feel relatively safe.’ As a social worker, Kelly is trained to attend to the wellbeing and health of the participants, having, as she described, a ‘lens that gives me empathy.’ This lens means that Kelly will endeavour to ‘come with kindness,’ even if there is unkindness from individuals towards her, understanding the negative behaviour as contextual rather than personal.

Through Kelly’s PhD research, she connected deeply to the idea of *The Ethical Space of Engagement* (Ermine, 2007). She applies the principles of *ethical space* to her practice, where developing ‘authentic relationships’ within the group is a key element. These positive

relationships inevitably lead to sharing of individual stories, but Kelly is careful to manage this within the boundaries of the music making, suggesting that it is vital that any sharing happens as a conscious choice. The structure of each session means that the group begins with ceremony, smudging¹, prayer, giving things, and an opening song. Kelly described how each person has an opportunity to lead a song, but as they take turns, participants might use that moment to share something of their context with the group, and potentially ask for a healing song or prayer.

Indigenous teachings are foundational values of the drum circle, encapsulating the idea that everything needs to work in balance. As Kelly explained,

I have to do my best to live a balanced life because I know that it will affect all my relations if I'm not. So, the teachings are about, you know, they call it Mino-Pi-Matisi-Win, which is an Anishinabe word for living the good life. And living the good life is about following the ethics of love, truth, respect, courage, honesty, humility, and wisdom. And those are seven secret teachings that the more we live those, the more we do become in balance.

These teachings determine the Ways of working, the shared group values, and how the women are to interact with one another. Kelly explained that having these sacred teachings as integral values of the group guides the circle, and in honouring them, there must be accountability, mutual reciprocity, and responsibility.

¹ Kelly explains smudging as a ritualistic, indigenous practice in preparation to be fully present in the space. See Higgins & Willingham, 2017, p. 62 for more detail.

Another strand to Kelly's work is a drum circle she facilitates in a women's prison. As Kelly explained, the proportion of Indigenous women (as compared to non-Indigenous) in carceral settings in Canada, is very high; systemic racism is a contributing factor to this inequity. Kelly connected the loss of identity of these women with both current and inherited trauma, saying, 'they had no sense that their way of life was connected to trauma and the context of colonisation, and just the extreme, extreme poverties on reserves, and where they came from.' Kelly approaches the two groups in a very similar way, despite the different contexts, with the same focus on sharing of culture through singing together. She is conscious of wanting to facilitate an inclusive space but reflected that the real goal was enabling a sense of belonging. She said, 'I would rather wish that they felt they belonged, you know, but that comes in time. I can include them but over time they will be the ones to see if they feel like they belong in that circle.'

Another key factor of the practice is that of *reconciliation*. Opportunities to build bridges between the Good Hearted Women Singers drum circle and the local community have included collaborating with the Waterloo Regional Police Male Chorus. Kelly described the importance of relationship in this creative partnership, emphasising mutual respect, courage, openness towards understanding each other, and an ethical agreement to work together.

Responding to the notion of trauma-informed practice, Kelly stated, 'I think what I've been doing has been that approach without the label.' Kelly's consciousness of being mindful of people's contexts in part comes from her social work practice, but has also been deeply influenced by her interactions with the Indigenous community, attending ceremony, and listening to the sacred teachings. She explained, 'I think, because of things I've been taught and you know, and elders always reminding me about people have stories beyond the story

you see, that there's so much more that we might never know about an individual.' Kelly reflected on how trauma-informed practice connects to the idea of *cultural humility*, saying,

The stance that I would take is to come into a space with recognition that I don't even know what I don't know. And so, I need to listen, and to hear people's stories. And I think that's what a trauma-informed approach is about, centring the individual.

Kelly spoke about the values of *safety*, *choice*, and *consistency*, supporting those who have experienced trauma. She reflected that an individual must 'determine what is safe for them' and that 'consistency in protocols adds to the safety that people experience.' Kelly explained that a consistency in the weekly structure of the drum circle means the women 'know what to expect' which helps them to 'relax.'

Kelly spoke about the challenge of interaction within the prison context, where the rules for practitioners are strict with regards to no physical contact with residents. She has had to make a conscious choice that she will sometimes ignore the rule in favour of building connection with the women, where greeting with a hug is the cultural norm in Indigenous communities. However, Kelly is mindful of reading the women's body language and being respectful of individuals who do not want physical contact, saying, 'I think trauma-informed practice is that the person who's doing the guiding has to be cognisant and aware.' She reflected that no practitioner is perfect or will always get it right but highlighted the importance of humility, saying, 'I have to acknowledge when I've made those missteps and speak to it and correct.' Kelly is conscious of her own tendency to be in her 'head' a lot, where reflecting on the practice can lead her to doubting and questioning herself too much.

Kelly spoke about the risks in the practice, commenting on how to balance what the women bring with them into the space, ensuring they do not ‘get to spill over on everybody else.’ Kelly spoke about a challenge to inclusion wherein participants are ‘creating harm’ in the group. She is clear that boundaries need to be set, where an individual’s actions make the group unsafe for others, saying ‘in those moments, I feel like I need to stand strong in maintaining boundaries. But how I do it, I hope is with humility and kindness.’

Reflecting on the ‘weight’ of the work, Kelly considered how she engages in self-care as a practitioner. She has a strong support system within the Indigenous community, and elders who guide and give her counsel, as well as providing a safe space for her to speak openly about specific challenges. Kelly spoke of how ceremony, fasting, and prayer are all helpful, and how dancing during a pow-wow is a release, understanding the need to ‘maintain some balance’ in her life as she engages in this work.

Illustrative Case Study II: Phil Mullen (All websites accessed 9th June 2023)

UK-based community musician Phil Mullen is currently a consultant for the English Music Education Hubs². At the time of the interview, he was working with over 40 of the Hubs (roughly a third of the 122 Hubs nationally), supporting them in developing inclusion strategies. In engaging in this work, Phil has taken the decision to identify not as a community musician, but as an inclusive music educator, acknowledging that this term is more closely aligned to formalised understandings of practice. The work Phil is doing with the Music Hubs is mainly with schools-based organisations and those working with formal

² For more information refer to <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/MusicEducationHubs>.

approaches to music making. As he described, ‘it's kind of changed my idea of what an inclusive session would be.’

A different strand to Phil’s current work is continuing to support training and strategic conversation within the area of practice he explored through his doctoral research (Mullen, 2017), in which he considers music-making with young people excluded from school. As Phil explained, generic community music training can support practitioners as they develop the skills they need for generalised, workshop facilitation. When there are additional considerations around young people with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Difficulties (SEMHD), specialist training needs to be engaged.

Phil calls into question understandings of young people in challenging circumstances as synonymous with young people with challenging behaviour. He has categorised the notion of *challenging circumstances* into five areas, to support both strategic thinking and pedagogical approaches to practice. The categories are as follows:

1. Young people with lifelong conditions including disabilities and complex needs.
2. Geographical barriers to engagement; for example, rural isolation, social economic deprivation, where the location is unsafe due to political activity and violence in the community.
3. Background factors—cultural barriers to engagement, socially excluded groups (for example, the Irish traveller community).
4. Life circumstances such as trauma, or prolonged stress or distress due to specific factors in their lives; e.g. children and young people in care, those from military families.

5. Social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. (Mullen, 2022)

Phil spoke about how there should be music provision for all children and young people, supported by the Hubs, but that this is not always the case, particularly with some of these groups of children in challenging circumstances. He explained,

Hub provision is supposed to give every child high quality music education, but it's also supposed to reach out to specific hard to engage groups, according to the previous National Plan³, and it's just not happening. So that's a whole range of groups, that would be the kind of traditional area of community music practice. But community music practice is not necessarily hooked in with the Hub funding that should be there for that in the country.

In this statement, Phil highlights the challenges for inclusive music making as being connected, in part, to funding. He also explained the pedagogical changes that need to happen if music making is going to be inclusive and accessible for young people across the five categorisations of challenging circumstances. Phil reflected that historic notions of curriculum-based lessons with measurable outcomes are not going to be effective for children with social, emotional, mental health difficulties. He asserted that 'there has to be some more holistic approach, you know, looking at the musical, personal, and social development of the young person, rather than the more traditional.'

³ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-power-of-music-to-change-lives-a-national-plan-for-music-education>.

Phil highlighted a massive societal issue in talking about young people in Pupil Referral Units (hereafter PRUs), where statistically, nearly nine out of ten will end up in prison. In consideration of how music making could support these young people, Phil reflected,

The idea of intervention ... starts to make a little bit of sense with this particular group, you know? If you can intervene with their journey early on, and make some kind of inroads ... into their perception of life and themselves within life, then there is potential in my opinion (unproven) but potential for change and transformation there, you know? We haven't proved it.

In reflecting on his motivation for the work, Phil explained that he 'fell into the work' back in 1985. As an unemployed musician, he was offered a government scheme that paid him money to train with John Stevens⁴, an experience Phil described as 'life changing.' Phil explained how the training 'informed me totally about our way of working with people that was radically different from what I'd experienced before.' He also acknowledged that his background, growing up in Northern Ireland, was as a young person *in* challenging circumstances. Phil reflected that when he came across behaviours in particular contexts, it did not faze him. In fact, he described how it felt 'very natural,' saying, 'But when I was working in prison, it was really just like working with my local crowd, you know? ... And so, I got in there, loved it, and realised the power of it.'

When discussing trauma-informed practice, Phil could see the value in specific training to support facilitators, building on any generalist training they may have received. He reflected

⁴ English jazz performer, community musician, and author of *Search & Reflect* (1985) a handbook introducing techniques of improvisation for music workshop settings.

that he was working many years prior to development of any theoretical models or specific training but was always aware of participants' histories and their ongoing challenging circumstances (whether working with homeless communities, with young offenders, in carceral settings, or in exclusion units). Phil described himself as a 'reasonably good communicator ...' with groups who have experienced collective challenge. He also reflected that 'I've never been seen too much as an outsider.' This positive facilitation skill of good communication, alongside participants' acceptance of Phil, he attributed to a mutual understanding, saying,

So, it was very natural for me to communicate with people who have significant challenges in their lives. I mean, I've had pretty significant in mine, you know, as well. So, there's a kind of shared empathy there that's just been, I haven't really had to work on that, being able to communicate.

Phil reflected on how facilitators need to address the potential gap between them and participants, and that this will be different for everyone. He said, 'for all of us, the first consideration here when working with the *other*, is that we are the *other* to them.' When thinking about how facilitators should approach working with those in challenging circumstances (where there will be a high percentage of those who have experienced prior trauma), he suggested that there is a need to 'interrogate our own positionality as an ongoing process.' Phil highlighted the responsibility that facilitators have in asking questions about their suitability for the work, and that positionality is key to that.

Illustrative Case Study III: Esme Bridie

(All web links accessed 7th June 2023)

Esme Bridie is a singer-songwriter based in Liverpool, UK. She balances her performance career alongside being a music educator, instrumental tutor, and community musician. Esme completed a BA (hons) Music (Songwriting) programme at Leeds Conservatoire⁵ in 2019. As well as developing the skills to support her performance career, Esme engaged in an elective module called *Working with Music in the Community*. As part of this module, she had the opportunity to create a songwriting project in a youth centre in Leeds, Angel of Youths⁶. This first experience of running a community music project was a resoundingly positive one for Esme.

Esme contacted me as she finished her degree, wanting to speak about how to develop her community music practice. I invited her onto the Prison Partnership Project as a way of her engaging in a specific practice context, that enabled her to develop her facilitation skills. I also knew her performance and songwriting skills would be invaluable in the space. She joined the Autumn 2019 Emerging Voices project, and supported the women in creating a collaborative song, as well as working towards a sharing of covers, chosen by the women, in the December. The group was already well established at this point, with clear structures and ways of working built into the facilitation strategies. Esme was able to engage in the One Small Thing model of trauma-informed practice, and we reflected weekly as a facilitation team, talking about the challenges, group dynamics, and how best to support the women in making music together. There were several women in that group with severe difficulties of mental ill health, and for Esme, it was an important experience using her musical skills in a

⁵ Previously known as Leeds College of Music.

⁶ Refer to <https://leedsforchange.org.uk/groups/angel-of-youths/>.

complex setting, and an opportunity to engage in trauma-informed community music practice first hand.

Her current practice is still focused on working with young people in schools, youth clubs, and more recently a secure adolescent mental health ward. Esme described her motivation to work with young people, saying,

I think it has actually always been an area of interest. If I think about it, when I was a teenager, like 13, that was when I found music for me as a way of expressing myself as a teenager going through various things. So, I feel like, in a way, it's sort of a drive to be able to connect with other young people through music in that way.

One of her more recent projects, the 42nd Street Project⁷, in collaboration with Brighter Sound⁸, supports young people with difficulties of mental ill health, with an aim of wellbeing through music making. Brighter Sound encourages young artists, like Esme, with opportunities for training. Esme applied for, and was awarded, a bursary to engage in an online Certificate for Music Educators with Trinity College of Music⁹. Esme commented that despite having had some experience of community music through her degree programme, the training courses she accessed through Brighter Sound gave her increased confidence in the work.

⁷ For more information see <https://www.42ndstreet.org.uk>.

⁸ Brighter Sound in Manchester, UK was set up over twenty-two years ago, Brighter Sound have many different strands to their work, with an aim of 'creating transformative experiences for young creatives, emerging artists and up-and-coming music professionals' (<https://www.brightersound.com/about/>).

⁹ For more information see <https://www.trinitycollege.com/qualifications/music/CME>.

42nd Street charity supports young people with mental ill health, with free access to services such as counselling and with creative projects designed to improve emotional wellbeing. The project Esme worked on was the first of its kind to offer drop-in music-making sessions for young people already connected to the charity. The music facilitators worked responsively with the project participants in what Esme described as a very ‘loose and open’ way, and with no particular focus or end goal. Attendance was both low and unpredictable, which Esme described as ‘difficult.’ She reflected,

It was quite hard to sort of feel like we got a project going, because there was so much sort of up and down. In the end. I think it was about more about, like what we did in the room that day, than working towards anything too long term.

There was a team of music facilitators, of which Esme was one, support workers, and a counsellor for the project. One of the facilitators ‘defined himself as lived experience.’ He had experienced difficulties of mental ill health, and music played an important part in his recovery. Esme highlighted this as a significant factor, saying, ‘I felt like he brought a lot to that space in terms of his energy and also, like, creating that safe space for the participants to feel safe. I just felt like he really sort of understood.’ She described where one of the participants, who had found it difficult to actively participate in the first week of the project, ‘had sort of a connection’ with the facilitator with lived experience, saying, ‘he seemed to feel quite safe with him working with him on guitar.’

Esme explained how the facilitator’s lived experience contributed positively to group dynamics, saying, ‘I think that was important in the trust and the level of the overall feeling in the room.’ She did identify a point of caution for the possibility of a facilitator with lived

experience being triggered by something in the space, saying, 'I guess there's just a few things to be careful of I suppose in terms of people's emotions.' Continuing with this need for care in the practice, Esme reflected,

Maybe it's about the awareness to not bring too much of your own experience into the space. And I guess that's the balance, isn't it? Bring in a bit of your own expert, because like you said, everyone has their own experiences, you're gonna bring an aspect of that, but it's the right awareness of how much of yourself to put in.

Esme felt that one tangible positive outcome for the young people who attended was increased confidence. In her view, this was especially visible in young people who had very high levels of anxiety at the start of the project and were withdrawn, wanting only to observe the initial session. As they attended each week, Esme described how their level of participation shifted positively. She also explained how important it was that the young people had a choice in how much or little they wanted to engage, saying,

I think in schools and stuff, you don't have that choice. A lot of young people, like only have the experience of maybe learning music in a school setting, where you have to join in, and you have to do exactly this, you know? Whereas I think that's what's really cool about these sorts of projects, where someone might just want to listen at first and that's fine. It's just more broad and open, ... it takes away those barriers. And especially I think with like things like anxiety. If you feel like it's forced and you feel like you might get put on the spot, you can shut down, can't you? So, I feel like ... that barrier is taken away, and people can join in.

Esme spoke of being conscious of working with young people with difficulties of mental ill health, saying that ‘being gentle with people’ was vital. She also explained that she never puts anyone ‘on the spot,’ especially when there is propensity towards high levels of anxiety and stress. She reflected that the facilitators were part of the music making with the young people in a way that eliminated some of the hierarchical structures present in more formalised environments, saying, ‘it was this together thing which I think could take away some of the stress and anxiety for some of those people in that space.’ The young people were also given time to provide feedback on their experiences of the project, via their support workers, to which the facilitators could then respond. For example, one of the participants felt too visible playing the keyboard where it was positioned in the space, and this was making her feel vulnerable and exposed. Responding to the feedback, the following week the team set up the instruments in a circle, to ensure a more inclusive experience for the participants so that no one person would feel highlighted or singled out.

The team was not given details or guidance for the specific needs of participants, but a 42nd Street counsellor attended each session. As Esme explained, ‘she could maybe look out for any signs of anything that needed any attention.’ This meant that the facilitators could focus on the music making, with a safety net for the young people from both the counsellor and individual support workers. Esme was clear that there was no mention of the young people’s stories and contexts, and therefore no disclosures to the musicians around individual experience of trauma. Esme suggested that a generalised training of trauma with guidance for trauma-informed practice could be useful in increasing facilitators’ awareness in that context, reflecting, ‘I guess it would just ... potentially like deepen your ability to sort of connect with participants in a way that's maybe more helpful to them.’ She explained that working with

songwriting, ‘things come up for people’; therefore, understanding how to ‘support certain situations’ would be useful.

Esme suggested that one of the contributing factors to creating a safe space for participants was a ‘calm energy.’ She also reflected that trauma is more prevalent than is always obvious, and that ‘following a model’ could support her work and increase her confidence across the varied contexts of her practice, including schools focused on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND¹⁰), and youth clubs in areas of social and economic deprivation. Esme also commented on the potential issues around boundaries of practice, saying,

But then it is hard, I think. Because it's like, you're there as a community musician, and then I feel ... like it's almost on the line of therapy, do you know what I mean? It is sort of that line, isn't it, of like, when is it best to have someone in the space that's actually a therapist or has that knowledge?

Esme asks the important question, how does a facilitator know when a participant needs additional support that is over and above a community musician’s experience and training? This articulation of the potential for tension in practice is of note--that there can be an over-expectation of a community musician’s skill and ability to deal with difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998) as presented by participants with limited guidance on how to respond.

¹⁰ In the UK, SEND schools are those with a particular focus on special educational needs and disabilities. Every state funded school has a SEND register, but for pupils with more severe needs they can access specialist services in schools that have staff trained to work with more complex physical, social, and emotional barriers.

Illustrative Case Study IV: Dan Axon

(All web links accessed 23rd May 2023)

Dan Axon is the Director of Upfaders, York, UK. A Youth Music Project, Upfaders is described on a local York-based information website as,

An inclusive youth, DJ, MC, music production and performance project. We work with any young people, often from disadvantaged backgrounds and challenging circumstances to empower them through involvement in modern musical activities such as music production, DJing and MCing and performances. (york.mumbler.co.uk)

Upfaders provides high quality music making opportunities for young people. The current music offer includes DJing, MCing, songwriting, music production, learning instruments, and recording opportunities. Alongside technical skills development in music performance and production, Upfaders is committed to support the young people in enabling them to ‘realise their creative potential’ as well as ‘develop participants’ personal and social skills, such as self-confidence and self-esteem’ (upfaders.wordpress.com).

A DJ, music producer, and performer, Dan described an organic process leading to where he is today, without formalised music training. He considered himself as a ‘non-musician’ but was always interested in music. As Dan explained, ‘I just went about it anyway in my own way and time.’ The interest and skill grew, and while Dan was working as a designer, more opportunities opened up for him so that he decided to ‘jump ship’ into a professional music career. He worked as a DJ and performer but spoke of how he realised quite quickly that the money was ‘completely unpredictable’ therefore, he needed other sources of income to support his career.

During the late 1990s, Dan explained that his skill set was quite unusual and therefore sought after in community settings. He was offered the opportunity to work with young people who had been excluded from school as part of a wellbeing intervention in a PRU, and from that point began to take community music jobs to supplement his income. Dan was clear that the motivation initially was financially connected, but as he worked with the young people, many of whom had social and emotional difficulties, he realised he had skills and expertise to offer that were beneficial to the participants. Dan considered one of the things that made him effective in the work was his understanding of the young people and their circumstances. He said, ‘I had a lot of life experience that gave me a lot of insight and a lot of parallels with the young people that I was being asked to try and engage.’

Dan spoke of being ‘musically credible’ and that because his motivation was not connected to, as he phrased it, ‘some sort of evangelical “down with the kids” approach,’ his approach to the work resonated positively with the young people. His musical background complemented his lived experience of challenge and disadvantage, ‘so young people sort of felt ... it was safe and credible to get involved with this.’ Dan’s focus was to ensure the young people felt included and enjoyed the music making.

Dan became a regular practitioner working with Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS¹¹) in-patients who have experienced ‘the most severe disadvantage’ and mental ill health. He provided music making opportunities one-on-one or in very small groups, over a sustained period, a model still utilised by Upfaders. Dan explained that ‘it’s usual for our clients to be, you know, traumatised,’ and he understands the need for reflective

¹¹ CAMHS is part of England’s National Health Service (NHS) providing support and services for young people with difficulties of mental ill health and diagnostic services in relation to neurodiversity, for example, ADHD and autism. For more information refer to <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/your-guide-to-support/guide-to-camhs/>.

and reflexive practice as significant strategies in the work. He described the participants saying,

We're working with individuals who are known to be sort of in like, you know, chronic mental health issues, probably in-patients coming from very specialist agencies that are offering strong support around like issues like, you know, abuse, neglect, bereavement, gender, sexual identity, very, very focused.

The young people that come to Upfaders have extremely complex needs. Dan explained that during the period of working with CAMHS in-patients, there was specific mentoring and support designed to keep the practitioners and the young people safe ensuring 'nothing disastrous' has ever happened. Dan understands his role as distinct from the clinicians and that some of the value for the young people is their perception of him as more equal. He raised the issue of practitioner 'welfare.' Without access to regular supervision as an integral part of the work, it is harder to maintain emotional distance in creative work that can be draining. Dan explained how empathy and awareness, as key skills for the work, could promote a risk to the practitioner if boundaries are not set.

Illustrative Case Study V: Emily Foulkes

(All web links accessed 24th May 2023)

Emily Foulkes is the Director of Music for Good¹² based in Cornwall, UK. Set up in 2001, and with a mission statement of 'supporting well-being and learning through music' (<https://www.musicforgood.uk>), the charity initially engaged young people in challenging

¹² Formally Cymaz, Cornwall youth music action zone.

circumstances by offering inclusive music making, with targeted investment in areas of social and economic difficulty. Music for Good has evolved during the past twenty-three years and now includes music making ‘across the lifespan.’

Music for Good has three core values: education, collaboration, and well-being, and a strongly held belief in the ‘positive and life-changing powers of music.’ As Emily described, they are ‘very much driven by music as a tool to support well-being,’ and while the charity does not operate like a traditional music service, they do offer an element of tuition alongside more therapeutic approaches to music making. The organisation supports practice in a range of contexts, including education, community, health and social care settings, and is connected to the NHS via its Social Prescribing project¹³. They design specialist programmes in response to need; for example, *Singing for Lung Health in Cornwall*, or weekly sessions in a Young Person’s Mental Health Unit, seeking to overcome potential barriers to engagement, whether social, economic, physical, or mental health related.

Music for Good has strong partnerships with other organisations and offers training and consultancy work, supporting practitioners who may be feeling ‘isolated and disconnected.’ One such offer was a pilot online training course in *Trauma and Mental Health-Informed Singing* that ran between January and March of 2023. Music for Good also established the Singing for Health Network in 2021, ‘offering a space for practitioners, researchers, and health care professionals to come together and share practice.’ Research is a vital component of the organisation’s ongoing development, and the Singing for Health Network is a key location for growth in this area. Emily’s work for the organisation covers four distinct areas: Director, practitioner, trainer, and researcher.

¹³ For more information, refer to <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/>.

Funding was secured within Cornwall to run a diploma level trauma-informed training programme to support schools and organisations working with young people in challenging circumstances, which Emily and other Music for Good practitioners attended. Emily explained the training as a validating process for the team to help them to ‘sharpen’ their practice. Emily’s master’s research connected with principles of trauma-informed practice, in which she considered outcomes of one-on-one singing lessons where trauma-informed pedagogy was applied. With the practical training and research background in this area, Emily described how ‘it became very much part of our whole organisation.’ Music for Good now identifies as a trauma-informed organisation, and Emily explained that they apply the approaches across all areas of their work. Music for Good now offer their own in-house training, because, as Emily explained, the course they attended had not explored much in the way of working with trauma-informed practice with music, singing, or the voice.

In speaking about her background and initial interests connecting her to the practice, Emily explained that her mother is a social worker who worked with fostering and adoption services. Having studied performing arts as an undergraduate student, Emily worked within a local authority child protection team as an administrator, in what she described as a ‘very eye opening’ experience. From there, she moved into a role within Youth Music¹⁴, developing and managing projects for young people in challenging circumstances. She also worked with Family Futures adoption and fostering agency¹⁵ giving her insight into working with children who have traumatic home lives. All these threads of experience, including becoming a trainer with Trauma-informed Schools,¹⁶ have contributed to Emily’s significant experience and expertise, which she brings to her current roles.

¹⁴ See <https://youthmusic.org.uk>

¹⁵ See <https://www.familyfutures.co.uk>.

¹⁶ Refer to <https://www.traumainformedschools.co.uk>.

Emily contextualised the approaches to trauma-informed practice that Music for Good use, explaining that there are different theoretical models they draw from. These include an amalgamation of Panksepp's Affective Neuroscience Model¹⁷, Dan Hughes PACE Model¹⁸ (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy), self-determination theory¹⁹, Albert Bandura's 1977 self-efficacy theory, compassion-focused therapy²⁰, Stephen Porges' Polyvagal Theory, and Peter Levine's (1997) work around somatic experiencing. With these theoretical models underpinning the work, they have 'drilled down' their organisational model to incorporate the 'Three C's': *connect*, *create*, and *consolidate*. Expanding further, Emily described the main facets of each:

1. Connect: the importance of relationship with participants as being person-centred, alongside practitioner attributes such as empathy, the ability to attune, setting clear expectations and boundaries, and being 'non-judgmental, accepting and curious.'
2. Create: the importance of co-creation, play, and working with energy levels and 'top-down, bottom-up' somatic approaches.
3. Consolidate: the importance of validation, 'appropriate rewards', negotiating next steps, and 'building in opportunities for reflection.'

Emily commented on the development of her practice alongside growing knowledge and understanding of theoretical models, reflecting, 'I was very much aware of this is not just happening by accident, I'm not just deciding to do something relaxing, and then something uplifting, this is a very carefully crafted journey.' Emily also spoke about the need for

¹⁷ For more detail, see <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3181986/>.

¹⁸ See <https://ddpnetwork.org/about-ddp/meant-pace/>.

¹⁹ See <https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/theory/>.

²⁰ See [https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/compassion-focused-therapy#:~:text=Compassion%2Dfocused%20therapy%20\(CFT\)%20aims%20to%20help%20promote%20mental,essential%20aspect%20of%20well%2Dbeing.](https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/compassion-focused-therapy#:~:text=Compassion%2Dfocused%20therapy%20(CFT)%20aims%20to%20help%20promote%20mental,essential%20aspect%20of%20well%2Dbeing.)

different levels of understanding and training connected to trauma-informed practice. She suggested that trauma *awareness* is a more surface-level application, but that in a lot of instances of practice it is completely appropriate not to go deeper than a generalised understanding of trauma, its implications, and how to adapt practice accordingly.

Emily commented on the different language used around trauma-informed practice, saying, ‘isn't it just all about what's relevant within your setting, how you're working, and where your line is?’ She continued,

But the line is that we're not training anything that any good parent shouldn't know, either. You know, this is all stuff that anybody could access and should access and can know and can implement. You know, you don't have to be a therapist, to understand empathy, to understand connection, to understand, you know, that you could just shift the way that you respond to somebody and, you know, you don't have to be a therapist to do that.

Emily reflected on the strain on services that support young people with mental ill health, such as CAMHS and how the work of Music for Good is not just complimentary but demonstrates ‘fantastically positive results.’ Emily described how their practice is closer to the health end of the spectrum than community music making; therefore, they provide peer supervision alongside regular clinical supervision for their practitioners. She spoke about being mindful that many practitioners operate on their own without support, and so they consciously make provision for their own team, as well as delivering training that can be accessed more widely. There are risks to the work, such as being triggered, compassion fatigue, burnout, and potentially, not responding well to participants. However, Emily also

suggested that practitioners need to be able to accept that they won't always 'get it right' but understand how to 'repair,' with reflective practice being key to this approach. Emily described personal skills as key for their practitioners, that she prioritised in recruitment over and above musicianship or teaching skills.

Emily asserted that trauma-informed practice should be something that 'everyone' understands, qualifying that in using the word 'everyone,' she is deliberately suggesting that it is 'useful for life,' not just for working in specific contexts. She discussed how music making can aid in trauma recovery, in the first instance because, as humans, we are 'hardwired as musical beings.' Emily commented on being very aware of the 'regulatory power that music has,' especially rhythm, and how there is a 'primal' connection when you consider physiological functions such as heartbeat and breathing. She spoke about music as a 'vehicle for expression,' and 'releasing trauma.' It is noteworthy that, in contrast, Emily also spoke about participants with whom they have worked who do not want to engage musically. She said, 'we've had children who just don't want to do music, they just don't want to do it.' Emily reflected on how the strong collaborative relationships with partner organisations (who refer participants to their projects) is key in these moments, including consideration of who is going to benefit most from the work.

Illustrative Case Study VI: Gillian Howell (All weblinks accessed 13th June 2023)

Australian-based community musician Gillian Howell has practice and research interests in peace building and conflict transformation. Her practice has been focused on working in post-war conflict zones, with those who have lived experience of forced migration, and with communities of First Nations peoples (see for example Howell, 2013, 2018). Gillian

attributes some of her interest in applied music practice to growing up in a household with socially minded Catholic parents, where her mother was ‘very involved in social justice, activism, campaigns, and fundraising.’ The Catholic teachings she was exposed to during her childhood and adolescence, Gillian described as encouraging individual responsibility ‘to live in a way that contributes to bringing good into other people's lives and addressing issues of inequality and injustice.’ Gillian spoke about looking for ways to integrate her musical skill with her understanding of ‘social responsibility.’

As an immigrant from the UK, Gillian ‘felt more connected’ to Europe, and so applied for, and was accepted to the Guildhall School of Music’s Performance and Communication Skills undergraduate programme²¹. The course offered opportunities to develop in improvisation, music theatre, and creative collaboration. While studying, Gillian volunteered for projects both in the UK as a visiting artist in schools²², and in Eastern Europe, developing her facilitation techniques, and combining her energy, enthusiasm for being immersed in different cultures, and sense of social responsibility. As Gillian described, she was interested in ‘countries in transition,’ and was ‘paying attention’ to what was happening, especially in Bosnia and former Yugoslavian countries. Gillian heard about the Pavarotti Music Centre in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina²³ and decided she wanted to work there.

The Pavarotti Music Centre was opened in December 1997, under the banner of the UK-based charity, War Child²⁴. Originally, the aim of the centre was to offer arts projects and workshops for young people to bring together those from different communities, religions, and ethnicities through creative engagement. Alongside these projects, the centre offered

²¹ Refer to <https://www.gsmd.ac.uk>.

²² See <https://www.childrensmusicworkshop.com> for more information on the project Gillian worked with.

²³ Refer to https://www.mcpavarotti.com/index_eng.htm.

²⁴ See <https://www.warchild.org.uk>.

music therapy for children and young people who had been and continued to be traumatised by the conflict. Gillian described running music workshops for the schools' programme, where she had 'all this energy, skills, and ideas for workshops, and an ability to work without a lot of language.' Nigel Osborne was the visionary driver for this work and placed emphasis on facilitating music making that was both fun and intentionally directed to support children who had experienced trauma.

Nigel had developed a particular pedagogical approach, training facilitators such as Gillian in his way of working. Gillian explained that until this point, she 'hadn't ever thought about what it meant to be a traumatised child,' or about how practice could be adapted to support young people in these kinds of circumstances. The focus of the pedagogy was to notice and respond to the children's energy levels. Gillian described the 'extremes' of behaviour that she observed during the workshops, with children 'literally bouncing off the walls' compared to 'those few who might be sitting there completely frozen, barely able to move, make eye contact, engage at all.' Gillian reflected that she had never witnessed a child in that kind of 'frozen' state before and did not have the language to describe what she was observing. She also spoke about being unprepared for the work and potentially contributed to the heightened energy levels of the children in the early days by not understanding how to work in a musically effective way to bring the levels down.

Gillian described being taught by Nigel to assess the energy levels at the start of the session and to match them musically. For example, if the energy was incredibly high, they would match this with a high energy musical activity and then gradually begin to bring it down. As Gillian explained,

The half hour or forty minutes we had with the kids was to help them to find a way of existing, a way of being in their bodies and brains, that was a little bit more functional to help them recover a steadier rate of breathing, of breath and heart rate, to help them find a place of calm, or moments at least where they felt like they could be still, a little more still.

Gillian spoke about matching the very low energy levels of the children, where any small step towards participation was a big ‘win’ to be encouraged. For example, if a child made eye contact, or joined in with a tiny part of a song, or even just mouthed the words, these would be moments that were celebrated.

At the same time Gillian was working in the Pavarotti Music Centre, there was a djembe drumming group for young people, set up by Eugene Skeef²⁵. Gillian described how the facilitators were ‘charismatic [but] really grounded and down to earth,’ had amazing energy, and were able to make the participants feel safe. Gillian spoke about the quality of a djembe drum that makes it ‘soothing or comforting or reassuring’ to play. This observation has led Gillian to think about the kinds of instruments she uses to the present day in her practice, where she actively seeks out instruments with the same kind of quality; for example, the bass xylophone. Participants can tangibly feel and respond to the deep vibrations and resonances from the instrument. Gillian commented, ‘kids don’t whack the instruments that they get comfort from, they don’t try to bash the shit out of them,’ supporting a more calm and regulated space.

²⁵ London-based South African percussion player, composer, and music educator.

A project that is part of Gillian's current practice is working with First Nations peoples in a remote community of Northwest Australia, Fitzroy Crossing. She facilitates music making in the school and Early Childhood Centre and described the complexity of the context, necessitating a trauma-informed approach to the work. Gillian reflected on the 'often very chaotic learning spaces,' where attendance at the school is low, so participation in the music making sessions changes constantly. Gillian spoke about the challenge of keeping the young people engaged, saying, 'So you might only get say, three shots, and then you've lost them.' She described the need for a more directive approach in the space, saying,

Because I think this is something interesting in terms of trauma-informed practice, and that people, actually they want, they need the safety that comes from that degree of direction, and the open-endedness, with which I've always approached my work, I don't know if it's always the right match.

Gillian reflected on the 'delicate' balance needed in the work to facilitate the participants' creative ideas, whilst avoiding the 'quick-hit' approach to the work that can be 'disempowering.' She works in a way that 'creates space for voices,' encouraging participants in the creative decision-making, understanding that her role is to hold and maintain the safety of the space.

Gillian described the 'ability to build relationship' as the 'first quality' of facilitation in post-war conflict zones and working with those who have experienced trauma. She reflected on the distinction between being able to 'face' and 'merge' with people whilst maintaining healthy boundaries, saying, 'because it doesn't work if you're too vulnerable, because then people don't feel safe.' Gillian reflected on the distinct characteristics of the facilitators at the

Pavarotti Music Centre, how they all brought different skills and personality types which positively impacted their delivery of the music making. She said, ‘and this is why I think it's not so much about a particular way of being, but it must be about the relationship.’

Despite Gillian’s extensive experience working in contexts where participants have experienced (and continue to experience) trauma, she spoke about her consideration of trauma-informed practice, saying, ‘I haven't done any training in any way that would make me feel like I could say, “I’m trauma informed,” like I've got it covered, or I've got my qualification.’ She described how she adjusts her practice in consideration of participants’ experience of trauma, saying,

I think more about what I understand of trauma and how it can manifest in terms of people's responses in a group setting, and being attentive to those, alert for those, and also making decisions about how I communicate, and how I set up the space, to try to avoid triggering some of the more common patterns.

Gillian spoke about strategies she uses; for example, keeping the space ordered and tidy, simplifying her communication with a group, using visual cues, helping children to relax by creating a space that ‘doesn’t give them things to worry about.’ She reflected on delivering sessions in a ‘clear and calming’ way, when the facilitator knows that the participants will have ‘debilitating symptoms’ to manage as well as finding it difficult to regulate their emotions. Gillian described how choice can be facilitated but in a way that ‘you're relinquishing control²⁶, but you're still retaining your responsibility,’ so participants feel safe.

²⁶ Refer to Higgins & Shehan Campbell, 2010.

Gillian spoke about the potential issue with identifying strongly as being trauma-informed, saying, ‘because it feels a bit like a way of asserting a level of authority ... a hierarchy of expertise.’ She reflected that it could get in the way of building relationships and that it could be more constructive for practitioners to create an invitation for open dialogue around the notion, understanding we can learn from each other, and celebrate the value in different approaches to practice.

Illustrative Case Study VII: Musicians Without Borders (All web links accessed 14th June 2023)

Founded in 1999, Musicians Without Borders (hereafter MWB) is a world-leading and innovative organisation ‘using music for peacebuilding and social change’ (<https://www.musicianswithoutborders.org>). With a mission ‘to use the power of music to bridge divides, connect communities, and heal the wounds of war,’ MWB runs projects in varied locations around the globe, in contexts that have been impacted by war, communal violence, and displacement. Each of the projects is designed and delivered with detailed and intentional consideration for its specific context and in collaboration with local musicians and organisations. With a philosophy based on three core principles²⁷, the current project offer is as follows:

- *Al-Musiqa Tajm'ana*: Based in Jordan, this music programme responded to a request for training provision and since 2021 has offered music students, teachers, and local musicians the opportunity to engage in developing their facilitation skills, running workshops with migrant children and young people with disabilities.
- *Armonia Cuscatleca*: Set up in 2015 by local musician Pablo Méndez Granadino with the intention of supporting building of connections, teamwork, and self-esteem, this

²⁷ The power of music, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The principles of nonviolence.

music education programme in El Salvador is for children and young people who have been impacted by gang warfare and communal violence.

- *Bara'em Ghirass*: Partnering with the Ghirass Cultural Center in Bethlehem, this project delivers a variety of weekly music making sessions for children, their families, and the local community. Seeking to address issues surrounding gender equality and cultural heritage, the project aims to increase the self-esteem and empathy for the *other* of project participants.
- *Music Connects (Rock School Program)*: Running concurrently in two contexts, Mitrovica, northern Kosovo, and Skopje, North Macedonia, this project aims to bridge the divide for young people, separated by ethnicity and conflict by providing quality music making opportunities in rock music and music production²⁸.
- *Rwanda Youth Music*: Set up in 2012, this project aims to respond to the ongoing systemic violence that has continued long after the end of the conflicts of the 1990s. The spread of HIV is an unwanted legacy of this time, and the project is designed to support the needs of children and young people living with HIV. The therapeutic music making has been developed in collaboration with WE-ACTx for Hope, enabling young people to experience the social and personal benefits of music²⁹.
- *¡Soy Música!*: In collaboration with the Salvadoran Ministry of Education and UNICEF, this project began in 2017 focusing on developing peaceful coexistence through music making and the arts in schools. This has been facilitated through a training programme aimed at music teachers, with principles of nonviolent practice as a foundation, building capacity for quality and contextually focused delivery within the existing national school system.

²⁸ See Howell et al. (2021) for an evaluation report of this project.

²⁹ Using the learning and expertise from Rwanda Youth Music, training programmes are now run in neighbouring Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Tanzania, supporting local music leaders.

- *Welcome Notes:* With its beginnings in the Netherlands, the project has grown with off-shoots in Germany, Italy, Greece, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Working with those with lived experience of displacement and forced migration, the musical offer includes both children and adults focusing on social inclusion, creativity, and self-expression, as well as training programmes for developing skills in inclusive music making.

The MWB methodology has been developed over two decades as an organic process, responding to localised needs and cultural context. The work of the organisation comprises four strands: music leadership, band coaching, music therapy, and research and evaluation. Music leadership training is delivered both within specific locations to support existing projects and as open access international events for music leaders to develop their skills, incorporating the five working principles (safety, inclusion, equality, creativity, quality) into their practice. Band coaching is offered at the Rock School programme in partnership with Fontys Rockacademie in the Netherlands³⁰. Music therapy is embedded into the projects based in Palestine and Rwanda, incorporating both clinical practice, and training for music leaders in therapeutic approaches to music making. Research and evaluation is a growing area for MWB, with a desired focus on exploring music making for social change (see for example, Eck, 2013; Hassler & Nicholson, 2017).

To understand more about the MWB methodology and its application, specifically in relationship to trauma-informed practice, I interviewed two members of the international team—Chris Nicholson (Program development manager, and Regional program manager for East Africa) and Darren Abrahams (Wellbeing advisor)—and from the Music Leadership

³⁰ Refer to <https://fontys.edu/Fontys-School-of-Fine-and-Performing-Arts.htm> for more information.

Network, Marion Haak-Schulenburg. In the following text I examine their respective insights into the structures and processes of MWB that support the methodological framework of practice.

Chris Nicholson

Chris first engaged with the Rwanda Youth Music programme as a trainee music therapist. After completing his studies, he returned to Rwanda and spent 4 years working with young people living with HIV. He is fascinated by the science behind the practice and theoretical grounding and continues to connect with academic research as a way of deepening understanding of application into music making. Chris's engagement with and reflection on theoretical models is significantly influential to conversations around development of MWB projects, training, and methodology.

Chris described music therapy practice as person-centred, responsive, a way of 'meeting someone where they are [and] trying to relate.' Chris explained that to be musically responsive in the most effective way, a care plan is developed and objectives set, however big or small. He reflected on how he finds the theoretical models (particularly sociological models of music therapy) helpful for decision making in his practice. Chris explained how these models place contextual understanding as key, moving away from the 'more medical, clinical basis of some music therapy work towards more sociological ideas ... much more the kind of flexible and emergent kind of idea of wellbeing and of musical meaning, and of relationship.' This is an important distinction, and is reflected in the work of MWB, where wellbeing and relationship are key facets.

Chris spoke about the Rwanda Youth Music Project as a way of addressing challenges faced by young people living with HIV. Chris explained that the stigma of HIV creates the biggest social barrier, saying, 'It's really very good medication now. So, the obstacles people face are other ones, they're sociological obstacles, and sociological challenges to their wellbeing.' Chris reflected on approaching the music making in the most effective way in that context, which necessitates asking questions; for example, 'What's the meaning of music to that person and what's the meaning of wellbeing to that person? And how are we going to relate together?' He spoke about the impact of being the outsider in that environment as a White, British male, saying, 'my cultural references are not very helpful to the person I'm working with.' Collaboration with local music facilitators is key to each of the MWB projects and a way of addressing barriers connected to social and cultural differences.

Trauma-informed Practice Within The MWB Methodology. Chris shed light on how trauma-informed practice is considered within MWB training and programme delivery and discussed in depth how the combination of facilitation skills, theoretical knowledge, and acknowledgement of cultural and contextual distinctions can be effectively integrated to support environments wherein both individual and communal wellbeing can be enhanced. In broad strokes, Chris explained how trauma-informed practice can be seen to support positive development of relationship, communication, and connection within music making spaces. Several coinciding factors were highlighted as Chris reflected on the use of trauma-informed practice within the context of MWB programmes.

One key aspect of applying trauma-informed practice into the MWB methodology is that of the importance of self-care of the practitioner. Chris explained that Darren Abraham's input into the MWB training brought this issue front and centre as a 'vital' aspect of the work. Darren's rationale for this focus on self-care of the practitioner was based in part on his

observations that have highlighted the potential for facilitators to display more trauma symptoms than those they are working with. As Chris explained,

It was the self-care that was really needed, and that element, call it trauma informed or in music therapy it's supervision, it's good supervision and a good therapist of your own. Having those safety nets in place to acknowledge that we've all got our own traumas.

This again highlights the need for practitioners to be aware of what they are carrying into a space, and how this can impact the people with whom they are working.

Cultural And Contextual Considerations. MWB programmes operate across a multiplicity of cultural contexts, necessitating detailed consideration of social, political, religious, and linguistic constructs when planning and delivering music making.

Contemplation of trauma-informed practice within these respective programmes is complex and needs to be responsive to the locality, as well as the individuals and communities involved. As Chris explained, 'I think it's really important for us to understand that even the concept of trauma is a construct. It can be very helpful. It's not in any way to nullify or reduce the importance of it, but it's developed in language, and it's a certain understanding which is not the same everywhere.' While MWB offers some centralised training courses in the Netherlands, training is delivered for programmes on a discrete basis. Chris explained the importance of not 'copy-pasting' the MWB model, and how crucial it is to reflect on context in designing and developing the practice, saying,

We've always asked the question, what's useful? And what's realistic? And what's the context here? And what are the concrete skills and knowledge which would be most helpful? It's not to say that in Rwanda, we wouldn't blanket run a training which involved trauma-informed or, you know, it's not to say that, but we wouldn't necessarily. We would look at that every time and think is this the right way to approach this, or, when we talk to people, is there another way?

This adaptive and responsive way of working also involves close collaboration with the local musicians who run the programmes. Chris explained how they discuss details, including what is appropriate or not to talk about in team trainings.

Training And Implementation. Chris articulated that different layers and levels are important when it comes to the MWB training programmes, connected to context and responsive to need, acknowledging the varied starting points of individuals and groups. He spoke about how MWB integrate theoretical knowledge into practice, responsive to contextual considerations. Chris explained the importance of Darren's expertise in being able to incorporate both theory and practice into trainings, saying,

Darren ... has great expertise in and understanding of ... I mean he's a trauma therapist. So, he comes with that expertise. Plus, he's a wonderful singer. So, he has a wonderful ability to combine those two things and understand the overlap. And it's incredibly helpful.

Darren is uniquely positioned to bring theory and practice together in the training sessions, communicating both the neuroscience of trauma and the physiological responses to music

making that can support development of positive wellbeing for both practitioners and participants.

Risks For Facilitators. Chris reflected on the potential risks involved in working in spaces where participants are known to have experienced trauma, as well as how these risks can be managed. One of the risks is the potential for a facilitator to be triggered. As Chris explained, ‘We’ve all got the things that will just touch you, the thing that you walk into, “Oh God, my own stuff is too much here.”’ Chris went on to talk about how a facilitator’s ‘state of being’ is another crucial element of establishing the conditions of the workshop space. This is an area addressed during Darren’s training, where he asks questions such as, ‘Where were you at the start of that session? Where are the people in the room? Where are you? Where are we all here? Where am I meeting people?’ thereby encouraging facilitators to reflect on and acknowledge their internal mental and emotional health and wellbeing and how this can impact others in the space.

Boundaries Of Practice. In responding to the lived trauma experiences of music facilitators, Chris reflected on the positive aspects connected to the Rwandan Youth Music Programme, where many of the musicians working with the young people have HIV. As Chris reflected, ‘That’s powerful, you know? You’ve got role models there also. You can build trust quicker. You’ve got people that know answers to things, from the inside. There’s definitely a power to that.’ But as Chris also considered, ‘The flipside of lived experiences, it can be really triggering.’ Chris connected the potential for unhelpful associations of lived experience, and how this can impact the feelings and emotions of the facilitator.

Another point of caution that Chris spoke about is the potential within any training in trauma-informed practice to open up conversations around trauma that could be difficult to manage. He explained how they deal with this potential risk within MWB training programmes, saying, ‘We'd be very aware, this is our trauma-informed decision making, don't open up that process unless you can manage that process. Don't encourage people to reflect on trauma, to reflect on recent traumas, we wouldn't do that.’ Chris was clear that in training around trauma just mentioning the word trauma will open conversations. Anyone delivering training has a responsibility to be adequately equipped to deal with these, offering support if needed. Chris articulated that the design of MWB training programmes incorporates focused content not based purely on participant need but also on the available support and expertise of the trainers.

Darren Abrahams

(All web links accessed 21st June 2023)

Darren Abrahams is a UK-based opera singer, community musician, trauma therapist, trauma trainer, and life coach³¹. Through working as part of the education team with Opera Circus³² in 2005, Darren had the opportunity to connect with Nigel Osborne. They met in Croatia, where a summer school hosted children from the Pavarotti Centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Darren described this as a significant moment of ‘really understanding the impact of music on trauma in a post conflict situation.’ He highlighted the importance of co-creation in the work, where the children and young people are collaborators, and the community musicians’ role is to facilitate quality in their artistic expression. Darren described how what he learnt through these interactions with Nigel and his pedagogical

³¹ See <https://darrenabrahams.com> for more information.

³² Refer to <https://operacircusuk.com>.

approach have not only shaped and influenced his own practice but also the principles that underline the MWB methodology.

Darren's interest in working with music as a tool to support those who have experienced trauma led him to train as a trauma therapist. As he describes it, he now has a 'very deep understanding of trauma as it presents through the nervous system.' He recognises the generational trauma carried in his family heritage, as British Israeli with family still living in areas of conflict in Israel. That deep-rooted knowledge and understanding of trauma and its impacts, especially connected to conflict, sparked Darren to ask the question, 'how could I in some small way be involved in resolving this issue, bringing peace?' This question has guided his endeavours and shaped his practice, with his family context drawing him to consider how to respond to the 'soup of trauma' we all live in.

Darren reflected on how those who have experienced trauma are often 'attracted to working with other people who have trauma, but that is not always a good thing.' Darren explained that those trying to work from a place of unresolved trauma will inevitably 'bring that energy' into the work. He described the risks of this, saying, 'If you come from an unresolved space then you are trying to work out your trauma by working with other people, so actually, you can't be effective. And you can compound the trauma of other people.'

Darren reflected that lived experience from a 'healed' space can enable facilitators to have huge empathy to support others and an authentic understanding of participants' experiences. He spoke of the need for facilitators to manage themselves in the space when working with those in crisis. Darren does not believe that a facilitator needs to have lived experience to be effective, but that the 'understanding of how [trauma] presents' is vital. Darren commented

on his current practice, saying, ‘And that's really, that's most of my work now is supporting people to understand it when they see it and feel it, and know what to do about that.’

Darren became involved with MWB in 2015. He had developed a training programme to support volunteers responding to the refugee crisis in the Calais ‘Jungle’³³. Darren recognised that many of those offering their time and energy to the work ‘were unprepared and were getting secondary trauma or bringing trauma with them.’ At the same time, he reconnected with Laura Hassler,³⁴ and they began to create training, integrating Darren’s work into the existing MWB model. Through that process, Darren has now developed a discrete MWB programme ‘to support musicians to learn to understand how music specifically can be used as a tool to support people with trauma regulation and conflict resolution.’

Darren explained how what he brought to the collaboration was like the missing puzzle piece, highlighting the ‘why’ of how MWB projects work and the reason they are effective. Darren was able to support understanding of how music interacts with people’s nervous systems and can positively impact physiological, psychological, and sociological processes, saying,

There's a whole load of things that are happening in a music making experience, which explains why music is a great tool for conflict resolution, post conflict societies, community building, and now, you know, with this understanding of trauma regulation, which I believe is at the heart of it, if you can help people to regulate their

³³ The ‘Jungle’ refers to a refugee camp outside of Calais, in northern France, that existed between January 2015 until its demolition in October 2016. Due to its proximity to England, UK-based practitioners and volunteers responded to the crisis, endeavouring to offer practical care and support as well as creative projects to engage migrant families.

³⁴ Founder and Director of Musicians Without Borders.

trauma and manage their own system, then you're going to get less conflict. You're going to get more space for people to renegotiate relationship and come back together.

Darren worked alongside Chris Nicholson to support development of a Theory of Change for MWB³⁵, adding, as he said, a bit more focus to the existing model. Outside of specific project-based trainings, the training programme MWB offers is open for music facilitators to engage with and make applicable within their own practice contexts. Darren reflected that their training approach enables a wider spread of the knowledge and expertise developed within MWB, where ‘as international musicians working in this way, can have more influence on, maybe policy change, supporting people to think differently about how we use the arts as a tool for conflict resolution.’

The MWB methodology is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach, but, as Darren explained, instead is unified and guided by five principles: safety, equality, inclusion, creativity, and quality. Alongside these principles, the two other key connecting threads running through all the work are ‘how music interacts with the nervous system, and how music is used as a tool for conflict resolution through identity shifting.’ Darren reflected further, saying,

So, we as practitioners and as an organisation know what the power of music is and why it works. But the reason that it works is because it is context-specific, and it responds to the needs of that place and those people in that time.

Using the Mitrovica Rock School as an example, Darren explained that while the facilitators involved are clear about the conflict-resolution work that is enabled in that space, it is not

³⁵ See <https://www.musicianswithoutborders.org/how-we-work/research-and-evaluation/> for more information.

communicated as part of the practice. Trauma and peacebuilding are not spoken about during the music making. As Darren explained, ‘You come in and you make a rock band. That’s the work.’

Marion Haak-Schulenburg

Marion is a German musician, music educator, researcher, and trainer. Between 2016 and 2019, she worked on various projects with displaced populations, specifically with children in refugee camps. Marion considered her understanding of trauma-informed practice as ‘immensely helpful’ within these music making interventions. As she explained, ‘I could judge situations so much more precise or have more understanding of the possible interpretation of certain behaviours.’ Marion comes from a classically trained, formalised music education context in Germany. Prior to engaging in trauma-informed practice, Marion explained she may well have viewed the young people’s behaviour as a personal ‘attack’ and been ‘less able to breathe through and find a more adequate response to what was happening.’

Marion’s initial connection with MWB was in 2007. She was working as a children’s choir leader for the Barenboim Said Foundation³⁶ in Israel, where MWB were setting up a project and contacting local musicians and facilitators. Marion met with them and subsequently engaged in one of their training programmes, saying, ‘that experience really changed a lot of my understanding.’ She described how she felt her values were not fully aligned with the work of the Barenboim Said Foundation, but when she observed MWB she ‘realised really for the first time that there is a completely different way of doing music’ and ‘fell in love’

³⁶ See <https://barenboim-said.org/en/>.

with their approach to working with participants. Marion kept in touch with MWB and in 2016, engaged with their training of trainers course.

She described some characteristics of the facilitation skill and style of MWB practitioners that drew her to the work. She spoke about the ‘positive vibe,’ energy, and flow with which the music making was delivered, and how much of the facilitation was non-verbal, using call and response as an effective strategy for engagement. Marion reflected on her observations of the practice further, saying,

It was just a lot of fun. There was just a lot of joy in the room, and I felt the biggest contrast probably was that there was not so much strain in the lesson. Having to get somewhere but a lightness and an easiness that was just so enjoyable.

It is interesting to note that the practice Marion observed back in 2007 did not have the theoretical underpinning that MWB practitioners have access to now, specifically with regards to trauma-informed practice. However, Marion reflected that the facilitation strategies were very much about working with the ‘flow of energy’ all those years before, and that ‘even without having this body of knowledge it was still somehow embodied.’ Marion described knowledge and understanding of the nervous system as key to the current theoretical underpinning of practice used within MWB trainings. She spoke about how this knowledge can then be applied to ‘reading the room,’ working with energy levels of participants, and determining what strategies will be effective for the music making. Marion reflected on this facilitation strategy, saying,

I've noticed that if you put your attention to the perception of energy in the group it becomes even more interesting, because then it's not about kind of fulfilling an idea that you want to be warmed up and you want to be ready for something, but that you can say you bring people to a more or less common energy level, an energy level where everybody is ready to start.

Marion also reflected that the informal time, during which participants and facilitators can be together and connect at the end of a workshop session is a key part of the practice, saying, 'people need time to integrate what they have experienced.'

Marion reflected on how engaging with the MWB training and methodology has alerted her to the necessity of understanding one's own limitations as a practitioner and the benefits of co-facilitation in spaces where people have experienced trauma. Marion explained, 'Facilitation in challenging environments shouldn't be done alone, you should always have somebody with you.' Marion identified the biggest risk for practitioners as an 'over estimation of your possibilities.' She expanded on this idea, saying,

And so sometimes I think practitioners and facilitators can have the impression they could actually heal people somehow through music, and I would say while it is a possible side effect that music has healing effects, it certainly, it shouldn't be my intention with which I am entering, when I'm just not trained for that.

She spoke about the dangers of opening emotional spaces in the music making that facilitators are not trained to handle. She explained the need to be clear about roles and objectives in the music making, without having a 'hidden agenda.' She reflected on the

potential for participants' hearts and minds to be opened, and that enabling self-expression needs to be carefully handled when working in spaces with those who have experienced, or continue to experience, trauma.

Summary

The seven illustrative case studies contrast and compliment the three case studies, shining a spotlight on practice enabling deeper reflection on and exploration of the guiding research questions. Facilitation skills are unpacked with a love of music and musical skills to support quality music making for the participants highlighted as particularly important. Safety is seen as a core value of practice, with co-creation, collaborative, and non-hierarchical processes identified as key components when working with those who have experienced trauma. Facilitator self-care is emphasised, alongside supporting regulation for participants and attunement to self and others.

Creating conditions of practice that enable a safe and non-judgemental space is vital to a positive music making experience. Clear boundaries of practice and understanding of the facilitator role as a musician first and foremost is key to safeguarding both participant and facilitator. Engagement in trauma-informed practice is considered in different ways depending on the practice setting. Some facilitators are operating with a strong set of values and understanding without any formalised training, such as Gillian, Phil, Esme, and Dan. Others have engaged in context-specific training and support, highlighted for example in the work of Music for Good and Musicians Without Borders. Accessing supervision, mentoring, and collaborating with those who have expertise in the practice context is seen as important across all the illustrative case studies. Facilitator background and positionality is identified as impactful to their current work, enacted in their values of and approaches to practice.

CHAPTER 8 THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Using reflexive thematic analysis and the five values of trauma-informed care as a conceptual lens, this chapter is concerned with analysis of the research findings. The discussion is twofold. In Section A, I respond to the question, what is trauma-informed practice as conceptualised through the case studies? In Section B, I respond to the question, how is trauma-informed practice applied to community music making? The five values of trauma-informed care offer a conceptual lens through which to view the musical, relational, and pedagogical findings. I revisit the Harris and Fallot (2001) model of trauma-informed practice to offer additional questions and strategies for facilitators to consider within their music making practices. The conclusions in Chapter 8 are drawn from a combination of the research findings as discussed in Sections A and B.

Section A: What Is Trauma-informed Practice as Conceptualised Through The Case Studies?

This first part of the discussion details how trauma-informed practice is conceptualised based on the data findings from the three case studies and seven illustrative case studies. The focus is on understanding how trauma-informed practice is viewed to better understand why and how it is applied into practice in Section B.

Varied Understandings of Trauma-informed Practice

As discussed previously, to understand trauma-informed practice is to first understand trauma. Chris highlighted the importance of the idea that ‘even the concept of trauma is a construct’ (Chris, interview, 29th April 2022), and that understanding of context, alongside the individual and collective needs of participants, is key to effective application of trauma-

informed practice. The research participants, in their respective contexts, had varied experiential understanding of trauma that therefore influenced how they conceptualised trauma manifestations and impacts. Gillian, for example, acknowledged that symptoms of traumatic experience can be ‘debilitating’ (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022) and impact emotional regulation. Kelly, with her background of training as a social worker, is conscious of understanding her participants’ contexts, seeking guidance from the elders so she can adjust her practice to accommodate varied needs. As Kelly explained, ‘because when people are coping with traumas, of course, they're not always walking in a good, balanced way’ (Kelly, interview, 21st March 2022).

Research participants reflected on how they consider trauma-informed practice. There was a range of responses depending on the context of music making, the facilitator’s experience, training, and expertise, and the amount of time they have been involved in the practice. For example, some facilitators are working in trauma-informed ways, as suggested by Gillian, but have been community musicians for longer than the term *trauma-informed practice* has existed. For these seasoned facilitators, the focus on developing knowledge, skills, and adaptation of practice are key features of their ongoing work, additionally discussed by Phil. All the facilitators I interviewed are aware of the term trauma-informed practice, but not all had engaged in depth by investing in trainings or readings to support their knowledge.

Trauma-informed practice is considered differently within the three case studies and applied contextually with regards to the Prison Partnership and Stone Flowers projects. Both Prison Partnership and Stone Flowers recognise the importance of acknowledging participants’ complex trauma histories and support facilitators in adapting their practice with context-specific training and mentoring. In contrast, trauma, and therefore trauma-informed practice,

was not deemed important within the organisational structures of Ethno World at the time of writing the case study. Individuals within the community, however, considered application of trauma-informed practice a necessity to support the artistic mentors and Ethno organisers. There was acknowledgement that training in and implementation of trauma-informed practice would help the facilitating and organising teams know best how to manage the wellbeing and emotional health of participants. Where understanding and application into practice were absent, the facilitators felt ill equipped and unable to appropriately respond to individual and collective needs.

Within the illustrative case studies, varied understandings of trauma-informed practice are apparent. MWB has trauma-informed practice incorporated into its organisational structures, with trauma training an integral component for their music facilitators. Trauma-informed practice is discretely and contextually applied across the different locations of music making. Training is carried out by Darren who, as both trauma therapist and opera singer, has combined facets of musical and therapeutic expertise. Darren uses an approach whereby music facilitators can be clear about boundaries of practice, understanding that their responsibility to the participants includes engaging in self-care strategies. Darren explained he does not run training in music therapy but supports facilitators in how to apply strategies to practice that enable safe and responsive facilitation of music making for those who have experienced trauma.

Collaboration is a key theme connected to how trauma-informed practice is operationalised. Stone Flowers and Prison Partnership both have partner organisations from which to draw on expertise and receive training. Stone Flowers collaborates with Freedom from Torture, where clinicians facilitate their training, and support project design and delivery. The Prison

Partnership receives training from the charity One Small Thing; as well, the project delivery is supported by trained prison staff and those with expertise in trauma-informed practice. The facilitation for both these projects and for MWB is carried out in teams, creating a safety net of practice. Ethno organisers and artistic mentors work closely together; however, findings showed that the teams are not always carefully considered or well-chosen. The work Esme is involved with also emphasises the importance of teamwork. Gillian, Dan, Phil, Kelly, and Emily mainly facilitate on their own, but there are others involved in the projects as well as strong collaborative partnerships with connected organisations.

The Phenomenon, It's Just Everywhere

The data findings suggest trauma is understood to be a ubiquitous phenomenon; we are all 'implicated in each other's traumas' (Caruth, 1991, p. 21). The research participants supplied a clear rationale for trauma-informed practice when reflecting on the prevalence of trauma on a global scale. Marion commented, 'The phenomenon it's just everywhere' (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022). Additionally, Jonas from the Ethno project described the 'sea of trauma' (Jonas, interview, 28th June 2021) we all live in. This was, in part, based on his understandings through training and working with MWB³⁷. Darren affirmed this statement, saying 'You know, we live in a soup of trauma, all of us, all the time, you can't escape it' (Darren, interview, 12th May 2022). Darren mentioned the impact of Covid-19 with resulting individual and communal trauma, which has brought recognition of the need for trauma-

³⁷ Significant to me are the common threads of practice where Gillian, Darren, and Lis all worked with Nigel Osborne in Bosnia. Music Action International was originally the UK base of MWB. Both Marion and Jonas have worked with MWB. The *traces* of practice are significant where Nigel Osborne's development of context-specific practice in Bosnia, have had considerable influence over practice that has evolved in the nearly thirty years since the opening of the Pavarotti Music Centre in Mostar. Aware of the importance of these connections I contacted Nigel Osborne several times over the course of my PhD to invite him to interview. He never responded, but I am conscious that as someone who pioneered music making practice with children who have experienced complex trauma, his voice is absent from this thesis.

informed practice into greater focus in recent years. He commented on the ubiquity of experience, saying,

So, bringing it into awareness I think is hugely important, to recognise that all our nervous systems are affected. We all get overwhelmed. We all get triggered. These things are normal and natural and human. So, they shouldn't be, they're nothing to be ashamed of. But we need to be able to be aware of them so that we can manage them in the space when we're working with people who may be in more crisis than you.

(Darren, interview, 12th May 2022)

Two key principles are emphasised in Darren's statement. One is that everyone must manage their own reactions, regardless of the root causes of our nervous systems being triggered. This is especially important if one is in a position of responsibility as a music facilitator. The second is the need to be aware of other people's potential to be overwhelmed and triggered. This thread was picked up by Kelly, who stated, 'people have so much more happening in their lives than I could ever possibly know' (Kelly, interview, 21st March 2022). This awareness helps her to look beyond the behaviour, or the 'presentation,' of members of the drum circle.

The recognition of what is potentially hidden under the surface of people's lives also connects with a comment Gillian made that people are good at 'masking.' She said,

They are not necessarily in spaces where it's possible to unmask, so they just get good at hiding it and coping. And, and their behavioural choices are explained as being

difficult or flawed in some way, rather than being understood as learned reactions and behaviours to something that happened. (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022)

Kelly picked up on this theme of how behaviours can be misinterpreted when reflecting on her drum circle in the prison. She recognised the context of incarceration for the women she worked with as not just the fact that ‘they did something wrong’ (Kelly, interview, 21st March 2022) but as far more complex, connecting to their histories of colonisation, the ‘extreme poverty’ (Kelly, interview, 21st March 2022) living on reserves, and intergenerational trauma. Understanding the trauma experiences of the women she works with helps Kelly respond appropriately and with kindness. Themes of kindness and empathic understanding are replicated throughout both the Prison Partnership and Stone Flowers case studies as significant facilitator qualities when working with those with complex trauma narratives.

One of the Stone Flowers facilitators spoke about how he perceived the value of trauma-informed practice and thinks that trauma awareness is something that every facilitator needs ‘because [trauma] surrounds us in many different ways and forms’ (Ajay, interview, 20th July 2022). He also reflected on practice where the facilitator knows that participants have complex trauma histories, questioning that ‘If you as a practitioner, you're not sensitive to trauma, then how can you work with people who have had trauma?’ Thus, he highlights the facilitators’ responsibility in awareness of and responsiveness to participants’ trauma.

Awareness, Adaptation, And Apology

Research participants reflected on how they consider trauma-informed practice. Dan commented, ‘It strikes me as practice that has been adapted to suit those who have

experienced trauma’ (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). It was not terminology he had considered in relationship to his own practice, although further in-depth discussion around how Dan facilitates when working with young people who have experienced trauma revealed many intuitive strategies he utilises that could be understood to be trauma informed. Marion also reflected on this notion of adaptation, saying,

Trauma-informed practice sounds like there is already something there but actually, it's not. There is trauma information. There is a knowledge about what trauma does to you in different ways. And then there is the question of how does it impact your practice? (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022)

In this statement Marion is highlighting the difference between knowledge and application, which is a key consideration of trauma-informed practice. The information itself is not enough, it is the adaptation of, or impact on practice that is significant. How this is achieved will be discussed in Section B.

In consideration of trauma-informed practice, Marion also reflected, ‘There is such a wide possibility of defining trauma and consequences of trauma, and then bringing that together into the music practice is a whole different step’ (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022). She described the way in which MWB considers trauma-informed practice, saying,

What I really admire Darren and Musicians Without Borders for is that they have really integrated this knowledge about what trauma is, how trauma is affecting the body, mind, emotion, everything. How that is impacting a person and then how music can be facilitated, that will answer the needs of these people and sharpen the

facilitators' perception in terms of what happens in the group, what happens with individuals in the group, being able to read reactions in a different way and then having musically appropriate answers to the challenge. (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022)

Awareness of the impacts of traumatic experience is highlighted by Marion, along with the implication that practice will need to be responsive and adaptive, musically, relationally, and pedagogically.

Lis commented on the importance of understanding what trauma is 'because it is such a word that's thrown around nowadays' (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022), connecting to the notion of trauma, and by extension trauma-informed practice, as buzzwords. The danger of lack of understanding and awareness was highlighted by Stone Flowers participant Leila who explained,

And if the facilitator doesn't have the understanding and knowledge, they might just react if they don't understand the situation. They might just panic themselves or some people, they cannot control, and they don't know how to react to the situation, basically. So, I think it's very important to have anybody who would like to work in this area, it's very important to have that basic, at least basic knowledge of you know, working with traumatised people. (Leila, interview, 15th July 2022)

Leila, as a participant who has lived experience of war and torture, is emphasising that lack of understanding and awareness is a risk to both facilitator and participant. She highlights the potential for a negative outcome in a situation where the facilitator does not have the skills or

knowledge to react appropriately, which could cause panic (dysregulation) in the group.

Ajay, understood the need for awareness and adaptation as a facilitator working with those with complex trauma histories, saying,

Because, you know, there are people there who had literally been in a war zone, and sudden, loud bangs or sounds, could be triggering. So, it's something that I've quickly realised that I had to readjust my workshop practice. (Ajay, interview, 20th July 2022)

Both Esme and Kelly spoke about the potential for increased awareness that engaging in trauma-informed practice could provide. Esme reflected on this, saying, 'I think having the awareness and maybe sort of knowing how to support certain situations ... when things come up for people' (Esme, interview, 15th February 2022). It is of note that Esme understands that things *will* come up for people. Esme spoke that through greater awareness of trauma-informed practice, she might be able to better connect with participants, therefore being able to offer greater support to individuals.

Kelly took the idea of awareness further, considering how trauma-informed practice offers an opportunity for deeper self-awareness and self-reflection. She explained that she is conscious of those moments when she has made a mistake and how acknowledging that with her participants has been a very positive experience. She spoke about the power of apologising when she made a mistake with a participant's gender identity, saying, 'I think that does something incredible for people because they feel they've been heard' (Kelly, interview, 21st March 2022). In that moment when she acknowledged and apologised for her error, the participant felt both validated and heard. Michael also highlighted the need for facilitators to be able to apologise, understanding that 'we all fuck up' (Michael, interview, 21st July 2022).

Theoretical Models and Values Of Practice

Findings reinforce the notion that theoretical models can support considered and informed application of practice. Emily Foulkes spoke about a ‘carefully crafted journey that does have a theoretical underpinning’ (Emily, interview, 8th March 2022); she has drawn from several sociological and trauma theory models to ground the work of Music for Good. MWB has a specific methodology, structured around five principles (safety, equality, inclusion, creativity, and quality) and utilises theoretical models that support practitioners’ understandings of trauma and trauma-informed practice delivered through trainings by Darren. The Stone Flowers methodology has a similar approach, whereby facilitators work within a carefully constructed methodology that has participant wellbeing at its core and focuses on refugee awareness, collaborative processes, safety, inclusion, non-hierarchical structures, and performance as key principles of practice. Prison Partnership is a project that has trauma-informed practice at its core, with application of the five values of trauma-informed care as an integral component.

Ethno World, in contrast, has no centralised trainings in trauma-informed practice and an entirely inconsistent approach across its international gatherings, causing the music facilitators to feel as though they do not have the skills to deal with situations as they arise. Additionally, some of the facilitators from the illustrative case studies are very clear on their personal values of practice but do not necessarily operate within specific models when it comes to the potential for working with those who have experienced trauma. For example, Phil commented on the five values of trauma-informed care, saying ‘So, all five are fundamentals, perhaps unarticulated, but they’re fundamentals of community music practice’ (Phil, interview, 17th March 2022). He could acknowledge and validate how the five values

are foundational to community music practice but does not utilise a consistent trauma-informed model within his own work.

Both Dan and Esme had specific awareness of the mental ill health challenges of their participants, supported and mentored by professionals with expertise in this area, but without full engagement with or understanding of trauma-informed practice and its application. Kelly was clear that the Indigenous teachings she adheres to form the values-base for her practice. She is also guided by *The Ethical Space of Engagement* as a theoretical model she can apply to the work. Gillian spoke about the theoretical knowledge she engaged with when working with Nigel Osborne, and how that impacted her understanding of trauma presentation, enabling her to better support better the young people she was working with.

Benefits Of Trauma-informed Practice

Several benefits of trauma-informed practice were highlighted by the research participants, as explored in the following sections.

Understanding Of Behaviours

Findings from the analysis of practice suggest that all the music facilitators acknowledged that trauma-informed practice can support their understanding of the participant behaviours they observe in the space. Chris not only articulated this understanding as the most useful facet of trauma-informed practice, but he also explained that it directly impacts the facilitators' ability to respond appropriately. He reinforced the importance of understanding trauma responses that negatively impact behaviour 'not as somebody's fault, not as something

to discipline but as coming from somewhere' (Chris, interview, 29th April 2022). Three of the Stone Flowers facilitators had found that understanding of participant behaviour connected to traumatic experience had been incredibly helpful for them in realising that they had not done anything wrong. Kelly also spoke about this in connection to the drum circle.

Dan talked about his participants' behaviours as 'often not what you expect' and explained that without understanding a participant's trauma, a facilitator could react in a way that is 'just as off as the presentation' (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). This highlights the potential harm that could be caused by a facilitators' lack of understanding. Their 'off' behaviour could negatively impact an individual who is wrestling with their trauma symptoms. Trauma-informed practice can provide the lens by which behaviour can be viewed, and as Chris said, as coming from somewhere, so that facilitation can be adapted appropriately. Marion described how training in trauma-informed practice has given her 'a wider range of interpretation of behaviours [and a] much better range of possibilities to respond to difficult situations' (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022). This range of possibilities has given Marion increased confidence and an ability to step back, understanding that difficult behaviours are not a reflection on her as a practitioner.

It Allows Us a Language

Phil highlighted the benefit of trauma-informed practice in 'developing a common vocabulary' (Phil, interview, 17th March 2022), describing it as an 'immensely valuable' way of practitioners communicating with others from different areas of practice. Phil sees this commonality and shared language to be key when collaborating across varied disciplines but where the main goal is supporting young people in challenging circumstances. What is

important to this discussion is that the findings demonstrate that trauma-informed practice has varied meanings, so to develop a common language, there needs to be a consolidation of ideas into a definition. Based on the research findings, I articulate a working definition of trauma-informed practice in Chapter 9.

Gillian also reflected on the language of trauma and trauma-informed practice. She spoke of the first time she heard another music practitioner describing the trauma of the children she was working with in Bosnia, saying,

We hadn't got control of the group; we hadn't been able to focus them. And it was all going very, very crazy. And he came in, and he saw that girl. And he said to me afterwards that she was one of the most traumatised children [he'd] ever seen. I don't think I'd ever heard that sort of language before. And I hadn't connected what I was seeing of her. She looked very frozen and withdrawn. But I didn't have a name for it.
(Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022)

Gillian's experience highlights not only that she was not able to articulate what she was observing, but that she did not understand what she was observing. Both the 'crazy' and 'frozen' behaviour had their origins in the extreme trauma experienced by the children in Bosnia. Understanding of and naming the impact of trauma on the children was the first step for Gillian to be able to respond more sensitively and effectively in the music sessions.

Risks Of Not Engaging in Trauma-informed Practice

Findings from the Ethno Research project strongly suggest that trauma-informed practice needs to be applied into all facilitated music making contexts, regardless of whether participants are known to have experienced trauma. Lack of appropriate training and supportive safeguarding structures left facilitators without the means to deal with situations as they arose. Participants had experienced trauma, and some were still dealing with manifestations of complex trauma histories, as in the case of the participant from Democratic Republic of Congo who was, from the description the artistic mentor gave of his behaviour, experiencing profound PTSD.

Risk factors for facilitators working in contexts with those who have experienced trauma were identified by Darren as secondary trauma and issues around boundaries of practice. Darren spoke of the importance for facilitators to have their own ‘creativity, fun, and friends’ and how setting boundaries around ‘private space’ is crucial. He reflected on how the work is a ‘heart space’ wherein people connect, and the risks of an accelerated process of ‘becoming close’ with participants. He reflected, ‘If you're doing a lot of this work, you can't become intimately involved with the lives of every single person you're working with. You have to be present for the people when you're in the space working’ (Darren, interview, 12th May 2022). These risks are also identified in the literature (for example, Smith 2022; Wise & Nash, 2020) as well as by Lis Murphy in discussing the vicarious trauma she experienced.

In response to considering whether trauma-informed practice is something that every facilitator should engage in, Darren stated, ‘I think any human-facing endeavour needs to be an understanding of what happens to humans when they get stressed, when they get

overwhelmed, when they go into crisis’ (Darren, interview, 12th May 2022). He spoke about the importance of boundaries of practice to the work, and how facilitators need to be clear they are not therapists. Darren spoke further about this distinction saying,

So as a community musician, you have to be very clear that you're not going in to do therapy. What you're going in to do is provide a musical experience in which therapeutic things happen. So, understanding how people are presenting in your space and recognising when people might be displaying symptoms of dysregulation, overwhelm, trauma, gives you something that you can work with, but it's not your role to go, to delve into story or the past or why that person is feeling the way they're feeling. (Darren, interview, 12th May 2022)

He explained how knowledge and understanding of trauma, trauma responses, and dysregulation can enable facilitators to better support their participants but that this happens ‘through the music’ (Darren, interview, 12th May 2022).

Marion responded positively to the idea of practitioners across all community music and music education settings engaging in trauma-informed practice. She spoke about this as a generic need for anyone working with groups of people, saying,

I think trauma is so prevalent in all populations that a basic understanding of what trauma is, not as in colloquial or “I’ve got a traumatic thing” but in a solid description, a solid understanding of what defines trauma and how the body responds to it. (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022)

Marion is reinforcing the importance of facilitators engaging in trauma-informed practice to support more robust understandings of trauma and its manifestations. She highlights the potential for misinterpretation of trauma, as well as the popularising of the term that can be unhelpful when a firm foundation of theoretical knowledge can positively enhance practice.

Considerations of Training

No One-size-fits-all Approach and The Importance Of Collaboration. Findings demonstrate that while training is an important aspect of becoming trauma informed, it is only truly effective when contextually designed and delivered. The One Small Thing training for those working in criminal justice in the UK is effective because the five values of trauma-informed care are operationalised in practice specific to carceral settings. Furthermore, the One Small Thing training programmes are gender-responsive on the understanding that trauma experiences and responses will be distinctive within male and female prisons. Engaging in this training, the Prison Partnership team were better able to adapt the practice than if it had been generically focused training trauma-informed practice. Similarly, Stone Flowers has both trauma and refugee awareness at the heart of its methodology. The specific needs of participants can be viewed through a lens of sharpened focus when both these components are taken into consideration.

Emily commented that her practice is both mental health informed and trauma informed. Dan did not use the phrase mental health informed practice but was clear that he had engaged in significant mentoring and informal training with CAMHS staff throughout his time working with inpatients with extreme mental ill health. Esme engaged in training and mentoring with Brighter Sounds to support her understanding of working with young people with mental ill health. These examples highlight the importance of collaboration in becoming trauma

informed, that facilitators need to draw on the experience of those who have expertise in the area they desire to practice. What is also highlighted is that in being contextually responsive, becoming trauma informed may also necessitate engaging in contextual issues; for example, refugee awareness, mental health awareness, or awareness of the issues facing women in the criminal justice system.

Chris explained the importance of collaborative relationships when designing and delivering the work of MWB. With many different geographical locations for the practice creating a locus of political, sociological, and cultural diversity, Chris emphasised the importance of drawing from localised expertise. He outlined the potential issue of the ‘outsider’ who considers they have the answers without having the ‘internal’ knowledge needed to make decisions in the best interests of an individual or community. When MWB design and deliver music making projects, they consider what is useful, how best to support those within the community to facilitate the work, acknowledging that to infer ‘my understanding is going to be useful for everyone can be really problematic’ (Chris, interview, 29th April, 2022). Chris’ reflection reinforces the importance of contextually driven practice designed and delivered with contextual understanding, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Different Levels of Training. Training needs are not only dependent on contextual location, but they are also dependent on the level at which the facilitator starts. For example, an inexperienced facilitator joining the Stone Flowers project will need more guidance and support than someone with an embodied understanding because of their experiential knowledge of practice. The Prison Partnership Project also highlights the need for mentoring of less experienced facilitators. Phil advocated for the notion of specialist training, arguing that facilitators need to be consciously willing to learn and develop in their practice:

We have a duty, we have a responsibility, no matter who we are, and no matter what our background is, to continually examine our position and our journey to make sure that we retain relevance, or we can have relevance for the group and that we are not foregrounding the dominant culture by default. (Phil, interview, 17th March 2022)

Phil spoke about the development of generic training but that depth of knowledge and understanding needs specific consideration for different contexts. Speaking of trauma-informed practice, Phil did not think that it is necessarily an ‘essential component’ of training for all practitioners, but he did suggest ‘it’s a great addition for somebody who wants to work strongly in the areas of applied empathy’ (Phil, interview, 17th March 2022). He cautioned that to make trauma-informed practice an obligatory part of a community musician’s toolkit could be exclusionary of some individuals and groups who may not need such specialist or in-depth knowledge. What Phil’s quotation highlights is the need for facilitators to understand both their positionality and their responsibility to keep their knowledge and skills updated in response to the settings in which they are working and the people they are working with.

Emily spoke about the basic level training they offer that gives an understanding of what a practitioner might come across in the music making space, alongside ‘some practical tips and tools for how they might then respond to that in a more trauma-informed [way]’ (Emily, interview, 8th March 2022). Emily asserted that all facilitators can and should be engaging in basic awareness to support their practice.

Oliver spoke about how he could see the benefits of training in trauma-informed practice across different contexts saying, ‘There’s room for any type of knowledge which is going to

help empower people to provide a better service to people in need' (Oliver, interview, 19th July 2022). He reflected on the level of information needed for differing contexts and that training needed to be pitched accordingly, with consideration of how therapeutically-focused the music making was perceived to be.

Working Effectively With No Training. Interesting to note is that several of the research participants spoke about facilitators with no formalised training in trauma-informed practice who are seasoned and effective in their work. Chris talked about facilitators he knows who, in his words, 'seem to not be able to verbalise anything about what they're doing, and they're doing wonderful things' (Chris, interview, 29th April 2022). This raises the question again of the importance of training when some practitioners work instinctively and effectively without any specific model or specialist knowledge. My conversations with Gillian, Phil, Dan, and Kelly additionally reinforce this idea, that tacit and experiential knowledge applied in practice can support safe and effective music making with those with trauma histories.

Dan explained that while he has not engaged in accredited training courses to support his work, he received very specific mentoring and briefing when engaging with CAMHS in-patients. As he described, 'But what I'm saying is we weren't trained, we were prepared and briefed, but ... it was the minimum required to be safe' (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). Dan has continued this model with Upfaders; any new volunteer is briefed about the young people in advance of the session, with 'as much as is needed to be safe and effective' (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). Dan commented that there are always potential risks in the work, but they try to minimise these by always making sure there is a significantly more experienced practitioner supporting the session.

Risks In Training and Over-claiming. Marion identified the potential for misunderstanding what it means to be trauma informed. She spoke about a day training she did in trauma-awareness, where practitioners were identifying as being trauma-informed at the end of the workshop. As she explained,

Now people in that project will say, well, we are trauma informed because they've been given information on trauma. But that's an interesting thing. They are trauma informed. And they have a practice. It's not necessarily trauma-informed practice. (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022)

Marion is again making the distinction between trauma information and application in practice. Gillian is also aware of not over claiming her experience of working with trauma-informed practice but understands that those she works with in school environments are reassured by her experience, even if she has not received detailed training. She is clear that it is not an area of practice that she feels is a finished product, saying, 'I often feel like the toolkit I'm bringing is something I'm still trying to work out, which tools to bring out at any point' (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022).

We All Get Overwhelmed

An important theme that came out of the data findings was that of understanding it is not just participants who can become overwhelmed and dysregulated but facilitators also. Darren identified risks for facilitators working in contexts with those who have experienced trauma as secondary trauma and issues around boundaries of practice. He highlighted two key principles to support developing appropriate boundaries. Firstly, that everyone must manage

their own reactions, regardless of the root causes of our nervous systems being triggered. This is especially important when we have a responsibility to our participants, when *being-for-the-other* is more important than being for ourselves. The second is the need to be aware of other people's potential to be overwhelmed and triggered. The recognition of what is potentially hidden under the surface of people's lives creates potential for the misperception and misunderstanding of behaviours.

Summary

Findings from the data suggest that there are varied understandings of trauma and trauma-informed practice. Trauma is largely understood by facilitators to be a ubiquitous phenomenon that can affect everyone. Findings point to an inconsistency in knowledge, understanding, training, and approaches to practice. Awareness of trauma and trauma responses is understood to be a vital element of practice, alongside the ability to adapt and to apologise when necessary. Trauma-informed practice is most effective when it is contextually applied and collaboratively designed. Theoretical knowledge and training are deemed to be crucial factors, but only when contextually considered—there is not one universal approach.

Acknowledging the potential for facilitators to be overwhelmed and triggered supports the notion of self-regulation and self-care as integral strategies. Risks of not engaging in trauma-informed practice include the possibility of burnout, vicarious trauma, and issues around boundaries of practice. Facilitation teams with appropriate mentoring and supervision can provide a safety net of practice for both facilitators and participants. Trauma-informed practice is found to provide an important communal language for facilitators.

Section B: How Is Trauma-informed Practice Applied To Community Music Making?

In the following section, I use the data findings to consider how trauma-informed practice is applied to community music making. The five values of trauma-informed care form the conceptual lens through which the findings are viewed, drawing out details connected to musical, relational, and pedagogical aspects of practice. The findings are operationalised for each value detailing facilitation strategies that can support development of trauma-informed community music practice. Visual representation of the findings can be found prior to the chapter summary.

Safety

Safety is understood to be foundational to trauma-informed practice. In the Literature Review, safety was identified as a basic human need. It is connected to notions of dignity and belonging as fundamental aspects of humanity. Safety is a holistic consideration of practice and is a relational construct wherein consideration of our own and others' safety is a key responsibility of practice with facilitator self-care highlighted. For trauma survivors, *feeling* safe and *being* safe are conflicting experiential components. Responding to individual need through attentive listening and utilising reflective and reflexive practice are key facilitation strategies working with those whose safety has been compromised. A community musician can additionally support safety through welcoming and hospitable actions—*being-for-the-other*—but also, paradoxically, in enabling risk for participants.

For those who have experienced trauma, feeling safe and being safe are understood to be contradictory. For the music making space to *be* safe, community musicians need to do

everything they can to help participants *feel* safe. As explained by van der Kolk (2014), ‘For our physiology to calm down, heal, and grow, we need a visceral *feeling* of safety’ (p. 79, *italics mine*). Without safety, the other values of trauma-informed care cannot be built. Darren articulated safety as the principal value of trauma-informed practice, detailing relational elements of practice. He explained:

The first thing fundamentally is safety. Can we provide emotional, psychological safety for people that we work with? That's there before anything. So, safety, to be able to create a safe space, you have to be listening, you have to be non-judgmental, you have to be inclusive. All of those things create safety. (Darren, interview, 12th May 2022)

Darren’s descriptions of facilitator skills in enabling safety for participants connect to the notion of ‘holding space’ (Sunderland et al., 2022, p. 8), supporting feelings of safety in the group.

Drawing on these threads of facilitator attributes and specific strategies for practice, this next section highlights the importance of safety as a key value of practice—musically, relationally, and pedagogically—as illustrated and explained by the research participants. Findings from the data set suggest that there are potential risks to creating a safe environment for facilitators and participants. Key risks were identified, such as facilitators’ and participants’ nervous systems interacting negatively with one another, the potential for vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue for facilitators (Foulkes, 2021; Smith, 2022), and issues of establishing secure and appropriate boundaries of practice.

Musical Aspects

Support Of Musical Ideas and Contributions. Hess and Bradley (2020) assert that the nature of music making requires building a community of safety and trust. Music, as a form of expression, provides an opportunity to contribute one's voice to a community of music makers. As the authors discuss, one cannot offer something so deeply personal in an unsafe environment. To cultivate such an environment, music facilitators can work towards creating a mutually supportive space (Hess, 2019) in which participants include and value each other's voices and contributions and commit to relational values that are 'consistent, predictable, and nonshaming' (Levenson, 2017, p. 108). The musical skill and confidence of the facilitator can enable participants to have confidence to contribute to the group. Particularly important is the confidence to work with metaphor and imagery, to support participants' emotional safety.

Howell et al. (2021) describe the 'bubble of safety' experienced by participants of Music Connects explaining, 'The rationale underpinning this pedagogical approach recognises that musical creativity flows most easily when people are working in an accepting, supportive social space' (p. 27). The authors describe the support offered to participants as including invitation for and acceptance of creative ideas from all group members, especially supporting those participants with less confidence. Stated in the report is the 'combination of creative risk and flow alongside psychological and emotional safety' that enables the 'bubble' to form as 'a space bounded by time, activities, and environment that is experienced as somewhat separate to the outside world' (p. 27). This notion of risk and flow is examined in more detail in the section detailing pedagogical aspects of choice.

Regulatory Processes and Breathwork. Porges (2017) describes the Western tendency towards cognitive knowing as opposed to embodied knowing. This top-down approach to applying ideas into interactions can ignore the visceral, intuitive, internal knowings that support a bottom-up approach to trauma-informed practices. Focus on physical warmups, regulating breathing and heart rate and using voices to express and explore emotion, all require a tangible connection to our bodies, that rely on engaging our senses but not necessarily fully engaging in conscious thought. The meditative aspects of breath work for participants who have experienced trauma are a valuable opportunity to focus on how individuals feel in their bodies and how breathing deeply into areas of pain or tension can bring a physical release and greater sense of ease. Physical relaxation can also support more positive social interactions—people will be more open and welcoming to those around them without physical tension or difficulties present in their bodies.

Facilitation strategies of working to support physiological regulation and relaxation are seen in connection to practice in the Prison Partnership and Stone Flowers case studies, along with illustrative case studies such as Gillian Howell’s work, Music for Good, and MWB; for example, working with and responding to energy levels in the space, and using breath work to help slow respiration and heart rate. Gillian referred to calmness and stillness as important in a space where trauma can cause inner turmoil and restlessness. Dysregulation can create the potential for harm and the possible exclusion of participants who cannot self-regulate to keep others safe, as evidenced in the Prison Partnership Project, and Kelly’s drum circle.

Facilitators aiming for inclusive, trauma-informed music practices must implement strategies to enable participants’ self-regulation. Repeated, ritualistic structures were discussed by Emily, Michael, Gillian, and Kelly as important for working with those who have

experienced trauma. The Prison Partnership project has activities at the beginning and end of the sessions that are repeated weekly for this reason: the Focus Game at the start, and Pat on the Back to close. These ritualistic structures are safe and comforting to participants in their regularity, enabling them to relax more easily and feel safe knowing what activities to expect.

Relational Aspects

Welcome and Hospitality. O’Neill (2018) connects a welcoming environment with establishing conditions of safety, positing that a safe space should also be ‘supportive, fun, caring, and challenging’ (p. 397) and enable risk taking for participants. When considering the importance of emphasising another’s humanity (Freire, 1970) and facilitated music making as a human practice, the notion of welcome becomes even more crucial in consideration of those who have experienced the dehumanising impacts of trauma. The selflessness or being-for-the-other is of note and explored further in the next paragraph as connected to self-awareness and self-regulation of the facilitator.

Higgins (2012) explores the etymology of hospitality as meaning love towards a stranger (p. 138) that can be extended to kindness and empathy towards the other. In its original form, hospitality evokes understandings of *otherness* and points us towards offering a welcome to the other. Higgins (2012) describes how both generosity and friendliness are encompassed in contemporary meanings of the notion of hospitality. He also suggests that community music practice operates in spaces of tension that contain the paradoxical nature of the word hospitality—meaning ‘both “host” and “hostile”’ (p. 138). Higgins introduces the idea of ‘unconditional’ hospitality, which he describes as ‘a welcome without reservation’ (p. 139). There is acknowledgement of the aspirational and potentially ‘inaccessible’ (p. 139) nature of

this notion, but also a suggestion that ‘by reaching out beyond what may be thought possible, new and interesting things can happen’ (p. 139).

Several of the research participants described the importance of what the facilitator communicates in their interactions, knowing that maintaining a welcoming approach is key, despite whatever challenging behaviours participants might be exhibiting. As Dan stated,

You've got to make it all count and you've got to make them as comfortable as you can as fast as you can. So, they've got to feel welcome. They've got to feel valid. They've got to feel that you know that they're entitled to all this. And you've got to make that clear pretty fast. (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022)

Dan talked about facilitators needing to bear in mind what participants might have been through. He sees his role as supporting participants to know that regardless of how they behave or react, he is on their side. He explained, ‘You remain enthusiastic, welcoming, warm towards them, no matter what they are towards you’ (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). Dan’s focus is to be able to get to the music making as quickly as possible, but there is potential for a participants’ anxiety to be a barrier. He considers his role to ensure safety through welcome in those initial interactions, to alleviate any anxiety as quickly as possible.

Ethics Of Care. Noddings (1995) stated that ‘Ethical caring’s great contribution is to guide action long enough for caring to be restored and for people once again to interact with mutual and spontaneous regard’ (p. 187). Mutual regard was a notion spoken about by Chris in relationship to the facilitator’s responsibility in establishing person-centred therapeutic conditions. He draws on the work of Carl Rogers in consideration of participants’ emotional

safety, including notions of unconditional positive regard, empathy, and authenticity. These elements combined are determined to be transformative (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990).

Gillian reflected that the concept of therapeutic space is a key factor in her work, to minimise the potential for harm. She described how she creates space, saying, ‘I leave space in front of people in a musical sense, in a physical sense, in a metaphoric, decision-making voice sense’ (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022). The importance of enabling participants the opportunity to make creative decisions is discussed more in the section on choice.

Listening And Bearing Witness. Listening is a way of paying attention to the face of the other (Levinas, 1969, 2006) attending to the uniqueness of their person, looking carefully, and being responsive. Listening enables the facilitator to bear witness, validating the stories and hidden narratives the participants carry with them. The veiled approach to interaction is a necessary part of trauma-informed practice in establishing safety. However, this can be complicated for creative processes, where openness and vulnerability intersect.

Bradley (2020) discusses the inherent difficulty in trauma narrative where ‘Witness accounts often are marked by incomplete thought, verbal incoherence, and conflicting details’ (p. 12). This makes listening, bearing witness, and validation even more powerful as facilitated during a music-making encounter. Bradley (2020) explores the importance of listening, when she asserts that ‘Coming to terms with traumatic history requires not only a speaker to *tell* the story, but someone to *listen*, both of whom are thus considered to be witnesses to the trauma’ (p. 12, emphasis mine). This assertion highlights both the importance of the voice of the one who has experienced trauma and the ability to hear of the one listening. The importance of listening is emphasised throughout the case studies and illustrative case studies. Issues are

highlighted in the Ethno case study where participants did not feel listened to or validated, rendering them feeling unsafe, vulnerable, and isolated.

Empathy. Findings show that empathy is a key facilitatory attribute in consideration of trauma-informed practice and enabling the safety of participants. Haines (2019) describes safety as connected to development of empathy towards and connection to others, ‘a state in which one is able to be both secure and vulnerable’ (p. 136). Higgins (2012) additionally encapsulates this theme, as connected to hospitality, emphasising the need for ‘emphatic understanding’ (p. 165). Empathy as a requirement of safety helps to create trust in the music-making space. Higgins (2012) connects these notions as conscious choices for community music practitioners, not as abstract concepts or personality traits. Facilitators must be intentional in their practice.

Dan explained how empathy and awareness, as key skills for the work, could promote a risk to the practitioner if boundaries are not appropriately set. He questioned whether practitioners should ‘cross that line’ of emotional investment, or whether we can learn to keep a healthy emotional distance. He described getting ‘caught out’ with participants when ‘you almost get a window directly into somebody's pain’ (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). Gillian also highlighted the need for emotional distance, discussing the potential negative aspects of a facilitator’s vulnerability and openness, suggesting that ‘It doesn't work if you're too vulnerable, because then people don't feel safe’ (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022).

Responsiveness To Participant Needs. Responsiveness to each survivor’s needs is a key facet of trauma-informed practice where participants are individually considered, seen, and heard. Michael explained that no survivor is the same, has experienced trauma in the same

way, or responds the same. There are contextual considerations that can be treated in a more generalist way, but the findings all point to emphasis on knowing the individual and being accordingly responsive. Higgins encourages community musicians to ‘think beyond comfortable understandings of what usually constitutes community’ (p. 143), implying that moving away from familiarity and comfort may provide ‘increased and richer opportunities for participants’ voices to be heard’ (p. 143). In working with those whose voices have been hidden, providing these opportunities is even more vital.

The group dynamics, alongside sensitivity towards each individual, needs to be delicately cared for, and empathy as a relational quality of the practice is also fundamental to this work. Ability to work *with* and alongside others and be emotionally attentive and responsive (Hasler & Nicholson, 2017) necessitates both empathic processes and reflexive practice. Community musicians have ‘the ability to sense what is needed and to be able to offer an accurate response in all situations’ (Higgins, 2012, p. 149). But to be able to offer an ‘accurate response’, there must be an emphasis on connection with participants. As an inherent part of trauma-informed practice, there must be an understanding of how traumatic experience has impacted each participant differently, thereby enabling facilitators to be responsive to their individual needs.

Supporting Participants’ Self-regulation. A key aspect of ensuring safety is that of being able to support regulation for self and participants. Those who have experienced trauma can find they are easily dysregulated, and music making can be useful in providing physiological benefits that support self-regulation (see, for example, Foulkes, 2021; Porges, 2017; van der Kolk, 2014). Porges (2017) emphasises that through processes of co-regulation, an individual develops a capacity to self-regulate. This reiterates the importance

of the facilitator role and how a facilitator needs to be self-attuned and able to self-regulate their own emotional health. Co-regulation can support ongoing self-regulation, and effective co-regulation in a weekly music workshop could enhance self-regulation of individual participants during the break between sessions, as highlighted by Kamia in the Stone Flowers case study. In the Literature Review, focus on the self-regulatory functions of making music, including the importance of calming the mind and body, is highlighted (for example, Sunderland et al., 2016; Harrison et al., 2019).

Research participants acknowledged that symptoms of traumatic experience can be debilitating for participants and impact their emotional regulation. Developing awareness of other people's potential to be overwhelmed and triggered was identified as key. Dan explained that 'There's a lot of alignment needing to be done for them to feel welcome, at ease. You know, usually people's anxiety is through the roof' (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). He asserted that a facilitator needs to be calm and regulated, and that these initial interactions can be 'make it or break it.' As Porges (2017) states, 'Only when we are in a calm physiological state can we convey cues of safety to another' (p. 50). The awareness of participant needs, understanding of the participants' emotional state, and therefore how to strategise accordingly, are all highlighted throughout the case studies and illustrative case studies as critical factors in supporting safety, and helping individuals to feel welcome.

Facilitators' Self-awareness, Self-regulation, And Self-care. Ahonen (2021) reflects on her work with refugees, acknowledging that the complications of difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998) can impact the facilitator. She questions, 'How is one to sit with a suffering person? How is one to carry another person's burden without oneself becoming traumatized? How can we protect ourselves as we continue to listen? How are we to take care of ourselves,

and how are we to empty our “containers” afterwards?’ (p. 314). She describes how the combination of self-care, self-reflection, making sure that one has enough to give, and remaining safe are key, explaining,

The first step in this is to learn to appreciate and recognize our own emotions, needs, and boundaries. It starts with a healthy balance between work and rest. We need a true connection with others, ourselves and our personal power sources. We must regain our sense of interdependence, meaning of life, and hope. (p. 314)

As facilitators, how do we protect ourselves? How can we preserve our own safety when working with those whose sense of safety has been compromised due to their experience of prior trauma? Facilitator self-care was illuminated as crucial to both the MWB and Stone Flowers methodologies. Darren explained the importance of making time for fun, friendship, and ‘private’ space (Darren, interview, 12th May 2022), corroborating Ahonen’s assertion of balance. Kelly also understands this need for balance and that it is key for her to be able to practice in a consistent, respectful, and empathic way.

Dan highlighted the potential danger of not working under a professional framework. There may be little or no access to mentoring and supervision unless paid for privately by the individual practitioner. Dan asserted that practitioners ‘go in at your own risk’ (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). He identified an issue of ‘welfare’ where the facilitation processes are drawn from an informal, pedagogical approach, and highlighted the stark contrast of the formality of clinicians in their professional role when they access supervision as an integral part of their job.

Higgins and Willingham (2017) suggest that the wellbeing of facilitators connects to self-awareness and reflexivity. Several factors were explored by research participants as vital aspects of self-care, including self-awareness, the need for supervision, and positively managing one's own emotional health and wellbeing. Marion commented on safety as being vital in the music-making space, connected to a practitioner's ability to be self-aware and self-reflective. She explained, 'Because, of course, we're getting affected by each other and our energy levels and our nervous systems' (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022). She reflected that, having engaged with the MWB training and supervision, she feels much more able to notice what is happening in her body and what her body is communicating to her. She has also developed more self-care tools to, in her words, 'stay a safe person for people.' Marion spoke of the need for self-reflection and for practitioners to be aware of and understand their own history, what triggers them, and how to manage their emotional health appropriately for the work in which they are engaged.

Dan reflected on how the experience and expertise he has acquired over the years means he is able to work effectively, even on a 'bad' day, saying 'I like to think that you wouldn't spot me on one of those days. I'd like to think I'm consistent' (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). This speaks to the level of skill and expertise Dan brings into the role, that what can be observed externally does not give away how he may be feeling internally. He can contain his mental and emotional health to consistently support the clients' needs during the music making process. Dan suggests that a facilitator working with participants with complex needs must 'make yourself comfortable in an uncomfortable atmosphere' (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). This connects with notions of ongoing self-care and self-awareness, knowing that the dynamics might be difficult, and understanding how to remain as calm and regulated as possible to facilitate safety for the individual or group.

Lis expressed the importance for Stone Flowers facilitators to receive training in self-care to help avoid the potential for risks to their wellbeing. Having experienced vicarious trauma in the context of her practice as a music facilitator, Lis understands the importance of minimising the risks as much as is possible. She explained,

You have to be aware what could become detrimental to your mental health which then leads to burnout, which then means you can't do your job very well. And so, you kind of have to have a shift in mindset that the only way that you can do your job well is to keep yourself as healthy as possible. (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022).

Lis's personal understanding of the danger of vicarious trauma for a facilitators' wellbeing has significantly influenced the project design of Stone Flowers. Supervision is a key facet of its methodology, embedded in the programme structures to support the music facilitators who are daily working with difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998). This is a rare but powerful example of practice, with peer support and mentoring also crucial within how the Stone Flowers delivery teams operate. The issue faced by many community musicians is that of working on a freelance basis, without access to the potential for organisational support.

Pedagogical Aspects

Reflective And Reflexive Practice. Reflexivity identified as 'a form of self-awareness' (Lawson, 1985, p. 9). Freire (1970) states that 'Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly' (p. 60). Reflective and reflexive practice can be tools by which we can re-examine ourselves and, as Freire suggests, 'reflection—true reflection—leads to action' (p. 66). Engaging in trauma-informed practice

necessitates development of reflective and reflexive practice in consideration of a facilitator's ethical responsibility to their participants. It can support understanding of the boundary lines of practice, keeping ourselves and those we work with emotionally safe, and creating space in which both the individual and the group can flourish.

Reading the room is an established strategy of practice to support a facilitator's reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983). As Higgins (2012) explains, 'In order to be a good facilitator, you need to know where everybody is at' (p. 156). Porges (2017) posits that,

We have this exquisitely tuned capacity to derive [our participants'] state and intention from the tone of their voice, their facial expressions, their gestures, and their posture. We may not have words for this information, but if we listen to the way they make us feel, it will inform our practice. (p. 44)

Gibson (2020) discusses the difference between reflective and reflexive work as reflection-in-action, and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983), focusing on tangible processes, facilitation strategies, observations, and critical moments. Reflexivity is a focus on internal, under-the-surface interactions between facilitators and participants, the visceral, tacit knowings that underpin effective practice purporting to be therapeutic in nature. The facilitator's self-awareness is critical to this process, discussed by Higgins (2012) as a means of developing a greater emphasis on a 'bottom up rather than top down approach to creative music making' (p. 154).

Dan described reflexive practice as the 'constant analysis of everything going on' (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). He talked about the internal reflexivity needed to work

effectively with those who have experienced trauma, saying,

It's that invisible, that unseen routine that you're running at like twice the speed, and you're trying to read every word and every like, inflection that they're giving off. And you're assembling like a master report at the top of it all. (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022)

Dan highlights key elements of reflective and reflexive facilitation in this quotation, detailing the ongoing internal, 'unseen' actions; reading words, body language, inflection of speech; making sense of what you are observing; and compiling the 'master report,' directing facilitator decision making in the space and supporting ongoing reflection and planning. Dan reiterated the importance of reflexive practice as 'invisible' to the participants and a skill that 'they're not aware of, if you're doing it right' (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022).

Marion spoke about challenges to reflexive practice and reading the room. She is conscious that in her role as a facilitator, she cannot know everything, and that despite using reflexive and reflective practice, there could be things she is not aware of that mean participants still feel unsafe. She described her process of reading the room, saying,

I just watch what's happening between participants and then I use my senses. In a way, I think it's a lot of intuition combined with the perceptions that run on a subtle level that I do not have as a very everything conscious level, but I register quite a lot in what's in gesture and mimics like facial expression. (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022)

In this quotation, Marion identifies both the active process of reading the room (i.e. observing facial expressions and gestures), and the intuitive processes that she cannot accurately identify, and of which she is not fully conscious. Explorations of the Prison Partnership in Chapter 4 detail this potential for inaccuracy in reading the room.

The First Five Minutes. The importance of the beginning of a music workshop was discussed by several facilitators. There is understanding that the initial stages are critical to the environment of safety for participants, including consideration of the physical (practical) and therapeutic (emotional) conditions of practice, with the first few minutes of a session being key. Harris and Fallot (2001) place emphasis on ensuring a hospitable and welcoming environment; i.e., ensuring the space is set up in a way that supports individuals' feelings of safety. Institutional spaces, including schools, hospitals, prisons, and detention centres, are often cold, too dark, or too bright, and uncared for, with the potential for an individual subsequently to feel uncared for in that space. Facilitators will not always have full control over the physical space they are working in, but considerations as to set up can still be made. Chairs can be placed in a circle to avoid unhelpful, hierarchical structures. Doors can be left open if appropriate, to emphasise freedom to choose and a physical 'opt out' for a participant who may be experiencing trauma symptoms such as intense anxiety.

In addressing physical safety with groups of children, Marion uses a model of practical safety with a number one rule: 'the facilitator wants to *feel* safe, everybody in the room wants to *feel* safe, and the instruments also want to *feel* safe' (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022, emphasis mine). She illustrated elements that cannot be controlled; for example, participants arriving late, 'banging doors,' explaining how this affects other participants' sense of safety.

Dan reflected on how he prepares for working with young people who have experienced trauma and the criticality of the initial moments of a workshop. He explained ‘If you can get them over that hill of trauma or anxiety or whatever it is that they are feeling, then you know that what you're going to offer them is going to make a difference to them’ (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022).

Risk And Reward. In explorations of safety without safety, Higgins (2012) explores how both risk and vulnerability can be encompassed within the meaning of safety. This connects with Michael’s statement around risk and reward. Higgins (2012) suggests that safety without safety ‘reinforces a drive towards dynamic music-making experiences that embrace risk and undecidability’ (p. 154). A safe and secure workshop space could evoke misunderstandings around what safety, as both a practical and an ideological concept, means. Donna Hick’s (2011) examination of the concept of *dignity*, further adds to the discussions of tension surrounding safety without safety within hospitable music making, where a person’s value and vulnerability paradoxically co-exist. The notion of vulnerability (both participant and facilitator vulnerability) is important when considering unconditional hospitality towards those who have experienced trauma.

Boundaries Of Practice. Higgins challenges the notion that the facilitator-participant relationship is equal in terms of the given roles and responsibilities of each, arguing that,

The relationship between facilitator and participant cannot be equal. It is the facilitator’s responsibility to ensure some boundaries and as such they hold some power ... Responsibility is therefore made concrete through professional boundaries,

demarcations that vary in thickness but nevertheless challenge any notion that there is equality between facilitator and participant. (pp. 160–161).

Understanding of power dynamics as important to creating boundaries of practice is vital, especially when working with those who have experienced complex trauma and who will find setting personal boundaries very difficult. Higgins notes the importance of boundary lines of practice and that ‘the ethical exchange requires a demarcation between the participant and facilitator’ (p. 160), suggesting that to ignore this dividing line is to create risk for everyone involved, and ultimately for the music making experience.

Creating strong boundaries of practice is supported by working within a facilitation team wherever possible. Marion highlighted this aspect of her practice, stating that ‘All I can do is try to well facilitate a good music session and make sure everybody stays safe. You know, it's just important to know the limitations also’ (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022). Marion suggests that the safety of the group is supported when practitioners know their own boundaries and limitations and keep focused on the goal of making music. Stone Flowers, Prison Partnership, and MWB all emphasise the importance of having a team of facilitators, bringing diversity in different facets, such as musical, experiential, cultural, linguistic, etc. to better support participants’ sense of safety, belonging, and inclusion.

Lis described the importance of ‘mental cut offs’ from the work; for example, not sharing your personal information and understanding that your role as a facilitator is not to try to fix every issue a participant is facing. Describing the importance of being able to signpost to others whose position of expertise renders them better able to support, Lis explained,

There's a limit to what we can give so we have to put boundaries in place to manage that, which feels awful because you think, well, I should be there for that person. But actually, we don't know how to do it. And there are other people that do. (Lis, interview, 14th July 2022).

Lis understands that she can rely on supporting organisations and the therapists they work with, reinforcing to facilitators what is and what is not their responsibility to ensure safety for them and the participants.

Trust

Trust as a core value of trauma-informed care is a vital component of practice in support of both musical and relational connectedness and interaction. From explorations of the Literature Review, trust is understood to be relationally considered as an ability to depend on another. Connected values, such as integrity and truthfulness, are viewed as key in establishing trusting relationships. Intention, competency, and reliability are understood to be active components of developing trust in group settings. These three interacting notions challenge a community musician's underlying motivation, highlight the importance of embodied musical and interpersonal skills, and illuminate the importance of authenticity and integrity as core values of practice.

Power dynamics are navigated when a facilitator is prepared to relinquish control. Trust is rooted in a propensity toward the other wherein building social connection through community is vital. Dialogue is viewed as a key relational concept in building trust through shared vulnerability. Friendship and belonging, as reciprocal, empathic encounters, supports participant wellbeing through entwined facilitation strategies such as attentive listening,

bearing witness, and validation. The research participants discussed in detail what skills and attributes are needed to effectively facilitate music making when working with participants who have experienced trauma to appropriate trust within the group. Clear threads are identified in the data set including being musically credible, building connections through relationship, and confidence of the facilitator.

Musical Aspects

Musically Credible. Confidence was discussed as key to the practice in relationship to the musical skill of the facilitator. When I asked what facilitator skills were needed for working with those who have experienced trauma, Darren responded, ‘The first thing is to love music, is to have a love of music’ (Darren, interview, 12th May 2022). This love of music is one of the foundational qualities Dan also identifies as making him effective in the work. He explained that young people connect to him first and foremost as ‘musically credible’ (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022) and that this is the starting point in building relationships of trust with participants. Dan emphasised the importance of authenticity in this process, stating that he is not ‘trying to impress these kids’ but balance musical skills with enabling access and welcome in the creative space.

Marion corroborated the notion of the importance of confidence of the facilitators and reflected on her observations of MWB practitioners. She described how energised, fun, and joyful the music making sessions were, with music-making strategies to support the ‘positive vibes,’ such as call-and-response, and how there was a lightness and easiness to the facilitation. Additionally, music can be seen to generate trust when there is a mantra to do no harm (Osborne, 2009, 2017; Porges, 2017).

Relational Aspects

Friendship and Connection. Development of trust as friendship that is ‘warm and caring’ (Higgins, 2012, p. 157) is vital to practice that endeavours to support individuals’ wellbeing and sense of belonging, as well as highlighting the ‘human’ aspect of group interactions. This becomes more challenging to navigate when participants have experienced trauma; their sense of trust in others has been eroded, and difficulties in developing authentic and healthy relationships can manifest in both inability to connect and in over-dependence and too great a tendency towards vulnerability. In the Prison Partnership, the team would often reflect on how the potential for transference from the women was unhelpful and could lead towards over-sharing and over-dependence on one or more of the facilitators.

Higgins (2012) identifies friendship as a theme of the empathic encounter between facilitator and participant. The root of the word friendship, understood as ‘mutual liking and regard’ (etymonline.com), emphasises the reciprocal nature of the relationship, as well as connecting to Carl Roger’s notion of the unconditional positive regard of the other³⁸. Several factors intersect in this conceptual understanding of the therapeutic relationship that are helpful in the context of facilitated music making, both to understand the different facets contained within the idea, and to create healthy boundaries around the concept as connected to practice. To have unconditional positive regard is to agree with the ideological and philosophical notion that all humanity deserves safety, belonging, and dignity (Haines, 2019). To offer a space that enables these concepts to be facilitated involves non-judgemental approaches to practice, as well as vulnerability. Friendship is connected to keeping confidences, highlighted

³⁸ Refer to Kirschenbaum and Henderson (1990).

as a key aspect of practice by several facilitators, as well as notions of respect, inclusion, and authenticity.

Trust is a critical factor in developing strong connections within a community music group, helping to overcome isolation and mistrust (Ansdell, 2014; Burnard et al., 2018; Silverman & Elliot, 2018). Howell (2013) describes the ongoing development of trust through the welcome and hospitality of the facilitator, where experience of communal trauma has eroded trust. A safe and trusting group environment can offer participants a sense of solidarity (Burnard et al., 2018) and unity (van der Merwe et al., 2019), collective focus (Marsh, 2019) and the opportunity for meaningful encounters (Mastnak, 2016). Turino (2008) describes the development of group cohesion through ‘social synchrony’ (p. 41) as enabling ‘feelings of social comfort, belonging and identity’ (p. 44), connecting with van der Kolk’s (2014) explanation of the neurobiology behind being in sync with those with whom we spend time.

Kelly reflected on how relationships with her participants take time to build, and that her knowledge of their context through disclosing of their personal histories does not happen immediately. She explained that participants will be internally asking the question, ‘Are you just saying things or are you genuine and authentic?’ (Kelly, interview, 21st March 2022).

Trust is also a two-way process. Haines (2019) states that ‘In the process of regeneration safety, in all aspects of healing really, we’re expanding our ability to grant trust and be trustworthy’ (p. 250). This reciprocal relationship demands trust be given and received, that the facilitator aims to be trustworthy as well as to develop trust in participants.

Howell et al. (2021) emphasise the social benefits of music making and importance of connections where trusted relationships with the facilitators is found to be key to the young

people's engagement with the music project. Marion also identified that building trusting relationships is vital to her work. She acknowledged different layers of building trust as 'me with them, them with them, each other, us with the music' (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022), supporting the understanding of a multidimensional process, not a one-way approach. She identified that building of positive connections and trusting relationships gives 'a possibility to unfold potential' for participants.

Gillian identified building reciprocal relationships as 'the first quality,' explaining that a facilitators' role is not just to come and do the work, but to be with those with whom they are working. As Gillian described, the facilitator can,

Offer to approach those in the group in a way that says, I'm here in relationship to you. I'm not just here doing my thing and presenting this to you in a take it or leave it way. I'm here and we're building the relationship. (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022)

This understanding of *working with* not *working on* (Higgins, 2012) as a key principle of practice supports the idea that the relationship of trust between facilitator and participants is fundamental to the creative process.

Gillian considered how she has had to shape and adapt her practice over the years depending on context, and the consciousness with which she thinks about what participants might need from her. For example, working with newly arrived children in a school context in Australia, Gillian is clear that the young people are carrying a lot of worry and that 'everything is very high stakes for them.' In response to this she explained, 'So in that environment, I learned

that I needed to be a warm, smiling, low stakes, person, it doesn't matter. We're just playing. We're just trying, let's just try to go around the circle again. Let's have another go. Let's do it again' (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022). She reflected on understanding the need for good humour from experienced teachers in that setting, saying,

Look for opportunities to laugh, especially when [the children] don't understand something, when they didn't understand an instruction or they didn't understand what they're being asked to do, they're worried that they look stupid. At that moment. It's really good to find something that makes them smile or laugh. (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022)

Playfulness, fun, and humour are identified in other practice contexts as important factors; for example, the Prison Partnership, MBW, and in the work of Music for Good.

If You flinch, You Lose. Dan considered key facilitation skills in building trust as intuitive character traits, saying,

I don't think it's something you particularly learn; it's just a character trait really that you're a compassionate person, you've got empathy for other people, you're non-judgmental, you don't get unsettled by somebody's situation, behaviour, presentation. That doesn't faze you and I think that's the key skill. (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022)

Highlighted in Dan's remarks is the understanding that not being fazed is a key skill of practice for those working with participants displaying challenging behaviours due to experience of trauma. To be fazed is to be disconcerted, worried, or disturbed

([collinsdictionary.com](https://www.collinsdictionary.com)), with etymological roots meaning ‘to frighten, alarm, discomfit’ or to ‘drive away’ ([etymonline.com](https://www.etymonline.com)).

For a facilitator to openly display worry, concern, or alarm can create an unsafe environment for participants, heightening mistrust. A facilitator who is themselves feeling unsafe, worried, or alarmed will not be able to create a safe emotional space for others or build trust within the group. As Haines (2019) suggests, ‘Trust is profoundly important ... (it) allows us to take risks together, to grow together, to know and be known’ (p. 250). Dan emphasised the importance of trust saying, ‘if you work in challenging settings, you've got to be confident’ (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). As part of being confident in the space, Dan explained that ‘if you flinch, you lose,’ reinforcing the notion that one must be able to control their reactions to potential behaviour manifestations that may be difficult or uncomfortable.

Looking, Listening, Witnessing, And Validating. Levinas (1969) explores the face as a ‘notion of truth’ (p. 51), as connected to expression. If a facilitator wants to create space for trusting relationships to be built with participants, to establish emotional and creative connectivity, they need to understand face-to-face conversation, exploration, and expression as vital. If my face beholds truth about who I am, about my intentions to be trustworthy, then in face-to-face interaction, I can convey meaning beyond my words and gestures of welcome. Levinas explains further,

For the presence before a face, my orientation toward the Other, can lose the avidity proper to the gaze only by turning into generosity, incapable of approaching the other with empty hands. This relationship established over the things henceforth possibly common, that is, susceptible of being said, is the relationship of conversation. (p. 50)

This generosity of approach is impactful to music-making processes and enabling narrative interaction. The common ground, according to Levinas, is that of conversation. Through conversation, dialogue, and engaging in open and supportive discourse, a facilitator can enable a process of ongoing trust to be gradually established.

Dialogue, Authenticity, And Disclosure. Dialogue is a fundamental notion in facilitation of trauma-informed practice, important in building connections, community, and unconditional positive regard. Waltzer (2021) explains, ‘Meaningful dialogue engages both parties to listen intently and engage with the other person beyond a trivial conversation. For caring educators, inner-dialogue, a conscience leading to ethical decision-making, requires space, support, and validation’ (p. 6). The author’s assertions highlight notions of reflexivity in practice and expound the concept of dialogue as both an external (relational) and an internal notion.

In his hermeneutics of trust, Gadamer (1975) asserts that environments of trust can enable a dialogue where pre-conceived ideas, misunderstandings, and potential for miscommunication can be explored and highlighted. This is summarized by Moran (2000) as follows:

Gadamer, then, seeks a form of encounter with others which is at once wholly open to new possibilities, and, indeed, to the truth of the other’s position, while, at the same time, remaining deeply respectful of one’s own starting point, one’s inherited outlook and presuppositions. (pp. 251–252)

These assertions reinforce the understanding that both facilitator and participant are connected through open dialogue whilst acknowledging each other’s past in relationship

to the encounter. Within the context of working with those who have experienced trauma, non-judgmental and open spaces for dialogue are key, alluding to the notion of ‘holding space’ (Sunderland et al., 2022, p. 8).

As trust can begin to be built, it opens possibilities for greater vulnerability in the dialogic processes of creative collaboration. Escobar (2011) asserts that trust must be modelled before mutual trust can be developed. He connects the demonstration of trust and vulnerability with ‘open invitations to engage in dialogue’ (p. 33) but cautions that this can create an element of risk in disclosure. Marion talked about this notion, explaining that care needs to be taken not to misuse trust and ‘dig too deep’ (Marion, interview, 18th March 2022). She reflected that this could be unhelpful and could potentially cause harm, even if coming from the ‘best intentions.’ Marion’s defined sense of her boundaries of responsibility in the space connects to the principle that our role as music facilitators is to actively enable participants in co-creative processes, not to engage in any pseudo-therapeutic work that could do more harm than good, as corroborated by Darren.

Mutual understanding, whether spoken aloud, or perceived through other ways of interacting, is reached as each person connects more authentically, or truthfully, to themselves and each other. If authenticity is enacted within those moments, ‘in which we are most at home with ourselves’ (Moran, 2000, p. 240), then this is surely a challenge when working with those who have experienced trauma. An authentic, creative space, one where the emphasis is on being genuine and true to oneself and each other, can enable the development of trust, which in turn, can enable greater vulnerability and more open disclosure.

Heidegger (2000) explores the Greek word, *alethia*, meaning ‘unconcealment’ (p. 107). I have wondered if it is possible to connect this etymological idea of *alethia* (*un*-covering, *dis*-closing, and *dis*-covering) into the idea of enabling narrative through the creative music making process. For example, in songwriting, the *re*-vealing of oneself in text demands a high level of trust, as well as truth. For those who have experienced trauma, the idea of *un*-covering themselves, displaying the vulnerability needed to tell their stories, may be wholly unsafe. The mental, emotional, and spiritual *dis*-closure in songwriting can be powerful but needs to be facilitated with great care. Trust can be broken. However, what if this concept of *alethia* can be connected to self-knowing, understanding of the truth about oneself? Building a depth of trust could enable the vulnerability for a process of *un*-earthing. This is furthered only by interaction with others and cannot happen independent of human connectedness.

The importance of lived experience

But we can also read the address of the voice here, not as the story of the individual in relation to the events of his or her own past, but as the story of the way in which one’s own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another’s wound. (Caruth, 1996, p. 8)

The lived experience of facilitators as trauma survivors was found to have positive value in a shared understanding and communality with participants. The pros and cons of facilitators with lived experience of trauma were discussed by research participants. Pros include the potential for facilitators to be positive role models, and, as seen within Stone Flowers, have the potential to build trust more quickly. Cons were identified as the potential for facilitators

to be triggered and the negative aspects of transference and unhelpful association. The Prison Partnership team regularly addresses these aspects, as do the Stone Flowers facilitators during their wellbeing sessions.

In Dan's opinion, lived experience is 'not something that you disclose openly, it's a tool you have in your back pocket' (Dan, interview, 12th April 2022). He spoke about using the 'tool' only if it was necessary to support a young person's engagement and sees his personal experiences as confidential unless 'it's gonna help somebody else.' Dan reflected that lived experience could also be used too much or in ways detrimental to the relationship between practitioner and participant, if the practitioner 'becomes too closely aligned with the client.'

Pedagogical Aspects

Fallot and Harris (2009) detail clear pedagogical strategies to support building trust; for example, '[providing] clear information about what [participants] may expect, [ensuring] consistency in practice, maintain[ing] boundaries, especially interpersonal boundaries, appropriate for the program' (p. 6). Pedagogical aspects connected to building trust within community music making include a consistency of approach, regularity of sessions with commitment to attending being a key component. The Focus Game was identified within structures of the Prison Partnership, to provide an opportunity for trust to be developed at the beginning of each session. Who is in the space is important, including, where possible, trained therapists in circumstances where survivors are known to have experienced complex trauma; for example, MWB, Stone Flowers, and Prison Partnership.

Collaboration

In the Literature Review, collaboration is identified as a core component of co-creation and understood to be key to non-hierarchical practices. Notions of inclusion and respect-in-action are vital facets of collaborative processes that focus on working *with*, not working *on* others. Negotiated, reciprocal approaches to practice are highlighted, with conversation and dialogue fundamental to these processes, and supporting mutual respect and understanding. In community music, individual and communal transformation can be supported through collaborative practices, where exchange of meaning and co-creation of new meaning can be beneficial for both facilitator and participants.

In exploring how collaboration can be applied in organisational contexts, Fallot and Harris (2009) ask, ‘To what extent do the program’s activities and settings maximize collaboration and sharing of power between staff and consumers? How can services be modified to ensure that collaboration and power-sharing are maximized? (p. 8) The author’s key points can support collaborative considerations useful to community musicians in integrating trauma-informed practice into project design and delivery. They suggest for example, that survivors involvement in planning, delivery, and advocacy is a vital component of practice, enabling a sense of belonging and shared identity in the work. Their model emphasises collaborative practice as doing *with*, not doing *to* or *for*, understanding that the survivor is the expert of their own experience. The following sections examine collaboration as considered in the data findings, highlighting the musical, relational, and pedagogical aspects.

Musical Aspects

Non-hierarchical Structures. In speaking about facilitation where hierarchical structures are demolished in favour of more equitable structures, Higgins (2012) suggests,

Music becomes an invention personal to the participants, owned by and meaningful to the participants, with the potential to generate an experience that can shape, create, and have an impact on identity formation (Green, 2011). In short, music-making experiences such as these can be uncompromising, personal, and “alive,” a process that evokes a telling of “their” story over those of the music facilitator. The self-worth that comes from being “enabled” to invent is powerfully affirming. (p. 148)

This emphasis on non-hierarchical structures is highlighted across the practice, for example, in the Prison Partnership and Stone Flowers Case Studies, and in the work of individuals and organisations such as MWB, Kelly’s work with Indigenous women, and Gillian’s emphasis on leaving space in front of participants for them to ‘step into’ (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022). Equitable structures and processes are identified as vital in contexts where participants have experienced trauma to enable development of self-confidence and self-worth.

Collaborative Processes and Co-creation. The importance of collaborative processes such as songwriting are highlighted; working together towards a common goal can enable a shared sense of purpose and identity. Perkins (2022) explores the strategies of group improvisation and co-creation, more common within non-formal music-making contexts, where ‘singers may practice uncertainty and vulnerability before dialogue and the singing of

a written composition ever began' (p. 137). Co-creation is seen as a crucial aspect of practice in enabling the voices of participants, as evidenced in the Prison Partnership and Stone Flowers Case Studies, as well as throughout the illustrative case studies.

Cultural and linguistic collaboration. 'Collaboration across difference' (Howell et al., 2021) is a key finding across the case studies and illustrative case studies. Cultural differences are understood to have the potential to cause barriers to access and create a relational disconnect. Where these are addressed within the facilitation strategies, there are opportunities to support intercultural understanding and emphasise humanising practices. This is seen within the work of Stone Flowers and MWB, but also as a consideration of practice for the Ethno community.

Relational Aspects

Belonging And Purpose. Darren emphasised the importance of belonging as a core value of the work of MWB saying,

Then belonging is the next one for us. And it's the ability to create relationship and connection to each other, to place, to what we're doing. People need to feel a sense of belonging. So, you know, we talk about it in terms of inclusion, I think it's an inclusion plus. So, you can include people but that doesn't necessarily mean that they feel like they belong. Belonging comes with this co-creative process. If I am creating in this space, and if we're making something here together, then I belong here, because I am also part of what's happening. (Darren, interview, 12th May 2022)

Understanding that belonging is key is corroborated by other facilitators; for example, Kelly spoke about her aspirations for the women in the drum circle, that they are not just included,

but feel like they belong. Darren additionally identified a sense of purpose as crucial in supporting participants' connection and safety within the group. Within the creative and collaborative musical processes, individuals can begin to develop a sense of identity which can help them feel a sense of purpose. Music is seen to be an effective way to support these important notions.

Collaborative Space for Bearing Witness. Knowing and being known is at the heart of community music practices, enabled in the collaborative processes of co-creation. For a facilitator, it is imperative to understand that an equal creative partnership, listening with respect and openness, and attending to the narrative participants want to share helps establish connections and respect-in-action in the space. To 'counter' silence, Schwab (2010) suggests that 'telling and witnessing are necessary for healing trauma' (p. 48). Bearing witness to the participants' stories as they want to tell and express them is powerful within a group and can support recovery with dialogue and conversation as crucial to this process.

Pedagogical Aspects

Collaborative Agreement. The importance of a collaborative agreement built on shared group values is an important finding. Group contracts, like the Prison Partnership Ways of Working are developed as collaborative agreements between facilitators and participants as a way of devising shared values. Stone Flowers also utilises this strategy to support engagement, respect, and safety for the group. As Haines (2019) states,

We come to spaces with a complexity of experiences. Purposeful agreements, collective practice, and engaging in our own reflection, transformation, and

accountability can give us the ground for building safety that allows for the complexity of trauma and systemic oppression. (p. 138).

Lis explained the importance of the collaborative agreement within the Stone Flowers methodology as a way of participants feeling a shared ownership but also shared responsibility of adhering to the agreed group values. The Ways of Working in the Prison Partnership operates similarly and can be a useful strategy for facilitators in dealing with potentially negative behaviours.

Collaborative Project Design. Stone Flowers, MWB, and the Prison Partnership Project all operate with a collaborative approach to project design and delivery. The collaborative processes include those with localised expertise and are cultivated across connected areas of practice. Chris outlined a potential issue in which the outsider considers they have the answers without having the internal knowledge needed to make decisions in the best interests of an individual or community. He explained,

But without any understanding of anything cultural, anything contextual, I don't believe that's helpful. It doesn't mean that the understanding for me to walk in with my background and think, 'ok I'm seeing kind of some evidence of trauma here and some after effects of trauma,' that can be really helpful for me. But to translate that to 'I know the treatment' I think can be really problematic or to say, 'well my understanding is going to be useful for everyone,' also, I think can be really problematic. (Chris, interview, 29th April, 2022)

This reflection reinforces the importance of contextually driven practice, designed and delivered collaboratively with contextual understanding, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. It also demonstrates a deep respect for the limitations of both individual and organisational knowledge and expertise and acknowledges the value of local, experiential understanding in designing and delivering programmes.

Working Collaboratively with Energy Levels. One of the strategies for responding to manifested behaviours is the facilitator being able to read the energy levels in the space and make musical decisions based on these. As Chris explained, ‘within a framework of trauma-informed thinking [the starting point is about] registering where you all are’ (Chris, interview, 29th April 2022). If the energy levels of participants can be understood related to the potential for experience of trauma, this can be useful for facilitators to acknowledge and respond appropriately. Chris reflected on the responsibility of the facilitator when participants’ energy levels are, as he described, ‘through the roof’ (Chris, interview, 29th April 2022) asking,

How do we meet this and then safely navigate an hour's workshop and come to some point of integrated regulation by the end of this workshop, that I’m not sending people out from this workshop in some kind of heightened state or some kind of state that might not be helpful? (Chris, interview, 29th April 2022).

It is of note that Chris highlights the importance of trauma-informed practice as a basis to *understand* behaviour and respond accordingly, rather than as way to *control* behaviour. The facilitator’s ability to work with whatever behavioural manifestations are present in a space is paramount for safe and secure music making practices and to enable effective creative

engagement. A controlling, dominating, or hierarchical approach will be counter-productive, even if culturally acceptable in certain environments, as Gillian Howell discussed when speaking about the hierarchical nature of education systems in post-war conflict zones.

Gillian described how the ways of working in the Pavarotti Centre were very different from the authoritarian approach of formalised education in the Balkans. She explained that ‘students are used to being controlled through threats and fear and sternness’ (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022) and that because the music facilitators’ approach was grounded in different values, the behaviour of the children could be extreme.

As Gillian stated, ‘on some days, you could walk into a room and the kids would be literally yelling and jumping around and almost literally bouncing off the walls and just not able to sit down.’ Through Nigel’s explanations, Gillian was able to begin to understand the different trauma responses that were impacting the behaviour of the children, including this hyper arousal state, or the children in freeze response, ‘who might be sitting there completely frozen, barely able to move, make eye contact, engage at all.’

In working with participant energy levels in the space, Evelyn spoke about having to guide inexperienced Stone Flowers facilitators in lowering their energy, saying,

You can't energise people who are just feeling so shitty. Frankly, they're in a bad place and you have to go where they are rather than think that music is going to bring them up. Just decrease the rhythm, decrease the noise. Let's start with something much quieter and build it up slowly. (Evelyn, interview, 15th July 2022)

Evelyn's knowledge and skill as a therapist was invaluable to the first iteration of the Stone Flowers project, specifically in offering informed guidance to the facilitating team. Her expertise, not just in trauma, but particularly the complex trauma experienced by survivors of war and torture, was vital for supporting adaptation of practice for the highly skilled musicians who did not have that specialised knowledge.

Collaborative Facilitation. The importance of team facilitation was highlighted across all contexts of practice. This is identified as a safety net of practice; to have a team bringing a combination of musical and personal skills, varied degrees of experience, including potentially different areas of expertise, is seen as crucial when working with those who have experienced trauma.

Empowerment

Explorations of the Literature Review demonstrate that empowerment is established as vital for trauma survivors. Restoration of power and control is a guiding principle of recovery. Community music is understood to support self-empowerment of both individuals and communities through facilitating self-expression. Emphasis on bearing witness supports participants in being heard and validated. Participatory and collaborative processes are seen as vital for individual and group validation and expression. Co-creation can support expression of individual and communal trauma, with singing and songwriting understood to be important musical mediums. Imagination and self-authorship are vital components of the potential for future positive selves. Additionally, self-regulation, self-acceptance, and confidence are potential benefits of community music making that support self-empowerment.

Fallot and Harris (2009) offer guidance in consideration of empowerment asking, ‘To what extent do the program’s activities and settings prioritize consumer empowerment and skill-building? How can services be modified to ensure that experiences of empowerment and the development or enhancement of consumer skills are maximized?’ (p. 9). The authors suggest strategies to ensure empowerment of survivors that can be useful to community musicians who are considering how to actively facilitate opportunities for participants’ self-expression and self-empowerment, understood as key to recovery from trauma.

Strategies suggested by the authors include ensuring survivors have a ‘significant advisory voice’ (p. 9) in planning, implementation, and delivery and have support and encouragement to reach their self-directed goals. Additionally, individual growth and skill development is valued, with process and product both viewed as important aspects. Finally, space should be enabled for the affirmation and validation of each participant.

Musical Aspects

Performance As a Strategy—Expression, Advocacy, And Activism. Performance as a strategy is a key finding across multiple contexts of practice. All three case studies demonstrate the importance of performance, with Stone Flowers performances seen to be the most enjoyable and important aspect of the project for the participants. Advocacy is a key component of the Stone Flowers performances, where songwriting creates the opportunity to redress the silenced voices, and participants can veil their narratives in poetry and metaphor.

Understanding the value of the performance space in enabling participants to be seen and heard is supported by van der Kolk’s (2014) notion of reciprocity as it connects to bearing

witness, stating that,

Social support is not the same as merely being in the presence of others. The critical issue is *reciprocity*: being truly heard and seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone else's mind and heart. (p. 79, italics in the original)

In further exploring the importance of bearing witness, van der Kolk (2014) describes how the one who witnesses needs to be accepting and non-judgemental. He goes on to state that 'Being validated by feeling heard and seen is a precondition for feeling safe, which is critical when we explore the dangerous territory of trauma and abandonment' (p. 301). For Stone Flowers participants in particular, performance is highlighted as the space in which they can best communicate and be validated.

Possibility Of Imagination, Self-expression, And Personal Growth. Palidofsky (2010) suggests that participatory creative processes can aid in '[imagining] a pathway out of dysfunction [and] chaos' (p. 122). Music making can provide a powerful way of presenting alternative narratives and reconciling past, present, and future selves (for example, see Balfour, 2018; de Quadros, 2011; Dieckmann & Davidson, 2019; Mullen & Deane, 2018). As stated by de Quadros (2011), 'Music appeals to imaginative faculties and helps individuals re-appropriate their own bodies and emotions, where conditions of abuse ... have led to deep-seated alienations' (p. 68). Other authors refer to the development of personal growth of participants who have experienced trauma, as music making is observed to facilitate self-contentment, self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-regulation, self-management, self-competence, self-responsibility, and self-affirmation (see for example, Cohen, 2010; Mastnak, 2016; van der Merwe et al., 2019).

Relational Aspects

Empowerment In the Group. Emphasised throughout the case studies is the importance of the group. Community music is a collaborative and communal activity, and as such can support a survivors' self-empowerment, as reinforced by Herman (1997). Barney and McKinlay (2010) suggest that 'song as musical text offers the possibility of historical witnessing and the possibility of truth in a new space opened up by testimony and narrative' (pp. 8–9). Bearing witness can support empowerment within the group, with songwriting as a safe space in which to hear participants' stories, whether shared openly or explored through metaphor and imagery. Uplifting repertoire can support those recovering from the deep impacts of trauma, and facilitators can support participants in creating music that can enable them to feel empowered, energised, and emotionally boosted. The Prison Partnership case study, for example, emphasised moments of joy in the music making.

Broader notions of empowerment are contained within the idea of cultural democracy, challenging community musicians to consider the potential for 'social and political change' (Higgins, 2012, p. 168) within the context of music making. This is particularly visible in the work of Stone Flowers and MWB, but other examples of practice highlight this potential for social and political change; for instance, The Good Hearted Women Singers, with Kelly's activist approach to the work through performance and collaborative partnerships. Group singing is additionally identified by Laurila (2021) to enable connections with possibility of building bridges through song.

The Prison Partnership Project has activism and a desire for social and political change as driving forces to the work, making visible what has been hidden (Conlon, 2020). In fact, I

would go further and suggest that trauma-informed practice is in itself an act of social and political change, turning the tables on previously conceived understandings of individuals and communities: viewing negative or antisocial behaviours in ways that challenge conventional responses of punishment, exclusion, and separation; offering spaces for ‘narrative healing’ (Barney & MacKinlay, 2010) and change; supporting the self-empowerment of the individual and the group; and offering alternative strategies of responsiveness and support.

Pedagogical Aspects

Fun, Playfulness, And Solidarity. Higgins (2012) describes the importance of conversation, negotiation, and play as key elements of participatory music making. Higgins additionally suggests that ‘If the facilitator can create a safe climate for risk taking, then this may release the group, or individual, to try the untried’ (p. 151). He reinforces the importance of ‘bendable rules’ and risk taking in a space where a facilitator does not emphasise mistakes but joyfully supports the participants’ journey of discovery. Gillian spoke of playfulness when working with displaced children, supporting this idea of ‘a path of no mistakes’ (Higgins, 2012, p. 151). Gillian suggests that lightness and fun in facilitation can enable the young people to let go of impossible expectations of perfection, relax, and feel more connected and at ease in their minds and bodies. Marsh (2010) also emphasises the importance of ‘musical play’ (p. 155) as crucial to self-expression, play as a means of developing connection, and social interaction in music making.

Breaking Down Hierarchical Structures. Facilitation strategies within community music can be used to challenge unhelpful power dynamics and break down negative

hierarchical structures. Higgins (2012) talks about the specific utilisation of ‘circle’ work as a reinforcement of non-formal pedagogical structures. He states,

The circle is a significant feature in community music because music facilitators organize participants within the circle’s “democratic” geometry. As such, the continual exchange between facilitator and participant, plus the spatial location of the group and their environment makes the circle a significant metaphor. (p. 152)

Higgins describes how within the workshop (a key strategy in community music making), pedagogical decisions support ‘the pursuit of equality and access beyond any preconceived limited horizons’ (p. 145). The facilitator’s ability to work with whatever behavioural manifestations are present in a space is paramount for safe and secure music making practices and to enable effective creative engagement. A controlling, dominating, or hierarchical approach will be counter-productive even if culturally acceptable in certain environments. Additionally, supporting the participants in taking on responsibilities and opportunities for leadership within the group can enable development of their self-empowerment and sense of autonomy.

Gillian spoke about working in a circle as a distinctive strategy of using the physical space to create space for everyone’s voice and contribution. She explained, ‘A lot of the circle work that I do is about really communicating. There is a space for everyone here; everyone's voice, everyone's body, everyone's eyes, everyone's energy’ (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022). Gillian reflected on how that space then needs to be ‘held’ and ‘maintained’ and how her role as a facilitator is to make decisions around how fixed and rigid, or flexible and porous, the space is depending on participant need. The circle as an important construct of

practice was reinforced by Stone Flowers facilitators, and it is the model used within the Prison Partnership.

Darren spoke about the need to ask volunteers or trainee facilitators about why they want to engage in the work, asking upfront, ‘why are you here? What's bringing you to do this work?’

Darren reflected on the need to engage in community music as ‘equals’ in the space and without any unhelpful hierarchy, where ‘saviourism’ and ‘romanticised expectations’ can throw this off-balance. He explained,

We walk into a space with other human beings. We're all human beings together. We're all equal human beings. We might be having different life experiences. We might have different skill sets in that space. I as the facilitator might have more facility with an instrument or with running a space. But if I come in, above everybody else, then that's an instant disconnect. Because we're there to empower and support others. We have to do that from, from a place of equality and looking across. (Darren, interview, 12th May 2022)

However, the ‘desire to eradicate hierarchy’ (Higgins, 2012, p. 165) cannot supersede the responsibility to acknowledge the power structures present in facilitated music making and implement appropriate boundaries of practice.

Enabling Goals and Self-empowerment. Enabling goals is a way of encouraging positive risk taking and development of future positive selves. In Higgins’ explorations of unconditional hospitality, he states that,

The unconditional is therefore always entwined with what is conditional and must be recalled in order to rethink and transform commonly accepted ideas and concepts. The unconditional is not therefore sovereign and becomes intrinsically linked to a future that is unforeseeable. (p. 140)

This idea of *rethinking* and *transforming* becomes vital in consideration of community music making that is grounded in social activism, where to go against and subvert, or disturb, commonly accepted ideas and concepts is foundational to the practice. This is also a point of connection with the notion of ‘departure’ (Caruth, 1995, p. 10); community music can play a role in a future that is not known but holds hope and possibility for those who partake. Higgins (2012) reinforces this idea, suggesting that ‘unconditional hospitality embraces a future that will surprise and shatter predetermined horizons’ (p. 140). This notion of shattering, disrupting, and disturbing the norms creates powerful imagery when considering locations of practice that support participants in devastating or vulnerable circumstances whose current experiences may reinforce a negative vision of the future.

Phil explained, ‘I think goals for young people, when they can set their own goals, and achieve their own goals is potentially a transformational part of what we do’ (Phil, interview, 17th March 2022). Van der Kolk (2014) also highlights the importance of understanding one’s value and worth in taking risks to step outside of one’s comfort zone. He explains, ‘Children and adults alike need to experience how rewarding it is to work at the edge of their abilities. Resilience is the product of agency: knowing that what you do can make a difference’ (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 691). Facilitators can support participants in setting their own goals, understanding the importance of this as a strategy in enabling self-empowerment of individuals and the group.

Choice

In the Literature Review, choice is seen as an act of liberation; enabling choice for a trauma survivor is a way for them to be heard and validated. Choice is given in the context of respectful interaction. Facilitators have a responsibility to be reflexive and reflective, making clear decisions to step into or away from the creative processes to best support participants. Choice is a value of practice that can support growing independence and self-fulfilment of individuals, especially when facilitators relinquish creative control. Choice in participation with the ability to opt out is a key principle of trauma-informed practice that supports the ongoing wellbeing of individuals and builds trust between facilitator and participant.

Regarding choice, Fallot and Harris (2009) ask, ‘To what extent do the program’s activities and settings maximize consumer experiences of choice and control? How can services be modified to ensure that consumer experiences of choice and control are maximized (p. 8)? Fallot and Harris’ guidance around choice can be summarised to support community musicians in the following ways: as consideration of repeated offer of ‘small’ choices for participants; consideration of participants’ right to choose when to start and stop engaging, for example, presenting an opt out; and consideration of participants’ musical taste and musical heritage considered in planning and delivery.

Musical Aspects

Choice in musical aspects is seen to be important in enabling participants’ sense of ownership and autonomy. Illuminated in examples of practice is facilitators’ awareness that offering choice can support those who have experienced trauma, especially when their choices and

rights have been previously taken from them. Choice was seen as important in choosing repertoire for performance and in putting forward ideas for collaborative songwriting. Choice in language used was a vital aspect of the Stone Flowers methodology, in which cultural and linguistic heritage was embraced and celebrated.

The Prison Partnership Project facilitators enable choice for the women in themes and inspiration for co-created group songs. The women were also given choice in deciding how to share their freewriting, and whether they wanted to write together or individually.

Participants within both Prison Partnership and Stone Flowers are additionally given choice as to whether they sing solos in the performances at the end of a project, enabling feelings of self-worth, self-confidence, and self-empowerment to be built.

Relational Aspects

Findings suggest that several relational aspects of facilitating choice can enable participants to experience greater autonomy. Examples from the practice highlighted equitable working to support individual and collective choice. The facilitator is seen to be in an ongoing process of reflective and reflexive practice, thereby constantly making choices that can affect the group dynamics. When facilitators demonstrate authenticity in their actions, underscored by empathic understanding, participants have greater levels of safety and trust and can feel more able to voice their opinions and state their choices in the creative work. Responsiveness to participants' needs will also support this process, along with relinquishing of control and the facilitators' ability to be vulnerable, within suitable boundaries of practice.

Pedagogical Aspects

Facilitator Decisions. Gillian stated, ‘I often feel like the toolkit I’m bringing is something I’m still trying to work out, which tools to bring out at any point’ (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022). In considering her toolkit for practice, Gillian reflected on the choices she makes and how these potentially impact her ability to be trauma informed. She reflected,

I think more about what I understand of trauma and how it can manifest in terms of people’s responses in a group setting, and being attentive to those, alert for those, and also making decisions about how I communicate, and how I set up the space, to try to avoid triggering some of the more common patterns. (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022)

Gillian likes to create a space with ‘a sense of order and neatness to it,’ speaking clearly, calmly, and minimally, relying also on visual cues to communicate with participants. Gillian described how the potential for children who have experienced trauma to be dysregulated necessitates a calm and controlled environment for them to feel safe, so the choices she makes as a facilitator need to create the conditions of practice necessary for these.

Reciprocity And Relinquishing Control. Higgins (2012) describes the fine balance between a directive versus a more free-flowing participant-led approach. He explains how problematic some of the traditional music leadership power structures can be and suggests that ‘facilitators are able to find a comfortable balance between (1) being prepared and able to lead and (2) being prepared and able to hold back, thus enabling the group or individuals to

discover the journey of musical intervention for themselves' (p. 148). This relinquishing of control (Higgins, 2012; Higgins & Shehan Campbell, 2010), however, was considered by Gillian to be potentially unsafe for participants who have experienced trauma and displacement.

Marsh (2010) considers the ability to facilitate levels of directiveness, and that it takes skill to 'step back and allow children to make their own decisions' (p. 155). She sees this skill as the responsibility of all music educators, alongside personal qualities of sensitivity and adaptiveness, and encourages these as a way of having greater responsiveness to participants' needs. Too much choice, however, is not always helpful in every situation, as Gillian explains,

That can be a trigger for people to feel like, they're not in a safe space, because they're being asked to make decisions all the time in a way that is silly. They want to make decisions about the important stuff; they don't need to make a decision about whether we should stand in a circle now or in five minutes. (Gillian, interview, 17th February 2022)

However, she is clear that she also enables a sense of choice in how she interacts with the group, saying, 'I'm always giving information, giving instructions. But I do it in a way that says, "Come with me. We're going, let's do this together. So come with me. Join me in this," as opposed to, you must.' This subtle difference highlights Gillian's recognition for the need for both direction and choice for the group to feel safe.

Choice To Opt in Or Out. Findings reinforce the importance of participants being able to choose their level of engagement in the music making. Ensuring that participants can

opt in and out as they need is crucial when working with survivors of traumatic experience. With no facilitation of a clear opt out, Ethno participants felt unsafe, and in some instances felt they were not able to engage in future Ethno gatherings. Choice to opt out was a clear strategy of practice within the Prison Partnership and Stone Flowers projects. Within the illustrative case studies, the ability for participants to opt out was seen as crucial to their sense of belonging and safety, as highlighted by Esme, Kelly, and Gillian, for example. MWB methodology also encourages choice in a participant's level of engagement, supporting feelings of safety. As Darren explained,

The ability to let people sit back and join when they want to step out of the space, step back into the space, all those things. It's not a requirement for people to participate in the way that you think they should participate all the time. People participate in different ways. So, creating safety is allowing people to be human within the space.
(Darren, interview, 12th May 2022)

Findings

Based on the research findings and Harris and Fallot's (2001) principles, the three tables of findings below are a distillation of application of the five values of trauma-informed care into community music practice. Adaptations of musical, relational, and pedagogical aspects are viewed separately. Important to note, however, is that as interconnected facets of practice, musical, relational, and pedagogical aspects cannot be applied as distinct from each other. Pedagogical decisions involve musical and relational choices, equally, relational interactions are housed within the music making. The categorisations support clarity in communication of the findings, but each overlap, connect, and inform the other.

Table 1 Musical Aspects

SAFETY	TRUST	COLLABORATION	EMPOWERMENT	CHOICE
Safe exploration of emotions	Accepting musical offers	Collaborative songwriting	Singing as an act of self- and communal-expression and self-empowerment	Accepting musical offers, song choices and repertoire
Musical skill, confidence, and vulnerability of the facilitator	Building connections through co-creation	Working towards a common goal	Performance as a strategy for expression and advocacy	Participants choose themes and inspiration
Breathwork and warmups to support emotional regulation	Music making can enable safety, belonging and social connection	Co-creative practices, cultural and linguistic collaboration	Artistic quality enables joy and fulfilment	Choice over cultural influences and language
Working with abstract concepts for co-creation	Music making generates trust if we commit to do no harm	Non-hierarchical structures	Uplifting repertoire	Choice in writing together or individually

Table 2 Relational Aspects

SAFETY	TRUST	COLLABORATION	EMPOWERMENT	CHOICE
Setting the therapeutic conditions of practice	Lived experience of facilitators can support shared understanding	Development of social skills within the group	Communal and self-empowerment in the group	Enabling equitable working to support choice
Welcome and hospitality enabling respect, belonging, and dignity	Listening, bearing witness, validation, dialogue	Importance of dialogue and conversation to co-creation	Building confidence of individuals and the group	Respectful interaction enabling independence and self-fulfilment
Ethics of care – inclusive, respectful, and empathic practices	Empathic encounters supporting friendship and authenticity	Sense of belonging and purpose	Cultivating an environment of care, support, and validation	Empathic encounters
Person-centred being <i>for</i> the other – responsiveness – ability to attune	Paying attention to the face of the <i>other</i>	The group bears witness to individuals' stories	Enabling responsiveness to and autonomy of participants	Being responsive to individual need

SAFETY	TRUST	COLLABORATION	EMPOWERMENT	CHOICE
Self-awareness and self-care of facilitator	Keeping confidences, truthfulness, and apology	Shared meaning, supporting identity in the group	Identity, purpose, and meaning through self-expression and self-authorship	Ability to be vulnerable

Table 3 Pedagogical Aspects

SAFETY	TRUST	COLLABORATION	EMPOWERMENT	CHOICE
Setting the physical conditions of practice, working in a circle, importance of the first five minutes	Warmup activities such as the focus game to support connection and positive interaction	Collaborative agreement e.g. Ways of Working for development of group values	Fun, playfulness as integral components	Choice in participation – ability to opt in or out as needed
Safeguarding through clear boundaries of practice	Boundaries of practice to understand roles and responsibilities	Negotiated, reciprocal practices	Opening space for individual and communal sharing and co-creation	Reciprocity in interaction
Enabling risk and reward	Directiveness and confidence	Working <i>with</i> not working <i>on</i>	Enabling goals and self-empowerment with positive risk taking	Being responsive, directive vs free-flow
Holding space	Relinquishing of power and control	Negotiated, non-hierarchical practices	Opportunities for leadership, restoration of power and control	Relinquishing control
Ritualistic, repeated structures	Consistency of approach - reliability of facilitator	Potential for mutual transformation in the co-creation of new music	Opportunities to use imagination – future possible selves	Choice in free-writing, sharing of work and co-creation
Co-facilitation – reflective and reflexive practice	Co-facilitation	Co-facilitation – importance of the team	Solidarity of the group	Reflective and reflexive practice

Summary

Trauma-informed practice has been found to be inconsistently considered and applied to practice. Understandings vary; in some contexts, for example, the Prison Partnership, trauma-

informed practice is a critical lens to support facilitators' adaptation of their practice in response to participant needs. In other contexts, for example in the Ethno community, it was not a valued aspect of practice, and so, issues of safeguarding are highlighted alongside participants' inability to voice concerns or be heard. Methodologies of practice, such as within Stone Flowers and MWB, are seen to enable greater participant safety, and support facilitators' understanding of and application of strategies to safeguard themselves and the group when working with participants with complex trauma histories.

The conceptual framework of the five values of trauma-informed care has been analysed as a fundamental and interactive component of trauma-informed practice. Safety has been conceptualised as the first priority of practice, with concepts of hospitality and welcome, ethics of care, and reading the room to support physical, emotional, and spiritual safety. How one considers safety will determine how one facilitates it. Combined facets of relational practice can create environments of welcome and hospitality for participants; active listening which promotes empathic practice enables connection to the *other*. Trust enables connection and a sense of belonging, with the importance of the group highlighted as key. Collaboration and choice can support positive social change. Self-empowerment of the survivor creates space for expression (personal and collective), validation, and personal growth. Each value has its own significance, but I strongly assert that the combination of the five values, with all the overlapping components of practice, form a strong foundation to support community music making that enables a space where survivors of traumatic experience can connect, take risks, and creatively engage.

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis explores the supposition that trauma is prevalent, impactful to individuals and communities, and is often hidden; therefore, community musicians need to consider how to adapt their practice in light of this acknowledgement. Trauma-informed practice was explored as a values-based model to support facilitators in understanding how best to be responsive to their participants. Application of strategies that enable safe practices and ensure a positive music making experience protecting the physical and emotional wellbeing of those involved have been explored. Trauma-informed practice is a lens that sharpens critical focus, enabling facilitators to better make decisions and be responsive in the music making space.

To understand trauma-informed practice is to understand the phenomenon of trauma and all its connected physiological, mental, emotional, and psycho-social impacts. The five values of trauma-informed care have been explored as interlocking facets of trauma-informed practice. They are interdependent; whilst it is possible to conceptualise each value separately, it is not possible to create clear delineation when applied to practice. Safety is the foundational building block of trauma-informed practice. Without safety, the other values cannot be built, and individuals who do not feel safe will not be able to participate in music making.

To support the ongoing conversation around trauma-informed practice in community music, I want to provide a working definition of how I now conceptualise trauma-informed practice based on the findings of this research journey:

Trauma-informed practice is a commitment to do no harm, an acknowledgement of what trauma is and the body's responses to traumatic impact. This understanding creates a critical lens of practice, thus sharpening a facilitator's ability to be adaptive

and responsive to contextual, individual, and group needs in order to build core values of safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice.

Where the five values of trauma-informed care overlap and intersect is where trauma-informed community music practice is housed—with all the combined nuances of musical, relational, and pedagogical application, demonstrated through the research findings, and as seen in Figure 4 below:

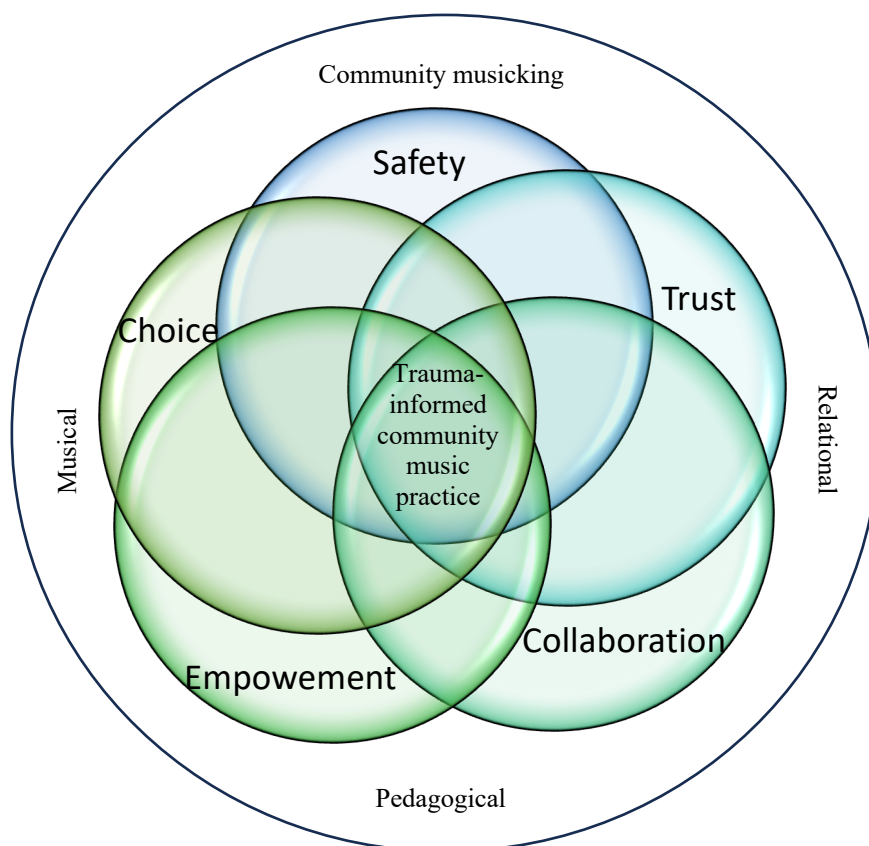


Figure 4 Conceptual Framework of Trauma-Informed Community Music Practice

Facilitators are key to implementation of trauma-informed practice. They set up the conditions of practice and use their musical, social, and personal attributes to support participant safety, development of trust between individuals and the group, opportunities for collaboration and co-creation that enable self-empowerment, and confidence to take risks and make creative choices. It is not possible to separate the practice from the one practising. The

effectiveness of trauma-informed practice, therefore, hinges on the facilitator. Facilitators' engagement in self-awareness, self-attunement, and self-care is vital to effective practice that is trauma informed. Facilitators need self-confidence to support safety and trust within the group, with enough sensitivity and vulnerability to be cognisant of when they need to draw on the skills and expertise of others. They must have respect for boundaries of practice and understand the clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities as a necessity for the work.

Being trauma informed involves an openness towards critical understanding of the other, a commitment to acknowledging the hidden voices and taking an epistemological stance that is unquestioning of a survivor, despite what cannot be seen at surface level. The ontological and epistemological challenges of working alongside trauma survivors in an ethically sound way have been examined using the five values of trauma-informed care as a conceptual lens.

Trauma-informed practice is an ethical response to the prevalence of trauma in our world.

While core values can be adopted into community music projects, specific strategies for facilitation need to be discretely applied. Trauma-informed practice is not a one size fits all approach; it must be contextually driven (geographically, culturally, socially, politically, spiritually) and collaboratively designed. Wherever possible, survivors should be co-creators in the design and delivery of the work. There is not one right way as to how the pedagogy is informed. The breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding needed, therefore determining training requirements for facilitators, should be guided by the context.

The journey towards becoming trauma-informed is a journey to be considered deeply.

Community musicians must reflect on this journey with honesty and reflexivity and learn to hear and attend to the hidden voices of participants, understanding our positionality in this

process. It is a journey best travelled in the company of others, with accountability and mentoring, regular training, reflection, and supervision, as well as interaction and collaboration with other organisational and professional structures to support the work. A critical examination of whether a facilitator is suitable for a particular context may seem contrary to the hospitable nature of community music practice but is a crucial question, along with what constitutes suitability. Facilitators who are attracted to working in contexts with trauma survivors will need to understand their responsibility to adapt and develop their practice appropriately and be prepared to develop in self-awareness and self-care checking their motivation is not driven from an unhealed emotional space.

As I have observed with student volunteers on the YSJU Prison Partnership Project, it is often the case that a personal awareness or experience of traumatic circumstance can lead facilitators to want to engage in supporting others who have similar histories. I would argue that there is a need to be both aware of and wary of this tendency, understanding that while an empathy of shared communality can be positively beneficial to the practice, it can be detrimental if the practitioner has not appropriately dealt with their own emotional difficulties, or indeed their own trauma narratives, speaking to the potential paradox of the wounded healer (Austin, 2002; Frank, 1995).

So, I ask the question, is trauma-informed practice as conceptualised within this thesis a pedagogic approach that could benefit from wider use? Is it enough to work ‘instinctively’ (Mullen & Deane, 2018) and with positive values such as building safety and trust, without critically reflecting on and discretely applying the five values of trauma-informed care? What greater advantage could trauma-informed practice enable for both facilitators and participants? Based on the research findings I suggest that trauma-informed practice could:

- enhance theoretical and practical understanding;
- increase understanding of the needs of participants, and their manifested behaviours, enabling facilitators to read physical and emotional signals more easily and respond accordingly;
- support development of musical, relational, and pedagogical strategies for effective working;
- offer clearer demarcation of boundaries so facilitators can create safe, welcoming, and empathic environments for their participants;
- help avoid re-traumatisation for participants and the potential for vicarious trauma for facilitators;
- enable facilitators to acknowledge when they need to seek further mentoring and guidance from those with greater expertise and when to refer participants for additional support.

The significance of the development of trauma-informed practice within community music is the understanding that the prevalence of trauma can no longer be ignored; facilitators and pedagogues of all kinds need to embrace the reality of trauma in our world and find appropriate ways of engaging in training to support their practice. Caruth (1996) describes ‘the complex action that constitutes the acts of addressing and of listening’ (p. 139) when dealing with the hidden voices of those who have experienced trauma. Community music has been seen to amplify the voices of those who have been silenced, making visible the hidden. As a facilitator, I want to commit to a journey that enables an environment of safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice for my participants so that their unique voices can be both heard and validated.

In this thesis, I endeavoured to respond to the guiding research question, *What is trauma-informed practice and how might it be applied to facilitated music making?* Whilst I do not believe that prescribing, or subscribing to, a set of trauma-informed rules is helpful, I do believe that applying trauma-informed principles into practice is a necessity to sharpen critical focus. I would like to offer this thesis as a way of better understanding the hidden voices of the participants and being able to attend to them. Therefore, at the culmination of this research journey, drawing from all the data findings and the expertise and generosity of each research participant, I want to close by offering the following statements:

I strongly suggest that trauma-informed practice needs to become an essential part of community music making. This assertion acknowledges a global landscape in which trauma is prevalent, and the physiological, sociological, mental, and emotional issues resulting from traumatic experience have long-lasting and detrimental impacts. I urge facilitators, whatever context you are working in, to engage in trauma-informed practice, to enable you to better support and safeguard yourself and your participants. I caution against over-claiming, and potentially causing greater risk for participants by engaging at only a surface level by embracing the label of trauma-informed practitioner without foundational knowledge or training.

I suggest that, when working with participants with complex trauma histories, organisational structures need to be developed to support facilitators in avoiding the potential for vicarious trauma, burnout, and secondary traumatisation. The emphasis cannot solely be placed on the individual to deal with the ‘sea of trauma’ we live in. This is a collective responsibility and is strengthened by a collaborative approach.

Commit to safety as the first principle of trauma-informed practice with the mantra of *do no harm*. Enable trust by being trustworthy, cultivating environments of dignity, respect, belonging, and inclusion. Focus on the humanising aspects of being-for-the-other. Have reflective and reflexive practice as a core component of practice, understanding how to be responsive to individual and group needs. Be non-judgemental and know how to hold space. Be cognisant of your level of experience and be willing to collaborate with those with greater skill and expertise. Make self-awareness and self-care a priority of practice. Ensure time and space for supervision and support, especially when working alongside participants with complex needs.

Importantly, have fun, and integrate playfulness in the music making space. Know how to set appropriate boundaries of practice. Understand when to turn work down if you do not feel safe enough in your emotional wellbeing to provide safety for your participants. Survivors want to be heard, they want to be believed, they want to be respected. So, finally, commit yourself to deep and attentive listening, understanding the importance of your role in bearing witness to and validating the *hidden* voices of your participants.

Implications Of the Study And Future Research

I am excited about the potential for future development of this research, specifically how the findings could support practical application of trauma-informed practice within community music making. I would like to develop a toolkit of trauma-informed practice for community musicians, providing a values-based framework that can support sharpening the critical lens of practice. I envision a collaborative process, connecting with those in areas of music making that support trauma survivors, alongside more generic contexts such as schools.

The Prison Partnership Project feels like unfinished business. I would like to develop research that involves deeper scrutiny of participants' experiences and amplifies the women's voices significantly. It may be possible to develop an impact case study to support the Prison Partnership's visibility within the institutional structures of YSJU. I would additionally like to develop the practice and continue to mentor community music students in the work, applying the findings of this thesis in the ongoing journey of becoming trauma informed.

Much more rigorous inquiry needs to be applied to the notion that music making can be used as a tool in trauma recovery. There are many claims made of the benefits of community music for survivors but not enough critique of practices utilised, especially those in which a blend of approaches has been adopted and adapted for use, whilst those carrying on the work may not have the experience or qualifications required. I am keen to draw on some of the explorations of this thesis and carry out more in-depth research into music as a tool in trauma recovery with a review of connected literature.

Boundaries of practice has been highlighted as a significant theme in this thesis. There is an ongoing conversation between the fields of community music, music therapy, and community music therapy reflecting on how these distinct areas of practice intersect (see for example, Wood & Ansdell, 2018).¹ Given the growing discourse connected to music making and trauma, including trauma-informed practices, there is scope to revisit the dialogue around health musicking (Stige, 2012), where the boundaries of practice continue to become less distinct, asking questions such as:

¹ In early 2022, I initiated one of the online ICCM Conversations to explore boundaries of practice in relation to the notion of health musicking (Stige, 2012). The conversation included two music therapists, Lis Murphy, Stone Flowers music facilitator Emmanuela Yogolelo, and me, discussing our respective practices and reflecting on the need for greater critical engagement where the boundary lines can be blurred. For the full recording of this online discussion, please see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdyRTIYEgxY>.

- What are the intersections of practice and why might these need careful consideration?
- In what ways can music therapists and community musicians both support and challenge each other's practice on the spectrum of health musicking? and,
- How could trauma-informed practice support facilitators across the spectrum of health musicking?

Intended Audience

A consideration of the research design has been the intended audience for the research. The decision to focus mainly on the perspective of the music facilitator was both an ethical and practical choice. I was conscious throughout of working with potentially sensitive and difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998) and that altered the way in which I approached the research methods and strategies. In choosing to highlight the perspective of the music facilitator, it was possible to enable rich conversation detailing reflections of practice that supported epistemological and ontological explorations of trauma-informed practice.

With an intended audience of researchers and practitioners engaged in community music, the respective philosophical, ideological, and practical viewpoints of individual music facilitators serve to create a rich tapestry of experiential and tacit knowledge providing a platform for discussion and application. I am conscious that generalisability can be problematic in any research project, and want to be clear that I hope this thesis enables engaged discussion, debate, and dialogue across different socio-political and cultural contexts where community music takes place.

Epilogue—Revisiting the Upside Down

I had no way of knowing at the start of this research journey that by the point of submission, I would have experienced a traumatic life turn with all the grief, pain, flashbacks, sleeplessness, and anxiety that accompanies such events. While the details are too raw to write here, I am more conscious than ever of the need for trauma-informed approaches to life, as well as in practice. I have needed physical and emotional safety. I have come to understand, sometimes at a high cost, that there are people who have instinctively been able to provide safety, and others who have not.

In my own experiential version of *The Upside Down*, I have had to take a step back from both my teaching responsibilities and my involvement in the Prison Partnership Project. These have not been easy steps, but ultimately, I know that I am not able to be fully present or effective in my work currently. It has made me more aware than ever of the responsibility of facilitators and educators to acknowledge our own needs and understand the importance of self-regulation. To ignore these is to render ourselves and our participants (or students) vulnerable and at risk to situations of emotional unsafety.

I acknowledge that what I have needed during this time has not always been to talk, and that the safest place for me to talk has been with a professional therapist. What I have needed has been kindness, friendship, ‘being with,’ and with increasing importance, music making as a creative outlet for emotional expression. I have needed to retreat, and I have needed to get out, be together with friends, and have fun. I am now sometimes painfully aware that no two experiences of trauma are the same, and to have people ‘speak into’ my situation with a projection of their own has not provided a safe or comforting space. Those who have

supported me most fully have not all experienced the same kind of trauma as I have. They have, however, had empathy for my situation, have wanted to stay connected, listen, and validate my story when I have been able to tell fragments of it, and love and know me well enough to understand the *hidden* voice that I have carried for so long.

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