

A view from above The Community Table (© Art Refuge)

Title: An Investigation of Adapted Art Therapy Practices at The Community Table

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Abstract

This thesis investigates The Community Table (TCT), which involves adapted art therapy practice developed and conceptualized by the charity Art Refuge between 2017 and 2018 to address the psychological needs of asylum seekers in France and the UK. As an art therapist with Art Refuge, the author aims to comprehensively understand TCT to develop a theoretical framework and practical insights for this new adapted art therapy practice. This study employs a phenomenological approach, incorporating perspectives from participants including asylum seekers, humanitarian workers, volunteers, and facilitators to explore the meanings, perceived impact, and mechanisms of change of TCT. Reflexive thematic analysis is utilized to identify key themes underlying TCT practice. Findings reveal that TCT interventions are perceived by the participants in the study as positively impactful, generating positive memories of home culture and identity and fostering moments of creativity, joy, and a sense of visibility for asylum seeker participants. Asylum seeker participants report that TCT generates positive memories and experiences, helping them to cope with their present challenges and feel more hopeful for the future and contributing to their overall wellbeing. Notably, TCT is recognized for promoting democratic art therapy practice by involving diverse stakeholders and fostering a sense of community for marginalized individuals. Unexpectedly, TCT is also seen as positively influencing the mental health and work satisfaction of volunteers and humanitarian workers.

Key mechanisms of change resulting in the above impact include the stance and attitude of the art therapists, culturally sensitive and imaginative art materials, an understanding of the impact of displacement both practical and conceptual, and the inclusion of artists in the facilitation team with lived experience of displacement.

Theoretical advancements from this study highlight the significance of the loss of home due to displacement and the impact of this on the meaning and intention of TCT; the impact of time and space in response to both displacement and a crisis context; the role TCT plays in supporting people to be able to emotionally cope in difficult circumstances and imagine something better; the specific role of the art therapists at TCT and the need for their necessary skills and abilities to be both robust and effective at TCT; the importance of the art materials, which ones are

chosen, how they are used, and how they are curated by the facilitators at TCT; the importance of the facilitators of TCT to understand, work with, and adapt (when appropriate) to the macro and micro contexts TCT is in; the importance of reflexive thinking by facilitators; and the significance of social connection and how to consider democratizing a space.

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The basis of this research is about working with those displaced, and the work is humbling, complicated, and at times difficult. Over the years of working in this field, I have heard and witnessed people's experiences of trauma and huge injustices. However, this is always counterbalanced by the overwhelming openheartedness, genuine curiosity, humour, creativity, and resilience of those displaced, who I work with and alongside.

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Dedicated to my parents, who instilled a sense of social justice in my siblings and me. Sitting around a dining room table and inviting others to join us was a key feature of our childhood. We have aimed to continue this legacy in the next generation.

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Note about images: All images in this thesis were taken by me on my mobile phone. However, it is crucial to note that, as part of Art Refuge protocol, images taken at The Community Table on the facilitators' mobile phones are copyright of Art Refuge. Therefore, images taken at TCT and not part of the arts-based data have been referenced as © Art Refuge (with permission granted for their use in this thesis). This fits with the ethics and philosophy that underpin The Community Table model and its shared endeavour in the service of the refugee population.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces my research project and professional practice. It discusses the motivations behind this research, outlines what The Community Table is and why there was a need to investigate it, and describes the context in which the research was conducted. It concludes with a timeline of the research process and the outputs produced during the study.

I am a practitioner and educator who trains art therapists. My professional practice is with the charity Art Refuge, where I work with people in the UK and internationally who are displaced. The primary aim of this research is to investigate a new model of practice called The Community Table (TCT). The goal is to learn from my experiences with Art Refuge, and my research into the experiences of other users and facilitators of TCT, to develop a theoretical and practical framework for TCT (an adapted art therapy model in humanitarian settings). This framework is intended to inform both teaching and practice. The principles behind the framework could work as a guideline for ethical art therapy in humanitarian settings.

The Community Table is a model designed to conceptualize and optimize group interactions in open spaces. Initially developed to support unaccompanied minors in Calais, TCT has since evolved to address the broader needs of displaced populations in various settings.

The research took place in multiple settings, including in northern France and various locations in the UK, such as hotels and government-run contingency accommodation, including a former military camp. The focus was on providing psychosocial support to displaced populations who are either in transit or awaiting asylum processing. Individuals housed in these settings are frequently moved and often lack control over their movements and timelines, necessitating any psychological support offered to be in the “here and now “.

The chapter will conclude with a detailed timeline of the research process and an overview of the research outputs produced throughout the study. These outputs aim to contribute to the overall understanding and development of art therapy practices in humanitarian contexts and how to adapt practice to such contexts.

This chapter sets the stage for a comprehensive exploration of TCT that will help to improve its application in supporting people in humanitarian settings through art therapy. It is important to explain why the term *adapted* art therapy is used in this thesis. In humanitarian/crisis contexts, some of the standard practices required by HCPC (the Health and Care Professions Council) and the practice recommendations of the British professional body, the British Association of Art Therapy (BAAT), are impossible to adhere to. By using this term, it aims not to diminish the practice but to recognise the gaps within professional practice and support the development of a bespoke art therapy specialisation which could extend the professional scope and identity of the art therapy profession.

It needs to be acknowledged that the research itself identified that there needs to be an art therapy specialisation in working in humanitarian contexts. Using the term adapted art therapy practice highlights the limitations of traditional professional frameworks; it addresses the gaps that exist when art therapy is applied in humanitarian settings. Conventional art therapy models are often designed for structured environments with clearly defined roles, boundaries, and resources—conditions that are rarely present in crisis contexts. There is a need for the creation of context-specific methodologies, ethical guidelines, and training pathways that are better suited to the realities of working with displaced populations, asylum seekers, and communities in crisis. This should include flexibility and responsiveness tailored to humanitarian work. TCT and the framework highlighted in this thesis are part of this development. Another rationale for the use of the term adapted art therapy is that TCT creates space for artists with lived experience and other non-art therapist facilitators to contribute meaningfully to therapeutic environments. Their involvement enriches the practice by bringing diverse perspectives, cultural relevance, and peer-based support, which are often more accessible and resonant for participants, promotes ethical and inclusive collaboration, and ultimately strengthens its effectiveness in supporting displaced and vulnerable populations through art.

Reason for research

The drive to pursue this doctorate stemmed from persistent questions from others, but also from myself, about working with asylum seekers on the France–UK border for Art Refuge. In 2016, during the so-called Refugee Crisis, I began working with Art

Refuge in northern France. The work was raw and intense, and balancing it with my part-time teaching role in the MA Art Therapy program was particularly challenging due to the vastly different contexts.

A teaching colleague once asked me, “What can art therapy offer in a humanitarian setting?” At the time, I struggled to respond, as I hadn’t yet formed a clear rationale myself. They questioned the appropriateness of offering art therapy when people needed the most basic of necessities such as shelter, water, and food. This was a helpful and necessary question, highlighting the practical need to understand and articulate the purpose, intent, and formulation of art therapy in such contexts. It also emphasized what I believe to be an ethical imperative to be continually reflective and reflexive about practice—understanding what you are doing, why you are doing it, and how you are doing it.

I felt frustrated by my inability to present a clear response and wanted to articulate the work more effectively. I had a sense of its meaning from my own experiences, observations, and TCT participants’ informal feedback. There was a positive impact, but I needed to formalize this understanding beyond a mere hunch. How could I translate this into something coherent for teaching training, and as a resource for other practitioners?

I sought to comprehend what we were doing in the humanitarian crisis context and why adapted art therapy was offered. What were the meanings and usefulness of our interventions? I wanted to know if our efforts had any impact, and, if so, how we achieved it. What exactly were the practices involved? I knew that any findings could advance both research and theory in which to substantiate practical application. There was rich learning to gain from these interventions, which could then be translated into teaching and training.

The context

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics state that 110 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide by mid-2023. Crises that include conflict, human rights violations, persecution, and climate emergencies have led to 6.1 million people becoming asylum seekers, 62.5 million internally displaced people, 36.4 million refugees, and 5.3 million people in need of international protection.[1]

Since 2015, Art Refuge has provided art and art therapy interventions for the transient asylum-seeking population attempting to cross into the UK at the France–UK border in northern France. Over time, our work has expanded to include projects in the UK, operating in drop-ins, government contingency and temporary accommodations in the UK, and in Paris in a day centre. The work straddles the English Channel. Increasingly, other global organizations and bodies have sought our advice on using art-based psychosocial activities with displaced people. This has included advising personnel from countries such as Italy, Greece, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uganda in diverse settings including rescue ships and in refugee camps. However, the core focus remains on supporting those seeking asylum who have yet to receive status in a safe country such as the UK and those still in unsafe, crisis conditions (such as the area of the northern France and UK border).

Even after the destruction of the large refugee camp in Calais known as “The Jungle” in October 2016, a constantly changing population of displaced individuals has remained in northern France. These people face violence, trafficking, and exploitation, with women, children, and unaccompanied minors particularly at risk of physical and sexual abuse. Art Refuge’s work initially arose from a recognized need for psychological support for those in the Calais camp, many of whom presented with mental health needs to camp doctors working with Médecins du Monde. Unaccompanied minors in particular were vulnerable and faced life-threatening dangers daily. Support for maintaining healthy emotional survival strategies became crucial.

A significant proportion of refugees reported experiencing police brutality, including evictions, confiscations, destruction of personal property, and the use of force (Monk

[1] https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/ (accessed 19/7/24)

et al., 2017). Widespread reports of violent police attacks, especially while individuals attempted to sleep under trees or in the open, indicated an active denial of access to physical shelter and deprivation of sleep. Even years after the demolition of the Calais camp in 2016, the situation remained critical, with no resolution in sight. Brexit, the pandemic, and legal changes across mainland Europe further exacerbated the grim outlook for those seeking asylum. It was reported that the transient refugee population's mental health is in sustained decline due to high levels of destitution and human rights violations by the police, with aid organizations struggling to fill critical gaps (Welander and Gerlach, 2018).

I and others in the Art Refuge team have witnessed depression, anxiety, and hopelessness as people become trapped in a cycle of rejection from their home countries, across Europe, and at the France–UK border. The situation in northern France, in one of the world's largest economies, has been described as a zone of crisis and upheaval by those living and working in the area (Lloyd et al., 2018b).

In northern France and government contingency accommodations in the UK, the displaced population is either in transit, waiting to reach the UK, or already in the UK awaiting asylum processing. These individuals are frequently moved, often without control over their destination or a clear timeline for their journey. Given the uncertainty and instability, providing appropriate psychological support is important, with a focus on offering assistance in the "here and now" through psychosocial support. Psychosocial means encompassing the broader environment that supports the mental, emotional, and physical aspects of people's situation.

Any crisis can impact people's sense of wellbeing and disrupt their connections with family, friends, colleagues, and their community. Psychosocial support helps individuals care for themselves and maintain their relationships with others, fostering a sense of safety and resilience in coping with the crisis.[2] In these circumstances, psychosocial interventions must focus on bolstering the emotional defence mechanisms of displaced individuals until they achieve a consistently safe situation (UNHCR, 2024 a).

[2] https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/psychosocial-support#:~:text=Any%20crisis%20can%20affect%20people's,to%20deal%20with%20a%20crisis.d (accessed 19/7/24)

The practices discussed in this thesis took place in France and in the UK, initially in the large makeshift camp known as “The Jungle” (in Calais, France) and, since its dismantling in October 2016, at a refugee day centre run by a French non-governmental organization. These practices also occurred at food and medical distribution points, a safe house for vulnerable unaccompanied minors, with a medical team in Dunkirk, and at a launderette catering to asylum seekers in Calais. Additionally, iterations of these interventions have taken place in Paris in a support hub and in UK contingency accommodations, including hotels, disused Army and RAF barracks, and community drop-ins. The ongoing work occurs in collaboration with French non-governmental organizations and UK partners, with the specific aim of providing psychosocial support to the asylum-seeking population.

The physical spaces where this work occurs are diverse and sometimes lack defined areas, with no seats, tables, or even walls. Creative interventions have been developed using a variety of art materials and media, including specially designed large world maps, small building bricks, postcards, and plasticine, all tailored to the specific circumstances and context. Adaptations of art therapy practices are needed to transform these environments into spaces where people can participate and engage in psychosocial activities. There is a growing body of recognized evidence highlighting the importance of psychosocial and creative interventions in enhancing emotional resilience in crisis settings (Hobfoll et al, 2021).

Politics frequently plays out on the France–UK border, and the situation in Calais often garners media attention, sparking debates on how to address the influx of individuals arriving from France in small, flimsy boats. The media narrative often aligns with polarized attitudes towards refugees. Former Home Secretary Suella Braverman’s assertion in 2023 that “[t]he British people have had enough of migrants pouring over the Channel”[3] has been criticized for its inflammatory language.[4] Political parties campaigning for election in the July 2024 UK general election forefronted the issue of small boats crossing from France to the UK with those seeking asylum. In August 2024 anti-immigration demonstrations and riots took

[3] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/columnists/article-11832523/SUELLA-BRAVERMAN-British-people-migrants-pouring-Channel.html (accessed 7/11/24)
[4] https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/suella-braverman-asylum-small-boats-inflammatory-b2295776.html (accessed 7/11/24)

place across towns and cities in the UK. Many of these were violent, attacking hotels housing asylum seekers and mosques.[5]

The portrayal of refugees in the media tends to dichotomize them as either perpetrators or victims, overlooking the nuanced personal experiences of individuals and their physical and mental survival strategies. While meanings for people are inherently subjective, I maintain that there exists a shared reality or a collective social construction of experience. While I am interested in exploring the significance of the practice work for those who participated in it, the underlying aim is to investigate the art therapy practice, and to develop and draw out conceptual and theoretical underpinnings to aid art therapy practice in humanitarian settings.

The Community Table

The Community Table (TCT) model emerged out of a necessity to respond to the crisis context in Calais. In this setting, using a traditional group art therapy model was impossible. The team initially worked in a tent within the large makeshift refugee camp known as “The Jungle”, as well as outdoors at food and medical distribution sites and in the middle of a large day centre. The lack of privacy and permanent storage were just a few of the challenges that forced the team to rethink their ways of working.

Around 2017 and 2018, as the work continued, the team realised they needed to formalise their approach to group work in open settings. They began to conceptualise and optimise what the group interactions were actually doing in such spaces (Lloyd and Usiskin, 2020). This coincided with the beginnings of this doctorate, and so TCT was developed alongside the research. Throughout the duration of the doctorate, there was an ongoing, iterative process, with the research influencing the development of the model. Developments in thinking related to practice were fed back to the team in situ. Aspects of the research were also used in book chapters and journal articles about TCT, which are outlined at the end of the chapter.

[5] https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/policing-response-to-the-2024-summer-riots/#:~:text=Between%2030%20July%20and%207,promoted%20and%20attended%20the%20riots (accessed 7/11/24)

The operation of TCT and how it is set up has evolved alongside this research. Initially, the work in northern France began in 2015, when Art Refuge worked in the large camp in Calais known as “The Jungle”. The team travelled from the UK two days each week, with a minimum of two—often more—team members. A staff rotation was established, with a core member acting as the cultural carrier of the work across weeks (Lloyd et al., 2018b). At that time, Art Refuge was one of the few services in the camp offering a psychological space open to all people, regardless of ethnicity, sex, or age (Lloyd et al., 2018b). The work took place in partnership with two French NGOs—Médecins du Monde and Médecins Sans Frontières—within their psychosocial programmes in the camp. Following the camp’s eviction, the work continued in a day centre, with the association Secours Catholique.

Over the following years, weekly delivery became unsustainable. The team became smaller, and delivery shifted to every other week. For the duration of the research and at the time of writing, the core team—of which I am one—continues to travel to northern France every other week, with additional team members joining less regularly.

How TCT operates and is set up principally remains broadly consistent, whether working in collaboration with the medical team from Médecins du Monde in the field or at a day centre in Calais with Secours Catholique. We typically arrange a large table—often by joining several together—in a prominent and highly visible location within an open area or spacious room, where other activities are also taking place concurrently.

TCT typically operates alongside or with another established service, and there is a minimum of two qualified art therapists, who are regularly supported by artists with lived experience. Sessions generally run for two to four hours, depending on the context and surrounding activities. TCT is open-access and welcomes individuals seeking asylum, volunteers, and humanitarian workers.

The working days are long and both physically and mentally exhausting. Clinical supervision is part of the British Association of Art Therapists’ Code of Ethics and Principles of Professional Practice. Art Refuge offers peer supervision through fortnightly discussion groups known as The Community Table Collective.

Additionally, team members arrange individual supervision privately.

There was no formal development of TCT; it was an organic process, partly influenced by my own questions about the intentions behind the work. This became more imperative when we began offering support in a safe house in Calais for unaccompanied minors, sitting around a dining room table. Walking into the house, I noticed a pile of young people's shoes by the front door (see Figure 1 below) reminiscent of my own home when my teenage children had friends over. However, these young men in Calais, mostly from North and East Africa, lived precarious lives, having left their families and travelled across Africa, the Mediterranean Sea, and Europe with the aim of reaching the UK. Often, they would leave the dining room table after the evening meal to attempt to stow away in lorries crossing the English Channel via ferry or train. While this research does not delve into why people make these perilous journeys, anecdotal narratives from the men themselves reveal



Figure 1: Shoes by the front door (© Art Refuge)

desperation—the need to flee poverty, conflict, and forced conscription. Many experienced exploitation and abuse during their travels, often at the hands of traffickers. Those from East Africa who took the route through Libya and crossed the Mediterranean by boat were frequently held in prisons or detention centres until a ransom was paid by their families. These young men had all endured difficult and heartbreaking experiences.

Often, they were asleep when we arrived, and staff and volunteers at the home questioned whether our presence was worthwhile. But while waiting and drinking tea, fruitful conversations began to emerge with staff and volunteers about their challenges, the situation, and how best to respond to the difficult and upsetting narratives they heard. We noticed that once the young men joined us around the table, more positive stories of home, travel, hopes, and aspirations emerged through the art they created. Central to this was the participation of staff and volunteers, who made art alongside the young men and the facilitation team. At the end of the afternoon, the same table on which small buildings were made (see Figure 2 below) was cleared to make way for the evening meal (see Figure 3 below). Even in brief interactions, the benefits of the work were evident. The Art Refuge team quickly recognised the value of including onsite staff in the art-making activities and carried this ethos into other contexts in Calais.



Figure 2: Small buildings (© Art Refuge)



Figure 3: The evening meal (© Art Refuge)

The work with Médecins du Monde and Secours Catholique has continued, with delivery of TCT in both Calais and Dunkirk. In Calais, a day centre for asylum seekers in transit was established in a former warehouse. TCT occupied the centre of a communal space, as there was no separate room or area. Concurrent activities—such as haircuts, language lessons, card games, and cultural exchanges—took place around TCT. The idea of allowing participation from everyone in the space, including humanitarian workers, interpreters, cultural facilitators, volunteers, and asylum seekers themselves, marked a pivotal shift in attitude and opened up possibilities for a different way of working. These aspects are

not traditionally considered in art therapy practice. Additionally, the particularities of the context—such as the constantly changing demographic—required careful consideration. Key elements highlighted early in the research included the challenges posed by certain art materials and the development of culturally resonant and relevant materials. Another unique feature, distinct from traditional art therapy practice, was the documentation of creations at the table through photographs and film, often by participants themselves, with their permission to share on social media.

TCT was positioned centrally within its context—whether in the middle of a day centre in Calais or at a table outside a distribution site. Not only were enclosed spaces limited, but the atmosphere at these sites was often volatile, and closed-off spaces posed safety risks. Although this positioning was initially a pragmatic response, the research revealed that it reflected a deeper intention: to be inclusive and accessible. This became a key aspect of TCT. While art therapists primarily facilitated TCT, the inclusion of additional team members—such as artists with lived experience—was also a unique and valuable feature of the work.

The conceptualization of TCT into a model of practice that could be used and replicated in other contexts required clarification as to its intent and potential. Investigating the rationale behind TCT's core principles became a primary motivation for this research. Because it was an evolving phenomenon, the research had to respond and adapt to the shifting cultural, political, and social landscape, in turn necessitating the questioning of its purpose, participant demographics, facilitators, and material choices. While the developing model has been collectively owned by the broader Art Refuge team, its origins trace back to the practice in Calais. As a concept developed in response to volatile conditions, it is pertinent to explore its applicability in other crisis settings by gaining a deeper understanding of its dynamics.

Art therapy

As I am a UK-trained and UK-registered art therapist and a senior lecturer teaching on an Art Therapy Masters training program, the premise of this research is based on UK professional practice. Art therapy is a form of psychological therapy regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) in the UK. To legally practice as

an art therapist in the UK, individuals must complete registered master's training and obtain state registration with the HCPC. It was important for me to keep this in mind throughout the research journey, as this impacts my own practice with a need to adhere to certain parameters as identified by the HCPC. The HCPC sets standards for professional education, training, and practice; it approves programmes which professionals must complete. The HCPC keeps a register of professionals, known as "registrants", who must meet these standards, and the council acts if professionals on the register do not. These standards include basic standards of practice around communication and social media; confidentiality; health, safety and wellbeing; being person centred; raising concerns; being open and transparent; and keeping up-to-date records.[6]

These standards are based on UK practice and raise questions about how things work with art therapy practices which are outside of ordinary settings or abroad, such as in northern France where the practice work of this research is based. However, it is crucial to consider what the standards and norms are in the jurisdiction where the art therapy takes place. The HCPC standards specify core elements of basic ethical practice, and these standards are integrated into the MA Art Therapy program on which I teach, and several international students as well as home students also attend the course. We make it clear that we teach to UK standards, and adaptions may need to be made outside UK settings to fit in with legal requirements in those settings. A reflective and critical exploration of ethics and the values of how and why art therapy is provided globally can hopefully enable more integrity (Potash et al., 2017).

According to the British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT), art therapy is defined as "a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of expression and communication". Unlike a diagnostic tool, art serves as a medium to address emotional issues that may be confusing and distressing for individuals.[7] Art therapy participants are encouraged to use visual arts to help express and make sense, or some meaning, of their experiences.

[6] https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/meeting-our-standards/
[7] This is a short description of art therapy; more information can be found at BAAT.org.

In the UK, contemporary art therapy theory is grounded in the biopsychosocial model of understanding, as highlighted by Ettinger et al. (2023). This framework encompasses biological (related to physiological influences), psychological (pertaining to thoughts, emotions, and behaviours), and social (encompassing socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural factors) aspects. Engel (1977) underscores the importance of considering these factors collectively to comprehend an individual's distress fully. Moreover, it is imperative for art therapists to recognize the influence of political, social, and economic factors on professional practice and be adaptable in responding to evolving contexts and challenges (Kapitan, 2014).

A crucial component of professional practice involves psychological formulation. This is a process to summarize presenting difficulties of an individual or group, to explain why they may be happening, and to make sense of them. It may include past difficulties and experiences, if these are relevant to the present, while also acknowledging the strengths and resources of the individual. This entails explaining a presenting problem and articulating the intent of the therapeutic work. As Brooke (2004) suggests, constructing a formulation serves to bridge theory with practice.

However, what happens when there is a lack of established theory related to a particular practice? Discovering and developing theory in art therapy is a practical endeavour, one that is learned through experience—a form of personal knowledge, as noted by Swedberg (2016). It is essential to strike a balance between the process of discovery and the justification of one's actions. The ability to theorize is vital for gaining insight into the issues being addressed, particularly in researching art therapy practice in crisis settings, where the development of a robust theoretical framework is paramount.

The practice of what art therapists do is not always identifiable through art therapy theory (Kapitan, 2017). There are processes and factors during art therapy practice that are unseen but that do have effects on the people participating, and trying to understand what these processes and factors are is part of the focus of this research. Theory should try to identify and explain what these unseen processes and factors do if they are successful, and, in this way, robust theory can help to identify what other art therapists should do.

The actions of an art therapist in practice depend on the particular needs of the client, service user, or participant of art therapy. Within the British Association of Art Therapy there are special interest groups. Distinguishing between different forms of practice helps determine what kind of art therapy may work for whom (Wood, 2011). The special interest groups focus on both the practice and research of a particular clinical specialty. Currently, there is not one relevant to this research.

Adapted art therapy practice

The use of the term *adapted art therapy practice* in the title of this thesis reflects the necessity of modifying traditional art therapy approaches in response to the crisis contexts in which this research took place.

When this research began, the British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) recommended that all images produced in art therapy be retained by the therapist for up to three years. This posed a challenge for Art Refuge, as the transient nature of the work and the settings made this impractical. Since then, practice guidelines have changed, and this requirement is no longer in place. At the time of applying for ethical approval, Art Refuge referred to its work as *adapted art therapy practice*, and the thesis title reflects this terminology.

The Art Refuge team in France has grappled with ethical and practical questions about their work in humanitarian settings. A central concern has been whether it is appropriate to operate in such contexts at all. Given the transient nature of the interventions, the absence of formal therapeutic agreements, and the fact that interactions sometimes resemble Psychological First Aid (World Health Organization, 2011[8]), the team has questioned whether their work can ethically be described as art therapy, or whether it should be considered *art therapy-informed practice* or *adapted art therapy practice* instead.

This research considers practice that crosses international borders, while BAAT and HCPC guidelines operate under British law. Currently, there is no international framework or agreement governing global art therapy practice. This research could

[8] World Health Organization, War Trauma Foundation and World Vision International (2011). Psychological first aid: Guide for field workers. WHO: Geneva

contribute to the development of an art therapy specialisation in humanitarian work, helping to extend the professional scope of the field.

There are also core principles of art therapy developed in humanitarian contexts that could be translated into other settings. Working outside the UK with diverse populations requires cultural humility, active anti-oppressive practice, a commitment to social justice, and a decolonising approach. Globally, art therapists are increasingly recognising the need for locally relevant, bespoke approaches and are adapting their practices to suit specific sociocultural contexts (Arslanbek et al., 2022; Bonz et al., 2019; Gomez Carlier and Salom, 2012; Potash et al., 2012, 2017).

It is important to understand whether, and how, art therapy practices outside traditional clinical settings—including arts-based psychological support—can have a positive impact.

The work in Calais resonates with other humanitarian settings shaped by war, climate disaster, and poverty. While there is now an increasing number of national and international protocols for working with trauma and PTSD in art therapy (Kaimal et al., 2021), these do not yet extend to the international realm.

There is growing evidence that art therapy interventions can improve self-expression, emotional processing, emotional awareness,[9] and self-regulation[10] (Collie et al., 2006; Haeyen et al., 2018; Haeyen, 2019; Johnson et al., 2009; Kaimal et al., 2018). However, there is less written about how these benefits translate outside of the NHS and other medical-model settings, where the focus is often on pathology. Increasingly, art therapy is being used in health and community-based arts contexts, and art therapists bring specific skills to these environments. I argue that the art therapy profession—and art therapy training programmes—need to give greater consideration to these settings.

The findings from this research emphasise the need for art therapists to adapt their practice to different contexts, while remaining responsive, clear, and boundaried.

[9] How one becomes aware of expressing feeling, with the optimum aim of developing a non-judgmental and accepting attitude towards emotions as they arise and are experienced (Czamanski-Cohen et al., 2019).
[10] The capacity to identify, control, and soothe a reaction to stress (Czamanski-Cohen et al., 2019).

Practitioners must understand what they can offer but also recognise the limits of their role. Developing a bespoke art therapy specialisation in humanitarian contexts contributes to extending both the professional scope and identity of the art therapy profession.

Relevance of this research to art therapy teaching and practice

Art therapists have expanded their scope of practice significantly, as evidenced by the BAAT workforce survey in 2019.[11] They now leverage their creativity and expertise in a myriad of contexts beyond traditional mental health and statutory services. However, further research and literature in these areas are needed to fully illuminate the possibilities for practice and identify the core aspects of art therapists' interventions. Potash et al. (2016) highlight art therapists' adeptness in diverse settings, emphasizing the necessity for more varied research methods despite the emergence of a research-rich professional culture in recent years (Gilroy, 2011; Kapitan et al., 2011). Ensuring teaching materials are current, comprehensible, and tested is paramount. It also needs to adhere to the Health and Care Profession Council's educational standards of practice,[12] as well as its standards of proficiency.[13]

The evolving contexts in which art therapists operate directly impact training and education. Keeping abreast of up-to-date research that considers cultural and political contexts is crucial for maximizing the impact of art therapy, particularly in humanitarian settings where it can challenge dominant assumptions. Recognizing the significance of adaptability, flexibility, and responsiveness while upholding core values is essential (Lefkovitz and Ness, 2013). Additionally, art therapy education must encompass educational standards that reflect diverse theoretical perspectives to underpin good practice (Wadeson, 2002).

[11] British Association of Art Therapists https://baat.org/memberzone/resources/workforce-survey-results-2019/workforce-survey/
[12] https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-relevant-to-education-and-training/set/
[13] https://www.hcpc-uk.org/resources/standards/standards-of-proficiency-arts-therapists/

Over the course of the doctorate, I have been teaching part-time on the MA Art Therapy program as well as working as a practitioner part-time for Art Refuge. This has inevitably influenced how I see and view the research and its impact.

Art therapists now work in a wider range of services than ever before.[14] Art therapists are offering their creativity and expertise beyond the traditional settings of mental health and statutory services and work within a wider spectrum of contexts. More research and literature about these fields will help to illuminate and demonstrate the possibilities for practice, as will identifying what the core aspects of art therapists' interventions can offer. Art therapists are necessarily very adept at working in a diversity of ways and settings (Potash et al., 2016), and, while a research-rich professional culture has begun to emerge in recent years (Gilroy, 2011; Kapitan, 2015), more diverse research methods are also needed.

The changing trends of contexts where art therapists work have direct impact on training and teaching. Up-to-date research considering the cultural and sociopolitical context is integral to the impact that art therapy can have in humanitarian settings and should challenge dominant assumptions. An understanding is needed that adaptability, flexibility, and responsiveness are significant, while keeping core values is integral (Lefkovitz and Ness, 2013). Art therapy education, in turn, requires educational standards that reflect diverse theoretical perspectives (Wadeson, 2002) to underpin good practice.

Over the last few years there has been an increase in invitations via Art Refuge for me to do more training for several NGOs, small charities, and the NHS around the themes of working in a crisis context using art therapy, art-based psychosocial activities, trauma and resilience, Psychological First Aid, and self-care. The ongoing research from the doctorate has been fed into this training, keeping it up to date, focused, and based on real-life practice.

Art Refuge

[14] https://baat.org/memberzone/resources/workforce-survey-results-2019/workforce-survey/ (accessed 14/7/24)

Art Refuge is a small, registered charity managed by a board of trustees. Established in 2006, the charity is registered in Bristol but works peripatetically. The CEO provides direction for the charity and coordinates all projects. As an art therapist, she is also part of the core team, which consists of approximately twelve freelance sessional workers who deliver services. The Community Table model is now used in Calais, Paris, and Bristol, as well as government contingency accommodation in Folkstone and Essex. The core team of approximately twelve freelance workers primarily comprises art therapists, but it also includes other artists with lived experiences as refugees and being in the UK asylum system, alongside artists connected to the contexts in which Art Refuge operates.

In addition to the core team, there is a wider team known as The Community Table Collective, which undertakes other specific or short-term projects. This collective is a multidisciplinary group of art therapists, artists, activists, and other interested parties. They meet fortnightly for peer support and supervision, including the core team and other members involved in exhibitions, workshops, events, and fundraising. The collective is united by a shared commitment to the charity's mission and the ethos of collaborative, participatory art and art therapy practice.[15]

As I worked and conducted research within the core delivery team, it was crucial to carefully consider what and how to research to avoid disrupting the delicate ecosystem of the team and the functioning and delivery of the work itself. This included verifying at each stage that the research process was feasible and did not hinder the ongoing work. It involved negotiating with the CEO and ensuring the entire team was aware of the research's purpose and intent, fostering a sense of transparency. Sharing research developments and reflecting new ideas and discoveries back to the team became part of the research process; the team were hungry to hear any thoughts.

This approach significantly influenced the research design, methods, and methodology. When accruing data and determining who to consult and interview from the team, explaining the rationale behind these choices was crucial to ensure everyone felt actively involved and not excluded. Throughout my doctorate, I gained

[15] https://www.artrefuge.org.uk/community-table

confidence and became more adept at articulating and describing the research process, which made it much easier to explain to others.

The CEO, board members, and entire Art Refuge team supported the research, seeing it as beneficial for enhancing both their work and the charity's profile. This support is reassuring but also brings a sense of obligation. I felt supported yet responsible for ensuring the research added value to the charity. I sometimes worried about what might happen if my research outcomes did not align with the expectations of the charity and my colleagues.

Out of all the Art Refuge projects, northern France is the most politically volatile and high-risk environment, but all settings present dangers and attract high-profile media attention. This was where the research was predominately focused. There was a balance and sensitivity needed in developing my own voice in the research alongside recognising the collaborative aspects of the work in Art Refuge. This was emphasised by the fact that teamwork is crucial for safety and risk reduction. It was not uncommon for fights to break out in the Calais day centre where we facilitated TCT. Among the hundreds of men who used the centre, some were under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and smugglers often covertly or overtly collected money or gave instructions for the perilous journeys by boat to the UK. Tensions ran high; the men were often tired, hungry, wet, and cold.

Cultural differences and misunderstandings could easily escalate situations. In one incident (not at TCT), a young Indian man took a video of the day centre, panning his phone around and filming several men chatting. He posted the video on TikTok, which angered a Sudanese man who did not want to be filmed without permission in case the video was shared on social media. The Sudanese man became aggressive, shouting and pushing the Indian man. This conflict was intercepted, but it highlighted the sensitivity of the situation. Many young men are ashamed of being stuck in Calais; their families may have invested everything to help them reach safety, placing immense pressure on them to provide an income for themselves and their families. The young Indian man seemed oblivious to this context and was simply excited to be there.

These moments can be explosive. The day centre director was once accidentally stabbed, and there have been incidents of knifings, glass bottles thrown, and fistfights. A convivial atmosphere can suddenly turn risky and sinister. In this environment, teamwork and clear communication and protocols are essential. We needed to be constantly aware of each other and our surroundings, with trust within the team being paramount, and clear protocols for removing the team from the setting if necessary.

The impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic on research and practice

The Covid-19 global pandemic had a profound impact not only on the research process but also on the delivery of work with Art Refuge and my role as a university educator. In Figure 4 below is a mask made specifically for use at TCT at a time when government advice was to wear masks. A survey by UK Research and Innovation highlighted that researchers faced significant disruptions, negatively affecting their time for research and other work activities, which in turn further reduced their research capacity.[16]

[16] https://www.ukri.org/news/survey-findings-of-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-researchers/



Figure 4: Mask made by the author with the Art Refuge logo

The pandemic brought many complications, necessitating creative adaptations by Art Refuge. With direct face-to-face work halted, there was a need to reconsider how and what work could be delivered. Despite the cessation of in-person activities, Art Refuge was requested to offer online support to frontline workers who were struggling with the challenges of supporting refugees in transit amid the spread of Covid-19 in France. This support eventually extended to British NHS frontline workers as well.

In response, the team created an online arts-based psychosocial structure called The Community Table Online. This model went through several iterations, including sessions that later transitioned to a hybrid format, combining both online and face-to-face interactions in Paris as some restrictions were lifted.

Art Refuge continued to provide training, consultancy, and supervision for French partner organizations online. Training sessions on Psychological First Aid and basic skills in psychosocial practice were conducted for volunteers and humanitarian workers who continued frontline services during the pandemic. In July 2020, Art Refuge managed a brief visit to Calais to deliver face-to-face training before further lockdown restrictions were imposed.

Art Refuge's online work during Covid-19 aimed to mirror the intentions of face-to-face delivery in France. The aim was to offer brief interventions to counter isolation, mediate emotional distress for both refugees and frontline workers, and build creative opportunities for emotional resilience. The adaptation to online delivery due to unforeseen circumstances was a familiar experience for the Art Refuge team, who were accustomed to working in volatile contexts. However, the shift to online interventions brought new challenges and questions, which demanded consolidation of what the actual intent of The Community Table was.

The Coronaquilt initiative emerged when Art Refuge could no longer conduct face-to-face interventions. This project was based on the concept of holding and supporting a collective space through the image-sharing platform Instagram. Guidelines were provided by Art Refuge via a website, encouraging people to create a quilt square (20 cm by 20 cm) and send the image to Art Refuge, resulting in a growing virtual quilt which later encompassed photographs, drawings, and other artworks. The overarching theme focused on daily rituals people used to cope during the pandemic, aligning with the recommendations of Psychological First Aid to maintain daily routines and creative activities.

Art Refuge received contributions from over 37 countries, including from asylum seeker and refugee communities in northern France and the UK, as well as from friends of Art Refuge, family, and the general public. The wider Art Refuge team, including myself, also participated in making and adding squares. The images reflected seasonal changes and political events throughout the pandemic. Some of the images I created were posted and have been incorporated into this research, serving as part of the arts-based methods used for reflexivity as a researcher.

Once directives to work from home became relaxed, there were still restrictions and wearing masks was advised. (Figure 4 is a photo of a mask I sewed with the Art Refuge logo on; this was used at TCT while these recommendations were in place.)

In summary, the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated significant adaptations in both research and practice, highlighting the resilience and creativity required to continue providing psychosocial support in challenging circumstances. Although the pandemic hindered aspects of the research process, it also enabled new learning and development.

In the next section is a timeline of the research process and a list of research outputs relating to the doctorate.

The research journey

The research journey timeline:

- Beginning of the Doctorate: October 2018
- Registration: April 2019
- Phase 1 of data collection: March 2020–August 2020
- First cycle of data analysis: September 2020–January 2021
- Progression: March 2021
- Phase 2 of data collection: August 2022–December 2022
- Second cycle of data analysis: January 2023
- Third and final cycle of data analysis: September 2023–December 2023
- Writing up: December 2023 onwards

Participating in this research has often felt like trying to capture a fast-moving subject in a photograph. Throughout the duration of my doctorate, I have been asked to contribute to various conferences, book chapters, and peer-reviewed journal articles. In Table 1 below, the relevant research outputs are listed. This evidences not only the research outputs that have already been accrued by this doctoral research, but the potential and ongoing opportunities to share the knowledge gained from this research. This also reflects the growing interest and desire among other professionals to understand more about art therapy in humanitarian crisis contexts

and TCT. As I am in the privileged position of being an educator as well as a practitioner, I have been able to talk about the practice work with students.

Table 1: Relevant research outputs related to the doctorate

Event/ presentation/ book chapter/ journal article	Date	Title
Presentation/workshop	(July 2025	European federation of Art Therapy **<u>The Community Table: adapted art therapy with people on the move</u>** BETWEEN & BEYOND CREATIVITY and DESTRUCTION The Role of Art Therapy in Affecting Personal and Social Transformation
Journal article	Winter 2024 Spring 2025	Sharing approaches to working with refugees Part 1 and Part 2. *InSight*, British Association of Art Therapists https://baat.org/publications/insight/winter-2024/sharing-approaches-to-art-therapy-with-refugees-part-1/ https://baat.org/publications/insight/spring-2025/sharing-approaches-to-art-therapy-with-refugees-part-2/
Conference	March 2024	Usiskin, M. and Lloyd, B. (2024) 'Space of Art Therapy', *Unity in Creative Collaboration*. Lviv, Ukraine, 15–17 March.
Exhibition	February 2023	Letters of Refuge. King's College London <u>https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/new-exhibition-explores-displacement-in-the-past-and-present</u> Letters of Refuge was a collaboration between the Department of Classics and the Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies at King's, King's Culture, the charity Art Refuge, and people with lived experience of displacement. Miriam Usiskin was part of the research team.
Book chapter	2023	Carta, S., Usiskin, M., Lloyd, B. and Tabar P (2023) 'Digital and Physical Spaces in Informal Settlements. Migrants Refugees and Mapping', in G. Karunaratne (ed.), *Informal Settlements of the Global South*. London: Routledge.
Conference presentation	18–19 February 2023	The Community Table at the World Art Therapy Conference. Art Refuge presenting TCT film (Miriam Usiskin and Bobby Lloyd)
Book chapter	2022	Lloyd, B. and Usiskin, M. (2022) 'The Community Table: Developing art therapy studios in-between, and across borders', in C. Brown and H. Omand (eds.), *Contemporary Practice in Studio Art Therapy.* London: Routledge.

Journal article	December 2020	Usiskin, M. and Lloyd, B. (2020) 'Lifeline, frontline, online: adapting art therapy for social engagement across borders', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 25(4), pp.183–191.
Journal article	August 2020	Lloyd, B. and Usiskin, M. (2020) 'Reimagining an emergency space: practice innovation within a frontline art therapy project on the France-UK border at Calais', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 25(3), pp.132–142.
Consultation	2020–2023	https://www.artrefuge.org.uk/post/university-of-bedfordshire-awarded-funding-for-young-refugees-to-tell-their-story-through-art Consulting on a research project as to arts-based activities for young refugees. Working with young refugees in the UK and researchers using arts-based methods.
Workshop delivery	February 2020	https://www.artrefuge.org.uk/post/feb-8th-22nd-baat-workshop Usiskin, M., Lloyd, B. and Press, N. (2020) *Working on borders: Socially engaged practice and humanitarian support*. February 2020, for the British Association of Art Therapists.
Workshop delivery	1 February 2020	The Community Table at the Refugee Solidarity Summit. Miriam Usiskin and Bobby Lloyd. https://www.artrefuge.org.uk/post/the-community-table-at-the-refugee-solidarity-summit
Book chapter	February 2020	Usiskin, M., Lloyd, B. and Press, N. (2020) 'Temporary, Portable and Virtual – making galleries on the France-UK border at Calais', in A. Coles and H. Jury (eds.), *Art Therapy in museums and galleries: Reframing practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley, pp.265–288.
Delivery of online seminar	21 May 2020	(for over 300 participants) Working with staff teams in situations of disasters, social upheaval, conflict, and pandemic, for the British Association of Art Therapists, Miriam Usiskin and Bobby Lloyd.
Exhibition	October 2019–February 2020	'Witnessing the Jungle'. Exhibition at Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2020. https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/program/calendar/event/c4EgAaA Art Refuge team. Miriam Usiskin, Bobby Lloyd, Naomi Press, and Miriam Nabbaro
Exhibition	September–October 2019	https://shipoftolerance.org/locations/london-england-2019 The Ilya & Emilia Kabakov Foundation showcasing the work of Art Refuge.
Conference	11–13 July 2019	Masterclass at the International Art Therapy Practice/Research Conference: Effectiveness of group Installation as shelter, considering materiality in contemporary art therapy practice; Miriam Usiskin and

		Bobby Lloyd. The Art Therapy Space with Refugees and No Fixed Space
Conference	11–13 July 2019	Practice innovation paper at the International Art Therapy Practice/Research Conference. We are here: Activating a map on the France–UK border; Miriam Usiskin, Bobby Lloyd and Naomi Press. Art Therapy with Refugees.
Exhibition	June 2019	Sink without trace. https://www.sinkwithouttrace.com. Exhibition at P21 Sink Without Trace was funded by Arts Council England and curated by Federica Mazzara and Maya Ramsay.
Journal article	2018	Lloyd, B., Usiskin, M. and Press, N. (2018) 'The Calais winds took our plans away: Art therapy as shelter', *Journal of Applied Arts & Health*, 9(2), pp.171–84.

These outputs highlight the ongoing engagement with the academic and professional community, underscoring the relevance and impact of this research in the field of art therapy and psychosocial support in humanitarian contexts.

Chapter 2: Literature review and conceptual framework

This chapter will present a systematic literature review and conceptual framework that encompasses the current body of knowledge of art therapy practice in the humanitarian field. The chapter is divided into two main sections: the first reviews relevant literature about art therapy in humanitarian contexts, and the second develops a conceptual framework which presents theory that supports, underpins, and helps to make sense of the process of investigating TCT.

The central research question guiding the literature review is:
What are the practices that are significant in the delivery of art therapy within humanitarian contexts?

The aim of this review is twofold:

1. To synthesize existing research, theory, and practice related to art therapy in humanitarian contexts.
2. To identify key constructs and examples of practice that can inform future this research and the practical application of TCT.

This review also seeks to build conceptual bridges between art therapy and related disciplines, contributing to a more integrated understanding of therapeutic practice (Cooper, 1998; Gilroy, 2006) in humanitarian contexts.

1. Literature review search strategy

The literature search was designed to identify historical, existing research and contextual resources relevant to the practice of art therapy in humanitarian settings. Given the specificity of the topic, a multi-modal search strategy was employed, including academic databases, professional texts, and grey literature. The grey literature includes reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), charities, and media sources. These sources provide valuable contextual insights, particularly regarding the Calais region in northern France, where the practices being examined in this research took place and humanitarian challenges have been acute.

The search focused on three main categories:

- Peer-reviewed journals (Table 2)
- Web-based and secondary sources (Table 3)
- Seminal texts and professional books (Table 4)

Search terms included:
"art therapy", "humanitarian settings", "psychosocial support", "psychological first aid", "refugees", "displacement", "trauma", "visual art and culture", and "ethics in humanitarian work".

Initial screening was based on abstracts or excerpts to assess relevance. Additional sources were identified through reference tracing within selected articles.

2. Inclusion criteria

The following criteria were applied across all source types:

- Publication date: 1997–January 2025
- Language: English or English translation
- Relevance: Direct relevance to art therapy in humanitarian, crisis, or displacement contexts
- Source type: Peer-reviewed articles, professional books, NGO reports, and academic grey literature
- Exclusion: Non-English sources without English translation, literature unrelated to humanitarian or therapeutic practice, focus on art therapy with refugees when they are in a place of safety

3. Literature sources

Table 2: Key art therapy journals

Journal title	Publisher/link	Peer-reviewed	Relevant articles
International Journal of Art Therapy (formerly *Inscape*)	Taylor & Francis	Yes	Yes

Art Therapy (Journal of the American Art Therapy Association)	Taylor & Francis	Yes	Yes
Journal for Applied Arts and Health	Intellect Discover	Yes	Yes
The Arts in Psychotherapy	Taylor & Francis	Yes	Yes
Canadian Journal of Art Therapy	Taylor & Francis	Yes	Limited—2 articles
Journal of Creative Therapies (formally the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Arts Therapy, ANZJAT*)	https://www.jocat-online.org/about	Yes	Limited—1 article

Table 3: Web-based research sources

Platform	Search terms
Google Scholar Alerts	art therapy, psychosocial, humanitarian settings, psychological first aid
Mendeley Library Alerts	as above
ResearchGate	as above

Table 4: Seminal books and key texts

Author(s)	Title	Year	Notes
Kalmanowitz, D. & Lloyd, B.	The Portable Studio: Initiatives in Former Yugoslavia and KwaZulu-	1997	Early work on art therapy in conflict zones. Focuses on visual arts.

	Natal, South Africa		
Dokter, D. (Ed.)	Arts therapists, refugees and migrants: Reaching across borders	1998	The psychological needs of refugees. Focuses on art, music, dance, and drama.
Kalmanowitz, D. & Lloyd, B. (Eds.)	Art therapy and political violence: With art, without illusion	2005	Foundational text on trauma and displacement. Focuses on visual arts.
Levine, E. & Levine, S.	Art in action: Expressive arts therapy and social change	2011	Emphasizes social justice and community-based practice.

Key findings and gaps in the literature

Despite a modest increase in publications over recent years, in particular in relation to the Covid pandemic, the Ukrainian/Russian war, and the Gaza/Palestine/Israel war, the literature on art therapy in humanitarian settings still remains limited. While there has been an increase in research publications in recent years about using art therapy with refugees, in particular working with Ukrainian refugees, these publications mostly focus on working with people who are in a place of safety. However, there are some that reference working in situ.

Other publications focus on short term work as a response to a catastrophic event, such as a tsunami (Gavron, 2020).

In the most recent relevant publication, Gavron Bat Or and Lakh (2025) describe how art therapists created multiple studio spaces for thousands of the survivors in the aftermath of October 7th in Israel and the following war that ensued, which has caused suffering on both sides. The Safe Space Open Studio model (SSOS) in Israel was initially an art-based community intervention for Ukrainian refugees. The model was extended to survivors and evacuees living in temporary housing centres

and hotels. The model uses trauma informed intervention principles, including attempting to promote a sense of safety and connection to one's own resilience, promoting a sense of agency while being active in the art-making process, and attempting to restore community cohesion. While this resonates with the TCT model, a key difference, however, is the recognition that the SSOS model focuses on the potential of art therapy in a situation of collective trauma and a shared reality during an emergency situation. The paper also posits that the art itself acted as a co-therapist by supporting emotional regulation and processing, which built resilience for the art therapists (Gavron Bat Or and Lakh, 2025). This particular notion echoes data in this research.

Lousa and Hughet (2022 wrote about a case study of first aid with art therapy in temporary reception centres for refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The authors identified it as being an emergency setting with the participants mainly men coming from places such as Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Sudan, and Syria, both aspects very relevant to TCT. The art therapy sessions focused on a non-directive approach with theoretical foundations influenced by Carl Jung and Nise da Silveira (a Brazilian psychiatrist). There were some resonant elements aligned to the situation in Calais, such as the transience of the population which meant there could be no long-term objectives to art therapy. They therefore focused on stress relief and management. They also identified complexities including what mental health meant to people from different cultures, and the need for cultural mediators who not only interpret language but also understand cultural nuances. It was interesting to note how they struggled with the use of these mediators when in groups where multiple languages were spoken and so organised art therapy groups in relation to language spoken, which is not how TCT works. A critique might be about the theoretical foundation of these groups, which were based on Jung and the role of images in artistic expression to facilitate the emergence of unconscious symbols (Lousa and Hughet, 2022). This very specific lens through which to look at the art produced could lead to an over interpretation or misinterpretation and a failure to consider cultural diversity.

Overall, across the reviewed literature, some dominant themes emerged as significant for art therapy practice in a humanitarian context. Psychosocial practices are seen as an important part of the response to promote mental health wellbeing (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2007). Promoting psychological resilience is a key element of this (Hobfoll et al, 2021). Art therapy is frequently identified as a way to foster psychological resilience among those affected by displacement, trauma, and crisis. This includes both individual and community-level resilience, often facilitated through the process of making art, creative expression, and some kind of narrative reconstruction. There is also the identification of the role arts-based psychosocial support plays in humanitarian emergencies and the role of training approaches for non-art therapists to deliver this (Arsianbek et al., 2025; Bardot, 2018). This also includes recognizing the impact of disaster and crisis on not only those directly affected but also those working in the crisis field (volunteers and other humanitarian workers).

Another recurring theme is the necessity for art therapy interventions to be tailored to the specific humanitarian context. This includes considerations and adaptations to the cultural norms, ethical frameworks, available materials, and sociopolitical environment. Practitioners are often required to modify traditional approaches to align with the realities of field-based work, the stage the crisis is in, limited resources, transient populations, and exposure to acute trauma.

These themes will be explored in more detail below. However, significant gaps remain. There is a lack of studies that systematically define the best ways of using art therapy interventions in humanitarian settings. Few publications offer practical frameworks or guidelines for adapting art therapy in such contexts, and there is a lack of evaluation or rationale for offering art therapy. The role of art materials and media in shaping therapeutic outcomes is underexplored, and there is limited integration of local voices and community perspectives in the design and evaluation of interventions.

These gaps underline the need for further research that is contextually grounded, methodologically rigorous, and based on practice experience, and explores these elements with an emphasis on ethical practice, cultural competence, and sustainability.

It is important to note that the TCT model of practice has not been systematically researched before. The existing written material about TCT has been authored and co-authored by me. These include various publications and presentations that document the development of the TCT model, as outlined in the introduction (see Table 1 in Chapter 1). Some more recent publications such as Lee et al. (2024), on art therapy as psychological first aid with Ukrainian refugees in Korea, and Arslanbek et al. (2025), on arts-based psychosocial support training in humanitarian emergencies, cite some of these published articles.

The following section begins by discussing resonant aspects of humanitarian contexts, then art therapy in humanitarian contexts followed by the Portable Studio, then resilience.

Psychological support in humanitarian crisis contexts

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the highest-level humanitarian coordination forum of the United Nations. It formulates policy, sets strategic priorities, and mobilizes resources in response to humanitarian crises. IASC guidelines state the importance of creating safe spaces where there is some kind of shelter, both physical and psychological, as a priority during and in the aftermath of a humanitarian disaster (IASC, 2007). IASC and the other key organizations which respond globally to humanitarian disasters—North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC); World Health Organization (WHO); and The Red Cross (TRC)—all recognize this need for psychosocial “safe spaces” as a primary necessity during and in the aftermath of a humanitarian disaster. Psychosocial intervention has been defined by IASC as “any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychological wellbeing and/or prevent mental disorder” (IASC, 2007, p.1).

Kalmanowitz et al. (2018) define the different concepts of humanitarian relief through four distinct phases, each demanding different resources, services, and responses. Phase 1 is the immediate acute post-disaster period, the day of the disaster and up to about six months afterwards. This is the phase of rescue, medical attention, food, water, and temporary shelter. Phase 2, the intermediate phase, begins after the disaster and lasts for up to two years. Phase 3, long term, can begin weeks or

months after the disaster and can last for years afterwards. Phase 4 is often referred to as disaster preparedness, during which there is an ongoing focus on emergency risk reduction and prevention.

Providing psychosocial support in the form of a safe space in which there are empathic staff or volunteers can have a profound effect, which can help engender hope, meaningfulness, adaptation, and resilience (Gibson, 2006; Hobfoll et al., 2007; Watson and Shalev, 2005).

Psychosocial interventions have a clearly significant role in supporting people's mental health during and after a humanitarian crisis (Hobfoll et al., 2021). Art activities provided in a "safe space" encourage social interactions, support resilience, and engender a way of psychologically managing in humanitarian crisis settings (Arsianbek et al., 2025; Bardot, 2018).

While it is important to offer psychosocial interventions in a humanitarian crisis, this is a daunting challenge, given that most refugees reside in settings where skills and resources in mental healthcare are in shortest supply (Silove et al., 2017). Although more understanding is needed to clarify what the specific cultural shape of the long-term consequences of war and migration is on refugees, some key indicators are helpful in highlighting what support can be offered in situ while working in humanitarian settings (Hobfoll et al., 2021). Psychosocial interventions have been increasingly evidenced as pivotal in such settings (Frankova et al., 2023). Psychosocial support interventions offering social support and engendering positive thinking are an additional way of reducing the severity of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) (Purgato et al., 2018a).

It is important to recognise that the monitoring of ethical practice in a humanitarian setting is difficult, while the potential for abuse is rife. Both Save the Children and Oxfam have had scandals (Quinn, 2018), where some staff members have exploited their positions of power when working in areas of conflict and upheaval. The "normal" safeguarding processes in established settings in a stable environment are often forgone in times of crisis, leaving the vulnerable even more vulnerable. Also, the effects of working in the crisis field on volunteers and other humanitarian workers is notable, with both the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the

World Health Organization reporting a high prevalence of secondary trauma among their staff. Stevens et al. (2022) note that humanitarian workers are likely to experience more psychological distress and burnout than other emergency workers. This raises the question of how these workers can be better supported.

Guerra et al. (2024) suggests that arts-based interventions may be an effective tool to increase the well-being of humanitarian workers. Art therapists can work in crisis situations to support other healthcare and humanitarian workers' mental wellbeing using art-based practices (Usiskin and Lloyd, 2020; Huss, 2020; Arsianbek et al., 2025; Gavron Bat Or and Lakh, 2025).

Art therapy in humanitarian contexts

Potash et al. (2017) identified that there is an increased proliferation of art therapists who have travelled internationally as a response to disaster or for direct service (Kapitan et al., 2011; Kapitan, 2015; Moon, 2013). However, there is still no clear consensus as to best practice in this field. Potash et al. (2017) proposed that sensitive cross-cultural practices are crucial. Core professional values need to be adhered to and translated as to what is culturally appropriate so that there is congruence and integrity. How this plays out in practice is variable, and as yet there is no clear understanding or definition of art therapy values or practice in a global arena. What is recognized by Potash et al. (2017) is that there is a need for international guidelines.

The important role that professional practice and ethics play in the delivery of interventions, particularly in a humanitarian context, has been identified by several authors (Arsianbek et al., 2025; Huss, 2015; Kalmanowitz and Potash, 2010; Nel et al., 2021; Potash et al., 2017; Riswarie, 2025). This is both through the delivery of arts-based psychosocial interventions and the teaching or training of them. Potash et al. (2017) identify key areas that are important to consider when practising in this area. These include developing a decolonizing approach to cultural competence; establishing collaborative relationships; creating support and supervision structures; engaging in the work; managing art materials, products, and studio; developing art therapy directives and interpreting artwork; acquiring consent and authorization; accountability; and acquiring funding. Kalmanowitz (2018) also identifies these as

significant issues but terms them slightly differently as using the arts in direct service to people in distress; contextualizing work; suiting models to context; offering staff support with training; and using the training the trainer's model[17]. She also identifies debriefing, self-care, and the "do no harm" concept.[18] As mentioned in the previous section, offering staff support to humanitarian aid workers and volunteers seems to be increasingly valued. Kalmanowitz (2018) identifies that, to alleviate secondary burnout, support should include trainings, debriefing, supervision, and self-care, with cultural contexts considered.

Training those who are not art therapists needs to include the sensitive use of artmaking as a means of social engagement in a psychosocial group space, which can work both to support work in the field and the workers themselves (Kalmanowitz and Potash, 2010). They emphasize the importance of working with the knowledge and skills each worker already has and they describe training non-art therapists, but it is left open to consider what is needed for training art therapists in this field.

Consideration is needed of the impact of colonization and recognition of the complex ethical and intersectional issues involved (Talwar 2018). It is essential to critically evaluate whether these interventions should be offered and, if so, how they should be implemented (Kapitan, 2015). Cross-cultural work in this context demands sensitivity and a deep understanding of the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the individuals involved (Kapitan, 2015).

Portable Studio

One of the most enduring and resonant contributions to art therapy in humanitarian settings is the Portable Studio (Kalmanowitz and Lloyd, 1997; 1999; 2002; 2005b; 2011; 2016). This offers a conceptual cornerstone in understanding the aspects of a

[17] A model used to describe training potential trainers or less experienced trainers, on the best ways to deliver training materials to others.
https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/train_the_trainers_cascade_models_toolkit.pdf

[18] A concept used by those working in the humanitarian field to ensure avoiding negative impact on those you are working with. (World Vision International: https://www.wvi.org/peacebuilding-and-conflict-sensitivity/do-no-harm)https://www.wvi.org/peacebuilding-and-conflict-sensitivity/do-no-harm

mobile art therapy practice in which context is sensitive. The relevance continues due to its emphasis on adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and the therapeutic potential of artmaking in unstable environments.

The Portable Studio (Kalmanowitz and Lloyd, 1997) emerged from Kalmanowitz and Lloyd's work in the former Yugoslavia, specifically in Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Kosovo. It was developed to address situations where a traditional physical art therapy studio and its organizational structures were unavailable. In their chapter "Inside the Portable Studio" (Kalmanowitz and Lloyd, 2005a), they describe creating a concept adapted from traditional art therapy while retaining its core elements: fostering artistic imagination, offering a safe psychological space where feelings can be explored, and offering psychological containment.

To understand the Portable Studio, it is important to recognise the significance of the art therapy studio. Kalmanowitz and Lloyd (2005a) emphasize the significance of the studio model, which led to the development of the Portable Studio framework.

The art therapy studio is a dedicated space where art therapy occurs, incorporating core elements of traditional art studios. It is less of a clinical environment, with more of a focus on process over interpretation, non-intrusive engagement, and fostering individual agency, all aimed at creating a more human setting (Brown and Omand, 2022). The art therapy studio aims to encourage individuals to engage in artmaking in a setting that encourages exploration, play, and immersion (Wood, 2000).

This concept is central to the research, as the practice aims to help individuals become absorbed in the moment and feel connected rather than isolated (Wood, 2000).

Historically, art studios in psychiatric settings marked the beginning of art therapy in the UK (Waller, 1991), with studio art therapy evolving from roots in art education and social justice (Brown and Omand, 2022). For a substantial part of my career, I worked in acute mental hospital settings and used the open art therapy group model[19] (which is similar to the concepts around studio art therapy). I immediately saw direct links between this and how we work in France. Art therapy work in

[19] Where clients generally self-refer and the focus is on the clients' relationship with the art rather than the art therapist and other clients.

psychiatric settings often uses open art therapy group models, but long gone are the old art studios that used to exist, so adapting a multifunctional space in which to practice therapy is common. But the spirit of an art therapy studio is important; this encompasses the idea of a studio as "*a place to sit and think and make things*" (Woods, 2000 p.37).

The physical setup and location of an art therapy space significantly influence therapeutic practice, with the room itself contributing to the therapeutic process (Case, 2000; Fenner, 2010; 2012; Kalmanowitz and Lloyd, 2005b; Wood, 2000). Fenner's (2012) study found that both clients and therapists value the space, though differently: clients seek comfort in the environment, while therapists curate the space for both the client's benefit and their own support. Thus, the spirit of the art therapy studio, its atmosphere, setup, and purpose, is essential for both participants and therapists.

Kalmanowitz and Lloyd, both art therapists, have extensively documented their experiences working in regions of political conflict and social upheaval where traditional art therapy practices are hindered by a lack of local infrastructure. Their work underscores the importance of the art therapy room and studio in creating a safe, creative space (Case and Dalley, 1992 Wood, 2000). However, due to the lack of a literal studio setting in these environments, Kalmanowitz and Lloyd (2005a) developed the Portable Studio concept. This concept is based on the premise that the internal framework carried by art therapists allows the work to occur in various settings. Crucially, it emphasizes guiding attitudes towards both the art and the individual creating it (Kalmanowitz and Lloyd, 2005a, p.108).

The Portable Studio aims to foster a more equitable power dynamic, moving away from the assumption that therapists hold all solutions. Instead, it recognizes that individuals possess their own internal resources, including resilience and cultural experience. The Portable Studio also highlights the importance of attentiveness to the art-making process, acknowledging that images can hold a multitude of meanings, which the therapists need to contain and manage (Kalmanowitz and Lloyd 2005).

These aspects of therapeutic engagement are significant not only for the individuals involved but also for the therapists facilitating the process. The notion of understanding that there may be multiple meanings in the art helps to perceive the Portable Studio as an invisible boundary, framing complex work in the same way a piece of paper provides an edge for a drawing or painting. This boundary creates a robust and safe environment for engagement, enabling immersion in the art-making process and fostering a creative, authentic, and supportive atmosphere where playfulness and imagination can thrive (Kalmanowitz and Lloyd 2005).

Kalmanowitz and Lloyd (2005a) identify the innate human preoccupation with a safe space in which to dwell, particularly important in contexts of conflict and upheaval and when working with those who are displaced. Human instinct is to have a home or a place where one can rest and experience physical and psychological safety. In the northern France context, where there is pervasive displacement, the significance of inhabiting a place, even if it is fleeting, holds huge resonance. Safe spaces are identified as a key significant aspect of disaster response. However, the notion of what a space is differs across cultures (Kuper, 2003). Kalmanowitz and Lloyd (2011) suggest that the environment, the objects, and those interacting with the artwork co-exist and consider Foucault's (1986) *Philosophy of Space* in the contemporary world. They argue that art installation is not only an art form but one that addresses our experiences with the spaces in which we live, work, and play. They assert that the environment must be used as much as the art medium itself. They agree with Moon (2007), who suggests we think of physical spaces as works of art in themselves. The significance of this is that play, creativity, and cultural life have huge importance in filling an intra-psychic potential space from early years and ensure a healthy resilience (Winnicott, 1971).

Kalmanowitz and Lloyd's (2005b) concept offers a solution to *some* of the issues that arise when practising outside of a traditional setting. It provides a framework on which to hang minimum requirements related to the principles of professional art therapy practice.

Although the Portable Studio describes the necessity of being aware of the political and cultural context within which it could be delivered and describes an adaptation of traditional aspects of art therapy, it does not describe the specific adaptations

generically but relates them to experiences the authors had. It focuses on the individual therapist holding a therapeutic frame within them which contains the work rather than relying on an external frame which exists when practising in more stable environments. Therefore, there needs to be more understanding of what adaptations exactly are needed in crisis contexts. What are these adaptations and how do they work in situ? A key aspect of contemporary practice is listening to the lived experience of participants of art therapy. There also needs to be research into the views of participants of the practices. These missing aspects of understanding how these practices work in action and how participants view the meaning and impact of these practices have informed both the research questions and the analysis of data in my research.

Resilience

Resilience is broadly defined as the ability to adapt successfully in the face of adversity or significant threat (Charney, 2004; Feder et al., 2009). A key intention in providing art therapy practices in humanitarian contexts is to support and enhance participants' resilience. A wide range of studies have emphasized that most people are resilient when experiencing or following trauma (Bonanno et al 2011; Feder et al., 2009; Masten, 2001). Increased evidence is being accrued as to the significance that healthy emotional resilience plays, acting as a protective factor both during and after a humanitarian crisis (Gibson, 2006; Hobfoll et al., 2007; 2021; Watson and Shalev, 2005 Purgato et al., 2018b).

What is also acknowledged is that armed conflicts and natural disasters cause significant psychological and social suffering to affected populations. IASC[20] states that the psychological and social impacts of humanitarian disasters may be acute in the short term, but they can undermine the long-term mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of the affected population (IASC, 2007). The IASC guidelines suggest that the impact of unresolved mental health problems could threaten peace, and human rights in the longer term, if left untreated. One of the priorities in emergency responses to humanitarian crises, therefore, is to seriously consider how to protect and improve people's mental health and psychosocial wellbeing in a time of crisis. A

[20] The inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance is a forum with the key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners.

pivotal part of this is to consider how to develop and sustain resilience.

Armed conflicts, environmental and natural disasters, pandemics, and industrial accidents can all create humanitarian crises. Often these kinds of crises disproportionately affect populations living in low-income and middle-income countries and can have a wide range of effects on both children's and adults' mental health and wellbeing.

There is increased evidence to show that focused psychosocial interventions are helpful in reducing PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorders) (Purgato et al., 2018b). What emerged from these findings was that hope and social support play a significant role in adverse circumstances and that appropriate psychosocial support can reduce the severity of PTSD symptoms. Psychosocial interventions can support the development of resilience by enabling people to connect with each other, find meaning through social engagement, and connection to culture, education, and religion (Purgato et al., 2018a).

Direct evidence linking art therapy and resilience is slowly developing (Kalmanowitz and Ho, 2016a; Worrall and Jerry, 2007). There is evidence that creativity is a protective factor for those who have experienced trauma adversity (Harms, 2005; Waaktaar et al., 2004; Wolin and Wolin, 1993; Worrall and Jerry, 2007). Significantly, there is a growing body of literature evidencing the link between imagination, resilience, and art therapy (Kalmanowitz and Ho, 2016a; 2016b; Kalmanowitz and Lloyd, 1997; 1999; 2002; 2005b; 2011; 2016; Worrall and Jerry, 2007). With ongoing development in neuroscience, increased recognition is given to the role that artmaking, creativity, and specifically art therapy play in adapting brain This neuroplasticity to develop a healthier resilience and process trauma (Hass-Cohen, 2016; Hass-Cohen and Findlay, 2015; Hass-Cohen et al., 2014)

Sleijpen et al. (2016) identified six significant sources of resilience: (1) social support, (2) acculturation strategies, (3) education, (4) religion, (5) avoidance, and (6) hope. The study indicates how much social as well as personal factors are important for refugees, both in sustaining and in developing resilience. They identified the universality of resilience-promoting processes. What helps promote resilience is strong social support systems, a shared sense of values, cultural and religious

beliefs that identify meaning in suffering alongside humour, and altruism (Leavitt and Fox, 2014; Masten, 2001; Werner, 2012).

Personal characteristics, including emotional regulation capacity, being able to face one's fears, certain personality traits, the use of adaptive coping strategies, and the ability to harness social support, among others, all contribute to resilience (Bar-Shai and Klein, 2015). Being able to face one's fears, planning, problem-solving, and humour all help someone to cope in adverse situations (Sliter et al., 2014; Southwick and Charney, 2012).

Although ongoing research needs to be done in relation to clarifying the cultural shape of resilience and the long-term consequences of war and migration on refugees (Hobfall et al, 2021), these sources are helpful in highlighting what support can be offered in situ while working in humanitarian settings. What is clearly evidenced is that, in the context of social upheaval and political conflict, hope and optimism play a significant role in ensuring resilience and the ability to cope in adverse situations.

Hope plays an important role in resilience (Hobfall et al 2021). The concept of hope refers both to problem-solving and finding ways of achieving a goal. In this discussion, hope is meant as someone experiencing a feeling of expectation and wanting for a particular thing to happen.[21] The idea of hope as being something that complements resilience is discussed in psychology, education, and social work fields and is identified by a number of theorists. Snyder et al. (2002) promote a theory around hope that is based on both a person's perceived capacity and their ability to motivate themselves to achieve goals. Duncan-Andrade (2009) defines three elements of hope: (1) Material Hope, which is the sense of control when someone is given the resources to deal with forces that affect everyday lives; (2) Socratic Hope, which provides opportunities for someone to question an unjust society; and (3) Audacious Hope, which provides opportunities to process and gain some kind of healing from oppression and the capacity to transform it.

Ginwright (2015a; 2015b) develops this idea of healing from oppression and posits that three types of hope could create spaces of opportunities: (1) Relational Hope—

[21] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hope (accessed 29/9/24)

changing situations with communities based on trust and relationship; (2) Restorative Hope—developing opportunities for communities to prosper and thrive; and (3) Political Hope—taking part in political decisions in everyday lives that discuss and outline what the opportunities might be to ensure thriving.

Conclusions

The Portable Studio is a significant concept that is pertinent to working in a humanitarian context; it helps ground the practice. However, it places emphasis on the art therapist to carry an internal structure, part of which is an “attitude” or stance. What is that attitude exactly? And how does it translate to teaching people to have that attitude? A deeper understanding is needed of what is meant by “attitude” towards the art and artmaking power dynamics and culture that people carry.

Resilience is a particularly important concept for art therapy in humanitarian contexts. Art therapy practice in humanitarian settings can offer valuable psychosocial interventions that support resilience. Art therapy can help to empower individuals to rebuild their sense of self and foster emotional recovery through creative expression in environments where traditional therapeutic resources may be limited.

Art therapy practitioners can promote resilience by encouraging people to recover from or adjust to difficult circumstances and change. However, the practice must adapt to the specific context while still holding the core values and principles of art therapy. Creative arts interventions can inspire imagination and engender hope, offering a vision of something beyond the current difficulties. A professional and theoretical framework for practice is needed that identifies a formulation for art therapy interventions in humanitarian settings. This framework should outline how to ethically and effectively implement art therapy, ensuring it is culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate to foster resilience and emotional wellbeing. Through this research I aim to investigate TCT to develop a framework which will help to contribute to the theoretical framework needed for art therapy interventions in humanitarian contexts.

Art Refuge’s work has had to adapt to various environments, often taking place in non-traditional settings. Creating a space that allows for immersion and distraction

has been a primary concern, especially in contexts where displaced people in transit lack shelter. Discussing safe spaces becomes particularly poignant in such settings, where the absence of physical shelter heightens the need for emotional and psychological refuge. However, what needs to happen in the sessions for this to occur? This is what this thesis aims to explore through the research questions, data, and analysis.

The conceptual framework

I interpret the aim of a conceptual framework as a means to scaffold and support the development of the research project. This section presents and explores the conceptual framework underpinning the research.

Bordage (2009) suggests that conceptual frameworks help in understanding the problem at hand by highlighting different aspects or offering parts of the solution. Achieving this requires clarity on the research goal, starting with what one wants to know, which then leads to identifying theoretical approaches to view and understand the problem. The literature review revealed a gap: the need for a theoretical framework for art therapy in humanitarian settings and, in relation to this research, for TCT.

Using arts-based methods, I visualised a microscope metaphor, one that could zoom in on details and zoom out to see the broader picture. These showed different perspectives, potentially relooking at and revealing various influences. This movement between macro (wider context) and micro (practice detail) levels reflects the dynamic interplay between context and practice.

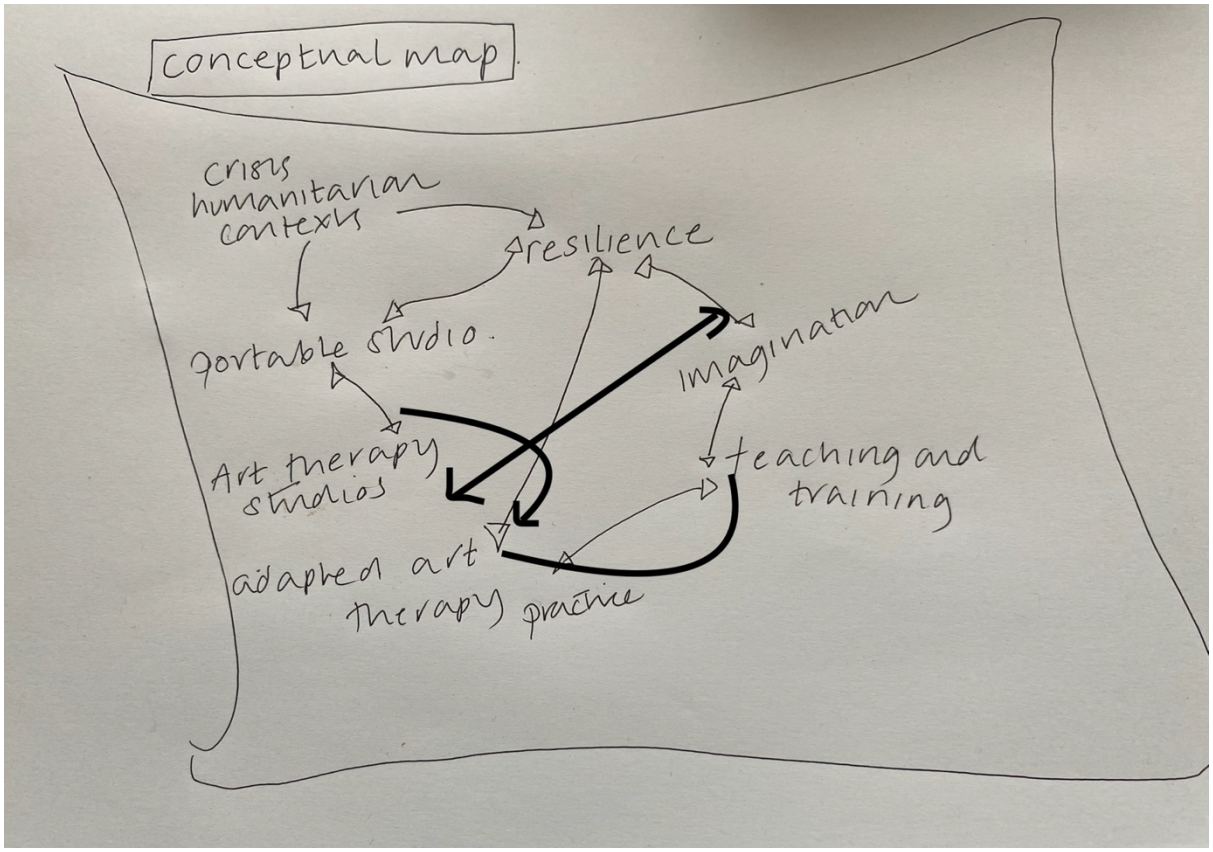


Figure 5: The initial conceptual "map"

Figure 5 (see above) illustrates the initial concepts I considered important for framing the research. As I examined these concepts further, their interconnections became clearer, as shown by the multiple directional arrows. Maps are frequently used in practice, both symbolically and diagrammatically, to help individuals locate themselves, trace their journeys, and envision future possibilities. Over time I have noticed that these reference points have provided psychological grounding. Mapping my own research journey proved similarly valuable, resembling a mind map.

Figure 6 (see below) shows how I layered the map to include concepts and disciplinary perspectives such as psychology, meaning-making, neuroscience, reflexivity, aesthetics theory, art materials, and media. These areas support an understanding of what gives meaning to the work.

As the research developed, I added new disciplinary perspectives over the initial conceptual map using tracing paper. This allowed the original concepts to remain visible and relevant, while new key areas merged with them, connecting foundational

ideas with broader disciplines around meaning-making, art materials, aesthetics theory, reflexivity, imagination, and neuroscience. The arrows indicate interconnections, forming new routes that link to earlier ones. Together, these maps outline the disciplinary perspectives and concepts essential to the research.

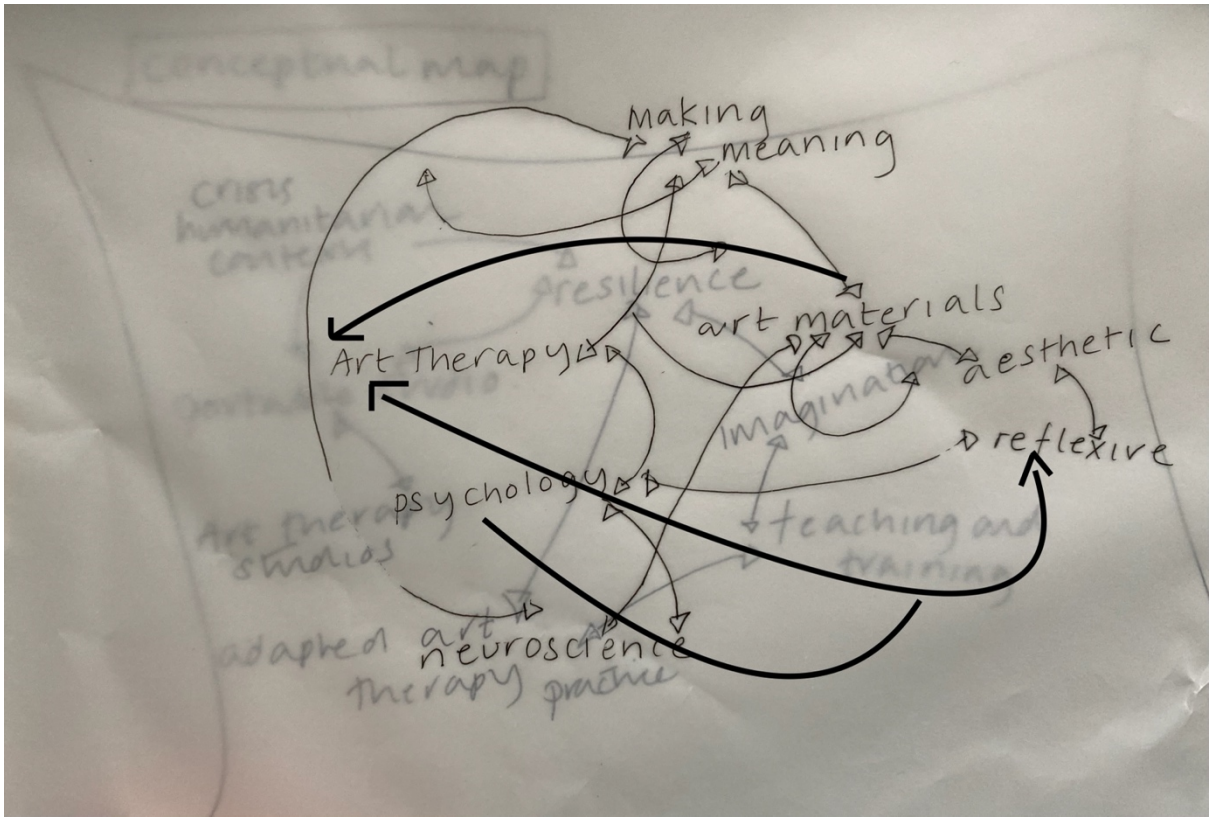


Figure 6: The second layer of the conceptual map

An animation[22] I created (click link below to see animation) helped identify relevant ideas. I visualised placing ideas into a cauldron, boiling them down, and synthesising them into a seed from which new ideas could grow. The process of making, watching, and re-watching the animation clarified my thinking and informed the conceptual maps in Figures 5 and 6. As a dyslexic learner, the stop-frame animation technique—drawing ideas, photographing them, and arranging them—was particularly helpful. This method supported my rethinking and synthesising of disciplinary perspectives and concepts, offering a way to conceptualise praxis into

[22] (see https://youtu.be/RjdCwVly3JQ)

theory. The layering and movement of frames mirrored the research process itself: looking and relooking at data.

Below, I briefly explore the disciplinary perspectives and concepts and explain why they were useful. Concepts shown in Figure 6 that were not covered in the literature review are discussed in turn. These include both the overlaid and underlying concepts, all of which were influenced by the reviewed literature.

Psychology

Although psychology falls under the realm of science, its scope spreads to include natural and social sciences. Art therapy is described by the British Association of Art Therapy and the Health and Care Professions Council as an established form of psychological therapy.[23]. I use the term "psychology" to refer to the theories and studies of attitudes and behaviour in that discipline that concern the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behaviour in any given context (British Psychological Society).[24]

The context and cultural context of the work I am exploring is pivotal, meaning that I need to look at these in relation to seeing how they may impact human attitudes and behaviours and the human mind. I take a personal ethical stance towards the context I am working in, which is that it is important and ethically preferable to move away from considering pathology in an individual and explore more of the impact of context on a person's mental health and wellbeing (Maclagan, 2001; Skaife, 2001).

Although we are impacted by our past, our present can also be shifted by current positive interpersonal relationships. Following current psychological models of practice (Springham and Huet, 2018; Schore and Schore, 2008), attachment is a primary mechanism which influences how we engage with the world, from our social relations to how we process experiences. Biopsychosocial theory in psychology considers the significance of human attachment as a common mechanism of change.

[23] https://baat.org/art-therapy/what-is-art-therapy/
[24] https://www.bps.org.uk/what-psychology (accessed 28/9/24)

Considering what the mechanisms of change are, is part of what I am exploring in this research. By mechanism of change I mean the processes or systems by which human behaviour is, and has been, affected. Psychology also links to other subsections in which I explore meaning-making and neuroscience.

Meaning-making

Frankl (1963) suggests a primary motivation of a person is to find meaning in life, and this meaning could be discovered in even the most difficult circumstances. Taking the premise that making meaning out of life is intrinsic to human behaviour Frankl (1963), I explore how art is one way used to do this and how there are subjective and intersubjective aspects of this that need consideration.

Social anthropologist Dissanayake (1992) looks at the role of art in human society from a bio-behavioural position, stating that art is a biological necessity in human existence and the actions of artmaking help to make and give meaning. Making art is both pleasurable and useful in terms of survival as a species. One must be creative to adapt, and the use of imagination is crucial in terms of being able to imagine something different to a current state of being. I often say this to students when teaching, as I witness this through the practice work, I do. Artmaking is a means of surviving through difficult times. Art has a clear function in helping to make sense of things around us. The human tendency is what Dissanayake (1992) terms to “make special”, which highlights that people want to be unique and seen as individual and special, and it is an intrinsic inherited trait in human beings. This fundamental human need is connected to ritual and play, both of which may be unique to different cultures. This making special is a way of making meaning out of life events (Dissanayake, 1992).

There are two important aspects to art therapy practice.

Firstly, art therapy is about using a visual and sensory experience in which participants create meaning for themselves (Fenner, 2012; Learmonth, 2009). To do this, art therapists need to recognise that people have subjective ways of making meaning. Art therapists need to embody multicultural competence and diversity in considering what these subjective meanings to people may be. This includes being sensitive to one’s own and clients’ cultural awareness and cultural heritage and

giving consideration as to how specific cultural experiences may influence the art therapy process (Arslanbek et al., 2022).

Secondly, as a practitioner it is important to be explicit as to what the meanings and impact of art therapy are for those who take part in it. And as a practitioner, this involves an intersubjective understanding, considering the perspective of the client's or service user's experience rather than just the therapist's. Participants of art therapy are better predictors of the outcome of the therapy than the art therapists (Rankanen, 2016). These salient points also have resonance as a researcher.

Artmaking enables several active factors, including being able to manipulate (art materials), perceptual (see things), affective (feel things), symbolism (conceptualize something allegorically), and cognition (thought) (Dissanayake, 1988). Using art is an important way of meaning-making. It provides ways that can enable making sense of the world; it allows a capacity to adapt an experience and manage experiences.

Learmonth (2009) argues that Dissanayake provides a crucial way for art therapists to view the theory of meaning-making in art therapy because not only does it allow a route in which to make meaning, but it is also a way of containing automatic reactions. Artmaking uses the active factors described in the above paragraph. This helps a person to make deliberate choices in response to uncertainty rather than follow the instinctive biological model of a defensive response of flight, fight, or freeze. "Making special" (Dissanayake, 1992) helps to contain and transform anxiety. In many traditional cultures, the level of artmaking and ritual increase when the culture and community feel under threat (Learmonth, 2009). This could be described as using artmaking to emotionally regulate.

This concept of *making special* is significant in understanding how and why making art is a way of making meaning or sense of a very painful or difficult experience. The art therapist's actions are important to support the *making special*; the witnessing and supporting of this process can help someone own, change, or transform these experiences using art, and at other times the art may need to be *ritually* discarded (Hyland Moon, 2002).

The concept of *making special* resonates with my research and practice of working across a wide range of cultures. I often witness the significance of ritual culture and artmaking with people who are in the direst of circumstances.

As art therapy is an intersubjective experience, it also includes aspects of co-constructed meaning. At the start of any therapeutic engagement, the formulation of what is the intent and meaning of the engagement is pivotal, as is the understanding that meaning needs to be co-constructed. Formulation of intent is a core skill of art therapy practice and is part of the regulatory requirements in the Standards of Proficiency set out by the UK Health and Care Professions Council.[25] It is part of the mental health skills and training framework, which applies to all mental health and related professions in England.

Johnstone (2018) argues for the necessity of co-producing a formulation with those you are working with to ensure that there is no loss of meaning for the individual involved. She emphasises the significance of people's personal, social, and cultural experiences in supporting their resilience. This idea of co-constructed meaning feels pertinent to this research.

Neuroscience

Aspects of neuroscience are helpful in trying to explore and understand behaviour and cognitive function, particularly around the meanings and actions of human behaviours that are pertinent to this research.

It is also important to consider how neuroscience informs us as to how interpersonal experiences forge key connections in the brain and impact on feelings and meaning. Neural structures in the limbic system of the brain manage one's emotions, and emotions play a central role in our social thinking and the ways we make decisions (Damasio, 2018 Siegel, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2014). The Art Therapy Relational Neuroscience model (ATR-N; Hass-Cohen and Clyde Findlay, 2015) integrates art therapy, interpersonal neurobiology, and relational neuroscience.

[25] https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/standards/standards-of-proficiency/reviewing/arts-therapists---sop-changes.pdf (accessed 23/10/24)

There is growing theoretical and scientific development on the physiological and neurological systems related to art therapy that focus on the neural and physiological mechanisms involved in perception, emotion, attention, and cognition (Bachtler and Gratama, 2020). The neuroscientist Damasio (2000) considers that emotions are the most direct link to our physical environment, including the body. He posits that feeling an emotion consists of having mental images that arise from neural patterns that represent changes in the body and brain. It is these changes themselves that make up the emotion. Because mental images are processed in this way, artmaking can give us an evolutionary advantage. As it elicits adaptive behaviour through the connection with emotions, it can also inhibit our automatic stress responses and therefore helps to increase survival (Damasio, 2000).

Art always existed to meet human mental health needs and to promote survival and attachment as an adaptive process of evolution (Dissanayake, 1992). Play and its adaptive functions are antecedents of artmaking and connect to attachment theory, as they are both, in evolutionary terms, a means to survival. Art and play help to rehearse attachment behaviours and coping skills that keep humans and animals alive, but artmaking and play also plays a significant part in helping to make meaning from feeling and gives value by something being made special (Dissanayake, 1992; Learmonth, 2008).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity means a process of inquiry which involves ongoing exploration and examination of self-awareness and how this influences what people do or think in a given situation. This includes taking into consideration intersectional aspects and political, social, and cultural consciousness. Reflexivity is significant in terms of ethical practice and questioning one's own motives, which may include both conscious and unconscious bias. In art therapy, reflexive thinking is not just related to the interpersonal but includes reflexively considering the role artmaking plays in this process.

Mason (2002) uses the term "noticing" rather than reflexivity and suggests that "noticing" is natural and essential to all kinds of research. However, he puts forward the argument that there is a discipline to this which, when carried out properly, can

lead to radical proposals in enhancing the validity of the research with the aim of improving practice. This is the discipline of observing one's own practice and is a way of learning from one's own experience. Mason (2002) sees professional development as becoming more expert in one's field, but also that this should be a way of questioning ourselves as practitioners. This includes challenging oneself about professional practice, considering how repeated reactions to a situation which were developed to cope in the *then and there* may not be relevant going forwards. Professional development should be a personal reflection which helps us to give more scope to identify and "notice" things and reflexively act upon them. This can be used as an addition to an already existing method or as a form of enquiry in itself when looking at one's own practice.

Subramani (2019) considers how ethics, methodology, and theory construction are intertwined and concludes that reflexivity ensures that there is a clear outline of the moral and epistemological underpinnings of both the study and researcher. Subramani (2019) takes the stance that reflexivity can be used as a way of measuring the quality and rigour of qualitative research. The researcher is the protagonist in a study and examining the ethics and moral concepts in research therefore requires a critical and reflexive approach towards one's own moral, epistemological positions and a recognition as to how they influence research.

It could be argued that art itself is reflexive. Kapitan (2017) discusses improvisational reflexivity in terms of using art as a system to reflexively think and respond in an improvisational way. Certainly, the notion of making something in the visual realm followed by reflection and action is a methodology that art therapists use. Reflexive thinking is improvisational in that the researcher is continually open to uncertainty by imagining *what if*, which allows an intuitive responsiveness and transient ways of knowing to come into consciousness and be performed through embodied action by artmaking (Kapitan, 2017). Reflexivity is included in the conceptual framework, as it should be used in art therapy practice itself; just like a researcher needs to imagine *what if* something may be happening, an art therapy practitioner needs to be curious and *wonder why* something may be happening.

Reflexive thinking plays out in practice and research, while my own research journey was about praxis in the field, but I also learnt about being a student, learning how to

learn and how to research. Being reflexive about this has further supported my role as a teacher and trainer.

Aesthetics theory

By aesthetics theory I mean theoretical ideas concerning the philosophy of art, cultural notions of taste and beauty, and what appeals to people. Shelley (2022) suggests that the idea of aesthetics theory comes from the concept of taste, which could be a response to something tangible or an experience, and if this response is profound, then it remains in your memory and impacts how you view things in the future.

Aesthetics theory should be considered when looking at art therapy experiential groups and practices such as TCT. So, what particular part could aesthetics theory play in helping to understand the actions and experience of TCT?

I have identified a number of concepts related to aesthetics that are relevant—namely, aesthetic appeal, the aesthetics history that participants bring, embodied aesthetics, relational aesthetics, and psychological aesthetics. I will discuss each of these in turn.

Aesthetic appeal might be a response to the interaction of the individual with the art materials (such as imagery, the colours, and the tactility) and/or to an interactional intersubjective encounter between participants and facilitators (Dewey, 1952; Samaritter, 2018). Aesthetic appeal has the potential to evoke new experiences in all participants, irrespective of whether they take an active role as a participant or facilitator at TCT. Aesthetic appeal may be an active factor that can create change in a person's state of being (Marković, 2012). But it can also enable an understanding of the personal sensory-expressive state of being at that specific time of engagement (as well as after the event, when looking back and remembering it).

Aesthetic history refers to the previous experiences, preferences, sensory capacities, and expectations concerning an aesthetic encounter. This in turn may have an impact on current encounters (including the degree to which they have aesthetic appeal). Intersubjective aesthetic experiences (as in having an aesthetic experience alongside or with someone else) could offer participants the potential to mix both

new and old aesthetic experiences. There is a newness that is intrinsic to each aesthetic experience, a newness experienced by the participant in that present moment, which may allow for learning (Samaritter, 2018). But part of this is also recognizing that there may be specific cultural aesthetic experiences influencing the art therapy process (Arslanbek et al., 2022)

Embodied aesthetics is the felt or affect element of aesthetics in a biopsychosocial sense, integrating the bodily sensations and sensory aspects of seeing and making images or objects (Woods et al., 2023). This may include the visuals, as in colour and form, but also the weight, smell, sound, and touch of the art material or object being used or viewed and the physiological response to this. This effect is also impacted by a wider context; this might be emotionally, geographically, and/or inter- and intra-relationally. When an embodied aesthetic experience is familiar, it can act as a very felt reminder of something in the past, away from a current situation.

An example of embodied aesthetics is seen very obviously in practice at TCT when observing people using the View-Masters (see Figure 7 and Figure 8). When looking through the View-Masters, each of the viewer's eyes looks at a different aspect of the image which, when looked at with both eyes, becomes three dimensional. It seems to have a transportive element, enabling the person to feel they are in the image in a completely different landscape. The images (14 on each reel, made up of two versions of each image) are landscapes, famous places, animals, and nature, and they are from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, being retro or another era possibly adding to the transformative aspect. In Calais, when working in the very busy day centre, viewfinders are often picked up by people passing the table. These could be young men trying to get to the UK, other humanitarian workers, or even, at times, smugglers. Witnessing people looking through these viewfinders is fascinating; they seem to be immersed very quickly into something other than where they are at that time (in a busy, complicated, often volatile setting). For a very limited time, people are transported elsewhere. You can see the incredulity on their faces. Berenson (1948) describes this as a brief fleeting moment when the spectator is so immersed in looking at an image that the aesthetic activity is no longer outside the person but embodied within them.



Figure 7: Looking through the View-Master (© Art Refuge)



Figure 8: Looking at the View-Master photo reels (© Art Refuge)

Relational aesthetics is a set of artistic practices that are based on the entirety of human relations and their social context, rather than focusing on an independent and private space (Bourriaud, 2002[26]). It is another way of looking at and seeing a whole arena of artistic ways of being, which comes from a theoretical and practical grounding based in human relations and the context in which they are made and experienced (Bourriaud, 2002). Bourriaud (2002) posits that relational artistic practices redefine the roles of artist and viewer. Here, the artist acts as a catalyst, creating and curating environments that encourage participation rather than presenting art objects as mere subjects for observation. Relational aesthetics attempts to ensure a space is an interactive and engaging activity in which to participate, not an artist's subjective idea of art objects and social situations (Bourriaud, 2002). This shift moves away from traditional aesthetics, which often prioritize beauty, towards a conceptual and experiential understanding of art.

[26] See also: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/r/relational-aesthetics

Relational aesthetics theory emphasizes using everyday environments outside institutional and consumer-driven structures. This includes moving away from art as a two-dimensional experience, such as looking at a painting in an art gallery, towards art as encompassing interactive installations, participatory sculptures, street interviews, and urban interventions and happenings (Bourriaud, 2002). Relational aesthetics shifts away from the traditional aesthetic idea of art and beauty and moves towards something that is conceptual and experiential.

Maclagan (2001) refers to a concept of psychological aesthetic, which is the actual aesthetic qualities of an artwork, for example the line colour or medium used, and the psychological effects that these have on the spectator or maker of the artwork as a felt experience. This includes the psychological significance brought about by the mixing of both unconscious and conscious responses and experiences.

Art materials

Aesthetics theory also links with art materials. The actual objects used at TCT, and in art therapy generally, are pivotal to practice. By art materials I mean what they are and how they are used.

The art materials in art therapy are a key component through which meaning is made. They act as the go-between from what might be personal, private thoughts and feelings to what might be shown in a physical form. Moon (2010) identifies that the history of art materials and media theory in art therapy is linked to developmental theory, psychodynamic theory, systems theory, relational theory, and, more recently, social constructionist theory, deconstructing hierarchical concepts and considering cultural contexts.

There are limitations within art therapy literature around the integration of these theories and how art materials might be used in art therapy, specifically the use of art materials in humanitarian contexts, for example, the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) (Hinz, 2020; Lusebrink, 2004; Lusebrink and Hinz, 2016). The ETC matches up the use of art materials with a developmental order of the person using the arts materials to develop insight into themselves and their ability to process their own experiences. The continuum of how art materials are used begins with kinaesthetic and sensory, which is a very *feeling*-based engagement with not much

noticing of what is going on by the artmaker, to an engagement by the artmaker which is more perceptual and cognitive. However, a critique of ETC theorists is the lack of consideration of the influence of cultural contexts which may impact the use of materials and sense of aesthetics. While this does not negate ETC theory itself, it does highlight the need for the researcher to consider this theory (as well as others) in relation to a cultural context, particularly in research such as this, in which there are a multiplicity of different cultural understandings and experiences.

A person's attraction to a given art material and how they use it are important in understanding the effect the art material has on the person. For example, in this research I have used art materials to help me make sense of things, such as the use of stop frame animation. The process of stop frame animation is interesting; it's a technique in which picture sequences or objects are physically manipulated or added to with additional, individually photographed frames so that when they are played back together, they appear to have independent motion or change. The process helped me to synthesize themes into areas in which to frame the research. I also used fibre arts, drawing with pen and ink, as well as pencil and watercolour. Using art helped me process and make sense of what I was doing. I find drawing easier than writing, so drawing something out helped me to find the words to articulate what I needed to say. My practice as an art therapist includes making art alongside those I am working with. From direct experiences of using the materials at TCT, such as typewriters, bricks, plasticine, and postcards, I have experienced the kinaesthetic and sensory impact.

Imagination

Kapitan (2010a) posits that imagination is at the heart of art therapy, as the role of the art therapist is to creatively imagine someone else's state of being. Imagination is meant here as the ability or action of forming mental pictures of people, things, or feelings that may not be present. Additionally, it is the idea that images can help to activate people's imaginative and creative capacities.

In this research there are different theories pertinent to the subject of imagination: neuroscience, mentalization, and (underlying the premise of how art therapy can

support someone to imagine through their use) the role of creative arts. How we conceive imagination should also be placed into a societal context.

From a neuroscience perspective, a key element of our awareness is based on the large-scale integration of images, which also includes past recall, as in what we remember having seen before helps us to imagine (Damasio, 2018). In order to understand ourselves and the world we need science, intuition, reason, and imagination (McGilchrist, 2021).

Coping in an adverse situation is aided by the ability to plan and problem-solve. Effective reasoning requires a consideration of what happens *after*, while the process of imagination is necessary in order to think of consequences. The ability to imagine something other than one's situation can often be a means of managing in adverse situations (Purgato et al., 2020).

Mentalization is a psychological concept that describes the process of how we imagine emotions and feelings to construct and make sense of ourselves, others, and the world around us. It is the way an individual directly and indirectly interprets their own actions and those of others as meaningful on the basis of their own mental state, such as wants, needs, and feelings (Bateman and Fonagy, 2010). Mentalization theory explains the process of how we use imagination to conceive of understanding one's own as well as others' behaviour, thoughts, feelings, and intentions (Havsteen-Franklin, 2016). It may involve a non-verbal form of thought that takes place with sensory images (Serafine 1979).

Mentalisation-based art therapy is the premise of using the art materials in a direct way to externalize feelings and thoughts. Using art helps create an order to mental content. Artmaking being witnessed, viewed, and/or discussed with others explicitly about the content can help the makers imagine their own thoughts and feelings (Springham et al., 2012).

The sociological concept of social imagination introduces the notion of the relationship between the personal and the public, placing people's experience both in an historical and contemporary social context. Using the concept of sociological imagination involves making the familiar strange, meaning that it involves questioning those things that seem obvious, normal, or natural (Mills, 1959).

There are emotional responses to real and imagined place and space, with places having the ability to hold memories and associations (Bachelard, 1958). Gregory (2021) explores how, in art therapy, we enter into images as imagined places: imagining the senses that one might experience in those places transforms the image from an observation to an experience (Gregory, 2021). Kapitan (2010a) suggests art therapy can help those we work with to aesthetically imagine in order to help them understand their perceptual and emotional experiences.

These relational, neuroscientific, aesthetic, and contextual aspects of imagination are all relevant to the underpinning of TCT.

Conclusions

There is not one but several concepts and disciplinary perspectives that need to be considered to help frame the research. The conceptual framework helps to ground and situate the research. This, in turn, brings confidence in the research and helps with the analysis of the findings.

The concepts and disciplinary perspectives for the conceptual framework have been influenced by ongoing experiences both in the practice and through teaching, which, in turn, help to structure this complicated and multifaceted research and practice. Although there are multiple lenses through which I am examining the research, the areas outlined in the conceptual framework merge and blend into each other, with each area helping to make sense of the overall research.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the methodology and methods used in this research and the rationale behind their selection. The aim of the research is to develop a theoretical and practical framework for TCT, and it is this that underpins why I made certain choices regarding how to go about the research. I also explore the research design, which will include research philosophy, research type, and research strategy; the methods, research questions, methodology and method of data analysis; and my position as a researcher and being trauma informed. The timeline of the research, recruitment of participants, data collection, data analysis, and limitations are discussed in Chapter 4.

Research design

1. Research philosophy

The chosen methodology and methods are aligned with the aims of the study, as well as personal and professional values and ethics (Creswell, 2009). Kapitan (2017) emphasizes that art itself informs the art therapist–researcher. In my roles as an art therapist, art therapy educator, and dyslexic learner, I use visual art to make sense of experiences—professionally, personally, and pedagogically. Alongside art, reflexivity is essential in both professional and therapeutic practice.
These two practices shaped my ontological and epistemological positions. This research adopts a qualitative paradigm, characterized by the exploratory analysis of observed themes (Kapitan, 2017). Reflections and reflexive considerations are guided by inductive reasoning to gain a deep understanding of the data.
Phenomenology is the philosophical foundation that underpins this approach, as the aim is to understand people's experiences of TCT and to develop a theoretical and practical framework. Phenomenology is a philosophical construct that considers how people make sense of the world (Bryman, 2016). It emerged when Schütz (1962) identified a distinction between the natural and social sciences, arguing that an epistemology was needed to clarify and support that difference. Schütz proposed that, in the social sciences, social reality holds significance.

In phenomenological research, it is the researcher's responsibility to understand the specific meanings people attribute to their actions and to interpret their behaviour and social environment from the participants' perspectives (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Bryman, 2016). Phenomenology aims to understand social reality through the meanings, values, interpretations, rules, and perceptions that people apply to their lives (Finlay, 2009). The validity of such research depends on the clarity and rigour of interpretations which must be systematically analysed with awareness of potential bias (Finlay, 2009).

This study is grounded in a hermeneutic phenomenological approach which combines theory, reflection, and practice. It blends descriptions of lived experience with *reflective* interpretations of their meanings (Friesen et al., 2012). Hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges that human experience cannot be fully observed objectively; the researcher must account for the influence of their own background and biases (Betts and Deaver, 2019). This position also incorporates constructionist elements, recognising personal experiences while acknowledging shared understandings within a broader context.

Constructionism and contextualism are the epistemologies used to situate the research. Constructionism is based on the belief that each person constructs a unique perception of reality shaped by their life experiences. These perceptions are influenced by interactions with and observations of others (Bryman, 2016). This perspective highlights the idea that knowledge is actively constructed rather than passively received. Bryman (2016) suggests that social phenomena occur through interaction and are constantly evolving. Researchers' accounts of the social world are themselves constructions, shaped by their own perspectives rather than representing an objective truth. In contextualist epistemology, knowledge cannot be separated from the knower, and the researcher's values inevitably shape the research. Therefore, it is the researcher's responsibility to clarify their relationship to the material and ground the analysis in the participants' accounts (Madill et al., 2000). It is also essential to contextualise human actions within their broader social and cultural environments (Tebes, 2005).

2. <u>Research type; art and reflexivity by the researcher</u>

The type of research conducted is qualitative, with exploratory and inductive theory generated from the data. Based on the rationale outlined above, this research uses art and reflexivity (by the researcher) as methods for gaining an understanding of praxis. Given that inductive research aims to develop theory from research findings (Bryman, 2016), it aligns with the objective of constructing a theoretical framework for TCT.

Art and culture play a significant role at TCT, both with the ideas, customs, and social behaviours of different people and visual culture. Becker (1982) defines culture as shared understandings that people use to bring together pursuits, with culture as an emergent reality which is in a constant state of flux and people continuously changing and adapting what shared understandings are. So, the research takes the premise that participants at TCT actively create meaning through their artmaking process impacted by their own personal experiences, as well as through a shared culture experienced at TCT. Constructionism emphasises that people *construct* meaning through their experiences. In the practices at TCT, participants engage with art materials and media to explore their emotions and experiences as a way of making sense. At TCT they are learning by doing, as with experiential learning (Kolb, 1984).

Arts-based research (ABR)

Arts-based research (ABR) is a methodological approach that integrates artistic processes into all stages of research. In art therapy, visual art can be used during investigation, data collection, interpretation, representation, and dissemination (Archibald and Gerber, 2018; Kapitan, 2017 Potash, 2019; Betts and Deaver, 2019. Researchers may interpret participant experiences through researcher-generated art, but importantly, art can also be used to explore and define the researcher's own experiences within the research process (Potash, 2019).

Intent and social justice in ABR is important, as ABR is not only a tool for understanding others but also for reflecting on one's own perceptions. Talwar (2019) highlights the importance of considering how social justice issues such as race, gender, class, and culture impact both the creation and interpretation of art. Leavy

(2015) emphasizes that the intent behind the creation of art is central to the integrity of the data, helping to clarify the researcher's position and perspective.

Chilton et al. (2015) argue that ABR is more than a method; it is a philosophical stance encompassing ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions. From their perspective as art therapy professionals, they propose an *aesthetic intersubjective paradigm*, a worldview that helps to explain how people create meaning and communicate through shared, sensory-based experiences.

This paradigm combines two key concepts: *Aesthetics*—Sensory, embodied, and imaginal knowledge, what we feel, sense, and imagine before we articulate it (Chilton et al., 2015); and *Intersubjectivity*—The creation of meaning between people, often unconsciously, through shared emotional experiences and deep empathy (Brown, 2011; Stern, 2005). In the context of art therapy, the *aesthetic intersubjective paradigm* is particularly relevant. It helps to explain how artmaking and the creative process can lead to transformation and understanding, not only for individuals but also within relationships and wider communities. Art can express what words cannot, and therapists and clients influence each other through emotional connection and shared narratives. This research therefore positions art as a form of knowledge and communication, valuing non-verbal, sensory, and emotional experiences as part of a collaborative and evolving process.

Contextual considerations in ABR, such as understanding how, when, and where art is made, are essential, especially for art therapists. Kapitan (2017) stresses the importance of grounding artmaking in context to avoid assumptions. Theoretical frameworks such as relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002) emphasize the importance of context and personal experience in both art and knowledge creation. This perspective highlights the symbiotic nature of human relationships and the environments in which art is made and experienced. However, this can be challenging. Sanders-Bustle et al. (2017) found that focusing on arts-based and relational aspects challenged them as facilitators, yet using an arts-based methodology led to more equitable and inclusive experiences for participants. Using familiar, everyday activities, such as cooking together, can foster social connection and relational engagement (Sanders-Bustle et al., 2017). Their research demonstrated the value of sharing daily experiences in shaping the research

process. By adopting an arts-based approach, they created alternative social exchanges and new ways of being, particularly with individuals who are often marginalized. Meban (2009) describes relational practice as an aesthetic process in which art is shaped by its environment and its viewers, who may become collaborators in the creative process. This resonates with my own experience as both a researcher and art therapist, where witnessing and participating in artmaking becomes a shared, co-creative act.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a vital component of art therapy research, particularly in cross-cultural and humanitarian contexts. It acknowledges the role of subjective interpretation, recognizing that participants' lived experiences shape how they understand and engage with both art and therapeutic interactions. This highlights the importance of researchers being congruent and reflexive, critically considering their own social realities and the potential for unintentional bias.

Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) turns the researcher's unique perspective into a core part of qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2022) Subjectivity is used to understand and treated as a resource for analysis (Gough and Madill, 2012). Reflexivity is never final; it is about striving to own one's own perspective (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The researcher's position shapes their research and engagement with data (Braun and Clarke, 2022). This means having an awareness of the philosophical and theoretical assumptions and making sure theory and research practice align (Braun and Clarke, 2022), but, crucially, developing an awareness of personal positioning as well as sociodemographic positioning and values and assumptions of the world (Braun and Clarke, 2022). (My own position in relation to research is described later in this chapter.)

RTA is particularly well-suited to integrating both images and words because of its flexible, interpretive, and meaning-focused approach (Braun and Clarke, 2022). It prioritizes the researcher's reflexivity and acknowledges that meaning is co-constructed. This aligns well with arts-based research, where images often carry personal, symbolic, and emotional meanings that may not be easily verbalized. Reflexivity allows the researcher to interpret these meanings while being aware of

their own positionality and assumptions. RTA is described in further detail, as well as the rationale for using it as a data analysis method and its specific benefits for art therapy research, later in this chapter.

Reflexivity in research can challenge hierarchies and welcome relational knowledge which connects to ABR. McNamee and Gergen (1992) question the traditional notion of the therapist or researcher as an all-knowing expert. They argue that histories and narratives are not independent entities but are constructed through human relationships. Meaning arises from how these narratives are used within relational contexts. Transformation, therefore, is not the product of individual expertise but a collaborative and relational process. This perspective promotes a more egalitarian and participatory approach to therapy and research.

Ethical reflexivity also involves being critically aware of the intersections of race, colour, gender, religion, culture, class, and sexuality within the research and artistic process. bell hooks (1995) introduced the concept of intersectionality, emphasizing how these overlapping identities create layers of discrimination and disadvantage. She viewed art as a medium that conveys political ideas and cultural beliefs, capable of both reflecting dominant ideologies and challenging stereotypical thinking. However, art can also be exclusive, depending on who creates it and how it is presented.

Nagar and Geiger (2007) extend this understanding by arguing that intersectional reflexivity must be radical, requiring researchers to critically analyse how they respond to their subjects. They assert that knowledge is shaped by the researcher's own social identity, positionality, and lived experience—including gender, race, class, sexuality, and other points of difference.

There are contextual realities of asylum seekers in northern France that impact the research, and the racialized geopolitics of global borders are enacted daily through practices of segregation (Tyerman, 2019). Most asylum seekers engaging with TCT are unaccompanied minors and adults, predominantly men, ranging in age from ten to their mid-sixties. They come from North and East Africa, the Middle East, and other regions, mostly fleeing war, poverty, and climate emergencies. With limited access to money, shelter, food, and water, many face daily harassment and

exclusion. These realities demand a reflexive and ethically grounded approach to research and practice.

Talwar (2019) argues that both art therapy theory and practice must adopt an intersectional framework that demands ongoing self-reflexivity. This involves deconstructing one's own position of power and privilege, using the "self" as a point of reference. Reflexivity in this context means taking accountability for how institutions, culture, society, and politics shape our understanding of cultural difference. Researchers must actively consider how to shift oppressive structures, especially when working with individuals who have experienced marginalization or trauma.

Springham and Xenophontes (2021) further highlight the challenging history of power abuse, stigma, and exclusion within mental health contexts—issues that art therapists must actively acknowledge and address. They advocate for co-production in both practice and research, where individuals who use and provide art therapy services collaborate to develop theory. This process values both consensus and divergent perspectives and requires methodological flexibility to ensure that those with lived experience are genuinely heard.

3. Research strategy

This research was shaped by principles of arts-based research (ABR) and reflexivity as discussed above, which informed the design, data collection, and interpretation processes. Considerations included participants' backgrounds, such as nationality, role, faith, age, and sexuality, and how these factors influenced engagement. However, reflexivity extends beyond mere recognition; it requires the active incorporation of these considerations into the research process.

To honour individual meaning-making, participants were interviewed individually, allowing for personal narratives and interpretations to emerge. Chapters 4 and 5 detail the interview process and arts-based data collection methods, while Chapter 9 presents thematic interpretations that reflect these individual constructions. Reflexivity required the researcher to critically reflect on personal assumptions and remain open to alternative perspectives.

Understanding participants' experiences also meant situating them within broader social contexts. These experiences were shaped by both personal and cultural contexts, influencing the meanings constructed through artmaking, viewing, and social interaction.

As a group-based model, TCT presented a dynamic intersection between individual and collective experience. The research acknowledged both the shared culture of the group and the distinct constructions of individual participants. A constructionist approach (Bryman, 2016) was used to document personal growth and self-awareness while considering social and cultural dynamics. The study also needed to consider how communal artmaking and social interactions within TCT supported participants and enabled a collective co-construction of meaning.

The aim was to develop a theoretical framework and practical insights into TCT, and to do this while recognising the interplay between individual and social contexts was essential to understanding how therapeutic experiences and outcomes are shaped.

The sociopolitical context in northern France, where much of the research was conducted, presented significant ethical challenges. These included ensuring ethical data collection, avoiding exploitation of participants, and upholding a professional duty of care as an HCPC registrant. The research was designed to ensure no harm was caused and that it did not interfere with the delivery of essential services.

Asylum seekers in this region face harsh realities, including frequent police operations that destroy temporary shelters and restrict access to essentials such as water, toilets, and food. These actions aim to isolate and disempower individuals, many of whom are fleeing oppressive conditions. The research acknowledged the ongoing social and political oppression and its impact on participants' mental and physical health.

Even though the intent of the research was to investigate a humanitarian model of art therapy rather than giving a voice to refugees, this context necessitated an anti-oppressive stance, with reflexive attention to power relations, race, gender, class, and politics. Reflexivity and cultural humility were essential tools for navigating cross-cultural work (Hocoy, 2002; Kapitan, 2017; Moon, 2013; Potash et al., 2017; Tervalon and Murray-Garcia, 1998; Valldejuli and Vollmann, 2022; Yeager and

Bauer-Wu, 2013). Kurcher (2017) stresses the importance of listening to the meanings and values of marginalised individuals, reinforcing the need for methods that align with this goal. To support this, the research employed trauma-informed practice (which is outlined further in this chapter). A "do no harm"[27] strategy was followed, avoiding intrusive questioning and ensuring ethical engagement.

Methods

Three main methods were used to gather data: arts-based research, semi-structured interviews, and a reflexive research journal. These methods were integrated to generate a comprehensive understanding, capturing a range of perspectives to build a robust picture of the research and formulate findings.

1) Arts-based research

Throughout this thesis, art has been a central tool for exploring, processing, and understanding the research. Visual art is not only used in the interventions (see in Figure 9 below some examples of materials) being researched and the practices described but also as a means for me, as the researcher, to process and respond to the data. The arts-based methods employed in this research reflect the diverse materials used in practice, including:

- Fibre arts such as knitting and crochet
- Drawing on paper, small card, and tracing paper
- Typing using the typewriters
- Building with miniature bricks or wooden blocks
- Stop frame animation using a mobile phone
- Plasticine

[27] "Do no harm" is a framework used to identify unintended impacts of humanitarian interventions in conflict-affected settings. It guides planning, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure interventions do not exacerbate conflict but contribute to its resolution (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, n.d.).
[Source: INEE Competency Framework. Available at: https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/INEE_Competency_Framework_English_2D%20Studio%20v3.1%20LowRes.pdf]

Using arts-based research was a desired and thought through choice, given that the work itself is rooted in artmaking and the active use of various art materials it seemed apt. The experiential use of art materials by me as both a practitioner and researcher has added depth to my understanding of the data.



Figure 9: Different materials used at The Community Table (© Art Refuge)

Arts-based methods were employed to gather data, develop reflexive thinking, represent the data, and disseminate the findings (Archibald and Gerber, 2018; Betts and Deaver, 2019 Kapitan, 2017; Potash, 2019). As highlighted above and in my conceptual framework in Chapter 2, the benefits of arts-based methods are several. They enable aesthetic knowing, which is knowledge that is sense-based, perceptual, embodied, and emotional rather than through just language. The rationale for this is to access forms of knowledge less reachable through traditional research methods. This approach is particularly relevant given that some participants did not have English as their first language.

Using image-making as an outward expression of inner experiences can reveal previously hidden aspects of personal and interpersonal awareness. When faced with adversity, people make meaning from their experiences (Ford et al., 2021), and artmaking can facilitate understanding of these meanings (Archibald and Blines, 2021). Multiple experiences and events influence what makes sense to individuals, and activities that engage imagination and less conscious aspects of experience are valuable for uncovering new ways of understanding phenomena.

The arts can serve as primary sources of data (participants creating art), secondary sources (a researcher using art in response to data), or complementary sets of data. They can be included throughout the research process for data interpretation and representation, as well as for disseminating findings (Archibald and Gerber, 2018; Betts and Deaver, 2019 Kapitan, 2017; Potash, 2019).

Engaging in arts-based research as an artist shifts the dynamic of engagement and enables a different form of data generation through artmaking (Archibald and Blines, 2021). This process of knowing-through-doing and process-based understanding is only possible through direct engagement with art (Polanyi, 1983).

If one accepts that the arts embody, capture, and generate aesthetic ways of knowing, it is essential to consider the context in which the art is created, including the who, where, and how of its creation. The impact of the artwork is influenced by the context in which it is seen (Berger, 2008). This relational aspect between what is seen and what is known or believed underscores the significance of context in arts-based research.

2) Semi-structured interviews

Alongside the arts-based data, the aim of using semi-structured interviews is to capture the rich and in-depth experiences and narratives of participants (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Given all the intersubjective elements it seemed an important choice to have some kind of recorded narrative with people who use TCT. Using an approach of semi-structured interviews provided the flexibility to have an open discussion, with the aim of understanding more about the exact practices of the work. By semi-structured interviews, I mean using a list of open-ended questions related to the

research questions but also allowing for the possibilities of tailoring questions and possible prompts in conversations to each participant's unique experiences.

Kitto et al. (2008) suggest that the main factors that influence quality and trustworthiness with semi-structured interviews are rigorous data collection procedures. Therefore, ensuring a comprehensive protocol for how to go about semi-structured interviews is crucial (how I went about this is described in more detail in Chapter 4). The concept of semi-structured interviews is to systematically collect similar types of information from different participants (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). So it is pivotal to support and guide participants as to what to talk about (Gill et al., 2008).

However, any support and guidance need to be carefully calibrated so that the interview is not dominated by the interviewer. An advantage of semi-structured interviews is engendering a sense of reciprocity between interviewer and participant (Galletta, 2012).

Krauss et al. (2009) and Rabionet (2011) suggest that using semi-structured interviews to consult experts in the field is an obvious way of trying to understand the phenomena being explored, particularly when there is sparse literature in the specific area being researched.

But knowing about the phenomena and having a good understanding of the subject being investigated helps to create a good framework for semi-structured interviews (Barriball and While, 1994); the researcher should have a comprehensive appreciation of the research (Rabionet, 2011)

A semi-structured interview should consist of both main themes and follow-up questions. The main themes should cover the main content of the research subject but also allow and encourage participants to speak freely about their perceptions and experiences (Astedt-Kurki and Heikkinen, 1994). A balance needs to be achieved between the main themes and follow-up questions, depending on the purpose of the interviews (Kallio et al., 2016). Verbal as well as non-verbal probing can be used for follow-up questions. Verbal probes include repeating the participant's point, being openly interested in what they are saying, and, when appropriate, agreeing with their

points (Turner, 2010; Whiting, 2008), while at other times it may be more appropriate to be non-verbal so as to allow the participant to think out loud (Turner, 2010).

One needs to take care not to lead but also to be prepared to do some gentle coaxing if the participants struggle to understand the main themes (Smith and Osborn, 2008). Interviews need to reflect the participant's personal feelings and narratives (Rabionet, 2011; Whiting, 2008). Descriptive answers could be stimulated by beginning questions with a who, what, when, how, or why (Chenail, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews need to be placed into context. Social construction plays a significant role in semi-structured interviews (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Knowledge is contextual, and the phenomena explored needs to be grounded in the context in which they happen (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). The interviewer needs to establish a relationship with the interviewees in order to understand and interpret how they perceive and explain their own experience. Rubin and Rubin (2012) see participants as co-participants in the research process, as people give meaning to objects and phenomena through social interaction. Researchers are never entirely objective and must be aware of predispositions and preconceptions. This approach needs the use of reflective and reflexive practices, and any outcomes should include an evaluation of the strengths, weaknesses, and biases of the interviewer in the conclusion of any research (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

Using semi-structured interviews fits in with the overall desire to include and consider participants' views. However, this was also a limitation in determining the recruitment of participants and their ability to speak English, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3) Reflexive research journal

As part of both the arts-based and reflexive practice, throughout the investigation I kept a reflexive research journal. This was in both a written and visual form. It has also been cited throughout this thesis to emphasise relevant emergent issues during the research. The journal includes observations and key moments of development, made through not only writing but an assortment of videos, images, and drawings that I have used to help process my own experiences and as a way for me to make sense and meaning of the experiences during the research journey. I have placed

the writing and visual data in a metaphorical box (see Figure 10). I used drawing as a way of visually conceptualising some of the ideas marinating in my head, enabling them to become a more solid form, which in turn enabled me to be more coherent. The journal (the metaphorical box) includes notes, visual images, and other reflections, which all relate to the phenomenon I investigated. This forms part of the overall data and will also be integrated into the analysis and findings. I found this method a very helpful way of iteratively and reflexively learning.

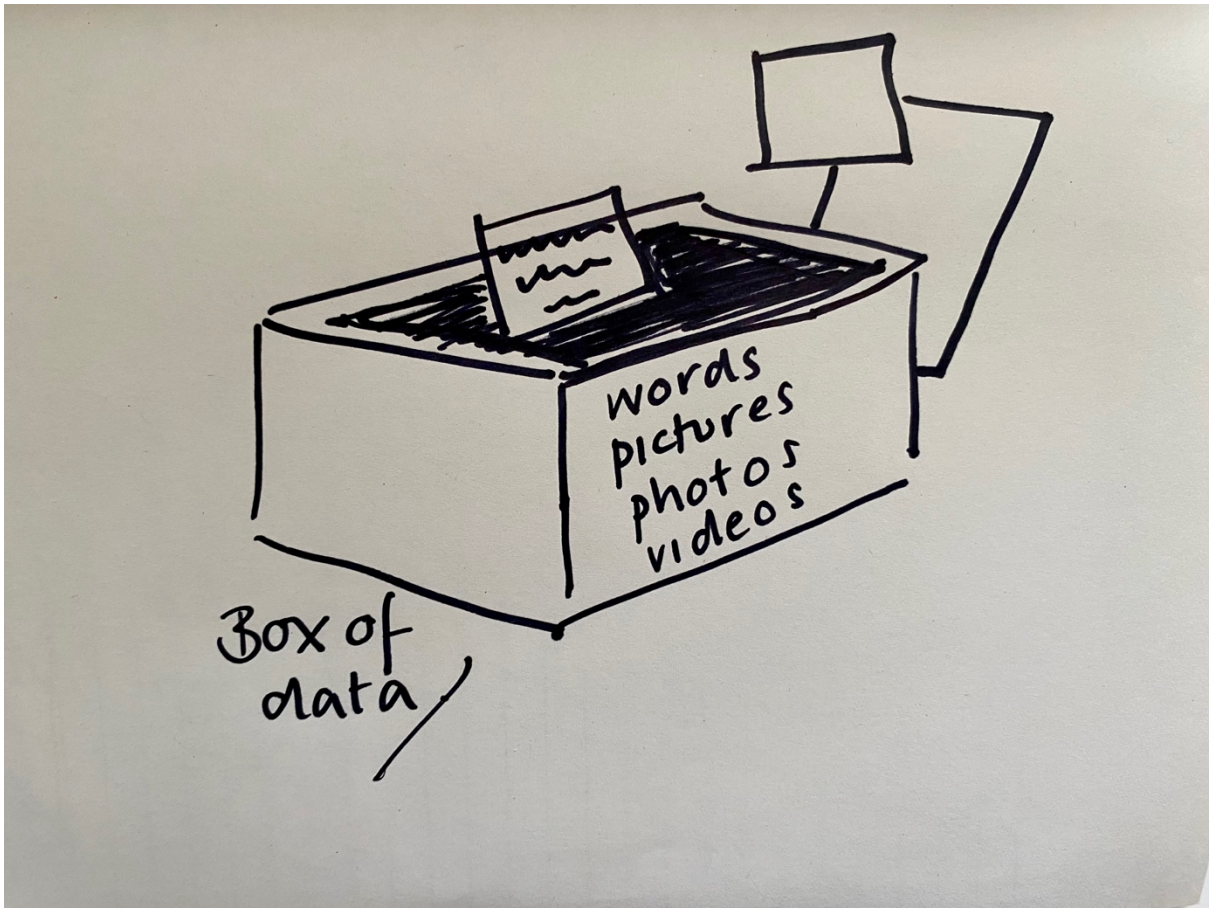


Figure 10: Metaphorical box of data

I see reflexivity as being actively engaged in thinking critically about how the physical context of the research intersects with my personal values and opinions, and how the wider worldview may also impact on decisions, interpretation, and analysis during the research process (Olaghere, 2022). Smith (1999) suggests that the researcher's self-awareness is developed by the use of a reflexive journal and that this, in fact, is then mirrored by participants' ability to be more reflective and reveal information about the context which had not been discovered in other ways.

A reflexive research journal can help to integrate thinking in mixed-methods research such as this through the active use of subjective thought processes during the research process (Olaghere, 2022). Being self-reflexive considers the researcher's position in all aspects of the research, including the development, the setting, and the findings; it highlights how important it is to be aware of these factors and think through the implications of the researcher's position on the research. Using a self-reflexive approach can mean that the complexities that arise during research and the representation of these are no longer viewed as coincidental but can become an object of study themselves (Olaghere, 2022).

Being reflexive from the beginning to the end of the research process to help resolve arising issues adds value to the rigour of the research (Biddle and Schafft, 2015).

Cain et al. (2019) and Guillemin and Gillam (2004) see reflexivity as a methodological tool as well as a way to ensure ethical research practice. Reflexivity can be a way of looking at a subjective position by metaphorically turning it upside down and relooking at the research in a different way. Engaging in this challenge places the researcher in a strong position to present their research in a more convincing way (Dean, 2017; Harding, 1991; Olaghere, 2022; Pillow, 2003).

The literature that links art therapy theory, practice, and psychosocial practices in humanitarian fields highlights the importance of considering cross-cultural work (Garcia and Potash, 2019; Gavron et al., 2022 Moon, 2013). Cross-cultural working requires one to exercise cultural humility by being reflexive and challenging oneself about bias and assumptions of knowledge which may come from a particular perspective (Valldejuli and Vollmann, 2022) and being open and humble (Tervalon and Murray-Garcia, 1998; Yeager and Bauer-Wu, 2013). But there are many challenges with cross-cultural work, such as the impact of colonialism and post-colonial mistrust issues around power and privilege (Hocoy, 2002; Moon, 2013; Potash et al., 2017; Valldejuli and Vollmann, 2022).

Cultural humility and being aware of the impact of colonialism also influences the choice of research questions, including how the questions might relate to wider injustices in social and institutional contexts that might exacerbate otherness and marginalization for an already marginalised social group (Talwar, 2019). This shapes

an overall rationale for the premise of the research, asking am I making assumptions about those I work with? Is it culturally sensitive? How does it consider the impact of colonialism? Is it appropriate and of course, most importantly, is it ethical? This is alongside other questions such as how or will this study contribute to knowledge of art therapy? How relevant is the subject in the field? What is the purpose of the study? What is needed to be understood? And is it feasible?

Taking the premise that cultural humility is about reflexive thinking, this constitutes thinking about how one's own background and the background of others impact research and creative activity. When enabling something to be culturally sensitive while also considering the impact of colonialism, one needs to be aware of and responsive to different cultural perspectives and backgrounds (Stubbe, 2020). This may include being genuinely open to learning from participants (Lekas et al., 2020). The wording of the research questions was all open, beginning with a *what* specifically designed to ask the participant rather than coming with an assumption. The design of the research questions was all based on trying to understand and be open to a variety of differing perspectives with no judgement of the validity of this.

The concepts of cultural humility and the impact of colonialism influenced my own thinking by making me more conscious about these particular issues and holding them at the forefront of my mind. This manifested itself in my reflexive thinking being more sensitive to the impact of these particular issues and how I asked the research questions and viewed the responses, being careful not to make assumptions. Cultural humility and the impact of colonialism had an effect on my awareness as a researcher.

The research questions

The research questions were designed to guide the gathering data that would help me understand the practice comprehensively. Ensuring the interconnectedness of the various research components—literature review, methodology, methods, and research questions—was pivotal. A core rationale for formulating the research questions was their practical utility: How could the data be effectively used? Therefore, the intentionality behind the study was central. I needed to determine precisely what I wanted to know, how I could discover it, and how I could utilize the findings.

Exploring the context around the research questions helped clarify both the motivations and purposes of the research. Identifying these elements, in turn, helped redefine the research problem. Maxwell (2013) proposed a model using five interactive, non-hierarchical elements to define research questions: purpose and goals, conceptual context, research problem or questions, methods, and validity/ethics. Iteratively moving back and forth among these elements helped refine what would be useful to ask.

My aim was to conduct systematic research on TCT to create a theoretical framework, marking the beginning of an evidence base. Kapitan (2017) highlights five areas influencing research problems in art therapy: practical experience, critique of art therapy literature, gaps in theory and practice, untested theory, and art exploration. These served as useful anchors to justify the research and shape the research questions.

As identified in the literature review, there is limited literature in art therapy describing a psychosocial model of practice in humanitarian crisis contexts. The concept of the Portable Studio by Kalmanowitz and Lloyd (2005) and their related writings are crucial for understanding art therapy practice in such settings. However, the Portable Studio is a concept rather than a practice model. Kalmanowitz and Lloyd developed a conceptual framework to guide their practice in adverse settings and share with an art therapy and related professional audience, but they did not incorporate the voices of those who participated in the Portable Studio in their publications. Their exploration was predominantly through their lens as practitioners. Thus, in this research it was essential to address questions to participants to understand their narratives and experiences.

This approach also aligns with considerations of anti-oppressive practice, cultural humility, and intersectionality, which influenced whom it was relevant to collect data from. There was an intent to really consider these aspects reflexively as well as include a variety of participants that would be a realistic and representative sample of who took part in TCT. (This will be discussed more in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 when describing the data collection and data analysis process.) For over a year, I kept a note stuck by my desk to inspire me whenever I struggled to motivate myself

with my doctorate work. This note served as a reminder of why I am undertaking this research (see Figure 11).

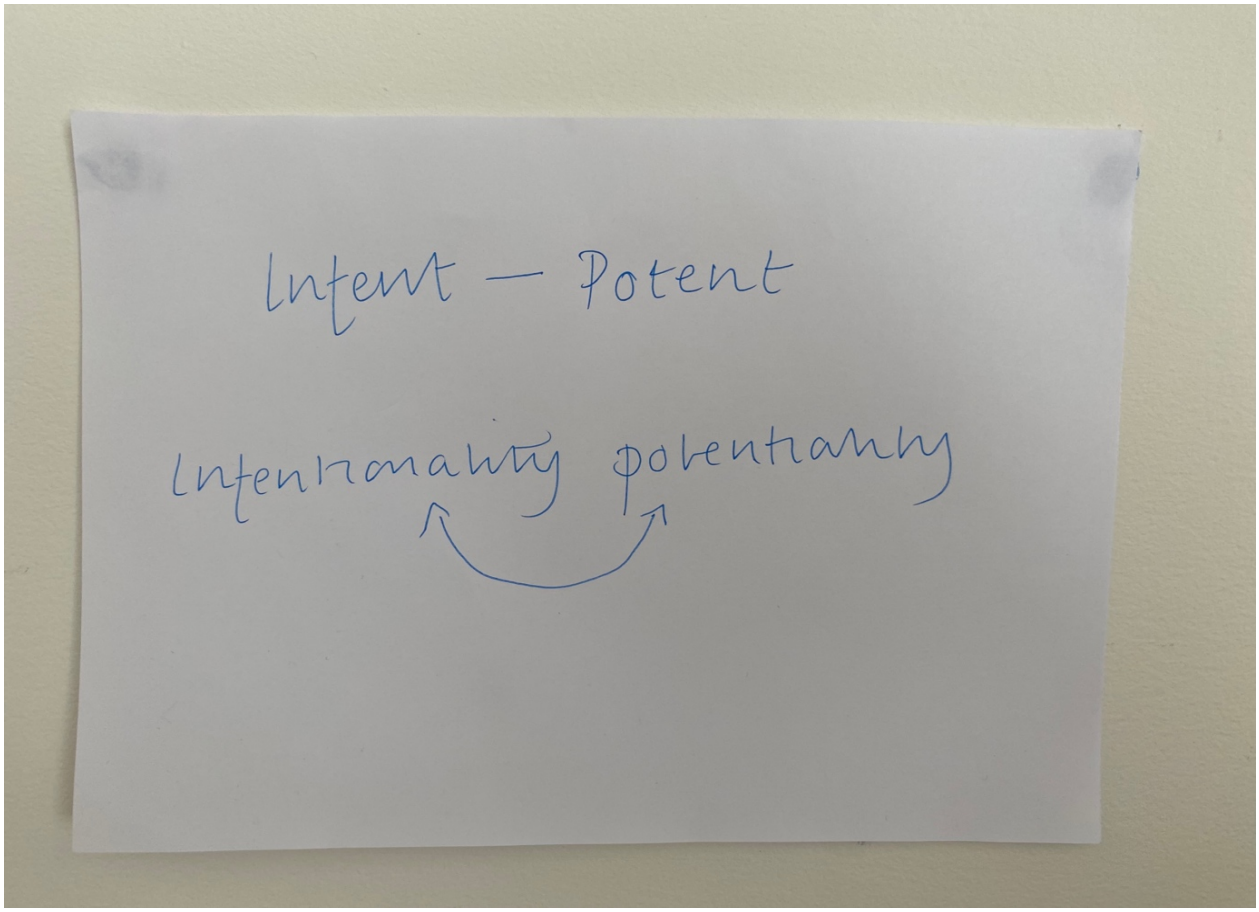


Figure 11: Author's own photo of note posted above her desk

Understanding the intentionality of the work is crucial for assessing and exploring its potential. I view intentionality as the ability to develop or achieve something with purpose and commitment—a deliberate action taken with specific intent. Potentiality, on the other hand, refers to recognizing qualities or abilities that may be developed to lead to future successes or usefulness.

I was particularly curious about other people's experiences of the work in Calais. In considering cultural humility and moving away from preconceived assumptions, it was essential to focus on the lived experiences of those involved in and participating in the work. This focus aligns with the intention of the work, aiming to ensure it embodies anti-oppressive research practices.

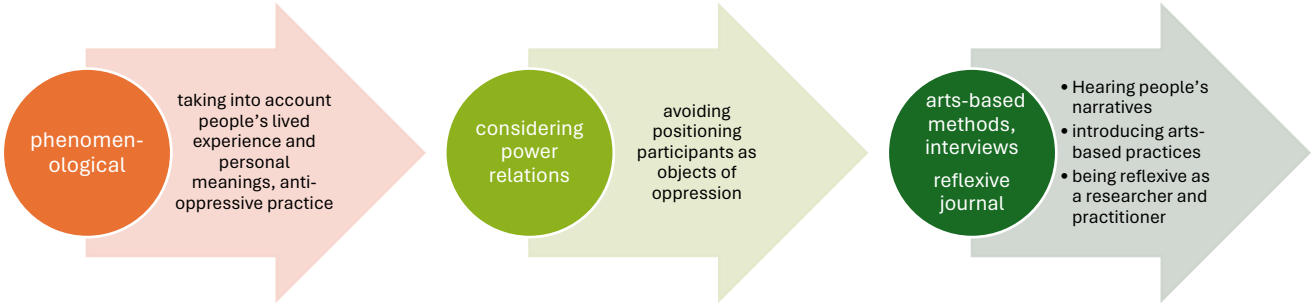


Figure 12: Concepts behind the questions

Figure 12 highlights the core concepts behind the research questions: wanting to hear from the people who participate in the practices and developing methods for gathering data that respond to those features.

I became increasingly aware that something was working well at TCT. I aimed to investigate the phenomena of the work as it was experienced by participants, including their preconceptions and presuppositions. By doing so, I hoped to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the impact and significance of the practices from multiple perspectives.

Below is a discussion relating to the design of the research questions. There were two phases of data collection. The development of the research questions (RQs) used in phase 1 and adaptation of the RQs for phase 2 will be outlined.

Research question 1 for phase 1 of data collection: What are the meanings *for participants* of the practices?

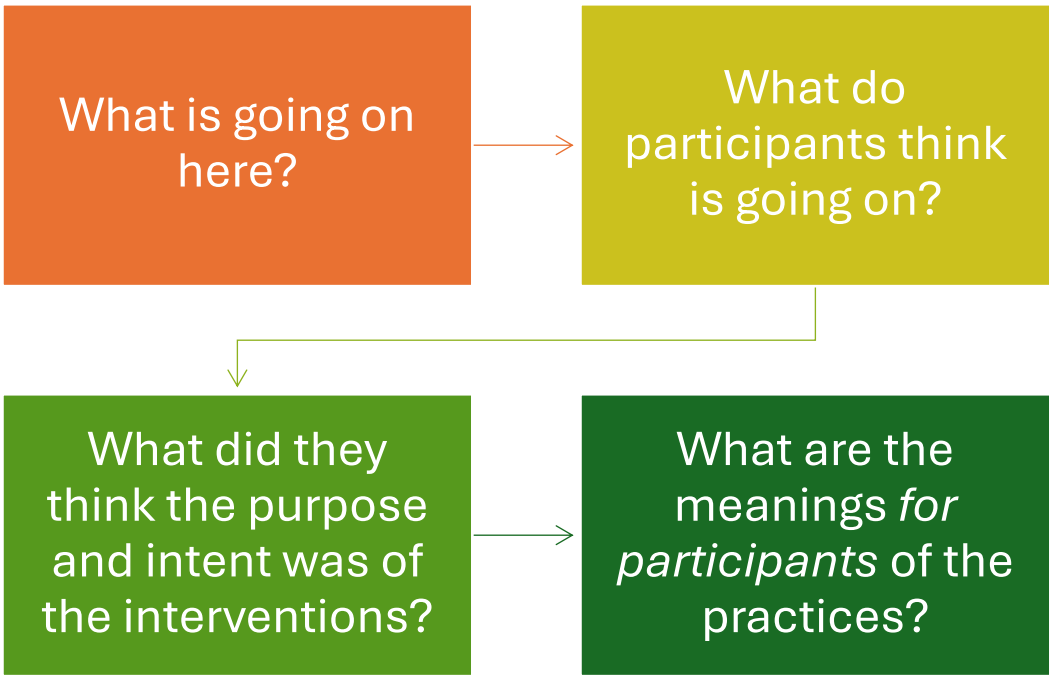


Figure 13: Development of the research question

Figure 13 shows the development of the research question. The phrasing of this question needed adaptation; "*participants"* was added to make it explicit that it was the meanings of the practices for participants and their own *subjective* meanings that were being researched. What did *they* think the purpose and intent was of the interventions?

I wanted to understand what meanings the practices had for people, hearing *their* retelling of *their* experiences, and in this sense understanding their own meanings of their experiences was important.

This first question is key, as it sets a tone for the other two research questions: What do participants make of the art therapy interventions and activities? What meanings does it have for them? From a psychological perspective, meaning making is the process through which something is made sense of, in terms of life events, interpersonal relationships, and understanding oneself (Epston and White, 1992).

Research question 2 for phase 1 of data collection: What is the *perceived* impact of the practices, if any, on participants?

Understanding the impact of the practices is essential to determine whether the intent is actualizing the potential of the work. The word "*perceived*" is important

because it acknowledges the personal perspective and subjective impact of the practices, rather than allowing me, as the researcher, to assume a positive or negative impact.

Knowing the impact of the work is crucial for securing funding, as funders need to see evidence of effectiveness. As a practitioner, there is also an ethical imperative to ensure that the work has a positive, rather than negative, impact.

Giving a voice to participants is crucial so they can describe their experiences in their own words. Throughout the research, I emphasized the importance of ensuring that participants felt valued, recognized, and empowered by having their voices heard. This approach aimed to foster a sense of validation and respect, contributing to the ethical integrity of the research.

Research question 3 for phase 1 of data collection: What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact?

This research question aims to capture the perspectives of participants and facilitators regarding the specific factors or actions that contribute to the impact experienced by individuals. Gruber and Oepen (2018) emphasize the necessity for art therapy research to delineate psychological models of practice to understand the unique factors present in art therapy. Clarifying these mechanisms can define the scope of practice for professionals and enable non-professionals to use the arts responsibly (Czamanski-Cohen and Weihs, 2016).

Understanding the mechanisms particular to art therapy practices and their specific qualitative impacts on clients is crucial (Rankanen, 2016). However, these processes need to be understood from the participants' point of view. Analysing the impact of interventions is essential for developing an evidence base for innovative models of practice such as TCT. Understanding the mechanisms of change in an art therapy intervention allows for further improvement of interventions, which could be adapted for or replicated in other practices. Identifying the specific mechanisms or behaviours that elicit positive change in psychological therapies is important for determining how and what to evaluate (Kazdin, 2007). Given that art therapy has limited literature related to working in humanitarian contexts, it is helpful to identify the details

pertinent to art therapy interventions in such contexts to offer a greater understanding of the core features of practice and their potential.

Although the core elements of the research questions remained consistent throughout the study, there was a slight adaptation after phase 1 of the data collection to better align with emerging insights and ensure the questions remained relevant and effective. In the discussion below, I will explain what was changed and why I considered these changes significant.

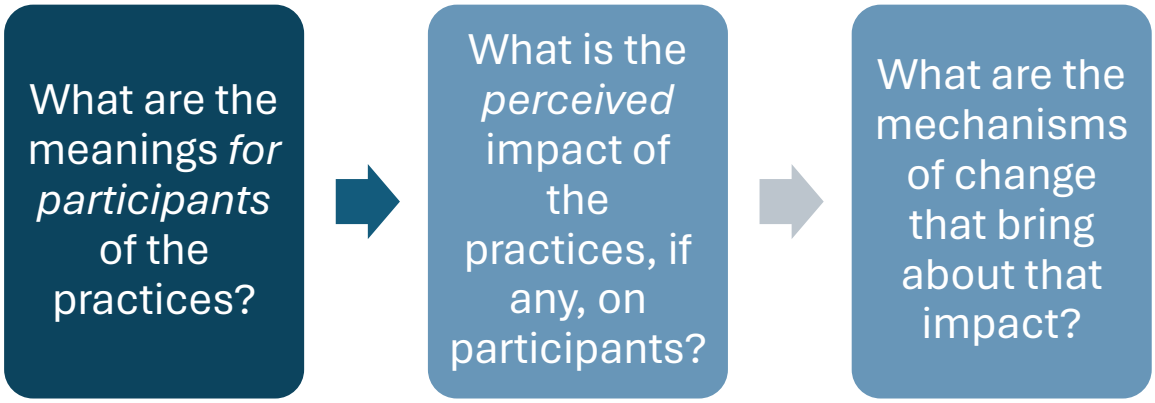


Figure 14: Research questions: Phase 1 of data collection

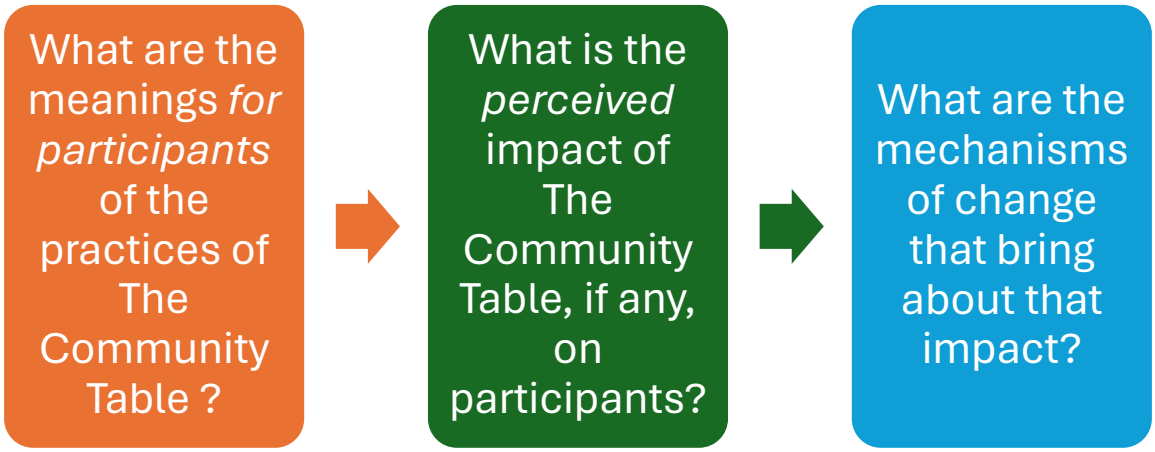


Figure 15: Research questions: Phase 2 of data collection

The data collection process for this research was divided into two phases. During phase 1, the questions shown in Figure 15 were used to guide data collection. Initial

data analysis revealed that the practices helped participants feel valued and enabled them to “hope and cope”, supporting emotional processing, emotional awareness, and self-regulation. However, upon further evaluation, it became clear that a deeper exploration of these aspects was necessary to better understand the specific mechanisms of change that brought about the impact of TCT and the specific actions that facilitated emotional processing, emotional awareness, and self-regulation.

Phase 1 of the data collection, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, focused on general practices rather than TCT specifically. Reflecting on this, it became evident that sharpening the research questions to focus more specifically on TCT practices would provide deeper insights. This refinement is shown in Figure 15.

In summary, the transition from general questions in the initial phase to more focused questions in the second phase allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the meaning, impact, and specific mechanisms of TCT practices on participants. This approach highlighted the importance of reflexivity in research, ensuring that the questions evolve to address emerging insights and deepen the overall analysis. By combining the findings from both research phases, a more comprehensive picture of the actions and interactions from various perspectives emerged.

Methodology and method for data analysis: Reflexive thematic analysis

Phenomenological research in fields such as art therapy, psychotherapy, and counselling can be transformative for both the researcher and the participant (Finlay, 2011). This approach provides individuals with the opportunity to be witnessed in their experiences, giving voice to their personal narratives. Using this premise allows both the researcher and the participant to make sense of and derive meaning from the experiences being explored. With this comes the responsibility of being reflexive.

There are several methods available for analysing data to identify patterns and understandings across the entirety of the data produced. Core to deciding which method to use is considering if it fits the research project’s purpose, research questions, and design (Willig, 2013). Research design and process need to support the research goals and questions (Levitt et al., 2017). Methods often used in art therapy, psychotherapy, and counselling research include interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), grounded theory (GT), discourse analysis (DA),

qualitative content analysis (QCA), thematic analysis (TA), and reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). These methods are well-suited to exploring the sense and meaning derived from people's lived experiences, with several similarities among them. But as reflexivity was a key philosophical construct underpinning the research, it was imperative to consider how to use it in the data analysis process. Braun and Clarke (2022) reclaim the notion of researcher bias in RTA, viewing researcher subjectivity as a resource for research and recognizing that meaning and knowledge are contextually situated. Reflexivity is what helps underpin good quality data analysis because researchers have to understand and take on board their own perspectives (Elliot et al., 1999). Reflexivity means routinely reflecting on assumptions, choices, and actions throughout the research process (Finlay and Gough, 2003)

With RTA, Braun and Clarke (2022) describe engaging with thematic analysis as an adventure that requires thoughtful engagement rather than merely following directions. This perspective allows for creative development within the analytical process. The reflexive aspect of thematic analysis aligns with the underlying philosophical position of the research.

RTA and art therapy research

RTA is particularly well-suited to integrating both images and words because of its flexible, interpretive, and meaning-focused approach (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Because of its flexibility, it allows exploration of both visual and narrative data. Images reflect participants' experiences and emotions, and identities can be analysed alongside words—such as interview transcripts and written reflections—to explore how participants articulate and make sense of their experiences.

In RTA, the researcher's reflexivity is prioritised and acknowledges that meaning is co-constructed. This aligns well with art therapy, where images often carry personal, symbolic, and emotional meanings that may not be easily verbalized (Williams and Daly-Lynn, 2025). Reflexivity allows the researcher to interpret these meanings while being aware of their own positionality and assumptions. It can be applied to flexibility in coding and theme development. As themes in RTA are developed through interpretive engagement with the data, not just through frequency or rigid coding, it allows both visual and verbal elements (Ponsford-Hill, 2018). Visual elements can be

described, interpreted, and coded based on their symbolic content, emotional tone, or contextual relevance, while verbal data can be used to support, contrast, and expand the meanings found in visual data. This flexibility supports the integration of embodied and aesthetic knowledge with verbal narratives.

RTA requires the researcher to be actively reflexive throughout the process, questioning how their own background, assumptions, and emotional responses shape the interpretation of both images and words (Kuhnke and Jack-Malik, 2022). This is especially important in this context, which is cross-cultural and trauma-informed, as the visual expression may reveal nuanced or culturally specific meanings that verbal language cannot fully capture. RTA allows for the gentle, non-intrusive exploration of sensitive themes that are important when working with vulnerable populations such as those seeking asylum. Images can provide a safe medium for expression (Potash et al., 2017), and RTA enables researchers to interpret these with care, avoiding over-interpretation or harm (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

There are various techniques within thematic analysis, but typical processes involve data-driven and theory-driven approaches to show both explicit (overt) and implicit (underlying) meanings in coding and developing themes. These techniques also offer flexibility in the theoretical framework guiding the research. position thematic analysis on a continuum from coding reliability to reflexive approaches, with coding reliability involving structured, multi-researcher approaches to prevent researcher bias through consensus on data coding. A potential pitfall of RTA is using it without sufficient clarity in approach and intent. What the researcher needs to bring to RTA is clearly defined scope, intent, and transparency about limitations to maintain integrity and rigour.

In RTA, themes develop from codes, with the process requiring extensive analysis and interpretation by the researcher. Themes are not generated separately from the researcher; rather, the data is viewed through the researcher's lens and influenced by their experiences, values, skills, and training (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The coding method is unstructured, allowing new codes to emerge as the researcher becomes more familiar with the data. This subjective process demands reflexivity,

requiring the researcher to reflect on their assumptions and remain open to new discoveries.

When comparing with other qualitative methods such as QCA, there is overlap with RTA in the use of coding and themes but differences in how the researcher positions themselves and the procedures and values underpinning the research. QCA, like RTA, cannot be atheoretical, as analysis always involves theoretical assumptions (Ponterotto et al., 2017). But QCA is more about categorizing specific elements in the data rather than RTA, which explores the underlying themes, meanings, and patterns in a more holistic and reflexive way.

IPA focuses on individual experiences, emphasizing specific language use, including pauses and tone (Smith et al., 2009). While IPA provides depth in individual experiences, it poses challenges if participants' primary language is not English and may not easily incorporate visual data. Since my research premise is wanting participants to be able to express their own, individual views of their experience of TCT, this did not seem viable.

GT constructs theory from the data. This theory is fully grounded in the data, which is collected with the explicit intent of developing theory, whereas reflexive thematic analysis focuses on prioritising developing themes from the data without the assumption of what may emerge.

DA also focuses on language, making it less suitable for research involving art-based data. RTA, in contrast, accommodates both visual and verbal data, aligning better with my research.

Traditional thematic analysis does not explicitly explore the researcher's influence on data interpretation. However, RTA does. The process of analysis offers a fluid yet structured approach, accommodating both images and words, facilitating a comprehensive view while also taking into account the impact and influence of the researcher. Braun and Clarke (2022) outline six phases in RTA: familiarization; coding; generating initial themes; reviewing and developing themes; refining, defining and naming themes; and writing up. This iterative process of revisiting data helps identify patterns and emerging themes, aligning well with the theoretical

underpinning of the research by exploring participants' subjective experiences and sense-making.

In conclusion, RTA's flexibility, reflexivity, and capacity to handle diverse data types make it the most suitable method for this research, allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and the meaning they derive from TCT.

Research position

In this section I outline my role within the research, navigating the intricate nuances of my position and elucidating how I have chosen to engage with it. Part of a reflexive practice is to be clear about my position. The fabric of the research is inseparable from the Art Refuge team, with whom I collaborate and derive data from our shared practice. This immersion inevitably shaped my perception of and approach to the research, influencing the methodology, methods, and analysis of the data.

This research focused on working with a particularly marginalized group: displaced people. Recognizing inequalities was crucial, as was considering how intersectionality plays out in the context. One of the core principles of developing awareness of intersectionality is self-reflexivity, especially in research and scholarship when confronting the experiences of others.

The overall quest of my study began with a drive to understand, "What are we doing here in Calais?" During the 2015 Refugee Crisis, I felt frustrated, moved, and overwhelmed with a desire to help the large numbers of people looking for asylum who had gathered in Calais with the aim of coming to the UK. I felt a strong sense of injustice at the situation of asylum seekers forced to live in squalid surroundings. My own family history, with grandparents on both sides who sought refuge in the UK,[28] heightened my empathy. Having lived, worked, and travelled in different parts of the world, I recognized the cultural differences and subtle nuances of living away from the familiar. I could only imagine how these challenges were exacerbated by the

[28] I am Jewish. My grandparents and great grandparents faced persecution, pogroms, and genocide. They needed to flee from where they were born to find sanctuary.

stress and insecurity of not knowing where or when one might sleep or eat, that night and beyond.

From my first visit to Calais as a member of the Art Refuge team, I began to question my role in that context and what I could do to help. Initially, I felt deskilled. The large makeshift camp known as “The Jungle” was full of well-meaning volunteers and professional non-governmental organizations trying to help. Many passionate, angry, and emotional volunteers and humanitarian workers expressed their distress at what they witnessed. Grassroots organizations emerged reactively to address people’s immediate concerns of food and shelter. What often seemed missing was a reflective stance on what was being offered to those displaced and how it was being offered. This motivated me to understand what I could contribute, if anything.



Figure 16: Taken in Calais, December 2022: “Looking together with different lenses” (© Art Refuge)

Figure 16 captures a poignant moment in Calais, depicting two individuals viewing the same image through different lenses. This imagery mirrors the multifaceted nature of the research and emphasises why reflexivity is crucial, as meanings, perceptions, and interpretations can be subjective and vary between people. Navigating the dynamics of collaborative teamwork juxtaposed with individual research pursuits is essential, particularly within the ethos of Art Refuge and the inherent collaborative nature of TCT model being scrutinised. Assessing the robustness of qualitative studies entails acknowledging any underlying assumptions and biases and elucidating the intricacies of relationships that may have influenced the presentation of findings. This introspective scrutiny is pivotal for upholding research rigour (Casterle et al., 2011).

Woods (1999) identifies several key elements shared by qualitative research: a focus on “natural settings”, a curiosity about the meanings, perspectives, and understandings within those settings, and an emphasis on the research process through inductive analysis and grounded theory. If, as Woods (1999) suggests, qualitative research involves exploring situations to uncover “lived experiences” in real-life contexts, then my position is advantageous.

I am investigating my real-life work, which I have been engaged in for the past eight years with Art Refuge, and even longer as a professional art therapist. The day-to-day, moment-to-moment aspects of this work require constant consideration of the context and the shifts and changes that occur, all of which are core features of the work itself. Woods (1999) also suggests that researchers should generally strive not to disrupt the “scene” they are studying. They should aim to be inconspicuous, allowing data and analysis to reflect as accurately as possible what is happening.

This creates a paradoxical situation regarding the researcher’s position. Researchers must avoid assumptions by making the familiar strange and questioning actions, while also recognizing that familiarity can provide deep insights. It is within this spectrum of making the familiar strange and using the familiar to gain insight that I carefully navigate.

This approach significantly influenced the research design, methods, and methodology. The rationale behind these choices was crucial, not only to ensure

robust academic integrity but also to clarify intentions to the team, ensuring everyone felt actively involved and understood what was happening.

I also could not ignore my familiarity with my colleagues or the experiences we shared within the practice. During the research, I needed to be sensitive and respectful of people's experiences with Art Refuge while simultaneously delving iteratively deeper to elicit responses to my research questions. Balancing these dynamics was crucial to ensure the research's integrity and the team's cohesion.

Sutton and Paddon Rhoads (2022) discuss the importance of empathy within humanitarian teams, emphasizing its inextricable link to the functioning and wellbeing of humanitarian workers. At The Community Table, dreams and aspirations are expressed alongside thoughts of the present and future, as well as the difficulties and conflicts of daily experiences. These dynamics are also mirrored within the team, making it imperative to maintain a harmonious status quo while conducting research, especially given the challenging settings in which we work.

Delivery of TCT in Calais ran over several days, requiring the team to stay in France, often sharing accommodation and sometimes even rooms. Over the years, this led to the development of close friendships. Living and working together while facilitating TCT, the team experienced both difficult and inspirational situations, creating a unique bond. Within these parameters, I questioned the feasibility of conducting in-depth research on the phenomenon of TCT. Was it effective to interview those I worked with? Did my chosen research methods fit the situation? These were all questions I grappled with.

It is important to acknowledge these challenges. A reflexive approach necessitates self-interrogation and congruence. Being reflexive is a process that impacts all stages of research. The choices we make in the research process are governed by our values, which in turn help develop, define, and shape those values. Reflexivity in research involves critical reflection on both the knowledge produced and the process of its production (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

Another key element to consider regarding my position in this research is the use of blog posts[29] written by the team, including myself. These blog posts have been pivotal in describing and promoting our work since Art Refuge began its work in the large camp known as “The Jungle” in 2015. The blog posts evolved into an integral method for the team to process their experiences after each piece of work in Calais. On the route back from Calais, the team would debrief and reflect on the collective experiences of that particular trip.

The posts often featured images and photos of artwork created at the table, often taken by participants themselves using our mobile phones, and included context-specific images.[30] These were shared on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram and followed by the refugees we worked with, as well as supporters and others interested in our work. The posts represent a reflection of a specific moment in time, serving as a visual and written snapshot and memory.

This practice expanded to include blog posts for all Art Refuge’s work. It became a crucial part of the team’s process, particularly in the highly stressful environment of northern France. The posts enabled the team to reflect on their actions and consider necessary adaptations. Great care was taken in crafting the narrative that accompanied the images, with the facilitators of each trip or intervention negotiating the details to ensure accuracy and sensitivity. The posts were deliberately subjective and lacked detailed information to protect the anonymity of those we worked with.

The blog posts focused on the overall context of each week, including political and meteorological factors that significantly impacted the refugees in transit, who often slept outside in makeshift shelters. Political shifts in government policies in both the UK and France were as frequent as weather changes, influencing the refugees’ situations.

I recognize the importance of noting that I often wrote or co-wrote these posts. My processing of these experiences through writing may have influenced the research

[29] https://www.artrefuge.org.uk/news

[30] Because there were many authors of the photographs at TCT, it was understood amongst the team, and written into the protocol, that all images taken on team members’ mobile phones remain the copyright of Art Refuge as a further output and feature of TCT.

itself, which, in turn, supported an ability to emotionally regulate[31] and self-regulate[32] to support oneself when feeling low, depressed, or anxious.[33]

There was a sense within the team that the TCT model was collectively developed, and this posed the question of what my contribution as a researcher was to the development of the model. This will be discussed more in the conclusion. A major challenge was addressing critique. A way this was addressed was by being open to listening to things that may question my own thinking and status quo of TCT.

As previously mentioned, throughout the doctorate there has been a need to balance robust and carefully considered in-depth research while continuing to function as a practitioner within the team. Research inherently involves criticism, questioning and striving to discover and understand previously unknown aspects. This included my own critical reflection and what Madison calls the "politics of positionality" (2012, p.6). I had to have a critical approach and acknowledge my own power, privilege, and bias when understanding my own resistance to hearing things that maybe I did not agree with or see in the same way so that the research did not preclude the possibility of critique.

Kapitan (2017) describes reflexive critique as a way of evaluating actions (or, in this case, interviews) by examining them through different lenses or positions. This process challenges and deconstructs existing assumptions—intense questioning and interrogation shift these assumptions or what may be taken for granted. This implies that something unknown or missing might not be done correctly. While being reflective and reflexive about one's own practice is one thing, asking critical questions about the entire team's practice is quite another and required sensitive management.

Trauma informed

[31] Emotional regulation "refers to a collection of cognitive and behavioural strategies that effect when, for how long and with how much intensity an emotion is experienced and expressed" (Czamanski-Cohen and Weihs, 2016, p.9).
[32] Self-regulation is meant in this capacity as the ability to control and calm oneself when experiencing stress.
[33] A response to the difficulty of the work itself.

Part of situating my position involves concepts that influenced the methodological underpinning of the research. Being trauma informed means considering the physiological and psychological processes that occur when individuals experience untoward, difficult, and shocking events (trauma). It requires thoughtful consideration of both the physiological and psychological impacts of trauma, as trauma is held both mentally and physically in the body (Van der Kolk, 2014). In any research involving human participants, it is crucial to be clear about who is participating, how data is being collected, and why this is being done—these are integral to maintaining basic ethical standards. This position entails not only mindfulness regarding ethical elements in relation to anti-oppressive research but also the psychological elements that could cause harm or distress.

In the context discussed, most refugees demonstrate remarkable resilience given their circumstances. However, many people Art Refuge worked with have endured adverse experiences, including forced displacement and difficult journeys across land and sea. Many are separated from family and friends and face daily prejudice and marginalization. Some experience various forms of mental distress, such as stress, anxiety, and depression—common responses to their challenging situations—including symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is important to acknowledge the limitations of short-term crisis support. Unlike in the UK, where art therapy interventions typically involve referral, assessment, and formulation processes, such processes are not feasible with the refugee population discussed in this thesis. Specialist treatment is needed to alleviate symptoms of PTSD, and individuals need to be in a place of safety before such treatment can begin. As a healthcare professional, I have a duty of care to those I work with. While the adapted art therapy practice in this context may not treat underlying trauma, it was crucial to use a trauma-informed approach to practice and research.

Using a trauma-informed approach meant designing the research to consider the impact of biopsychosocial responses to trauma, such as the fight-or-flight survival instinct. This instinct is a natural defence mechanism in response to perceived threats to life, triggering responses categorized as fight, flight, freeze, or flop (faint). After trauma, these responses can be unconsciously retriggered by sensory experiences, causing individuals to re-experience the same feelings they had during

the trauma. In northern France, people live in dangerous, volatile conditions, while traumas may have occurred in their country of origin, en route, or in the hostile environment of Calais. The research needed to ensure that these natural defence mechanisms (unconscious mental processes that avoid experiencing conflict or anxiety) were maintained until people reach safety. This included keeping myself and research participants (both refugees and humanitarian workers) within what is called the "window of tolerance" (Siegel, 2012). This term describes the parameters needed for people to manage their emotions under stress. Emotional regulation involves the capacity to rethink in challenging situations, reducing complex feelings such as anger and anxiety and focusing on reasons to remain calm and content.[34] Therefore, when designing the research, I needed to consider the optimal arousal zone to ensure that people's emotions were regulated enough to cope and thrive in their daily lives.

Given the stressful conditions of the displaced population in Calais and those who work with them, it was important not to trigger additional emotional distress that could extend beyond this window of tolerance. Specific techniques to help maintain this zone, such as mindfulness, breathing exercises, and orientation in space (grounding activities), are part of the practices used by Art Refuge. These grounding and orientation practices utilize the five senses—touch, taste, smell, sound, and vision—to bring people back to the "here and now" and avoid triggering the fight, flight, freeze, and flop responses (Ogden et al., 2006). These practices will be discussed further in the findings, but it is important to note that they needed to be considered throughout the research process itself.

There are several psychological implications of trauma when events occur outside the normal realm of experience, but an overwhelming aspect is the lack of control. Trauma-informed practice needs to focus on ensuring safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and, most importantly, a sense of empowerment (Berger and Quiros, 2014), which all underpin TCT model. All these aspects had to be considered

[34] https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/basics/emotion-regulation#:~:text=Reviewed%20by%20Psychology%20Today%20Staff,to%20feel%20happy%20or%20calm

when determining who to include in the research, how to use arts-based research methods, and how to conduct interviews.

Chapter 4: Data Collection

In this chapter, I will discuss the research process, recruitment of participants, and implementation of the two data collection phases. Figure 17 below shows the data collection and data analysis timeline. Cycle one and cycle two of the data analysis culminated in cycle three (see Figure 17).

The chapter concludes with a table summarizing the results of the data analysis, which are then described in more detail in Chapter 5.

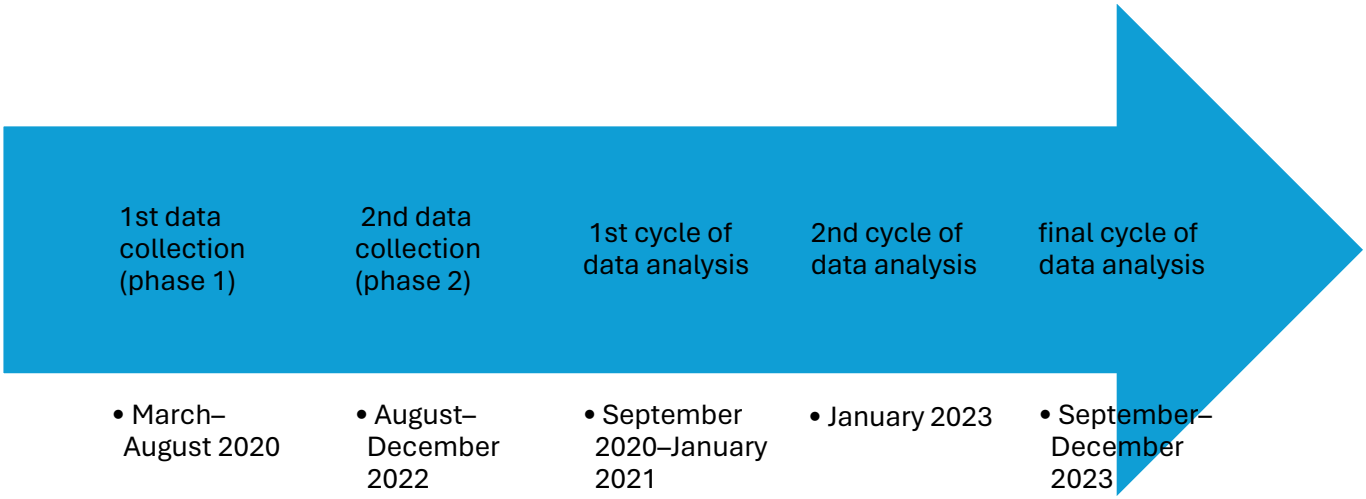


Figure 17: Timeline of the stages of data collection and analysis

Data collection

The primary aim of the data collection phases was to gather responses to the research questions investigating TCT, accruing data from participants' lived experiences of the Art Refuge work at TCT. Participants included asylum seekers, humanitarian workers, volunteers, and TCT facilitators. Effective data collection necessitated preparation, flexibility, and adherence to ethical standards, ensuring confidentiality and respecting participants' emotional states. Collecting data presented several logistical challenges, given Art Refuge's portability, lack of designated office space, and adaptation of plans due to the various settings and changing contexts. Workdays often exceeded 12 hours, including travel and planning, and the large day centre in Calais was chaotic and overcrowded, which

meant that the requirement to find private spaces for semi-structured interviews was difficult.

The initial intent was to interview participants post-TCT sessions, ensuring minimal imposition on their already high-pressure situations. Art materials used during sessions were available during the semi-structured interviews to integrate arts-based data, allowing participants to discuss their creations and thereby enriching the understanding of their experiences. This approach intended to capture diverse perspectives and provide valuable insights into the impact and effectiveness of Art Refuge's work, ensuring that participants' voices were heard and respected.

The data collection methods were designed to generate data that addressed the research questions, aiming for both specific responses and a broader understanding of the practices. Focused questions were asked about what participants saw as significant in terms of the practice of the interventions and what the meaning of the interventions was for them. This was followed by inquiries about the perceived impact, if any, on participants who engaged in the activities. The final questions explored what participants thought about the mechanisms of change that might bring about the impact.

Recruitment

Throughout both data collection phases, recruitment was complex. I was mindful of anti-oppressive principles in research. This meant I was reflexively attentive to identifying who was suitable for recruitment and who was interested in partaking in the research of their own volition. This also included ensuring that the whole process of recruitment and data collection was using the principles of trauma-informed practice, ensuring participants were treated with safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural consideration (GOV UK, 2022). I wanted to remain faithful to the desire to understand and investigate the practices of TCT.

To do this, I felt there needed to be a balance and variety of participants who normally sat at TCT. This included asylum seekers, humanitarian workers, and facilitators, but it also meant thinking of the cultural and practical differences between the different demographics involved and placing this in a context where I thought

about how to include considerations of anti-oppressive practice, cultural humility, and intersectionality.

The initial plan involved meeting participants in situ and inviting those who had engaged with the interventions multiple times and possessed sufficient English proficiency to participate in the research.

I aimed to interview asylum seekers who had used the interventions more than once, as this allowed me to briefly assess their suitability. This meant understanding more about the asylum seekers involved and knowing a little bit more about their situation and the support systems around them and available to them at that time.

This was guided by the ethical principle of “do no harm”, ensuring participants were not too vulnerable, which involved assessing their ability to emotionally stabilize themselves at TCT. An example of this was with Participant A (an asylum seeker), who often used the typewriter at TCT as a way of emotionally regulating himself. This process was to ensure that the participant would be able to manage any uncomfortable or difficult feelings stirred up by the research questions or the process of being interviewed and using art materials. This did restrict potential asylum seeker participants. The principle of “do no harm” was extended to all the other participants, in particular humanitarian workers, volunteers who used TCT for themselves (as became evident in the data), ensuring their ability to stabilize themselves, and their support systems were also taken into account. The initial recruitment of facilitators was based on their regular facilitation and involvement with TCT.

The process of choosing participants also included thinking about intersectionality. A key aspect of recruiting participants was ensuring a diverse representation of those who attended the interventions. Participants needed to be a mix of ages, genders, cultural background, professional positions, and experience in order to gain a wide perspective of views from those who attended TCT to enrich the data collected.

For participants whose first language was not English, my use of spoken language and descriptions of questions needed to be particularly accessible (due to their limited proficiency in English). Questions were framed as: “What activity did you do with Art Refuge?”, “How did it make you feel?”, and “What is it that made you feel that way?” Collecting information about the mechanisms of change that helped to

elicit the impact of TCT helped to identify specific actions that enabled any outcomes.

There were two data collection phases: phase 1 and phase 2. Overall, nine participants were involved across both phases, resulting in eleven data collection sessions, since two participants took part in both phases. For confidentiality and anonymity, each participant's name was substituted with a letter for the purpose of data analysis. Table 5 outlines the total number of participants and the specific phase of their involvement.

Table 5: Total number of participants and their involvement in phases 1 and 2 of the research

Participants	Phase 1 (2020)	Phase 2 (2022)
Participant A	*	
Participant B	*	
Participant C	*	
Participant D	*	
Participant E	*	*
Participant F	*	*
Participant G		*
Participant H		*
Participant (I)[35]		*

Phase 1 of the data collection began as a small-scale study and yielded valuable data. Reviewing the process reinforced the need for a further phase to fully respond to the research questions and aims of the research, leading to the initiation of phase 2. Both phases employed the same methods described, comprising semi-structured interviews, arts-based methods, and a reflexive learning journal.
Below is an outline of the ethics, informed consent, anonymity, and data storage information.

[35] (I) is used to denote the difference in text when describing participant (I).

Informed consent, anonymity, and data storage information

Each participant was introduced to the research and invited to give their informed consent to be involved. Participants were provided with a participant information sheet and a consent form (see information sheet in Box 1 below), as explained in the ethics application which was approved by the ethics committee. These documents clarified the study's aims, methods, and design, and included my contact details. They also outlined the risks and potential benefits of participating in the study.

All participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage or having to provide a reason. They were informed about how their information, including data obtained during interviews and through arts-based images, would be handled, kept secure, and accessed, as well as how it might be used. Additionally, participants were made aware that, if any unlawful activity or non-medical circumstances endangering others were revealed, the university might refer the matter to the appropriate authorities.

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, ensuring that all participants were treated with respect and dignity. The ethical considerations were designed to protect the participants' rights and wellbeing throughout the research process.

Ethics permission was given by the University of Hertfordshire Ethics Committee. This involved applications to the committee for phase 1 and phase 2 of the research. Due process was followed, including informed consent, anonymity, and data storage. The first ethics approval was given on 04/03/2020 (valid until 31/01/2021): **EDU/PGR/UH/0449.** The second ethics approval was given on 03/03/2021 (valid until 31/01/2023): **EDU/PGR/UH/05683**.

Permission was obtained from an off-campus location to carry out the study on their premises. The sites where data was collected were the working sites of Art Refuge. These comprised of two interviews onsite in the UK at a government accommodation contingency site where people were housed in an old army barracks in Folkestone; two interviews onsite in Calais, France, at a day centre for asylum seekers; three interviews onsite at a day centre for asylum seekers in Paris; and four interviews online during the pandemic. A permission letter from Art Refuge was attached to both the ethics applications.

Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and any potential risks and benefits. They provided their consent voluntarily and were reminded that they could withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Informed consent was sought from each participant. They were given an information sheet about the study (this was read to them when English was not their first language), and they either gave verbal agreement, which I noted and dated, or signed their consent sheet. The information sheet outlined the purpose of the study, what their involvement was, how their data would be protected, and their rights as a participant. Contact details for myself, my supervisor, and a contact at the University of Hertfordshire were also provided, should a participant wish to question any element of the research with or without my knowledge. The participant information sheet used for both phase 1 and phase 2 of the data collection can be seen below Box 1.

Box 1

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR STUDIES INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ('ETHICS COMMITTEE')

FORM EC6: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

1 **Title of study**

An investigation of adapted art therapy practices at 'The Community Table"

2 **Introduction**

You are being invited to take part in a study. Before you decide whether to do so, it is important that you understand the study that is being undertaken and what your involvement will include. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do not hesitate to ask us anything that is not clear or for any further information you would like to help you make your decision. Please do take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. The university's regulation, 'Studies Involving the Use of Human Participants' (UPR RE01), can be accessed via this link:

https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/governance/university-policies-and-regulations-uprs/uprs
(After accessing this website, scroll down to Letter S, where you will find the regulation.)

Thank you for reading this.

3 **What is the purpose of this study?**

The aim of the proposed study is to better understand the adapted art therapy model of practice “The Community Table” used in humanitarian work with refugees. The ultimate aim is to provide better provision for delivering adapted art therapy interventions and for greater understanding in teaching and training as to what is best practice in this field.
It is specifically to gain data for my educational doctorate.

4 **Do I have to take part?**

It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. Agreeing to join the study does not mean that you have to complete it. You are free to withdraw at any stage without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part at all, will not affect any treatment/care that you may receive (should this be relevant).

5 **How long will my part in the study take?**

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be involved in it for the duration of the interview, which will last approximately 1 to 1½ hours.

6 **What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will be contacted to arrange a convenient time for an interview to take place at an Art Refuge location. In the interview you will be asked questions about your work with Art Refuge and about your experience of The Community Table. You will also be invited to make a visual arts-based response to the experience of participating in these activities to help describe your experiences.

7 **What are the possible disadvantages, risks, or side effects of taking part?**

There are no disadvantages, risks, or side effects of being involved. At any time, you can withdraw consent.

8 **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Taking part in the study will help determine how best to provide psychosocial, adapted art therapy support in a humanitarian context. By participating you will help to provide a better service to those who use it. You also may enjoy participating and find it beneficial to your overall wellbeing.

9 **How will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All participants will be anonymised at the point of completing the data and allocated pseudonyms or numbers/letters for any purposes of analysis and reporting of the data. Electronic data will be stored in a password-protected computer and used only by me, and physical data will be secured in locked cupboards for which I will be the only keyholder.

11 **Audio-visual material**

Any audio-visual material will be stored in a password-protected computer and only accessed by me.

12 **What will happen to the data collected within this study?**

The data collected will be stored electronically, in a password-protected environment. Photographs and audio-visual recordings of the arts-based work may be kept for 5 years after the submission of the final thesis, at which time the data will be deleted. The final thesis is due up to 96 months from enrolment (September 2026).
The data will be anonymized prior to storage.

13 **Will the data be required for use in further studies?**

The data collected may be reused or subjected to further analysis as part of a future ethically approved study. The data to be re-used will have been anonymised.

14 **Who has reviewed this study?**

This study has been reviewed by:
The University of Hertfordshire Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority

The UH protocol number is cEDU/PGR/UH/05683

15 **Factors that might put others at risk**

Please note that if, during the study, any medical conditions or non-medical circumstances such as unlawful activity become apparent that might or have put others at risk, the university may refer the matter to the appropriate authorities and, under such circumstances, you will be withdrawn from the study.

16 **Who can I contact if I have any questions?**

If you would like further information or would like to discuss any details personally, please get in touch with me. Email address:

Although we hope it is not the case, if you have any complaints or concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please write to the University of Herefordshire's Secretary and Registrar at the following address:

Secretary and Registrar
University of Hertfordshire
College Lane
Hatfield
Herts
AL10 9AB

Thank you very much for reading this information and giving consideration to taking part in this study.

Anonymity

To protect participants' privacy, all data were anonymised. Personal identifiers were removed or replaced with pseudonyms to ensure that individual participants could not be identified in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Each participant was identified by a letter of the alphabet.

Anonymity was taken very seriously, as refugee participants were particularly vulnerable. Any identifying information from transcripts or images provided during an interview was removed, such as particular locations or names of other people. The interviews were either conducted online or in person: online they were conducted in a private room with the door closed, face-to-face interviews were conducted in a private space.

Data storage

Data security was a top priority. All data, including interview transcripts and arts-based images, were stored securely on the University of Hertfordshire OneDrive. Only me as a researcher had access to the data. Detailed protocols were followed to ensure the data remained confidential and was used solely for the purposes outlined in the study.

In phase 1, both the face-to-face interviews and the interviews online were recorded on a digital recorder.

All interviews in phase 2 of the research were videorecorded using my personal iPhone and, once transferred to a password-protected computer, then stored on the University of Hertfordshire OneDrive.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, stored on a password-protected computer, transferred to the University of Hertfordshire OneDrive, then removed from the computer. There were audiovisual recordings of art objects and activities to evidence the process of artmaking. No person was photographed or filmed in any way that made them identifiable. Images and audiovisual recordings were stored on a password-protected computer, then stored on the University of Hertfordshire OneDrive, then removed from the computer.

1) <u>Phase 1 of data collection</u>

Table 6: Phase 1 of data collection: Consent; date, length, and location of interview; art mediums used

Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F
Date of interview	6/3/20	11/3/20	27/3/20	27/3/20	28/5/20	4/6/20
Face to face or online (via Skype)	Face to face	Face to face	Online	Online	Online	Online
Consent to be interviewed and to use data	Verbally agreed	Signed	Verbally agreed	Verbally agreed	Signed	Verbally agreed
Art material used by participant	Small bricks	Cyanotype	Drawn image using felt pens	Photo of house of cards—tower built with postcards	Photograph chosen of the setting, wanting to represent the inside and outside	Screenshot taken while doing an online Community Table
Length of interview	45 minutes	1.5 hours	45 minutes	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour

Table 7: Phase 1 of data collection: Participants' role, location, and demographics

Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F
Role	Refugee participant living in France	Humanitarian worker living in France, half French half Egyptian	Refugee	Volunteer/ humanitarian worker	Very experienced art therapist, trained in the UK, HCPC registered. Works in France and the UK	Art therapy trainee
Location	Calais	Paris	Skype	Skype	Skype	Skype
Demographic	Identifies as male from Afghanistan, 28	Identifies as male, mixed heritage French/ Egyptian (age not known)	Identifies as male from Sudan (during the research came to the UK), 45	Identifies as male, white British, 62	Identifies as female, white British, 57	Female living and training in France, 58

The first phase of data collection was directly impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. Data collection began in March 2020, but, by 23 March 2020, when lockdown restrictions were implemented, only two out of the initial six participants had engaged

in the data collection process. As mandated by the University Ethics Committee, all subsequent research activities were moved online, necessitating that the remaining four participants' data collection be conducted via platforms such as Skype.

The two participants who engaged with the in-person data collection process did so following TCT sessions, where a range of art materials and media were available. Both participants, A and C, selected images of art-based practices created during TCT sessions and brought these to the semi-structured interviews. B brought an image made previously.

For the remaining participants, adaptations were necessary to accommodate the online data collection process. Participants had to reflect on their previous experiences at TCT, choosing images they had made previously at TCT, rather than discuss a current or recently completed session. An exception was made for participants E and F, who used the data collection process to discuss some of the online activities that Art Refuge provided during lockdown for frontline humanitarian workers. However, this did not yield sufficient relevant and specific data to fully address the research questions in relation to RQ3: "What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact?" The responses from E and F were through the lens of the pandemic, although these responses were interesting, and part of the data accrued from participants E and F was used for a journal article.[36] Their responses left gaps in answers as to the mechanisms of change that brought about any impact of TCT, and I wanted more in-depth responses about face-to-face interventions at TCT to balance out the data from other participants. Data from participants A, B, C, and D had brought up interesting aspects of TCT, in particular how the art therapists managed TCT. I wanted to know how these were explained more from an art therapist's view. Consequently, phase 2 focused on facilitators of TCT. As part of this, E and F were re-interviewed during phase 2 of the data collection.

Despite the pandemic impacting the data collection process, some of the data obtained was rich and contained crucial information that helped me to understand

[36] Usiskin, M. and Lloyd, B. (2020) 'Lifeline, frontline, online: adapting art therapy for social engagement across borders', *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 25(4), pp.183–191, doi: 10.1080/17454832.2020.1845219

the meanings and impact of the practices under investigation and laid a strong basis on which to develop phase 2 of the data collection.

2) First cycle of data analysis (analysis of phase 1 of the data collection)

Despite the impact of Covid-19 restrictions, phase 1 of the data collection accrued significant material that contributed to the overall findings after both phases of data collection and analysis. Using Casterle et al.'s (2011) QUAGOL and Braun and Clarke's (2022) Thematic Analysis (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5: Data analysis process), broad themes emerged from the data. Table 8 below highlights the themes that came up for each research question in phase 1 of the data collection.

Table 8: Themes from phase 1 of data collection

What are the meanings for participants of the practices?	What was the perceived impact of the practices?	What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact?
1. It was important to have a comfortable and safe space that felt convivial, open, and friendly. 2. The Community Table acted as a temporary home, where there was a recognition of their culture and a sense of community. 3. It was a place to make sense of things through the use of personal interactions and art materials and media.	1. Participants felt valued. 2. Participants felt that Art Refuge interventions had instilled a sense of hope; this in turn enabled them to "hope and cope". They felt this was because they had been listened to and heard. They felt valued by this and this, in fact, had enabled them to cope better with their circumstances. 3. Humanitarian workers and volunteers felt that, when they participated, they could destress, which they felt was really important for their own mental health and that this, in turn, made them better able to support refugees.	1. The quality and aesthetic of the materials used helped capture participants' imaginations and create links to their own cultural histories and memories. 2. The importance of being distracted from anxiety and staying occupied. 3. The stance and attitude of the art therapists.

The data provided interesting responses to the first research question: "What are the meanings for participants of the practices?" Participants A, B, C, and D emphasised the importance of having a comfortable and safe space that felt convivial, open, and friendly. TCT acted as a temporary home, recognising their culture and providing a

sense of community. It was a place to make sense of things through personal interactions and art materials.

The data responses to the second research question, “What is the perceived impact of the practices?”, highlighted that participants felt valued, which enabled them to “hope and cope”, supporting emotional processing, awareness, and self-regulation. The perceived impact was overwhelmingly positive, particularly for participants A, B, C, and D. They felt that Art Refuge interventions instilled a sense of hope, made them feel listened to and valued, and helped them cope better with their circumstances. A and C, both asylum seekers, described how significant it was to feel valued in circumstances where they were often treated as “unknown persons”.

Participants B and D used Art Refuge activities to destress, which was crucial for their mental health and made them better able to support asylum seekers. The findings were important for recognizing the importance of Art Refuge support for volunteers and humanitarian workers. This was significant, as it highlighted the core feature of including everyone in the vicinity who wished to join, which has been integrated into the work in Calais and beyond.

In the data responses to the third research question, “What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact?”, participants A, B, C, and D described the beneficial attitude and stance of the art therapist, with B describing them as “like a mother, but calm”, which was construed as positive, affirming, and warm. These themes highlighted significant information, which felt like they had the potential to become strong themes from the data, but more data was needed from the facilitators’ perspective to clarify the specific practices behind their actions and how they themselves understood the work to further strengthen these themes. More understanding was needed as to the specific actions that art therapists and other facilitators saw as the mechanisms of change in the interventions. There needed to be a balance of perspectives to dig deeper in comprehending the actions that helped to support people’s ability to “hope and cope”.

Overall, the data from phase 1 was interesting and, in some ways, rich, but more data was needed to strengthen the themes. It was not only RQ3 that needed more information from facilitators; RQ1 and RQ2 data were also limited from participants E

and F. They didn't give sufficient insight into the practices of TCT and often focused on wider Art Refuge practices. The pandemic restrictions were a major preoccupation of the time and possibly inhibited thinking beyond that situation. They also prevented the intended use of direct arts-based methods in a more embodied sense. However, all the emergent themes highlighted key elements to be developed. In particular, RQ3 needed more data related to the themes: the quality and aesthetic of the art materials, the distraction from anxiety, and the stance and attitude of the art therapists.

Phase 1 of the data collection highlighted the need to adapt research questions to specifically investigate the practices of TCT rather than wider Art Refuge practices. As participants all referenced TCT, it made sense to specifically name it and sharpen the responses to the question to the specific practices at TCT. The conclusion of the first round of data collection was that the methods used elicited significant data. However, the pandemic restrictions inhibited the intended use of direct arts-based methods in a more embodied sense. Adaptations meant participants interviewed online identified and chose images from past TCT that were meaningful to their responses. Participants B, C, and D chose images made previously that resonated with their narratives, allowing them to visually add to their narrative and create additional dialogue. However, participants E and F found it harder to find a resonant image. They considered very carefully what image they wished to represent what they were saying, and it felt it would have been more of a viable process to collect if they were making an image face to face with the researcher. A critique of the first phase of the data analysis process (explored further in Chapter 5: Data analysis process) was that it needed to be streamlined to be more effective and consistent. The themes that arose from phase 1 of the data collection suggested participants felt a sense of safety at TCT, even briefly, which made them feel valued in a political context where they often felt dehumanized. The quality and aesthetic of the materials used helped capture participants' imaginations and create links to their own cultural histories and memories. Participants expressed feelings of hope and potential during and after TCT. What was also highlighted was the importance of being distracted from anxiety and staying occupied. These were tentative preliminary themes. A better understanding of what is taking place in the sessions to elicit positive impact

would give the possibility of not only further improving those interventions but also replicating them in other's practice.

3) Phase 2 of data collection

The second phase of research began in 2022, requiring renewed ethics approval. The aim of this phase was to deepen the findings from phase 1 by collecting additional data from facilitators. The rationale for this was the review of phase 1, which had highlighted tentative themes that needed strengthening. There was a need to clarify further the mechanisms of change which had been identified as actions and the stance that the art therapists (and additional facilitators) had, and a need for face-to-face interviews which would enable the use of arts-based methods of data collection.

I sought insights from team members who had experienced TCT in Calais, where the model was originally developed. The wider Art Refuge team encompasses approximately 15 arts therapists and artists with lived experience who are involved with facilitating different Art Refuge work. Thinking intersectionally, I considered it important to include participants H and (I), who were not qualified art therapists but were considered integral in the facilitation team and brought rich insights. Initially, I planned to include data from another site where Art Refuge was facilitating TCT in the UK. However, after visiting and interviewing one of the facilitators, it became evident that this would not contribute significantly to understanding the research questions. Although they were keen to be involved, the facilitators there had not yet gained enough experience with TCT model or worked enough in Calais.

The rationale for recruitment for phase 2 of the data collection was therefore based on who had worked most frequently and recently in this setting. Facilitators with firsthand experience in Calais could most confidently discuss TCT. Key team members, aside from myself, included E and G. F had been on placement with us in Calais while training as an art therapist in France prior to the pandemic. However, I also needed to consider how to include an intersectional approach, so including facilitators who were not art therapists added depth to the data, providing insights from artists with lived experience of displacement and local artists. H and (I) were part of the broader Art Refuge policy of including artists with displacement

experience (participant (I)) and local artists (participant H) as part of the facilitation team at TCT sessions. There were additional intersections in relation to race, culture, experience, age, and sexuality to which participants H and (I) could give perspective. However, the recruitment criteria limited the number of participants in phase 2 to five.

Post-pandemic, ongoing projects developed in Paris and Folkestone alongside the work that restarted in Calais. These projects also used TCT, providing an opportunity to collect data in other settings. With the support of the Helen Burchell Scholarship, which is administered by the Department of Education at the University of Hertfordshire for arts-based research, I visited various projects and collected data onsite. The context significantly influenced the practice work, making onsite data collection essential for this research.

Since qualification, participants F and G had initiated a TCT project with refugees in Paris. H and (I) were team members working in Folkestone, Kent, directly across the Channel from Calais (see Table 6). In Kent, we facilitated TCT in a government contingency accommodation for newly arrived asylum seekers, many of whom had crossed from northern France. Both H and (I) had experienced TCT in Calais and supported its facilitation in Kent.

The methods—arts-based research, semi-structured interviews, and reflexive research journal—remained consistent with phase 1 to ensure rigour. The goal of phase 2 was to clarify the processes and actions of the interventions from the facilitators' perspectives to shed more light on the meanings of TCT, what impact the work had, and the specific actions, stances, and activities that led to positive change.

Reflecting on phase 2's intentionality, I refined the research questions to focus specifically on TCT practices:

1. What are the meanings for participants of the practices of The Community Table?

2. What is the perceived impact of the practices on participants of The Community Table?

3. What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact?

Table 9: Phase 2 of data collection: Consent; date, length, and location of interview; art mediums used

Participant	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**
Date of interview	August 2022	November 2022	November 2022	October 2022	November 2022
Face to face or online	Face to face	Face to face	Face to face	Face to face	Face to face
Location of interview	Calais	Paris	Paris	Folkestone	Folkestone
Consent to be interviewed and to use data	Signed	Signed	Signed	Signed	Signed
Art materials used by participant	Plasticine, pens, postcard-sized paper, spirographs	Book, wooden letters	Postcards, tracing paper, tape	Typewriter, pens, paper, and silver foil roll	Tree stamps, paper, ink pad, and tape
Length of Interview	57 minutes	56 minutes	1 hour 4 minutes	55 minutes	45 minutes
Transcript and video	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The data collection process mirrored the original intention of phase 1, but all interviews were now conducted face to face in situ. All interviews took place in locations where TCT had been implemented (see Table 9 for the date, length, and location of the interviews, consent information, and art materials used), in a quiet, discreet space. The interviews were videoed, focusing on the art-making process while ensuring no identifying features of participants were recorded. Although similar interview questions and prompts were used, it was made explicit that it was in relation to TCT model. Participants were invited to choose art materials and media used in TCT to create an informal and convivial atmosphere. All participants received an information sheet and signed an ethics form.

Table 10: Phase 2 of data collection: Participants' demographics

Participant	E	F	G	H	I
Role	Very experienced art therapist, trained in the UK, HCPC registered, works in France and the UK	Art therapist, now qualified, trained in France, works in France	Experienced art therapist, trained in the UK, HCPC registered, works in France	Professional artist with lived experience of being a refugee, works in the UK	Poet and community arts worker, works in the UK
Resides	UK	France	France	UK	UK
Demographic	Identifies as female, white British, 59	Identifies as female, white British, living in France, 60	Identifies as female, white British, living in France, 42	Female, mixed black African and white European, 43	Queer female, Black British, Caribbean mixed heritage, 25

Table 10 (above) outlines the participants' roles at the time of the data collection, their countries of residence, their work locations for Art Refuge, and brief demographic descriptors as provided by them.

4) Review of phase 2 of data collection

Phase 2 of the data collection process proceeded as planned. The aim was to gather more data to respond to the research questions, focusing on facilitators who had recently and/or frequently attended TCT in Calais, and the depth of the data collected was significant.

Throughout both data collection phases, it was crucial to remain faithful to the research questions and to make informed decisions about participant inclusion and exclusion. The data collection methods included arts-based research, semi-structured interviews, and the use of a reflexive learning journal, which were pivotal in placing the data collection in context.

Although I had some initial concerns about the limited number of participants, the second data collection phase accrued a wealth of data. Keeping faithful to the intentions of the research questions was crucial, and the five participants in the second phase of the data collection gave much more insight into the tentative

themes. The responses to RQ1 about the meanings of the practices aligned with the initial tentative themes around home. Responses to RQ2 highlighted that the facilitators perceived that not only did participants have a positive impact from TCT but also they themselves as facilitators felt that impact. Responses to RQ3 were more in depth and specific to TCT, and this enabled more data to be extrapolated from the tentative themes emergent in phase 1. Together with my own experiences at TCT (the observations gathered over the duration of the doctorate were also integral to the data), there was now a large amount of data on which to draw.

In conclusion, the process of collating, organizing, and writing up both data collection phases identified that amalgamating the data from phases 1 and 2 of the data collection process provided more than enough information to respond to all three research questions. Keeping the focus on the doctoral investigations was core. Gibbs' (1998) reflective cycle highlights the importance of describing the experience, reflecting on thoughts and feelings, and evaluating the experience to provide structure to learning. This process helped me to learn, although unintended feedback from all participants in both research phases indicated that they found the research process to be a helpful learning experience for themselves.

Despite the limited number of participants, the data encompassed not only their input but also my observations on the work and the data collection process itself.

Chapter 5: Data analysis process

This chapter will address the data analysis process, outlining the process of the three cycles of data analysis.

The data analysis process involved three cycles, reflecting a learning-by-doing approach refining the data analysis approach (see Table 11). The first cycle was after the 1st phase of data collection, the 2nd cycle was after the 2nd phase of data collection, the 3rd cycle was reviewing the 1st and 2nd phase of data collection using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). The findings are the result of this iterative learning, culminating in the third and final cycle of data analysis.

Table 11: Cycles of data analysis

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Phase 1 of data collection Data analysis methods: QUAGOL[37] RTA	**Phase 2 of data collection** Data analysis methods: RTA	**Phases 1 and 2 of data collection** Data analysis methods: RTA

In the 1st phase cycle of data analysis, I experimented with different data analysis methods, including Casterle et al.'s (2011) QUAGOL and Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis. Both methods are well-regarded in nursing and psychological research, making them relevant for an art therapist like myself who works within the allied health professions framework.

QUAGOL (Qualitative Analysis Guide of Leuven) by Casterle et al. (2011) offers a methodical yet flexible approach to qualitative data analysis. It involves an iterative process of digging deeper into the data, constantly moving between reading, re-reading, and analysing. This method emphasizes an intuitive and creative process while maintaining a rigorous reflexive approach. It involves systematically building up a set of codes to capture the main ideas in the data, guided by clear research questions to lend credence to the process.

[37] QUAGOL (Qualitative Analysis Guide of Leuven)

Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), as described by Braun and Clarke (2022), also interprets qualitative data by identifying patterns to make meaning. This method searches for themes in the data and explores their significance within the social, political, geographical, and psychological context. It is a flexible approach, allowing for various methodological and philosophical perspectives, and it emphasizes getting to know the data thoroughly and placing it in context. (Why I choose RTA is described in more detail in Chapter 3.)

Initially, I was drawn to QUAGOL because of its clear, systematic process, particularly the iterative steps of reading, re-reading, and analysing data. During the first cycle of data analysis, after phase 1 of the data collection, I reviewed each interview, matching participants' quotes and comments to the research questions. Participants were divided into three groups—refugees (A, C), humanitarian worker and volunteer (B, D), and art therapy facilitators (E, F)—to explore shared or differing perspectives within similar demographics. This was followed by a comparative analysis of responses to the research questions and emergent themes.

This side-by-side comparison of participant groups had several variables, given the different roles of those who sat around TCT. Their roles were only part of the overall story of the participants. The participants' cultural context, and how and where the data was collected, all needed to be considered. This presented a conundrum. For example, the refugee group (A and C) came from different countries—Afghanistan and Sudan—and were in different situations in relation to their asylum status, which gave several variables. The humanitarian workers and volunteer group (B and D) had different roles, one was a humanitarian worker and one was a volunteer, and they came from different countries, which again gave several variables. In the art therapy facilitators group (E and F), E was an experienced art therapist and, at the time of the first data collection phase, E was still in training in another country to F, which introduced a number of variables.

Given that cultural context is such a significant part of the underpinning of this research, these variables limited the scope of a full comparative analysis. However, a benefit of having limited participants meant it was easier to identify some patterns in the data, noting certain responses from A and C, B and D, and E and F that were significant. Given all this, I decided not to do a formal comparison analysis in the

next data analysis cycle, but I did note in my reflexive research journal certain interesting patterns in responses to the research question, which have been identified in the findings.

An additional component of the QUAGOL process involves using qualitative software, which might have been relevant if semi-structured interviews were the only data collection method. However, my data also included arts-based methods and my reflexive learning journal. Using qualitative software to analyse data felt too cumbersome as a new researcher, and I wanted a more integrated approach to include all forms of data, ensuring none of the data collection methods were marginalized.

To ensure validity in the data analysis process, it is essential to clearly describe the tools used and how they are applied (Nowell et al., 2017). Analysing arts-based data presented a challenge due to the subjective nature of art interpretation. In UK art therapy practice, the focus is on the process of creating the image and the narrative provided by the maker, rather than interpreting the image itself. This research used images to allow interviewees to visually augment their narratives, creating an additional dialogue. An art therapy lens emphasizes ethical sensitivity towards the artwork (Kapitan, 2017), recognizing that images are not inert data and require ethical consideration (Moon, 2006). Sullivan (2010) provides a framework for arts-based research, involving reframing, encountering, and critiquing insights from the data, and making meaning through transformation, construction, conceptualization, and contextualization. Reflexivity is also crucial, requiring a continuous re-evaluation of the data.

After phase 1 of the data collection and initial exploration with QUAGOL, I noticed that the focus on semi-structured interviews seemed to minimize the arts-based data and my reflexive learning journal. This observation led me to consider a more inclusive method that could encompass all data forms, leading to the adoption of the reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) process.

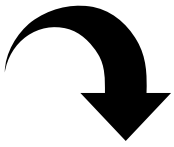
The second cycle of data analysis, conducted after phase 2 of the data collection, employed RTA with the data from the 2nd phase of data collection. The third cycle of data analysis used all the data from phase 1 and phase 2 of the data collection and

integrated data from both phases. The rationale for the 3rd cycle of data analysis was to review *all data* from both data collection phases using RTA (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The intention was to be systematic and methodological and review *all* data with rigour to ensure validity. The aim was to get answers to the research questions and identify key themes to construct a theory. The challenge was integrating mixed data collection methods—arts-based responses, semi-structured interviews, and my visual and written responses from the reflexive learning journal. Once I embraced RTA, I realized it was possible to analyse all the data collection methods in themes rather than having to analyse each individually, and I developed a system based on Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-step method, applied across all data (see Figure 18). In Figure 18 I identify which tables present summary results from the steps followed.

Figure 18: Quick overview of the third and final data analysis cycle

Step 1: Familiarization with the data

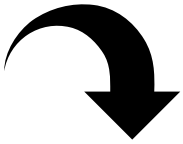
- Reading and re-reading *all* the data from phases 1 and 2 of the data collection.
- Amalgamating written accounts of each participant's arts-based data with the arts-based data, ensuring the arts-based data is placed in a context. This is evidenced in Table 12 (p.135), which has images from arts-based data, a description of the image, the action of making the image, a summary of comments about the image, and initial coding for RTA.



Step 2: Initial coding

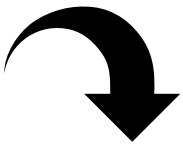
- Coding with a colour system for each participant's semi-structured interviews to identify the responses relevant to the research questions: Meanings Impact Mechanism.

- Creating a stop frame animation to help code (see https://youtu.be/B0qBgWLcEHE).
- Highlighting each interview in bold, coding relevant researcher thoughts and reflections (Figure 21, p.153).



Step 3: Develop tentative themes

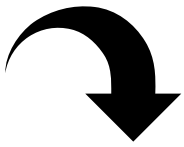
- Collating all initial codes generated from each participant's data set (using Table 12 as an overview): Arts-based responses, semi-structured interviews, and the reflexive journal together to develop overall tentative themes.
- Identifying all tentative themes across all individual participant's data sets (Table 13, p.146).
- Using visual mapping as a way of developing themes (Figure 22, p.160).



Step 4: Review tentative themes

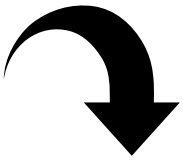
- Returning to review tentative themes, linking them with research questions using the image as an aide-mémoire (see Appendix 1).
- Returning to initial codes from arts-based analysis where codes had been developed, amalgamating all the codes that had been developed from *all forms* of data, grouping them to respond to research questions.

- Revising tentative themes, draft revised themes. Linking all the data from all methods together in relation to research questions by individual participants (Table 15, p.154).
- Using handwritten notes to review themes (Figure 22, p.159).
- Generating themes (Table 16, p.161).



Step 5: Generate final themes, subthemes, and defining themes

- Going back to steps 2, 3, and 4 to help define themes.
- Reviewing the initial definitions of themes from Step 4, reviewing and finalising the definitions.
- Illustrating the defined themes with quotes from the data (Table 17, p.165).
- Developing final themes with quotes, core features and subthemes for each research question (Table 18, p.165; Table 19, p.166; and Table 20, p.167).



Step 6: Write up findings!

Step 1: Familiarization with the data

Braun and Clarke (2022) emphasise that this step requires a thorough and critical engagement with the material, noting ideas about the data, and can include visual notes. I utilized visual notes to process information, which aligns with Braun and Clarke's recommendations.

In the third cycle of data analysis, to begin integrating all data collection methods, I created a table and analysed the arts-based data to develop initial codes. This initial review revealed that some of the phase 2 participants provided more relevant data than other phase 2 participants. For example, participants H and (I), newer team members not trained as therapists, initially appeared to have less directly relevant data. However, their observations on identity, skin colour, and culture were unique and valuable, offering insights that the art therapists might not see. This highlighted the importance of valuing each individual's subjective experience.

I reviewed all the data systematically, including interviews, artwork, and reflexive research journal logs from both phases of the data collection. After each interview, I wrote an overview of my thoughts and observations. I repeatedly examined all the data to understand what was said and made by each participant. In the second phase of the data collection, I had recorded videos of the interviews, which included the artmaking process, allowing for a detailed review of these sessions.

Analysing narrative flow was crucial. Initially, transcripts appeared disjointed, moving across timelines and subjects, reflecting informal speech and my familiarity with the participants. I paid careful attention to my reflections in the reflexive learning journal, particularly my biases due to knowing the participants. The interviews aimed to work with the participants' current thinking and used my dual role as researcher and practitioner to validate their experiences. Writing, editing, and re-editing the tables and reflexive research journal extracts helped me familiarize myself with the data, leading to emerging ideas and connections.

For both data collection phases, I transcribed semi-structured interviews verbatim as soon as possible, noting pauses, breaks, and side discussions. Transcribing is critical, if not properly done it can lead to data loss through distortion and a reduction of complex details (Cohen et al., 2007). Listening to interview responses inherently introduces bias, as interpretation begins immediately. For instance, after phase 2, my supervisors questioned if I was leading the interviews due to shared experiences with participants. This highlights the importance of including my reflexive research journal in the data set, reclaiming bias as a method itself.

In the reflexive journal, I included brief descriptions of participants, their context, and their relationship to Art Refuge. These narrative overviews included images chosen by participants and their comments about these images, detailing the process of selection or creation, the materials used, and the actions around making the images. This integrated different data collection methods, ensuring the data was contextualized.

Arts-based data provided additional insights alongside the interview transcripts. Each image was placed with the interview transcript, and participants were asked about their choice and creation of the image. Despite the tacit understanding in arts-based research, explicit description is necessary, and the process can mirror standard thematic analysis (Potash, 2019). I adopted a phenomenological approach, viewing images in context and relating them to participants' statements, aligning with my professional responsibilities as an art therapist.

I described arts-based responses based on participants' comments and my observations, emphasizing that these are personal thoughts rather than definitive conclusions. Noting the physical actions of artmaking and their relevance was crucial, exploring the embodied element.

Table 12 includes a column identifying kinetic, aesthetic, sensory, and embodied elements, which could be interesting for future theorization. For example, participant B (from phase 1) chose a previously made image in response to an attack on the day centre, involving an active process of creating a cyanotype by throwing corks pierced with nails onto paper. This embodied action might have helped process the experience, which I found useful to note.

It was essential to consider the latent meanings of the arts-based data and how they linked to the research questions and themes from semi-structured interviews. Placing the image in context, understanding how and why it was made, and focusing on the artist/maker's meaning were key to maintaining rigour. The arts-based data and semi-structured interviews enriched each other, providing a deeper understanding of the data.

In summary, familiarization with the data involved a comprehensive and iterative process, integrating various data collection methods and ensuring thorough

engagement with the material. This step set the foundation for developing themes and addressing the research questions rigorously and systematically.

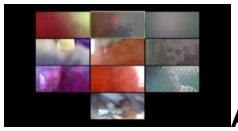
Table 12 (see below) introduces a visual and written description of the arts-based data. It considers the kinetic, aesthetic, sensory, and embodied elements, provides a summary of what the participant said about their image and artwork, and introduces the initial coding that came from both the semi-structured interviews and the arts-based data (step 2, initial coding, is discussed further in the next section).

Table 12: Images from arts-based data: Description of the image, the action of making the image, summary of comments about the image, and initial coding for RTA

	Brief description of the image	**Kinetic, aesthetic, sensory, and embodied elements**	**A summary of what the participant said about the image/artwork**	**Initial coding from text and images (step 2)**
Participant A 	A small-scale building made from bricks—made at The Community Table	Active, weight of the bricks making something (3D)	*"It is real for me, it is real for me, I am inside it—one day I will build this house with good materials we have on our country too; it looks beautiful and clean."*	Being made welcome, place building, typing taking back to memories, remembering good things—people, own culture and heritage being important, being lonely and isolated. Imagination, hope, Immersion, embodiment, community, interpersonal aspects, being safe, aesthetic reference to the quality of the material, interpersonal aspects, imagines and hopes, reminding him of happy

				memories, loves the houses.
Participant B  The making of the image  The finished image	Cyanotype made with corks with nails in—Participant B then tweeted this image over his distress from the racist attack towards the day centre and its occupants. He keeps the image on display in his new office in Paris.	Active, reuse of materials—using the corks on treated paper, which was then left in the sun, to create a shadow.	*"We discovered the cork with nine-centimetre nails which had been thrown over the fences to destroy tires, and I think you felt how angry we were—you said it is okay that we offer something?—you did it in a delicate way which I appreciated. We did this picture—I threw the cork everywhere and I wanted to say stop this again! I was so happy as you showed up just at the right time."*	Solidarity, safe space—stance of the therapists, aesthetic quality and specificity of the materials, quality of the material, choice and voice for participants, continuity and experience of the team. Being understood. To extract time and take a moment to gain a different perspective, understand more, sound memory affirmation.
Participant C 	A drawn image using felt pens of their home in Sudan.	Cognitive drawing of a specific place.	*"I drew whenever they came to the hospital, to draw things and this created hope for me that things would change."*	Culture and heritage, memories of the past enabling hope for the future, sense of community. Being lonely and isolated Being distracted Giving hope. Being validated and respected. Poetry / imagination. Practical help re timeline—stops isolation, time and place. Art Refuge is passionate about art, psychological

				support, being included, regain some sense of themselves, stop being isolated.
Participant D 	Tower of cards built from the selection of postcards in the Art Refuge postcard box.	Active risk taking, playful precarious.	*"I think about immediately the tower of cards that was higher and higher, the tension going on building—higher and higher, intensity of concentration … the desire to keep on going up higher and higher… push to build."*	Personally therapeutic, the significance of play, immersion and absorption, relational. Playful. Enabled people to express themselves. Valuable to themselves and to refugees. Faith, belief, walking alongside people, self-expression, remove themselves for a short time.
Participant E  **A** Image from phase 1 of data collection  B Image from phase 2 of data collection	Picture A. A photograph of The Community Table in situ. Picture B. Did images throughout the interview, responding to the images made on the table the day before.	A representation of something to show an example. A response to what was on the table, a drawing using words—cognitive.	Image A: "*It holds many of the core ingredients of our work in relation to context, use of space (inside, and outside evident at the edges of the frame) and materials, in this case mixed media: the use of film projection—analogue / digital, books of poetry, bricks, images of kites flying, and The Ship of Tolerance project documented on the wall."* Image B: "*I responded to these words because they are Lost and Found and Far and Away are not necessarily the messages we want to give at the table and they were written as*	Resilience, hope, materials culture, community, faith and belief, context, place, grounding, connection with home and memory, identity—meaning for self and self-meaning for others, play, presence in the here and now, attitude, imagination, artistic identity. Working on different levels, crisis support, modelling, therapeutic environment space for reflection, learning, and companionship, not a deficit model but a positive one,

			part of developing ideas which is an important part of our process, I think we can only be here and now in this setting."	develop a culture. Inclusiveness, a community, a culture for people to build on their capacity to cope and to flourish. Communication.
Participant F  **A** Image from phase 1 of data collection  B Image from phase 2 of data collection	Picture A: Image from the online session discussed in the interview. Picture B: Used letters throughout the interview.	An example of something non-active. Active moving around words.	"*Visual image is very tied up with emotions, a way of kind of reacting to them."* *"I wrote house, I wrote hope, I wrote night, and I wrote mouse, but I don't think mouse is symbolic. The mouse is in the house and erm the Ouse is the river Ouse where I was brought up – I didn't think of it there like the sort of suggestions."*	Inclusiveness, a space that brings possibilities with it, time and place playing an in between space. Personal history, symbolism, working on the edges.
Participant G 	Looked at postcards used at the table, wanted them to use as reference points.	Used the postcards as a prop or reminder.	*"I didn't really pick significant—Oh I don't know—oh yeah these are ones that we took of here—you know this kind of idea of things going in and out."* (Chose postcards that had been made from images created at The Community Table in Paris.)	Reintegration, place, identity, working on the margins, solidarity, providing access to people, community, culture, artistic identity.
Participant H 	Brought an image that began at the table and continued it throughout the interview.	Doodling, playing with the materials.	"*I'm just doodling around I like this a lot* (reference to a silver roll of paper) *… you can sort of emboss into it.* *I feel like it has a sort of has an ancient Egyptian look to it.* *I have been writing on it today with the ballpoint pen, not that I can read*	Ideas shared, ease and spontaneity, hospitality and invitation, consistent orientation, able to make choices, opening possibilities, good for herself, growth, culture, identity, colour,

			what I have written."	gender, and sexuality.
Participant (I) 	Made an image using stamps and tape throughout the interview.	Active movement, stamping and using tape.	"*I fell in love with the stamps right today—and it's beautiful, so relaxing to just to create patterns. I'm not very methodical, so I just let it flow—and just go for it … It's flowed beautifully, but then I want to put lines on it. I think these are obstacles and we must overcome these obstacles. Maybe I will stamp over it again. Resilience and overcoming different traumas, barriers. There's always barriers."*	Equity, presence and consistent presence, familiarity but also change, grounding people, place, wanting to give back. Culture identity, colour, and gender.

I conclude this section with an abbreviated version of an account I composed in the familiarisation step (step 1) of the third cycle of analysis, regarding a participant's arts-based data, contextualizing their contributions. The accounts for all participants are available in the appendix 2. In these accounts, quotes from the participants are presented in italics.



Figure 19: Arts-based data, participant A (© Art Refuge)

Abbreviated account of participant A

Participant A took part in the first phase of data collection, which took place face-to-face in Calais. He is a young man in his twenties from Afghanistan, known to the Art Refuge team for several months. A left Afghanistan as a teenager and had been living in the UK for a few years, although his status there was unclear. He expressed his love for living in the UK and had a good command of English, despite some difficulties with reading and writing. A left the UK to support his younger brother, who had left Afghanistan with the goal of reaching the UK. They reunited in the large temporary camp in Calais, known as “The Jungle”. With his help, his brother successfully made it to the UK and is now in foster care, but A remained stuck in Calais. He continues to pursue legal routes to return to the UK and is devastated by his situation. A frequently attended TCT and often spoke of his love for the materials used there, particularly the bricks and the typewriters.

Artmaking context: Participant A created his artwork at The Community Table, during one of the few face-to-face interviews conducted before the pandemic. The building shown in his image was made at the table and photographed in situ. He was interviewed shortly after the session in which it was made.

The image (see Figure 19): A house that Participant A built at TCT. The building was made using miniature fired clay bricks, which are an integral part of the materials used at TCT. Each brick measures approximately 3.0 x 1.5 x 0.5 cm. Cuisenaire rods, another staple material at TCT, have also been used. Other objects such as a toy truck and a van were positioned into a 'garage' specifically made for them. Wooden sticks were used to support the roof tiles. The bricks were also used to spell out WELCOME at the entrance of the structure. The house has a symmetrical design. The picture is taken from above and shows the house and its compound surrounds.

Participant's reflections: *"I join (The Community Table) and make houses. I love houses like in the country that I come from. When I try to build a house, room, and everything, it is like my house. One day, I will have a house like this. Other people too. A hundred things in your mind you forget once you start building the house. It is real for me, it is real for me, I am inside it. One day, I will have to build this house with good materials we have in our country too. It looks beautiful and clean* [materials]."

Participant A discussed the complex dynamic of wanting to return to the UK, expressing both a memory and an aspiration: "*I was trying to do 'welcome to the UK' because I loved it when I was in the UK, which is the same as when I was at The Community Table. The UK was the only country in my life. When I was in the UK, I was really happy. The only time in my life when I was happy was when I was in the United Kingdom. It was a really great time in my life; that's why I remember. And always, when I write with bricks and when I hear people speak English, and when I make something, I write London, UK, stop, and this makes me happy*."

Researcher's observations: The building A created was very balanced, with a big "welcome" at the entrance. A felt it was important to state "you are welcome", reflecting how he feels at The Community Table. The building included a carport,

was well-protected, and had a strong boundary with a fence around the perimeter. The design resembles houses and buildings in Afghanistan, set within a familiar compound context. Although A described the house as a future hoped-for home, it also seemed to reference his past, highlighting the significance of his cultural heritage in the building's design and architecture.

However, the building also appeared isolated and defensive rather than protected, positioned precariously close to the edge of the table, making it feel vulnerable, like it was on the edge of a cliff. This positioning also meant that the cars could not leave the carport, symbolizing a feeling of being stuck.

This building is poignant on several levels. A felt very stuck in his situation, living on the edge of his longed-for destination in Calais, being able to look across the sea to the UK but unable to get there. The building capture's themes of home—past, present, and future. It references his cultural past, his current situation of being stuck, and his future hopes for a home. He loves the aesthetic of the materials, which hold real resonance and significance for him. When he builds it, he feels as though he is inside the house, indicating a deep connection to the process.

Step 2: Initial coding

RTA is a process; the codes and code labels are the outcome of this process. Coding is an organic way of sewing together the knowledge, subjectivity, and analytic skill of the researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

There are possibilities of using technology to support coding, but it is a personal choice (Braun and Clarke, 2022). I preferred to use handwritten notes and developed a colour-coded system with the examples shown in the steps. Doing this by hand was a more helpful process, as it allowed movement across both images and words. The process of writing things out also helped to integrate the data and make sense of it.

At the beginning stage of the initial coding, I highlighted repeated words that connected to key concepts and ideas that had come from the interviews and the arts-based data. These concepts and ideas were impacted by my own experiences in situ of the interviews and responses to the arts-based data, and I was aware of

actively being reflexive during this process. I placed these words into groupings that related to building blocks of tentative themes. While doing this I noticed that often these repeated words had dual meanings. The dual meanings were not homonyms but were representative of underlying latent ideas. What I mean by this is that the words and images could relate both to one initial theme as well as to another. It is the contextualizing of the particular word, phrase, or images and their representation as seen in that context that held significance.

This was enhanced by my own experiences as an inside researcher. It enabled tacit and implicit understanding of the themes developing. I could relate to the images, as well as several points being raised and spoken. I was aware that, throughout this process, I was automatically self-assessing and filtering concepts into ideas and themes. I see this as a significant part of the reflexive process in reflexive thematic analysis.

For each participant's semi-structured interview, I used a colour-coding system to identify the responses I saw as initially relevant to the research questions. I copied them into a document pasted under the relevant research questions, shortened to Meanings/Impact/Mechanism.

By doing this, a first document was produced that included all the responses to the research questions. I found this a laborious process and very word heavy. I found myself feeling stuck; I felt lost in the process. So I made a stop frame animation (see https://youtu.be/B0qBgWLcEHE).

The stop frame animation highlighted the importance of the process of looking and relooking at the data to identify codes, which helped me to code and had the additional benefit of helping me become even more familiarized with the material. When using the stop frame animation app, I deliberately chose a frame which looked like looking through binoculars or a microscope, as it felt like I was really scrutinizing the data to search for initial codes. The process of making an animation freed my thinking; I was able to revisit each interview and consider codes. I went through each interview, highlighting in bold and adding my thoughts and reflections (see Figure 20 below, an example from my initial coding of participant A's interview). The bold type is my notes, the italic is the participant's narrative.

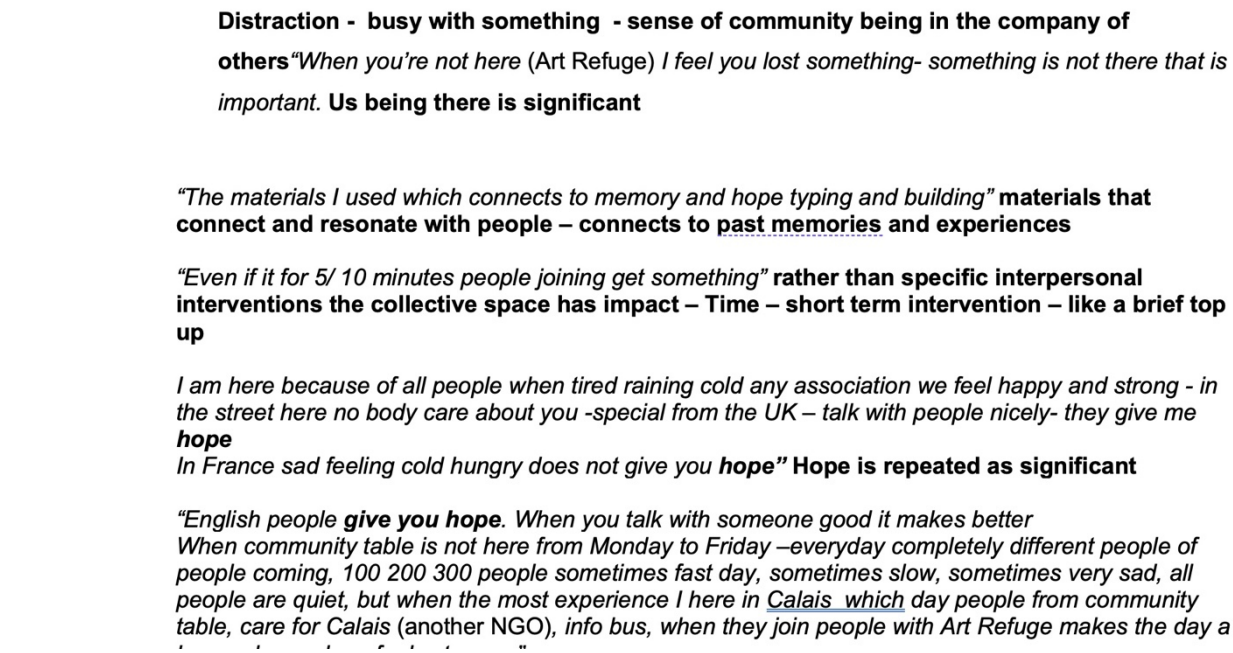


Figure 20: Sample section taken from initial coding of participant A's interview

Thematic analysis needs exploring through semantic and latent lenses (Braun and Clarke, 2022), and I sought to identify codes through both these lenses during step 2. There is a continuum of looking at something in a semantic way, identifying the explicit or surface meanings of the data, and then looking at it in a latent way, identifying the underlying meanings and assumptions that might be informing the semantic parts of the data. This was also a reflexive process, with a need to recognize and emphasises the subjective elements of making sense of one's own experiences. This reflexive process was a preparatory stage and helped me to get set for the next step of developing themes.

There were too many codes generated to list. Figure 20 (see above) identifies how the initial codes were generated. I then compared these to each other to narrow down the codes. These were connecting the repeated codes such as codes around distraction, a sense of a community, being in the company of others, connections to materials, connections to past memories, time, and hope. This was an iterative process, explained more in step 3 below, and led to the development of tentative themes as exampled in table 13(see below after step 3).

Step 3: Develop tentative themes

A theme is a way of capturing a pattern of meaning across the data, with the theme encapsulating a shared idea (Braun and Clarke, 2022). This is overtly different from a topic summary. The spirit of a theme is more of a pattern of shared meaning around a focused idea, rather than something that is explicitly just about one particular issue. A theme is also characterised by its significance (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

This section explores how I developed tentative themes by looking across all participants' data sets. To develop the initial codes into tentative themes, I began grouping initial codes. I played with moving the images from the arts-based data (without the analysis) around to see if any patterns emerged without the written analysis and word associations. Initially this was done by creating a document that included the stills of all the arts-based data and placing them in different groups and formations, curating them into initial groups. I then checked and cross-referenced the arts-based data with the written components. This helped to consolidate some initial codes into tentative themes. An example of this is that A and C both did images relating to home. I played around with the presentation of the images from the arts-based data, changing the scale and groupings of the images, linking it with the narrative of what people had said about them and what my initial analysis was of the arts-based data. It was another way of looking and relooking at the images and integrating them with the narratives from the interviews.

What I noticed was that looking at the artwork allowed an ability *to notice more*, *and* I was able to get more breadth and depth from the data; it allowed a freedom to think in a different way. However, I was always aware that I needed to place the images in the wider context of how and why they were made and the significance they had to the participants themselves.

I realized I needed to integrate the data from all the methods, considering semantic and latent meanings. This meant reviewing the images and integrating some of my thoughts as written from my reflexive research journal as well as the interviews to consider what underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations there might be.

In summary, I grouped the initial codes from all phases and methods of the data collection into tentative themes. I did this by identifying the initial codes from the arts-based data, reviewing the initial codes, which included relooking at my reflexive research journal, and grouping them into tentative themes. The tentative themes were defined by words linked to each participant. An example is participant A being made welcome and having a place, the significance of this being pertinent in an environment in which asylum seekers are not made welcome. I used both the images and the narratives to begin to develop tentative themes, with the aim of conceptualising the spirit of each theme. The theme's titles or phrases were shortcuts to deeper, more significant and salient points. Table 13 below shows the tentative themes that were generated from all the forms of data: arts-based data, interviews, and the reflexive journal.

At this stage I actively tried to consider latent and semantic meanings. Examples of this are highlighted in Table 13, using participant A with latent meanings around **own culture and heritage being important**, **immersion**, and **being safe.** An example of a semantic meaning is A describing **remembering good things—people.** A number of words or phrases had both semantic meaning and latent meanings. As Braun and Clarke (2022) identify, there is not an absolute distinction between semantic and latent codes. They suggest that it is more helpful to think of them as two ends of a spectrum. There is potential for some blurring and overlap in the centre of the spectrum. What was interesting to consider was what or why I decided a code was more semantic or more latent. I was aware that my position as an inside researcher influenced my judgment, and I needed to reflexively consider my choices. At this stage going back to the research questions was helpful, as this held me to account regarding what I wanted to discover from the data.

Table 13: Tentative themes generated from each participant's data set, arts-based data, semi-structured interviews, and reflexive journal

Participant	Tentative themes
A	Being made welcome, place Building Typing taking back to memories Time

	Distraction Community Remembering good things—people Home Own culture and heritage being important Being lonely and isolated Imagination Hope Immersion Embodiment Community Interpersonal aspects Being safe Aesthetic reference to the quality of the material Interpersonal aspects Imagines and hopes Reminding him of happy memories Loves the houses
B	Solidarity Safe space Stance of the therapists Aesthetic quality and specificity of the materials Choice and voice for participants Familial Continuity and experience of the team Being understood To extract time and take a moment to gain a different perspective To understand more Sound memory and affirmation
C	Culture and heritage Home Memories of the past enabling hope for the future Sense of community Being lonely and isolated Being distracted Giving hope Being validated and respected

	Poetry and imagination Practical help re timeline—stops isolation Time and place Art Refuge is passionate about art Psychological support Being included Regain some sense of themselves Stop isolation
D	Personally therapeutic The significance of play Immersion and absorption Relational Absorption Playful Enabled people to express themselves Valuable to oneself and to refugees Faith, belief Walking alongside people Self-expression Remove themselves for a short time
E	Resilience Hope Art materials and culture Community Faith and belief Context Place Grounding Connection with home and memory Identity Meaning for self and self-meaning for others Play Presence in the here and now Attitude Imagination Artistic identity Working on different levels Crisis support

	Modelling Therapeutic environment space for reflection, learning, and companionship Not a deficit model but a positive one Develop a culture Inclusiveness A community, a culture for people to build on their capacity to cope and to flourish Communication
F	Inclusiveness A space that brings possibilities with it Time and place Playing with an in between space Personal history Symbolism Working on the edges
G	Reintegration Place Identity Inclusion Working on the margins Solidarity Providing access to people Community Culture Artistic identity
H	Ideas shared Ease and spontaneity Hospitality and invitation Consistency Orientation Able to make own choices Opening possibilities Good for oneself Personal growth Art materials and media Experience of the team

	Culture Identity, colour, gender, and sexuality
(I)	Equity Presence and consistency Immersion Art materials and media Familiarity but also change Experience of the art therapists Grounding people Place Wanting to give back. Culture Identity, colour, and gender

The images that A and C made were about houses and homes, which felt very poignant. This resonated with things made generally at TCT by other asylum seekers, often buildings such as farms, homes, and houses appear in 2D or 3D forms. It felt both apt and pertinent that these images were chosen by A and C, as neither had a permanent home or at times had not even had shelter. This emphasized the vulnerability and need for sensitivity when doing research with such participants. A and C both felt it was very important to take part and wanted their voice to be heard. C had chosen an image that related to his home village, whereas A said of the small built structure that it was his future home. So the houses seem to represent homes that had been, as well as ones that were longed for and imagined. But they were also about more; they were also about nostalgic memories, their own culture and aspiration. All these kinds of observations were added to my reflexive learning journal.

My approach was to use the images as a way of expanding the knowledge rather than contracting it, holding in mind that, as an art therapist, the final product is not really differentiated from the observed process (Lakh et al, 2021). Not placing the arts-based research in the context in which it was made would limit knowledge. The process and context in which images were made was pivotal, so my own observations included in the reflexive research journal had value. This was much easier with phase 2 of the data collection, as I was able to observe all artmaking in the then and there in situ. In phase 1 of the data collection, I was able to use my position of working in the setting to advantage, as all the images that participants

had chosen from previous interventions had been witnessed by me, as I regularly facilitated these interventions.

In Table 14 (see below), I began to develop the tentative themes from Table 13, which was done by crossmatching the participants with connecting concepts. This process began to create several tentative themes across participants that held in mind both semantic and latent meaning. An example is “Home”. Home has both semantic and latent meanings: the actual physical memory of a house, but also a much deeper sense of belonging somewhere that was safe and familiar. The connections became hinged on the words used; these were used as a shortcut to explore bigger overall initial themes like “home”, with emphasis on context. This way I began making connections across participants. At this stage it still felt like an iterative process, moving backwards and forwards over the data sets. But I was also beginning to note how concepts related to each other, creating tentative themes. At this stage I also used colour codes to relate to the research question—so using participant A as an example, “place and home” were highlighted in pink, which related to RQ1: What are the meanings for participants of the practices of TCT?

Table 14: Initial themes generated from each participant’s data set, crossmatched with other participants to develop themes

Participant	Initial themes
A	Being made welcome, place. Building, typing taking back to memories, remembering good things—people, home, own culture and heritage being important, being lonely and isolated. Imagination, hope. Immersion, embodiment, community, interpersonal aspects, being safe, aesthetic reference to the quality of the material, interpersonal aspects, imagines and hopes, reminding him of happy memories, loves the houses
B	Solidarity, safe space, stance of the therapists, aesthetic quality and specificity of the materials, quality of the material, choice and voice for participants, familial, continuity and experience of the team. Being understood. To extract time and take a moment to gain a different perspective, understand more, sound memory affirmation.

C	Culture and heritage, home, memories of the past enabling hope for the future, sense of community. Being lonely and isolated. Being distracted. Giving hope. Being validated and respected. Poetry / imagination. Practical help re timeline—stops isolation, time and place. Art Refuge is passionate about art, psychological support, being included, regain some sense of themselves, stop being isolated.
D	Personally therapeutic, the significance of play, immersion and absorption, relational, safe space. Absorption. Playful, enabled people to express themselves. Valuable to oneself and to refugees. Faith, belief, walking alongside people, self-expression, remove themselves for a short time, absorption.
E	Resilience, hope, materials, culture, community, faith and belief context, place, grounding, connection with home and memory. Identity, grounding—and grounding of not grounding, meaning for self and self-meaning for others, play, presence in the here and now, attitude, imagination, artistic identity. Working on different levels, crisis support, modelling, therapeutic environment space for reflection, learning, and companionship, not a deficit model but a positive one, develop a culture, inclusiveness, a community, a culture for people to build on their capacity to cope and to flourish. Communication.
F	Inclusiveness, a space that brings possibilities with it, time and place playing an in between space, personal history, symbolism, working on the edges.
G	Reintegration, place, identity, working on the margins, solidarity, providing access to people, community, culture, artistic identity.
H	Ideas shared, ease and spontaneity, hospitality and invitation, consistent orientation, able to make choices, opening possibilities, good for herself, growth, culture, identify, colour, gender, and sexuality.
(I)	Equity, presence and consistent presence, familiarity but also change, grounding people, place, wanting to give back. Culture and identity, colour, and gender.

I also used visual mapping as a way of conceptualizing tentative themes. To explore the tentative theme of home, I considered related aspects emergent in the data. The below image (see Figure 21) taken from my reflexive research journal has a scribble of hands holding a ball. Hands holding a ball makes it feel as if something is being held safely, a reference to someone feeling safe. This was then translated into how

someone felt about TCT. It made them feel safe, a feeling that they had a “home” at TCT.

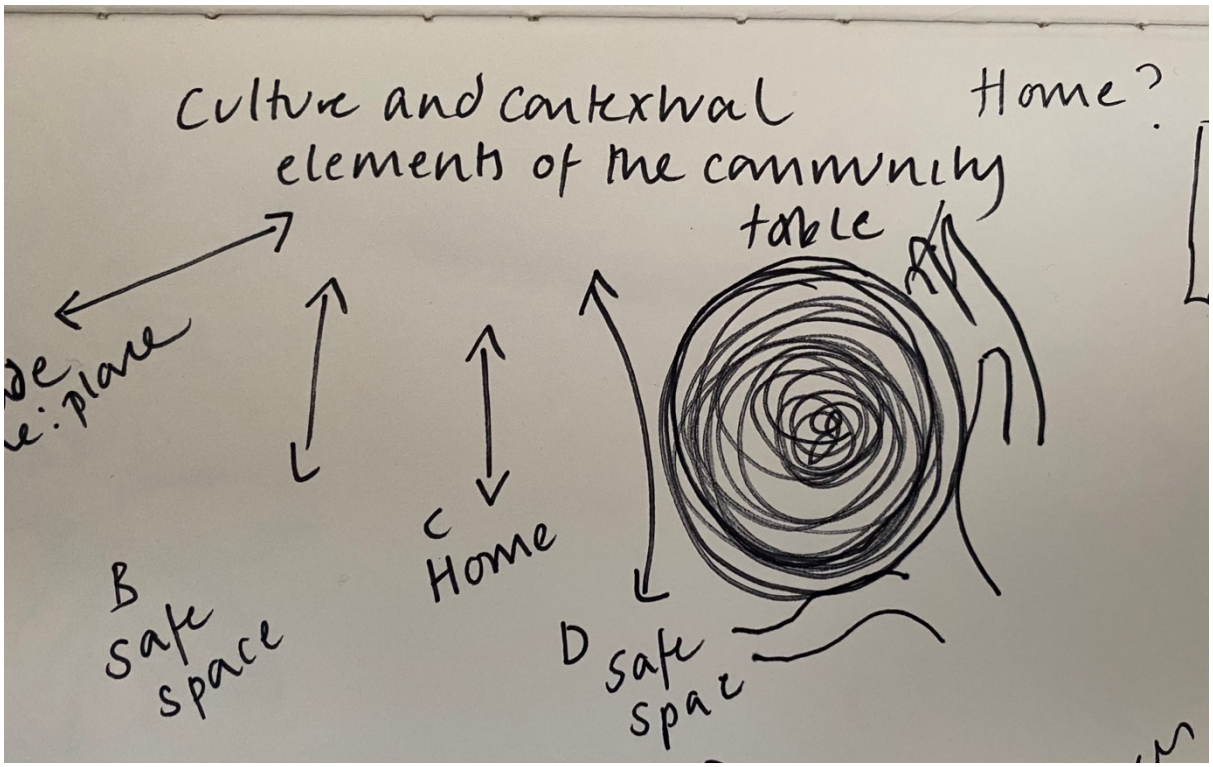


Figure 21: An example of visual mapping

Step 4: Review tentative themes

In reviewing the themes, I was aware I needed to remain faithful to the intentions of the research questions. I also needed to create revised themes that were not just associated with individual participants but with ones that were collective. But most important, as Braun and Clarke (2022) emphasize, was to ensure there was a viable enough pattern which had an identifiable central organizing concept. Table 12 began to help me identify underlying individual concepts that related to research questions with an identifiable central organizing concept, but in reviewing themes I also wanted to ensure that the initial themes resonated with the data. To do this, I double-checked the initial themes against the research questions, and part of reviewing the themes was to ensure they also responded to the research questions (Betts and Deaver, 2019).

I began by reviewing the themes and linking them with research questions using the image as an aide-mémoire (see Appendix 1). Using images and quotes helped me to

consolidate the initial themes alongside the research questions. The images became an aide-mémoire for the underlying elements of the initial themes. At each stage, condensing quotes helped me to synthesize initial themes. I then crossmatched these initial themes with those in Table 13 and Table 1.

I then went back to the arts-based analysis, the semi-structured interviews and the reflexive research journal, where I read and re-read quotes, and at each stage I noticed more valuable information where the tentative themes had been developed. It was a painstaking process but an important one. This was checking all the tentative and initial themes, making sure all the forms of data were included and connected with the research questions. This process helped me to begin defining the draft revised themes, which culminated in Table 15.

Table 1 (see below) examples the draft revised themes, with each initial individual theme highlighted in colour in relation to each of the research questions.

Table 15: Draft revised themes: Linking all the data from all methods together in relation to the research questions by individual participant

Participant, Initial themes	Revised themes around Meaning: In this column, revised themes are identified in bold, with the inclusion of the initial themes below	Revised themes around Impact: In this column, revised themes are identified in bold, with the inclusion of the initial themes below	Revised themes around Mechanism: In this column, revised themes are identified in bold, with the inclusion of the initial themes below
A **Being made welcome, place. Building, typing taking back to memories, remembering good things—people, home, own culture and heritage being important, being lonely and isolated. Imagination,**	**HOME** **House** **Home** **Family** **Time to myself** **Hope**	**Makes me feel relaxed** **Better** **Hope** **Even joining for a short time I get something**	**Someone good (therapists) and art materials** **Typing and building** **Good quality** **Embodied meaning**

hope, Immersion, embodiment, community, interpersonal aspects, being safe, aesthetic reference to the quality of the material, imagines and hopes, reminding him of happy memories, loves the houses.			
B Solidarity, safe space—stance of the therapists, aesthetic quality and specificity of the materials, quality of the material, choice and voice for participants, familial, continuity and experience of the team. Being understood. To extract time and take a moment to gain a different perspective, understand more, sound memory affirmation.	**Extract time** A place to talk about the situation A good space Sharing solidarity	**Good for stress** People use the table	**Knowledge of the therapists** Presence in the space Choice Atmosphere

C **Culture and heritage, home, memories of the past enabling hope for the future, sense of community. Being lonely and isolated. Being distracted. Giving hope. Being validated and respected. Poetry / imagination. Practical help re timeline—stops isolation, time and place. Art Refuge is passionate about art, psychological support, being included, regain some sense of themselves, stop being isolated.**	**Reminder of home** **Safe space** **A place to organize things in your mind** **Peace** **People coming together**	**Good impact in my life** **Positive** **Not useless**	**Make you think it will not always be like this** **Activities that are familiar** **Positive feelings**
D **Personally therapeutic, the significance of play, immersion and absorption, relational, safe space. Playful, enabled people to express themselves. Valuable to oneself and to refugees. Faith,**	**A place you can self-express** **Personally therapeutic** **A space you can be immersed (safe)** **Beyond words**	**Inspired** **Made happy**	**Relational elements with the art materials**

belief, walking alongside people, self-expression, remove themselves for a short time.			
E Resilience, hope, materials, culture, community, faith and belief, context, place, grounding, connection with home and memory, grounding, meaning for self and self-meaning for others, play, presence in the here and now, attitude, imagination, artistic identity. Working on different levels, crisis support, modelling, therapeutic environment, space for reflection, learning, and companionship, not a deficit model but a positive one, develop a culture,	**Home** Crisis support Safe space Familiar Kind space Culture	**Witness a transformation in someone** Valuable space where people are heard	**Holding the space Therapeutic boundaries** Psycho-education Specific skills Art materials and media Formulation Consideration of culture Mentalization

inclusiveness, a community, a culture for people to build on their capacity to cope and to flourish. Communication.			
F Inclusiveness, a space that brings possibilities with it, time and place playing an in between space, personal history, symbolism, working on the edges.	**Familiar** An in between space Archetypal space Family	**People use the space** Witnessing people Alleviating loneliness	**Providing time and space to play** Art materials Treating people as normal Small actions Paying attention
G Reintegration, place, identity, working on the margins, solidarity, providing access to people, community, culture, artistic identity.	**A space to be with others** To meet basic human need of being with others	**Used as a thinking space** Asked to do training Directly told by people that they get something from it	**Trained, experienced people Facilitating** Longitudinal relationship Art materials and media Acting as a curator Responding to people's needs
H Ideas shared, ease and spontaneity, hospitality and invitation, consistent orientation, able to make choices, opening possibilities,	**A space of possibilities** Liminal space Positive Culture A point at which to meet	**Positive personal impact** Enables choice	**Skills of the therapist** Art materials, media Open invitation Hospitable Holding and containing the group Choice and empowerment Open space Not pressured

good for herself, growth, culture, identify, colour, gender, and sexuality.			
(I) **Equity, presence and consistent presence, familiarity but also change, grounding people, place, wanting to give back. Culture identity, colour, and gender.**	**Safe space** **Learning culture** **Community** **Witness** **Play** **Sharing** **Collaborating**	**People come back** **Happy space** **Witnessing people** **Calm down** **Enjoying the space** **Restructuring their minds**	**Culture** **Community** **No end outcome** **Presence** **Cross-cultural conversations from someone from same culture** **Trust** **Safe space** **Memories** **Playing**

In Table 12, the formation of revised themes connected to research questions was still done on an individual participant basis. I needed to begin to form overall themes *across* participants. While I considered how to develop the revised themes, I began to identify what Braun and Clarke (2022) refer to as subthemes. Whereas a theme describes the different aspects of a pattern across a data set, a subtheme shares the same organizing concept but focuses on a particular element (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

For this I returned to drawing. Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate the use of visual maps to demonstrate the connections between themes and subthemes. This was particularly useful to me as a dyslexic researcher. It was much easier to map out my thinking visually by placing the image next to the text. Using “Home” as an example, I began exploring the related aspects for the subthemes. I needed to distinguish the difference between the theme and a subtheme. Initially, I saw safe space as a subtheme. However, it became something that was recognized as an important response to the first research question, as participants felt very strongly that a safe space was part of the meanings of the practices. The term “safe space” represented

patterns that emerged in the data, such as *a place to organize things in your mind*, or *a kind space.*

Although I did not consciously bring my own lens into this process, I did need to be reflexive, reminding myself to look at the data rather than *what I thought I should see* in the data. In reviewing the tentative themes, the looking, relooking, cutting, pasting, and moving of paragraphs really helped. By now I had highlighted both the tentative themes and initial themes collectively, as well as placed the reviewed themes next to the research questions. However, I needed a more macro approach to step back and review these in terms of revised themes. I began to include ideas that had helped me to identify themes by putting in phrases that linked. I then began to synthesize the themes by writing them all out and matching words, phrases, and sentences that I felt were relevant (see Figure 22 below). Although gruelling, it helped me to relook at the data in a different way. The actual act of writing out, along with the visual elements, really helped me to focus.

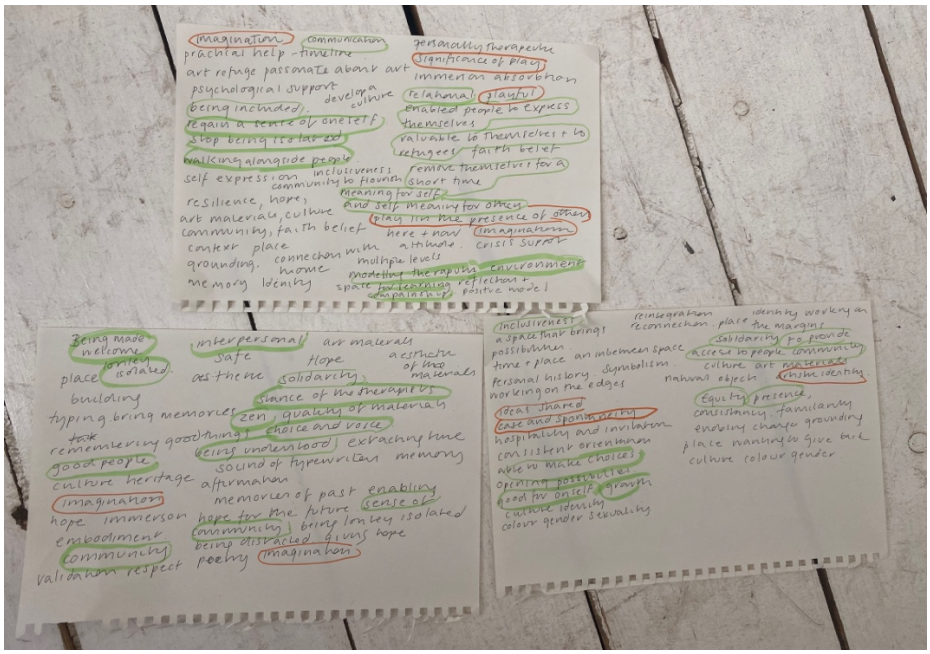


Figure 22: Handwritten notes reviewing themes

I then returned to looking at the revised themes against the research questions, grouping them in a coherent manner collectively rather than by participant by relooking at the research questions. I was always aware there was a wider context to the work. Often I had witnessed or been part of an anecdote or situation described,

or I knew the people, the materials, or the concept being discussed. I tried to use this constructively while also having an open and curious stance about the data and a different perspective.

This has pros and cons in that I knew the work, but I also had both conscious and unconscious bias as to what I found important, but this did enable a depth of understanding that someone who was not an insider may not have had. I was surprised, too, as some things seemed like they were missing, but I realized that, when I had repeated the same themes, I had condensed them. I had to think very carefully about what to choose as a theme and why. I felt concerned that the material was too reductive. However, I was reminded that the writing up would enable a much fuller description of themes, with examples from the data that would allow a much richer narrative. At this point, I realized how helpful it was to really know the data.

Table 16 (see below) identifies the themes generated across participants that clearly respond to each research question.

Table 16: Revised generated themes

What are the meanings for participants of the practices of The Community Table?	What is the perceived impact of The Community Table, if any, on participants?	What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact?
HOME: **Being made welcome, place, home, reminder of own culture and heritage, community, family—familiar, symbolism of the table as a family or community sitting around together. Someone interested in what you are saying. Personal history, familiarity but also change.**	**PERSONALLY THERAPUTIC:** **Remembering good things—people, being lonely and isolated, hope, imagines and hopes, reminding him of happy memories, loves the houses. Valuable to oneself as well as to refugees, good for facilitators, being distracted.**	**STANCE AND ATTITUDE OF THE THERAPISTS (like a mother, but calm):** **Continuity and experience of the team, Art Refuge is passionate about art, choice and voice for participants, interpersonal aspects, walking alongside people, inclusiveness, communication, equity, presence and consistent presence, solidarity, modelling, therapeutic environment, ideas shared, ease and spontaneity, consistent**

		orientation, enabling someone to make choices.
SAFE SPACE: **Solidarity—familial, understand more about themselves or the situation, psychological support, not a deficit model but a positive one, enabled people to express themselves, self-expression, develop a culture, inclusiveness, a space that brings possibilities, hospitality and invitation.**	**BEING VALUED:** **Providing antidote to being lonely and isolated. Being treated like a person rather than a "refugee". Giving hope. Being important—stopping isolation, regain some sense of themselves, stop being isolated. Faith, belief in humanity—not extractive.**	**ART MATERIALS:** **Aesthetic quality and specificity of the materials, quality of the material, building, sound memory affirmation, typing taking back to memories, connection with home and memory, aesthetic reference to the quality of the material, being validated and respected, presence in the here and now.**
CULTURE: **Heritage, sense of community, being identified and recognized, faith and belief, artistic identity, to develop a culture, a community, a culture for people to build on their capacity to cope and to flourish, inclusiveness, resilience, space for reflection, learning, and companionship.**	**FEELING BETTER:** **Hope, happier, faith in humanity, people care, better able to cope, relaxed after session, capacity to "think".**	**GROUNDING:** **Immersion, embodiment being safe, memories of the past enabling hope for the future, Poetry / imagination, practical help re timeline being included, immersion and absorption, relational, playful, crisis support.**
TIME AND PLACE: **Extracting time, remove themselves from general activities even for a short time (time out for oneself), time travel, to extract time and take a moment to gain a**		**IMAGINATION:** **Time and place to play in, symbolism, remove themselves for a short time, working on different levels, opening possibilities, activating imagination in a person and in a (the) space.**

different perspective, nostalgia, having a place, an in between space, place and identity, a different place.		
SELF-MEANING: Meaning for self and self-meaning for others, imagination, the significance of play, making sense, imagination, space for reflection, learning, and companionship, wanting to give back, working on the edges, reintegration, working on the margins, providing access to people, community, growth, identify, colour, gender, and sexuality.		**AESTHETIC:** **Embodied experience**

Step 5: Generate final themes, subthemes, and defining themes

This stage involved considering the themes, synthesizing and distilling them down to define the final themes, and what the features were of the themes and any subthemes. This led to some amendments and changes by grouping themes together more definitively. Braun and Clarke (2022) consider this stage as reviewing the provisional themes against the data, checking they are relevant to the research questions, and, if there is enough evidence, validating the themes. It is up to the researcher to ensure they get the most relevant pattern of meaning that resonates with the data, not based on frequency but on the relevance of the data and addressing the research questions.

I asked myself several iterative questions. Do the patterns of meaning have enough of a centrally organized theme? What might be included or excluded? Was there

enough meaningful data to include a particular theme or subtheme? Was the theme coherent or too diverse? And, most critically, did this theme portray something significant?

I repeatedly regrouped and reformed what I saw as similar concepts into final themes under each research question, all of which had a few subthemes. This meant going back to developing and generating themes (steps 2, 3, and 4), relooking at the research questions, and synthesizing the initial codes.

I wanted to reflect all aspects of the methods used for data collection but also the kinetic, aesthetic, sensory, and embodied elements that came across from the making of the images, as this reflected something about the context.

I had noted other aspects of the data. For example, participants F and G did not make an image per se but talked about using the art materials as props. They used the art materials to help them reiterate their points; the materials became the intermediate objects that helped them to describe and define what they were saying. Interestingly, this is a core feature of art therapy practice. They really wanted to talk, and I noticed that both, in their interview, had reiterated that often people come to the table who have not talked to anyone in days or weeks, and that in fact was something they saw as a key purpose and meaning for participants. I considered how I could represent these nuances through the themes. I wondered if it was too reductive and would not take into account the nuances of the data, but then I considered how the next stage of writing up would enable a much fuller description of themes, with examples from the data that would allow a much richer narrative. The challenge was to write it up coherently and ensure others who were not privy to the context could understand it. In fact, at this stage, I realized how well I knew the data and how helpful this was.

Braun and Clarke (2022) see step 5 as a further development of the themes, identifying the scope parameters and core ideas of the themes. This includes considering the names of the themes; they need to capture the pattern of meaning intended from that theme, so they consider a phrase better than one word. Choosing a quote to represent a theme helped to ground, define, and illuminate the themes in a way which directly connected to the data (see Table 17 below). Table 17 shows

the set of final themes, and against each final theme there is a quote. The significance and rationale for choosing these quotes will be extrapolated more in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

Table 17: Final themes (without subthemes) with quotes

Home: "The Community Table is like my grandmother's house" (A)
Safe space: "I found a safe space" (C)
Culture: "A culture for people to build on" (E)
Time: "It was important for me to extract time" (B)
Meaning-making: "In terms of meaning it's all quite mysterious I think" (F)
Absorbing: "Totally absorbing times" (D)
Valued: "I appreciate you coming, it made an impact on my life" (C)
Able to cope: "Makes me feels stronger" (A)
Making a social connection: "This is the first conversation that I have had for three months" (G)
Art therapist's stance: "Like a mother, but calm" (B)
Art materials and media: "The art materials and media act as a sort of catalyst" (G)
Grounding: "Here and now" (E)
Imagination: "Making space for the possibility of it" (H)
Embodiment: "It is real for me, it is real for me, I am inside it" (A)

Defining the themes with a phrase or saying and having a quote helped to extrapolate exactly what the spirit of the theme was. The next stage was to put all the final themes together aligned with the research question, the name, the relevant quote, what the features of the theme were, and any subthemes (see Tables 15, 16, and 17 below).

Table 18: Final themes for research question 1

Research question	**Theme**	**Characteristics**	**Subthemes**
What are the meanings for participants of the practices of The Community Table?	Home: "The Community Table is like my grandmother's house" (A)	An atmosphere that feels familiar and/or reminds one of being in a familiar or family situation.	Nostalgia Homesickness
	Safe space: "I found a safe space" (C)	A space that people are comfortable enough to be in to understand more	Psychological recalibration Solidarity

		about themselves and the situation. Psychological safety, the right mood and atmosphere that fits the context.	Democratic space
	Culture: “A culture for people to build on” (E)	Recognizing people’s culture, faith, and belief.	Identity
	Time: “It was important for me to extract time” (B)	A space and time in which something different happens.	Time out Here and now
	Meaning-making: “In terms of meaning it’s all quite mysterious I think” (F)	Making meaning out of an experience.	Being witnessed Learning with companionship

Table 19: Final themes for research question 2

Research question	**Theme**	**Characteristics**	**Subthemes**
What is the perceived impact of The Community Table, if any, on participants?	Absorbing: “Totally absorbing times” (D)	Destressing, calming, and relaxing	Personally therapeutic immersion Distraction
	Valued: “I appreciate you coming, it made an impact on my life” (C)	Beneficial and important	Autonomy, a sense of self
	Able to cope: “Makes me feels stronger” (A)	Managing something difficult better—emotional regulation	Hope
	Making a social connection: “This is the first conversation that I have had for three months” (G)	Inclusion Antidote to loneliness, accepting someone for who they are	Democratic

Table 20: Final themes for research question 3

Research question	Theme	Characteristics	Subthemes
What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact?	Art therapist's stance: "Like a mother, but calm" (B)	Caring Holds in mind Attunement	Experience Efficacy Transference Wider context Team supporting each other Collective thinking
	Art materials and media: "The art materials and media act as a sort of catalyst" (G)	Art materials appeal Tactility Sensory Aesthetic Enthusiasm Attraction	Culture Nostalgia and pleasure
	Grounding: "Here and now" (E)	Supporting self-soothing techniques Emotional regulation	Past, present, and future (time travel) Recalibrating
	Imagination: "Making space for the possibility of it" (H)	Playing with symbolism—imagining something other	Relational aesthetics Mentalization
	Embodied experience: "It is real for me, it is real for me, I am inside it" (A)	Mind and body connection	Aesthetics

Step 6: Write up findings!

The final stage of the RTA is writing up. Braun and Clarke (2022) see this as telling an overall story, with conclusions taken from the whole analysis, which will be explored in the next chapters. The challenge was to write it up coherently and ensure others who were not privy to the context understand it.

Another consideration was that some references from quotes and images in the data related to more than one theme. This meant that, in the practical presentation of the

material, therefore, one quote from an interview or an image from the arts-based data might represent and be relevant to more than one theme.

Additionally, using visual data has been a significant aspect throughout the course of the doctoral journey. I have used art to help process, understand, make meaning, and make sense of integrating my experiences of research and practice. As discussed in the main body of the thesis, using art has been a core feature. Using photography and fibre arts and drawing and painting images influenced my thinking in both tacit and explicit ways. It therefore felt important to include some of these in the findings. I did this in the form of a visual timeline, which is in Introduction to Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

In summary, in this chapter I outlined the data collection and data analysis process. It was a complicated process, with three data collection methods and two data collection phases. Through all the steps I attempted to be scrupulous with the data analysis process. I also wanted to ensure that I included data from all the data and no one was marginalized. This was with the aim of ensuring rigour and being systematic, but not rigid. The iterative process of digging deeper was enhanced by constantly moving between the various stages of the process. When I got stuck, I went back a stage and relooked at the themes and the coding. It was a little laborious and painful, with a great deal of working and reworking. There were complexities involved in working out how individual data sets could become collective data, and it was a learning process as to how to achieve this. But as a data analysis method, RTA allowed me to observe my own responses and use these as a help rather than a hinderance, which enabled me to identify certain patterns that came up. As a data analysis method, RTA allowed me the ability to be creative in finding ways to process the data and find solutions to challenges. What I noticed is that, when I got stuck writing up the findings, I would go back to the data analysis processing stage and relook at the different stages, and I think this helped to bring fidelity and rigour to the themes.

Introduction to Chapters 6, 7, and 8

This introduction aims to guide the reader through the findings in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. These present the findings from the data analysis process, organized around the research questions. It identifies the main themes, their features, and their subthemes, followed by extracts from and an analysis of the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2022), integrating analytic discourse with data extracts is essential, therefore the themes derived from the reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) are outlined, interwoven with threads of discussion throughout to tell an overall story of the findings.

Overall, a wide range of topics came up from participants from all the sets of data collection. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 all begin with the themes related to the research questions: Chapter 6 tells the story of the meanings for participants of the practices at TCT; in Chapter 7, the story relates to the perceived impact of TCT, if any, on participants; and Chapter 8 describes the story related to the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact.

Each chapter begins with a table of the themes and subthemes related to the research question. Following this, each chapter will delve deeper into these themes. Each theme is discussed with selected quotes, images, and some excerpts from my reflexive research journal, from all participants and all data collection phases. Related literature is woven in when relevant to contextualize the overall theme and analysis.

At the beginning of each chapter, I provide an overview of the themes in response to the research question, and then I systematically examine the themes that emerged in response to the specific research questions. Following Braun and Clarke's (2022) suggestion, I identified a phrase or quote that captures the core characteristic of each theme, embodying its essence. I used the notion of subthemes to help frame some elements of these themes (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The subthemes helped to give an overall bigger picture of the findings. The subthemes are more subtly interwoven into the discussion, with some directly explored and others less discussed but obviously related.

As mentioned in the data analysis process (Chapter 5), I noted in my reflexive research journal interesting patterns in responses to the research question. At times I have identified when participants have agreed specific or differing concepts that may have relevance to context and intersectional analysis (Talwar, 2019).

In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, several quotes are included, some of which are lengthy. The quotes evidence the often detailed and nuanced explanations given by participants. The data collected often had multifaceted meanings. Due to these multiple meanings, some aspects of the data are re-explored in relation to different research questions. For example, certain images and quotes are used in more than one theme, as they represent various aspects that enhance understanding of what is being explored. Table 21 (see below) is a reminder (aide-mémoire) of the roles of each of the participants.

Table 21: Aide-mémoire for participants and their roles

Participant	**Role**
A	Refugee
B	Humanitarian worker
C	Refugee
D	Humanitarian volunteer
E	Lead art therapist
F	Recently qualified art therapist
G	Art therapist
H	Art support worker/poet/facilitator
(I)	Artist with lived experience of being a refugee/ facilitator

Tables 19, 20, and 21 all identify the themes and highlight the key features of the themes and subthemes, where relevant, as they correspond to each research question. In the first column, the themes are each identified by a name, with a quote that represents the theme. In the second column, there is a brief description of the characteristics which highlight the central organizing concept behind the themes, as well as the scope of the theme itself. The third column identifies subthemes, and these subthemes address standalone small elements that capture an important facet of the central organizing concept (Braun and Clarke, 2022). They are connected to the theme but do not necessarily have full patterns across the data.

Below is a visual timeline. This is a record of each year of the doctoral journey, highlighting significant aspects of my learning process. These images are part of those I collated in my reflexive research journal or the metaphorical box of data I referenced in Figure 11 (Chapter 3). They show a visual relationship to the themes and subthemes discussed in the findings. These images emphasize the tacit and implicit influence, significance, and impact that imagery had throughout the research journey. Underneath each image is a title and identification of the image's connection to certain themes in the findings. These are then briefly explained in more detail in Appendix 3.

Visual timeline

2018–2019: The beginning

What are we doing here?



Calais living site.

Themes: Home, homesickness



@ Art Refuge

Placing a world map up helped to orientate everyone in the vicinity.

Themes: Imagination, relational aesthetics



@ Art Refuge

Placing maps on the ground outside.

Themes: Safe space, time



@ Art Refuge

Building houses.

Themes: Home, art materials and media



@ Art Refuge

The map placed on an ambulance.

Themes: Imagination, relational aesthetics



Making art on the beach with the Art Refuge team.

Theme: Meaning-making

Visual timeline

2019–2020: Formulating a rationale for research Registration



@ Art Refuge

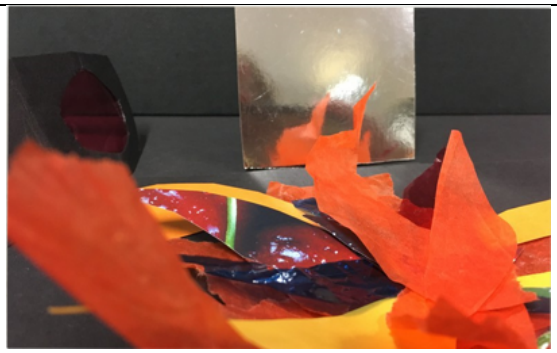
Playing with enlargers in Calais.

Theme: Art materials and media



Giving a training in Athens using postcards of images taken from TCT in Calais.

Themes: Safe space, art materials and media



Using collage at a UH Ed Doc day: Looking at the fire.

Theme: Art therapist's stance



BAAT International Conference. My own response art: a leaf boat.

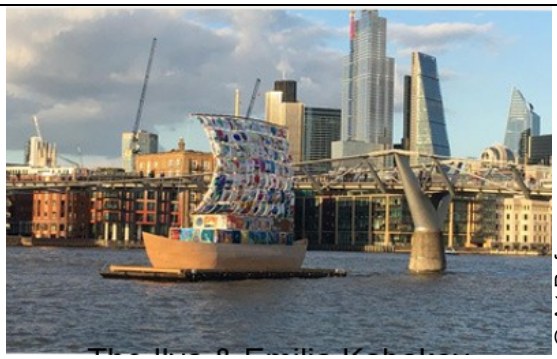
Theme: Embodied experience



@ Art Refuge

TCT at BAAT International Conference 2019.

Themes: Culture, absorption



@ Art Refuge

The Ilya and Emilia Kabakov Foundation showcasing Art Refuge work.

Themes: Culture, art materials and media, valued

Visual timeline

2020–2021: First phase of data collection



@ Art Refuge

Collecting data at TCT.

Theme: Art materials and media



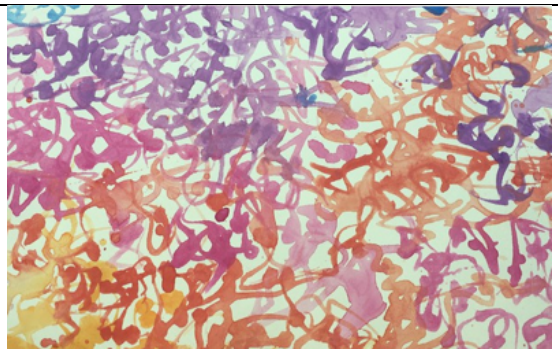
Doing a workshop at UH with students about the work in France.

Theme: Art therapist's stance



Beauty (1993) by Olafur Eliasson– taken at an exhibition.

Themes: Safe space, imagination, embodied experience



My own response art: watercolour patterns.

Themes: Art materials and media, grounding



My own response art in relation to Covid-19.

Themes: Time, grounding



My own response art: gold thread on a tissue, spelling "fragile".

Themes: Imagination, grounding

Visual timeline

2021–2022: First cycle of data collection, analysis and, progression



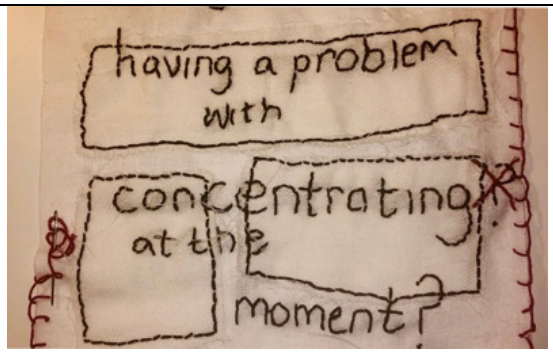
Plasticine figures at TCT.

Themes: Able to cope, making a social connection



Materials at TCT.

Theme: Art materials and media



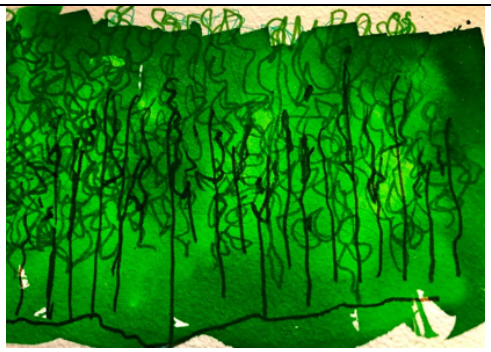
Response art: trying to focus on data analysis.

Themes: Able to cope, grounding



Arts-based data, participant A: Looking at it in a different light.

Themes: Able to cope, grounding



Response art:
I can't see the wood for the trees.

Themes: Able to cope, grounding



Small plasticine creatures on the beach in Folkestone, looking out to France.

Theme: Imagination

Visual timeline

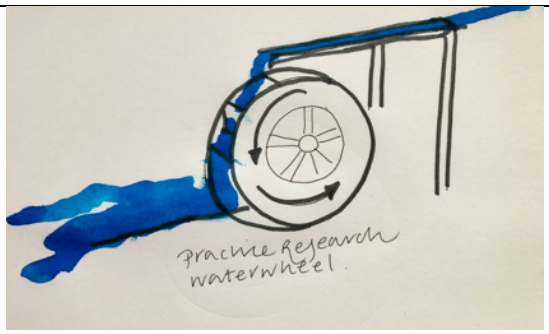
2022–2023: Second cycle of data collection and analysis



@ Art Refuge

Second cycle of the data collection at TCT.

Theme: Meaning-making



Response art: waterwheel.

Themes: Meaning-making, art therapist's stance



Response art: working out how things fit together.

Theme: Meaning-making



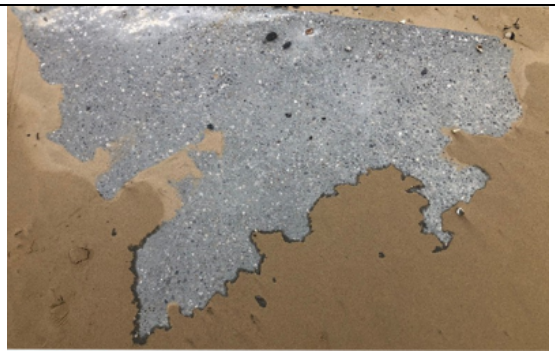
Trying to make sense.

Theme: Meaning-making



The beach in Calais.

Theme: Meaning-making



Finding world maps on the beach.

Theme: Imagination

Visual timeline

2023–2024: Third and final cycle of data analysis and writing up findings



@ Art Refuge

Letters of Refuge, King's College London.

Themes: Social connection, culture



Folkestone: Taking TCT to Napier Barracks.

Themes: Able to cope, social connection



The beach in Calais.

Themes: Safe space, culture



TCT in Lviv, Ukraine.

Themes: Safe space, culture, meaning-making



@ Art Refuge

Meeting with graphic designers in Lviv.

Themes: Able to cope, valued, culture



The deck of SS *Humanity* rescue ship in Sicily, Italy.

Themes: Able to cope, absorption

Chapter 6: Research question 1: Findings

This chapter explores the findings from the data analysis process, organized around the first research question: "What are the meanings for participants of the practices of The Community Table?" Table 22 below outlines the themes, characteristics, and subthemes.

Table 22: Themes for research question 1: What are the meanings for participants of the practices of TCT?

Theme	Characteristics	Subthemes
Home: "The Community Table is like my grandmother's house" (A)	An atmosphere that feels familiar and/or reminds one of being in a familiar or family situation.	Nostalgia Homesickness
Safe space: "I found a safe space" (C)	A space that people are comfortable enough to be in to understand more about themselves and the situation. Psychological safety, the right mood and atmosphere that fits the context.	Psychological recalibration Solidarity Democratic space
Culture: "A culture for people to build on" (E)	Recognizing people's culture, faith, and belief.	Identity
Time: "It was important for me to extract time" (B)	A space and time in which something different happens.	Time out Here and now
Meaning-making: "In terms of meaning it's all quite mysterious I think" (F)	Making meaning out of an experience.	Being witnessed Learning with companionship

Introduction

The five themes—home, safe space, culture, time, and meaning-making—all came up as repeated patterns across all the data of what the meanings of the practices at TCT were for participants.

The characteristics for home included associations with home and an atmosphere that feels familiar and/or reminds one of being in a familiar or family situation.

Subthemes included homesickness, the idea of missing home, and nostalgia, or having a sentimental longing for something in the past.

The characteristics for safe space were identified as a space where people are comfortable enough to be to understand more about themselves and the situation they are in. This included a sense of psychological safety, the right mood, and an atmosphere that fits the context. Subthemes included psychological recalibration—the process of rebalancing an emotional state of being; Solidarity, as in a sense of unity and support for a group of people; and democratic space, which is referencing a space being open to all.

The theme of culture was about recognizing people's culture, faith, and beliefs, with the subtheme of Identity, as in a sense of who we are as individuals and how we may identify as part of a social group.

The characteristics of the theme time were about a space and time in which something different happens. Subthemes are having time out, as in a suspension or a break from something. Here and now refers to the present time.

The characteristics of the theme meaning-making were around making meaning out of an experience. The subthemes include being witnessed, as in being seen by others, and learning with companionship, developing alongside others.

Overall, the practices were seen as very *meaningful*, as in the practices were identified as important, significant, relevant, and consequential, discussed more in the next research question about the impact of TCT. The question as to what the meanings of the practices were for participants was interpreted subjectively by each of the participants. This was helpful, as participants were describing ways in which they made meaning themselves personally from the practices at TCT. What was apparent was that the practices had personal meanings for everyone, including the facilitators.

There was an overall repeated thread that continued, where all participants referenced the meanings of the practices at TCT as enabling people to be somewhere safe, familiar, and familial. These concepts will be extrapolated in more detail in the themes. The themes as a response to meanings of the practices home,

safe space, culture, time, and meaning-making—all revolved around both semantic and latent tacit and implicit aspects.
Below, each of the themes are extrapolated further.

1) Home: *"The Community Table is like my grandmother's house"* (A)

It feels pertinent that a prominent theme arose around home, as the practice work itself is focused on working with those who have been displaced or those who work with those displaced from their homes. Attached to this came subthemes around nostalgia and homesickness, having wistful memories of home and feeling homesick.

One of the basic human requirements is the need to dwell, to inhabit a space, and to connect to a place somewhere on the planet, however temporarily, where we might belong (Moore, 1991). However, home is a subjective term; a place to dwell is not necessarily home. Samer, a refugee who was not involved with any data collection for this research, was quoted in an article I co-authored, "*Your home is not where you come from. Your home is where you feel you are safe.*" (Lloyd et al 2018b, p3)

Home as a definition can mean many things to different people (Taylor, 2013), but here I use the term as a place where we feel most comfortable and protected, as this is how participants expressed it. Observations from my reflexive research journal highlighted that I have witnessed again and again people using the art materials to draw or make homes and houses.

"There has always been a sense of people who used TCT wanting to draw, build, and construct homes. Right from the beginning of the interventions in the Calais camp in the psychosocial activities tent, sand and dirt, which was on the ground of the tent, was used to shape and construct houses and homes. But in the actual camp itself many shelters were hand built by people to actually sleep in, they were impressively designed, given the restrictions and complications of the environment. Refugee men who were living there spent time making areas which were marked out with fences, gardens, and even community areas. Even in the devastating squalor with areas of open sewers and rubbish, there were pockets where men had sensitively carved out a thought-out space, somewhere to dwell even for a temporary time." (Extract from reflexive research journal, 2018)

From this experience, I inferred how important the idea of creating a house was and that it gave meaning beyond basic shelter. It was about giving a better experience and valuing the life they had at that time, creating some meaning for them.

The use of the small bricks at TCT developed after the destruction of the large makeshift refugee camp known as “The Jungle” in Calais in 2016.



Figure 23: Participant A, future home (© Art Refuge)

Participant A and participant C both chose images that they had made or drawn that depicted home and a place that was theirs. At the time of the data collection, both the participants (who were refugees) were not living in a place which they could call home, which felt particularly poignant. Both images (Figure 23 and Figure 24) seem to show the significance that home has to them and therefore emphasize the loss of a home.

Participant A used a metaphor of TCT being like his grandmother’s house. *“When I come to The Community Table, the feeling I have is the same feeling as I got when I was at my grandmother’s house. This gives me a lot of hope and makes me feel*

strong" (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection). With a little more questioning, participant A described what the features were that made him connect TCT to his memories of his grandmother's house: *"My grandmother's place was a very happy place, when we had any problems as a child we would go to my grandmother's house, and it made me really happy. When I was there, I would feel more hope and more positive, I have the same feeling when I am at The Community Table"* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection).

Participant A was very articulate about the importance to him of the houses he made, as he felt they were familiar and resonated with the houses in Afghanistan, making a link and a connection with his former home. He saw the bricks that he used as familiar, too: *"I join (TCT) and I make houses, I love these houses, they are like the ones that are in the country that I come from…. The bricks are good materials, we have them in our country too…"* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection).

The image of the house A built (see Figure 23) shows careful planning: a large boundary wall keeping it safe, but with "Welcome" spelt out. The image has been explored in more detail previously (p.132). Key aspects from the analysis were how much care, attention, and thought were given to the house, even though it was precariously built so near to the edge of the table. The house represented a number of contradictions and conflicting hopes, with reference to Afghanistan and the longed-for destination of the UK. These were familiar issues that resonated with others who sat around TCT.

F describes how symbolic TCT is in relating to a home and familial environment: *"I think the table plays a central role in that there is something very archetypal about sitting around the table and different things going on …. It's really, you know, like the kitchen table when the kids are doing their homework—mum's cutting up the onions, and there… maybe there's a neighbour who's there doing something else—it's that kind of thing which is quite an archetypal familiar way of being with people… There's a sort of familiarity…"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

D thought the overall purpose of TCT in Calais was about finding a place which people were able to inhabit, which brings back the idea that a place to call home is

somewhere where you are safe: "*We are trying to help find a place for these people to inhabit the uninhabitable"* (Participant D, phase 1 of data collection).

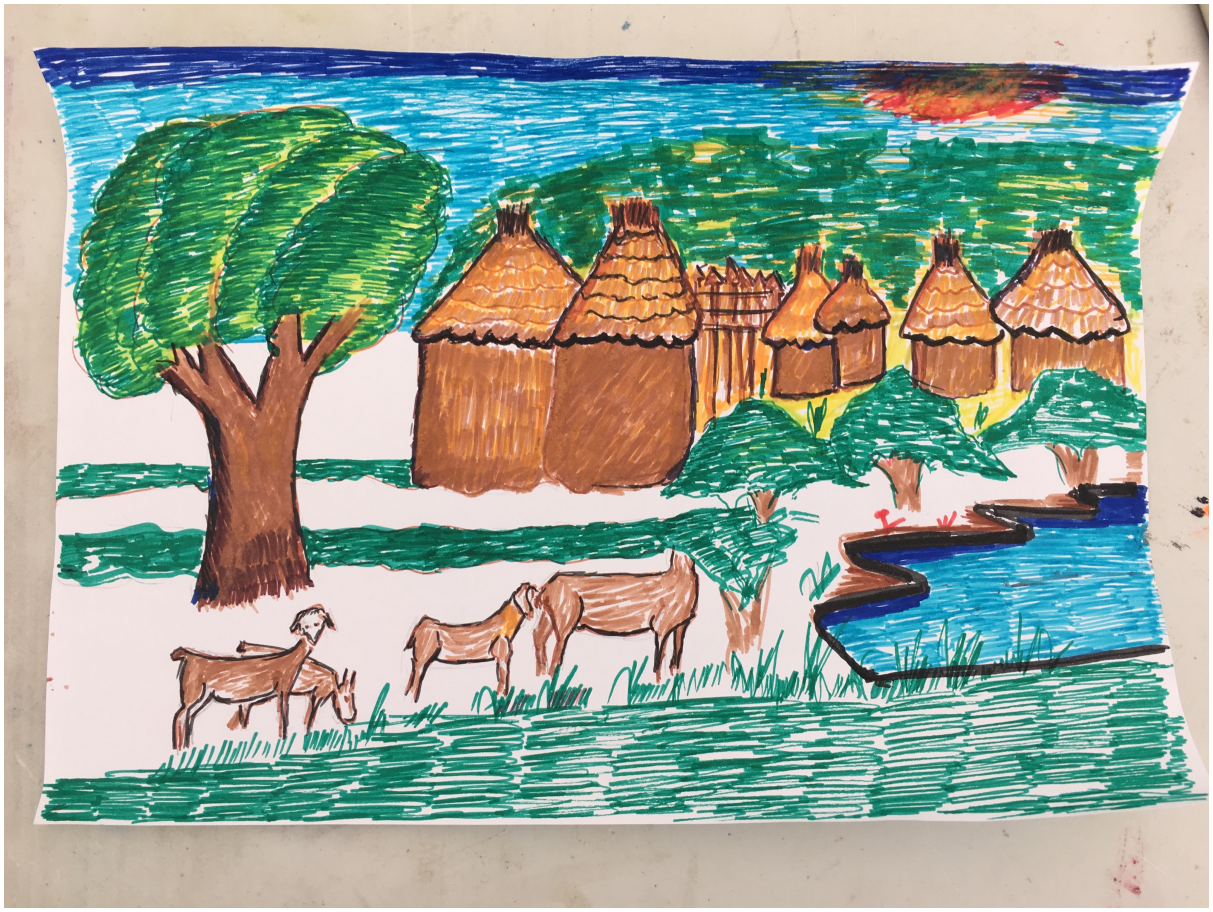


Figure 24: Participant C, village in Sudan (© Art Refuge)

Participant C referenced his thoughts of familiarity and a familiar place in a different way: *"Art Refuge gave me the opportunity of things I used to do when I was at home in Sudan"* (Participant C, phase 1 of data collection).

The image (see Figure 24) shows a village setting in Sudan; the houses and landscape are clearly very different from northern France. However, something about TCT still enabled him to feel it was familiar. Remembering and reminding people of their sense of place in the world, and orientation as to where they are, is an important part of making someone feel comfortable.

Perkins and Long (2002) describe how, following a crisis, people lose confidence in the norms and networks that should have been protecting them, and they define this as a feeling of "loss of place". But this loss of place is describing more than the

physical loss; it is a sense of emotionally being untethered. Papadopoulos (2021) describes the experience that refugees have from involuntary displacement. The absence of home creates an emotional void, and this makes people feel uncontained and in need, searching for something to make up for that loss and something to help recreate the protective aspects that a home provides. There is a yearning to have a sense of familiarity. He terms this “nostalgic disorientation” (p145).

The term nostalgic is not necessarily about a reference to a sentimental happy past but meant more as the emotional discomfort or yearning for the thing that helps an individual return to a sense of familiarity (Papadopoulos, 2021). Dieterich-Hartwell and Koch (2017) name the longing for a sense of place as homesickness and suggest that the arts have a way of offering a containment that can pacify this.

Participant E describes her own memories of being homesick as an impetus for her to do the work that she does—she remembered feeling this when volunteering in India with Tibetan refugees many years ago: *“I was profoundly moved by this group of people, who had left home and didn’t have a sense of going back there until the country gained independence, and I was also dislocated from home, but I knew that I could go home, and I had this sense of acute homesickness which was really very painful”* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

She sees this as providing a meaning for her to do this kind of work, as an artist and art therapist. She saw this as why she was so passionate about her work and a motivation to find appropriate art materials that could connect with people, to provide something familiar as an antidote to homesickness: *“So I suppose for a very, very long time I’ve been exploring what value art materials can play in people’s lives where they’ve lost so much, and that somehow the materials can connect with an internal sense of home, connection with memory, connection with sense of not being so lost”* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

E made these comments while drawing out letters spelling NEAR and HERE on small postcard-sized cards; this was a response to cards left on the table made by someone else in a previous Community Table session which spelt out LOST and FOUND and FAR AWAY: *“And if we’re going to think about lost, we think about found because this isn’t a space where we encourage people to be lost. This space*

is to hold everything and anything that they might bring—and if we are talking about FAR AWAY while saying this [referring to FAR and AWAY written in bold as seen in Figure 25], we also need to talk about HERE and NEAR as well, I think" (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

Her choice of words recognized that an essential aspect of the meaning of the practices is to provide a space for those who were lost to have a place in which to find something through the use of art materials, but also that at TCT there were some things that were familiar and NEAR and HERE (see Figure 25).

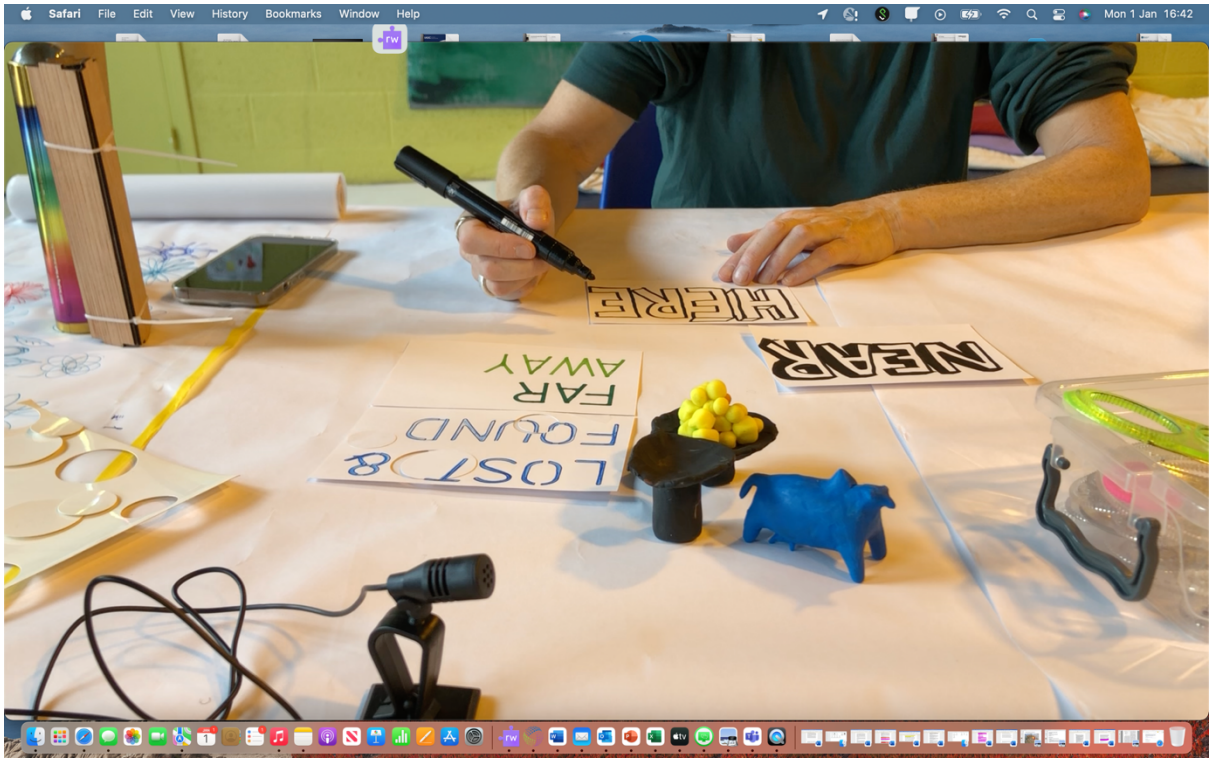


Figure 25: Participant E spelling out "Here"

The importance of the choice and careful consideration of the materials available on TCT was repeated by all the participants and will be explored more in another later theme about art materials. However, there is a relevance to art materials within this theme, as for participants the materials and media activated a sense of nostalgia which appeared to evoke a wistful affection, as when A referred to TCT being like his grandmother's house, and when C said Art Refuge offered him the opportunity to do things he used to do when he was at home in Sudan. For them, the idea of something being familiar even in a completely different context was offered as a

meaning of the practices. TCT could be seen as a place where people can reorientate themselves in an environment that may be very different to the one they are used to, but which has aspects or elements that have a sense of familiarity or traits reminiscent of home.

2) Safe space: "*I found a safe space*" (C)

Participants saw TCT as a safe space. A and C referred to TCT as a space in which they felt safe; B, D, H, and (I) also saw the space as a safe space for themselves as well as others, a space they felt comfortable in. The subthemes related to aspects about the space, where and how the space was seen, which was as a place for psychological recalibration, which had a sense of solidarity and was also a democratic space.

I use the term taken from participant C to title this theme. C recounted his experience of Art Refuge and TCT as being somewhere where "*I found a safe space*". Displacement robs a person of autonomy and choice, therefore the word *found* suggests (although not directly but as an implicit and latent meaning) that C actively chose to find a safe space.

The meanings of a safe space are diverse. In this context it is meant by participants as a space which is safe psychologically and socially. Psychosocial safe spaces are recognized as of primary importance both during and after a humanitarian disaster or crisis (UNICEF,[38] International Committee of the Red Cross,[39] Save the Children[40], War Child[41]). Providing a safe space facilitated by supportive empathic humanitarian staff or volunteers can have a significant impact on those in a crisis context (Gibson, 2006; Hobfoll et al., 2021; Lloyd and Usiskin, 2020; Watson and Shalev, 2005).

[38] https://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org.eca/files/2022-09/Blue%20Dot%20Information%20Brochure.pdf (accessed 17/10/24)
[39] https://www.icrc.org/en/document/humanitarian-space-must-be-protected-without-exception (accessed 17/10/24)
[40] https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/child-friendly-spaces-emergencies-handbook-save-children-staff/ (accessed 17/10/24)
[41] https://www.warchild.org.uk/our-work/what-we-do/protecting-children#:~:text=War%20Child%20works%20to%20support,other%20support%20they%20might%20need (accessed 17/10/24)

It would be reductive to consider TCT as a private safe space, as it functions in communally shared spaces. Indeed, as noted in my reflexive research journal, even arranging private interviews during the data collection phases proved challenging.

"The whole process of collecting data in situ is challenging, as there are no real private spaces in which to interview people. In the day centre, the number of people can be prohibitive. I have to think creatively about how to interview people in situ."

(Extract from reflexive research journal, 2021)

To adapt, I had to find private spaces before and after the day centre was open in which to interview participants. Thus, the notion of having a safe private space was not an option in this context. TCT had an open membership, with individuals choosing to attend. Therefore, the notion of a safe space does not necessarily mean a private space.

So what creates a safe space for TCT, and what meaning might this have?

E highlights one of the underlying meanings of the practices as the space that is offered; this identifies a key aspect of the intent of TCT: *"It's not looking at understanding that they are coming with trauma that needs to be resolved—it's actually offering a space where people can build on their strengths, so I think that TCT—it is crisis support model that lends itself to short-term interventions"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

Consistency in offering TCT has been crucial for developing a sense of trust with the setting and other NGOs working in the context. Attachments to objects and specific zones within a space can provide support and stabilizing influences on the therapy process. The place or space is part of the meaning-making experience, just as interaction with artmaking objects and interpersonal relationships is (Fenner, 2010).

The space itself is important, but, as Cresswell (1996) argues, a space must encompass aspects beyond what we may know or realize, including how others may perceive the space differently. Interestingly, there were common shared perceptions from participants about how TCT was seen as a space. The interaction of social engagement and creative engagement can create a sense of mood that inhabits a space (Dovey, 2010).

In the first phase of data collection, E chose an image (see Figure 26) that she wanted to represent the work at TCT, which highlighted space. Below is an extract from my reflexive learning journal.



Figure 26: Participant E, chosen image from phase 1 of data collection

"E chose an image [see Figure 26] that related to how TCT practices meant considering the use of space. She deliberately wanted to select an image of TCT that she felt held the core ingredients of TCT. She wanted the image to show a relationship to context, where the use of space had considered both inside and outside, which was evident at the edges of the frame of the image where there is a window. But I think this was more of a metaphor for understanding [that] the space needed to be placed in a context to make it safe and viable. She wanted to showcase the variety of materials, mixed media: the use of film projection, analogue/digital objects, books of poetry, bricks, images of kites flying, and The Ship

of Tolerance[42] project documented on the wall. There was also a microphone. On that particular day, a refugee artist who works with the team had recorded people reading out the poems that they had typed on the manual typewriters in response to the projected films of kites from the Jungle camp. She described how some of the kites soared freely in the sky while others were trapped on cables or in trees, as in the frozen image. E described this as a poignant and subtle metaphor of people's situation. She also referred to the map tablecloth onto which the activity took place, which she felt offered useful reference points again, both physically in terms of people understanding the location as well as an additional aesthetic texture to The Community Table." (Extract from reflexive research journal, 2020)

E herself said that "*space is really central to our work and how we understand it in each context"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

E's chosen image (Figure 27) illustrates her perspective on creating a safe space by placing it in context—both internal and external. This involves not only the visible, tangible aspects but also the unseen, felt elements and the intention behind creating a mood and setting that feels comfortable. It requires consideration of the external sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and geographic contexts that affect displaced people, as well as their internal emotional states. This means understanding how individuals might feel due to their past experiences and current circumstances when they are at TCT.

Kalmanowitz and Lloyd (2011) describe how, when using art therapy in crisis settings, it is important to shift practice and move between the inside and outside, "*physically, psychologically symbolically and metaphorically"* (2011, p.107). This they consider as a way of creating a potential dynamic energy, or mood, which is still stable and comfortable for those participating.

In the spirit of creating the right mood that considers and responds to the specific contextual elements in which TCT functions, facilitators (including myself) in Calais developed a ritual involving the use of tablecloths. These tablecloths, part of the "kit", come in a variety of designs, including ones with specific maps printed onto plastic

[42] The Ship of Tolerance was a project funded by the Kabakov Foundation which Art Refuge was part of in 2019. https://shipoftolerance.org

canvas or block-printed cloths from India and Africa. The selection of the tablecloth is carefully considered based on the contextual elements of a particular session, reflecting the mood of the setting at that time. The tablecloth sets a boundary around the space, defining it and setting the intention for the session's duration.

In discussing the concept of safe space, it is helpful to consider why this notion of "safety" is so important.

Hobfoll et al. (2021) helpfully describe safety in crisis contexts as the promotion of a sense of safety, rather than focusing solely on the space itself being safe. This is because sometimes one cannot guarantee completely being safe from factors out of one's control. This is pertinent in the context of TCT in northern France, since the environment where it was held was volatile. However, in this context the term safety is the perceived state of being safe. This aligns with what A and C see as the meaning of TCT—a perceived feeling of safety that allows them to partake and be a part of it. Bryant (2006) suggests that promoting a sense of safety can reduce the biological aspects of post-traumatic stress symptoms. If this sense of safety is not restored, an individual can remain in a constant state of heightened physical threat, preventing any sense of psychological safety (Ehlers and Clark, 2000; Nortje et al., 2004).

As A identified when he was at TCT: *"I was relaxed, I forgot everything else happening, like my stress"* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection).

Having a sense of psychological and social safety is crucial for resilience. The ability to maintain a balanced view of the world, understanding that not everything or everyone poses a danger or threat, is a key element of resilience. Recovery from exposure to difficulties or trauma depends on this balanced perspective. Being able to mediate the fixed belief that the world is inherently dangerous reduces the chances of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (Foa and Rothbaum, 1998). Evidence indicates that individuals who develop subsequent mental health problems often struggle to realistically mediate risk and are prone to exaggerating it in the future (Smith and Bryant, 2000; Warda and Bryant, 1998).

Without opportunities to feel safe, a person remains in a state of exaggerated threat, which prevents them from returning to a psychological sense of safety (Ehlers and

Clark, 2000; Nortje et al., 2004). Creating an environment that is convivial helps to restore a belief that not everything in the world is bad. A described his experiences of living in “The Jungle” as horrible, but what mediated this for him were the kind volunteers and humanitarian workers, which made the space feel safer for him: *“I met some people from lots of different countries, and they were all kind. I was in horrible situation, the people coming to us gave us hope. This helped us in ‘The Jungle’”* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection).

Both B and D see TCT as a space which is safe enough for people to be themselves. B sees this as follows: *“Your work seems to be more about solidarity, creating a space so people can express themselves and share a space with each other”* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

B also emphasized the significance of one’s presence in a space, highlighting how an atmosphere of safety is evoked. This involves not only being present but also recognizing how the space is shared in a democratic manner. What is meant by this, and expressed directly by B, is that people had a choice to join TCT. They could make a decision as to whether to join or not. This concept is what B suggested allowed a democratic sharing of space, and what possibly makes it feel safe for people. This emphasizes what C referenced earlier (and the quote encapsulating the theme)—that he *found* a space. The specific sense of finding and choosing to use the space suggests that he had his own sense of autonomy and was part of what made it safe.

In addition, B viewed TCT as being with people in a space in a specific way, where art and art therapy become collective activities of solidarity. This mutual support within a group being present in the space and participating in these activities is very important and seen as an act of solidarity.

C identified this in a different but similar way. The space is important as it allows for the following: *“People come together and do things together, reuniting humanity, showing how it’s important to live in peace in the earth”* (Participant C, phase 1 of data collection).

(I) saw it similarly as a space for people to come together in a relational way: *“It is a place for displaced people to find a space that’s safe for them to just play, forget*

about the normal daily worries that they have, and they have somebody there to listen to them and have a conversation with… They have this space to build relationships or connections, learning to trust people … by being at the table with us" (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

G sees TCT as making a safe space so people can connect: *"In Paris, people are kind of in between, sometimes settling or sometimes in continued very unstable situations or in transit. What we really recognize here is the isolation people exist in. Despite being in this kind of multicultural city, people's experience here is one of really existing on the very edges, and then there's so little points of connection. Community or a sense of place here has become really one of the features of this work here."* (Participant G phase 2 of data collection.)

F had a philosophical view of what might make the space safe: *"It's a space that's proposed to everyone who is present in the place, and at the same time … resonates with the other things that are happening around, both in the immediate environment and in the environment a little bit further away. So, it's at the same time slightly separate from everything else, but it's also kind of linked to everything else. You kind of got one foot in and one foot out; you can kind of go in and out as well, I think"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

This once again emphasizes the importance of a space that feels safe enough for positive social interactions. The border town of Calais is a transitional space, always in a state of limbo, carrying both hopelessness and the potential for something to happen. In all settings, it is crucial for the facilitators to feel safe. However, the various places where TCT is facilitated often don't feel safe, as they can be volatile and tense.

H acknowledged her own trepidation of working in Folkestone in a government contingency accommodation in an old army barracks: *"I mean, I still—I still find it difficult and from way back when this place opened, I've never had—never been in a space like this before…. I think there's both something to do with the fear of sexism and probably my own internalized racism. I was scared, and, you know, I still find myself feeling and processing fear occasionally"* (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

The spaces in which TCT is offered are not easy spaces; most of the attendees are men, while the team delivering are generally women.

E, F, G, H, and (I) all mentioned the connection with the other facilitators being an aspect that makes them *feel safe*, and the importance of working in a team elicits this.

H went on to reiterate that this is because of the careful teamwork that happens, which in turn creates a sense of safety in the spaces: *"You can just sit and feel safe in the space*" (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

(I) considered part of the safety of the space to be having experienced psychological therapists who were facilitators: *"You and E (referring to us being psychological therapists) being there to support us if there's any trauma that arises now … you can talk to them… The fact that there is somebody that can help them with that, I think, is really important"* (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

A, B, C, D, F, H, G, and (I) all described part of the meaning of the practices for participants as being in a safe space, and they described it in the sense that the space at TCT made them feel personally comfortable. Some used the word safe, while others described features such as being comfortable. E, F, G, H, and (I) all identified this as a significant meaning for participants.

"I think TCT is giving a safe space, an escape from daily things that people do, in this case the displaced people to find a space that's safe for them to just play, forget about the daily worries that they have, and they have somebody here to listen to them and have a conversation with and treat them normally as human beings."

(Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection)

"You can just sit and feel safe in the space, and I think is helped by the creativity of this space… I think it's been an amazing space for growing… Every time that I come here to do this work, I leave with something that I didn't have at the beginning of the day… Learning about myself and how I react to situations that come up, it feels really valuable, it feels really safe. I'm trying to think both of what it means for me and what it means for the people who come to the table, being a young—a youngish black woman can mean something to the people and table."

(Participant H, phase 2 of data collection)

"We are trying to help find a place for these people to inhabit the uninhabitable."
(Participant E, phase 2 of data collection)

Being in a safe environment allows individuals to psychologically recalibrate; it offers a balance by showing that some spaces and places are safe. The features that enable this psychological recalibration will be discussed in the section on mechanisms of change. It has been identified that the right mood and atmosphere, along with interpersonal engagement with the team and participants, play a significant role in the meaning of the practice. Aspects of space will also be considered in relation to other themes.

3) Culture: "A culture for people to build on" (E)

This theme emerged when E described part of the meanings of the practices for participants as a space where there was "a culture for people to build on".

The theme of culture explores how participants saw culture as part of the meanings of the practices of TCT. There are several elements to this theme. It covers aspects of the culture of TCT itself; the learning TCT can offer about how cultures are seen differently in different contexts; the relationship that TCT has to the culture of participants; and the perception that building on someone's culture is important. The subtheme for this is identity.

The meaning of culture by participants was described in different ways, so it is therefore used here in several ways. These include aspects of intersectionality, (being more attuned to sociocultural contexts and moving away from assumptive thinking rooted in a solely Western perspective), building a culture through arts activity, participants' cultures, and the culture of TCT itself. It encompasses the arts and humans' capacity to be creative and imaginative.

Beginning with the culture of TCT itself, E describes TCT as developing a culture in itself: *"I think we are developing a culture through which artmaking can hold whatever needs to come into that space. Grounded in experience, we are creating a culture for people, a community, a culture for people to build on their capacity to*

cope and to flourish, and I think that goes for ourselves, the refugees that attend our spaces, and our colleagues" (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

But as E says, there is a culture of TCT that has developed because the team delivering TCT has the experience and understands what it is like to work in a particular context. *"That comes from a culture we have developed over the years, so not just coming out of the blue, we have got a* real *understanding…"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

Both participants B and D saw TCT as a space which had developed its own culture.

B saw TCT as a culture in itself that was imbedded in the way TCT was facilitated and shared with others: *"It is the atmosphere that you are build and create that you share"* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

E identifies this too: *"People are tired. They arrive exhausted, and they don't necessarily have the mental capacity or any emotional capacity to even begin to understand it. By just being present with others in the space, things rub off on each other—it's almost as if the culture of the table rubs off"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

E recognizes that her own cultural experiences lay a foundation for TCT. When reflecting on her own experiences and influences for doing the work, she recalls an important aspect of her childhood and cultural background. She reminisces about sitting around a table with family and friends, emphasizing the significance of community: *"I think probably is than more than just sitting around the table—sitting at the table, the table is culturally symbolic …."* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

E saw it as crucial that there was diversity in the facilitating team so TCT could be more attuned to sociocultural contexts away from thinking rooted in a Western perspective. By introducing this diversity to TCT it creates a culture where different cultures are seen and interact in differing contexts: *"It has become increasingly clear to me that it's really important we need people in the team with lived experience of displacement, it makes so much difference to people"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

Participant (I) noticed that there is learning TCT can offer about how cultures are seen differently in different contexts. (I) described how useful it was that she came from East Africa (a number of those attending TCT come from there too) because she understood the culture there: *"The culture—Eritrea, Sudan, and around East Africa is an area I understand, what they think, how they think… This familiarity is an advantage for me"* (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

Below are a couple of long but very significant quotes in which (I) explains that she felt she was able to bridge the complexities of being in a different new culture, how she was seen herself in the UK as "black".

"My father's Italian. Even though I was born and brought up in Africa, I was brought up in this Italian world in Africa. It's very confusing for a mixed heritage person where you come from two different places, then you make a choice—the parents or whatever—they make a choice for you, that you should fit in, or which culture you should take on more, so this case for me was the Italian culture, although I don't look Italian at all, so it's completely wrong, even though at the time it was a privilege. I went to an Italian school and any association to Italy was a good thing—until I came to this country and where I started looking back and understanding the history of oppression and colonialism. But here I feel like I'm put in this category, which is that you are black regardless. I'm okay with being black, but what if somebody is not okay with being black? I see the implications put on you, so I think it's something they [refugees] need to understand, East Africans especially. They don't consider themselves as black, even though they are African, so they always try to differentiate from West Africa. There is this division; they always say they are from Eritrea, but they will never say that they are black" (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

Considering the complexities of intersectionality is crucial for contemporary art therapy practice (Talwar, 2010). E mentioned the importance of having people in Art Refuge who have lived experience of displacement, but, more than that, (I) brought a perspective which helps to consider social and cultural contexts and bias in a deeper ontological capacity, to help an understanding of why and how there is an existence of these issues and how this plays out in terms of the meanings of the practices. She enables members of the team (who are predominantly white) to learn different perspectives and experiences, but she also brings an experience of a different

culture, which those who partake in TCT may find familiar. (I) expands this by also describing how the complexities of skin colour played out in her childhood.

"*I was brought up in a household where my mom's really dusky, but in Eritrea those cultural issues, class issues, plus ethnic and colour issues, and I was brought up from a very young age—everything was about skin colour, where you fit in and all that, I experienced that as a child—so I always used to say in what I used to walk around with my mom—they would say to me, the majority of the Eritreans, they would say, 'Who is she, then?' She would say, 'She is my daughter.' They would say, 'No, she doesn't look like you. She belongs to our side. No, she is not yours,' all this kind of thing, so there is this otherness kind of talk. So I was brought up with that and I understand it. More when I came here, even though I realised as a child that I used to fight with my friends, they used to call me a slave child—so anyone with a darker skin is a slave—so I used to have those fights—knowing that I understood it properly—and when I came here [the UK], I understood that my Italian heritage is not a privilege. It's a confusion for me and I never got to learn my mum's culture—Eritrean culture—properly. I have a bit of everything. I was not immersed in one culture where it created this strong identity within me, so when I came here, there was a freedom actually—when it came to that—because I could be anybody, when it came to it, and I think it was a beautiful thing—where are you from—people would guess you are from here, from there. I'm international, so there was something beautiful about it, until I had to come back to it when I moved to Kent here. You're black, that's it"* (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

There is also the relationship that TCT has to the culture of participants and the perception that building on someone's culture is important.

When considering, Kapitan (2015) uses the term "cultural frame switching" (2015, p.108). This involves being more attuned to sociocultural contexts and moving away from assumptive thinking rooted solely in a Western perspective. This approach emphasizes learning from others to build a mutual cultural understanding (Kapitan, 2015). From the data, this learning from others is seen as part of the culture at TCT.

Cultural frame switching happens with objects used at TCT. E retold an anecdote of how people are enabled to translate objects to relate to their own cultural frame, and

how that helps the facilitators learn about other cultures and gives participants a sense that their cultural experience is important. This highlights the perceived importance of culture building as well as the relationship of TCT to the different cultures of the participants: *"We also had various wonderful stones, from all sorts of places, sort of exotic crystals… The stones I seem to remember were picked up by a couple of men who came from, I think, South Sudan, who said, 'Oh my goodness, these come from a mine from down our village.' I think they said they came from a particular region in South Sudan, actually I think these stones probably came from the UK, but in a way that was the wonder of them. And one of them had photographs on their phone which showed—actually, we found on Google Maps on a phone the exact mine, the exact area from where the stone came from. This brought us back to place, memory, home, culture—so that built on his resilience, his capacity to feel strong and grounded and rooted in something"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

This introduced the notion that culture helped one feel grounded. A, C, and (I) all highlighted how TCT connected with their own cultural experiences. A's and C's images reflected this. The style of building for A (see Figure 24) reflected his own cultural reference from Afghanistan. And C reflected his own cultural context in his image of a village in Sudan (see Figure 25). E, F, G, and H saw TCT as developing a cultural space for all, including themselves.

Another aspect of this theme was culture building through art at TCT. C described this as "*this value of art you have",* which he felt the Art Refuge team brought and was pivotal to the meaning of TCT. His understanding underlies a conceptual element of art therapy. The value of the arts that the team have links to the ethos that humans have the ability to be creative and imaginative and that the cultural world offers so much for everyone.

Winnicott (1971), a psychoanalyst, considered creativity and living creatively as essential. His concept of "potential space" highlights the value of the space between one's inner reality, fantasy, and dreams, and one's outer reality, the external world. This in between space holds the potential for an individual to discover the world through playful creative engagement.

The pleasure of creating things, or the enjoyment of making something that previously did not exist, can encourage a sense of autonomy as well as aesthetic value (Dissanayake, 1995).

What emerged from the data was that there is a subjectivity as to what is seen as culture, but that TCT seems to enable a creative space where people can identify their own cultural meanings while also developing a culture of its own. This is a way of being which includes the encouragement of people bringing their own cultural meanings to the artmaking at TCT.

4) Time: "It was important for me to extract time" (B)

In the data, the theme of time manifested in different ways in relation to the meanings of the practices. The idea of extracting time, finding time, having too much time, or time travelling (as in moving backwards and forwards in time) all came up. The subthemes are having time out and here and now.

Beginning with the idea of extracting time, which inspired the quote attached to the theme, B saw taking time out from his chaotic schedule as significant in terms of the meanings of the practices: *"For me, when I did any of your activities, it was important for me to extract time, to forget about daily life, actions, and work on the ground, to be disconnected, to take this moment individually and also in a collective way to talk about the situation of the refugees and to gain an aspect or some vision to get deeper into a subject to understand more of a feeling of something"* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

He saw that extracting time was important to *disconnect* with his normal structures so that he was able to really *connect* with more understanding of how to work with refugees and see it from a different perspective.

The perception of time is different depending on one's situation. Calais is a transitional space and is one of limbo, with people waiting to cross over to the UK and often dependent on things outside of their control. All the spaces where TCT functions are limbo spaces where people are waiting, either to cross over to the UK or for asylum outcomes, where the basis of the work is with people awaiting an asylum claim rather than having achieved it. I have written in Lloyd and Usiskin

(2020) about how space, place, and time play out as important elements in the work in northern France. We all experience some practical realities of time which links to our relationship to space, but that might be understood differently, with diverse cultures having different perspectives (Kuper, 2003; Lloyd and Usiskin, 2020).

Finding time or the right timeframe is complicated. The length of time that people spend at TCT varies. The sessions themselves last longer than any normal art therapy session, which at its longest tends to be 1½ hours. TCT follows more of a pattern of an open art therapy studio model, which lasts over a longer durational timeframe of between 2 to 4 hours, where people can wander in and leave of their own volition. TCT, like the art therapy studio model, is a place for reflection that fits into a wider social context (Brown and Omand, 2022).

This idea of extracting time or removing oneself from the difficulties one may be experiencing does not have a timeline. As D noted, it can be a moment, or as A noticed too: *"Even if it for 5/10 minutes people joining get something"* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection).

I noted the following in my reflexive research journal: *"The time people spend at TCT varies widely, with some people coming for the whole session, all 4 hours (in Calais). From when we set up TCT they are there until right to the end, while others hover around checking it out and may swoop in to participate in a brief activity. For others they might have a quick action, a making of a plasticine figure or use a typewriter to type a brief phrase. An important aspect seems to be that they have a choice as to how long they wish to spend at TCT. This choice seems pertinent, given there is such limited choice in how they might spend their time in other ways"* (Extract from reflexive research journal, 2019).

There are also elements of having too much time. It is important to acknowledge the gaps when TCT is not present. More frequent attendees like A noted that, when TCT is not there, the day feels longer and less structured. TCT provides an activity, something which gives a purpose to the day and a timeframe for the day. Straightforward sequential thinking is helpful for ordering the past, present, and future, but in a crisis state this level of cognitive thinking is difficult because there is no specific routine, so some kind of a routine helps to retain a sense of order.

“When The Community Table is not here, in the week from Monday to Friday, every day is completely different. There can be 100, 200, or 300 people in the day centre, sometimes it’s a fast day, sometimes slow, sometimes it’s very sad and everyone is quiet” (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection).

Augé’s (1995) idea of “non-places” is where spaces of transience are not thought of as a place; they are not significant enough. Humans who reside there remain anonymous, with no thought to a time that fits in with the *normal* world.

There were always gaps with TCT in Calais of either two weeks or a month. But there has always been a consistency in the provision of TCT.

The concept of waiting in limbo is interesting to consider as it is in a continuum of crisis. In Calais this takes a specific form of immediate crisis, as people are homeless, waiting to cross over to the UK. In the UK people are housed waiting to see if they might be given leave to remain, and in Paris they are in another limbo state waiting, but often on the streets. (In France there is no requirement for the state to provide accommodation for people awaiting asylum claims.)

In these contexts, people are all in limbo. They have an uncertain timeframe for a decision or conclusion. Dieterich-Hartwell and Koch (2017) identify this as an aspect of refugee existence when one no longer feels at home, defining this as a state of limbo. But they also see the possibilities of a limbo state being a liminal state as in a transition space (Dieterich-Hartwell and Koch, 2017). This transition is a space between where one has been and where one might go, physically or metaphorically. This transitional space could be an emotional one too.



Figure 27: The wall next to where TCT was placed in the day centre in Calais

Just before the pandemic, the Art Refuge team became aware of the gaps in between sessions. Inspired by seeing the Olafur Eliasson exhibition at the Tate Modern in London in 2019, in which there was a section called “The Expanded Studio”[43]—a wall filled with information and images related to social and environmental issues, a very visually accessible way of communicating with people—the team experimented with creating such a wall in the day centre in Calais (see Figure 27).

Like A, B had noted an absence of times TCT was not there. However, he felt images on the wall filled a gap in between the times we were there, which provided a

[43] https://www.tate.org.uk/press/press-releases/olafur-eliasson-real-life-0

sense of a *"longer term presence of the table"* (Participant B phase 1 of data collection).

E regarded the art materials as an element that provided something more consistent in a period of crisis: *"The art materials also that lent itself both to a timelessness and a specificity, if people wanted to engage on either of those two levels"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

The idea of time moving, as in from present to past to imagine something before after, came up within the data.

D saw a big part of the meanings of the practices as removing oneself from the present into the past: *"The significance is that it enables people to remove themselves for a short time from the immediacy of people's lives, absorbing them so they can express something about their lives before being in Calais. It's a moment of self-expression"* (Participant D, phase 1 of data collection).

Kalmanowitz (2013) explores the relationship of time to crisis contexts using the metaphor of the Greek notions of Chronos and Kairos. Chronos represents the sequence of time, a predictable rhythm of days, months, and years, whereas Kairos is more about the quality of time, the state of time when something reaches its peak. A crisis is Kairos time at the height of something (Kalmanowitz, 2013). The Chronos interpretation is a timeframe which is logical and connects with straightforward sequential thinking; it is helpful for ordering the past, present, and future, but in a crisis state this level of cognitive thinking is difficult.

This aspect of "timelessness" is a recurring motif, much like Kairos, where the quality of time becomes the focus rather than its longitudinal element. The emphasis is on the here and now, with reminders of the past, present, and future—like the images on the wall that remain when TCT is not present, serving as a reminder of both the past and the future, when it will return. This interplay of past, present, and future will be explored further in the mechanisms section.

As E noted: *"TCT is a space where people are fully involved in what they are doing and being in the present, but also being able to go back to the past as well as aspire to the future"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

The idea of how this might be used will be explored more in the mechanisms of change section. However time was considered, it was seen as holding part of the meanings of practices of TCT for participants.

5) Meaning-making: "*In terms of meaning it's all quite mysterious I think…*" (F)

This theme explores meaning-making. Participants saw that TCT was a space where some kind of meaning was made by people who joined TCT, and this therefore was part of the meaning itself for people. TCT was a place where a meaning could be made. The subthemes being witnessed and learning with companionship were identified as connected with meaning-making.

However, is it possible to make sense or a meaning out of difficult or untoward situations, particularly when people are still in a vulnerable position? A potentially devastating effect of experiencing a trauma can be existential—a loss of meaning of why one exists (Hobfoll et al., 2021). As identified in previous themes, a key component of TCT is to provide time and a space for people to connect and have creative expression, as providing a space in which to make meaning is a core aspect of art therapy practice (Ford et al., 2021).

There were two aspects of meaning-making that emerged in the data: the kinds of meaning-making participants indicated took place at TCT, and the things that participants felt facilitated meaning-making at TCT.

The quote related to this theme comes from participant F: *"…and in terms of meaning it's all quite mysterious I think …. Meanings are possibly co-constructed. I'm just thinking about someone who is here today, who I have never seen before who just came in and he was using these… [shows 3D letters]. He was writing his own name with these little things [3D letters] and he was using a variety of backgrounds and he was looking through this pair of sunglasses at them—and then taking pictures, taking little figures and taking more pictures, keeping always the same letters. For me he was just in his own world, he was doing his thing, and I was vaguely saying, 'Would you like this? Would you like that?' But he'd found something, I don't know what he found, but he found something, and he went through with it for about an hour doing it. There are different variations of his name*

written in these letters on different backgrounds. He was taking a photo every time. If you were to ask me what meaning was there for him, I could kind of interpret that and say well it's his name and he's placing backgrounds, but you can't really know. But what is obvious is that it did mean something to him" (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).



Figure 28: Participant F moving around letters

F considered the idea of meaning as mysterious, but it was while F was describing the instance with a man at TCT that she was moving letters around herself and disclosed she was a fan of anagrams. When asked about what she was doing with the art materials in the interview, she observed: "*I wrote house, I wrote hope, I wrote night, and I wrote mouse, but I don't think mouse is symbolic. The mouse is in the house and, erm, the Ouse is the river Ouse where I was brought up. I didn't think of it, the words just kind of came, they're like sort of suggestions"* (see Figure 28) (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

I use these extracts as an example of how meaning-making took place at TCT, in the first extract, and, in the second extract, how F was making her own meaning out of using the letters.

The theme emerged from participants' descriptions of their own meanings of the practices at TCT as well as witnessing others' meaning-making. When I use the term meaning-making, I am considering more the meaning made or a making sense of something in the "here and now" at TCT rather than the idea of someone trying to make sense of their overall situation. This meaning-making or making sense of something is a subjective process but includes intersubjective elements with others at the table as well as the engagement with the art materials and media. With this I propose there is a difference between making sense and making meaning; when making sense, one can imagine clearly, something that is perceptible and normally conscious, whereas often making meaning is a more emotional aspect of this, which may include unconscious elements.

An example of this is with participant C describing an example of making meaning at a time when things were very difficult for him. He remembered making a stop frame animation with the support of members of the Art Refuge team: *"One day we made a movie about Mr Fox. it was a lot of fun in a time of pain. I was not expecting myself to be able to [make] a movie like this"* (Participant C, phase 1 of data collection).

The stop frame animation using paper cutout figures was a story about a fox who fell into a hole and became trapped. It possibly mirrored his situation at the time. It was impossible for him to make sense of his situation, which was dire. He was physically ill and stuck homeless in Calais. But he was able to make some kind of meaning about it.

An example of making sense is the aspect of orientation that happens on the table. This not only enables a sense of making meaning but can also help make sense in the here and now. Maps placed on the table used as tablecloths help to orientate.

I noted the following in my reflexive research journal: *"The maps sometimes used on the tables in the different spaces where TCT functions inform and help orientate people. In Folkestone the use of a map of the UK or even the cross-channel map can help to literally show people where they are. This helps people make sense of something, where they came from and where they are going and where they are now. However, this is not necessarily about making meaning, maybe that is more about making sense of where someone is. The conversations that happen when*

people are looking at the maps seem to be where you see meaning made. It's when people place objects, postcards, or show something on their mobile phones that things seem to connect, and meaning is made for that person" (Extract from reflexive research journal, 2021).

When using a map where people are orientating themselves, the map helps cognitive straightforward thinking about the whole context, which adds to a way of helping people make meaning and make sense of where they are.

Fenner (2012) considers that any content in a visual field can become a part of potential meaning-making, so the *whole situation* should be considered when contemplating how meaning is made by an individual. From a neuro science perspective, Damasio (2018) asserts that the mind is initially made up of images. These are developed from the representation of objects, events, and situations that link to concepts related to those events. The concepts then become verbal translations of those events and situations (Damasio, 2018). Construction of multisensory moments in our minds get memorized and can be recalled later (Damasio, 2018). What came through in the data was the ability to make a positive meaning at TCT which could enable a memory that might be remembered later, like Mr Fox. This would counterbalance what Hobfoll et al. (2021) note as people's loss of meaning in crisis and help to frame meaning.

F made meaning from what she made and saw. It resonated with her, and she found her own links to her own house and memories of her childhood. She created her own meaning with me witnessing (see Figure 28).

E considered how people can find ways of making meanings with connections to others. Part of this was the Art Refuge team making meaning themselves from the experiences and learning from them: *"I think we are learning, or I am learning that all our interventions actually work on different levels. On the one hand there is working with the people who are seeking asylum, in transit, and who are in high stress, and that is crisis support through art that we do around the table. On the other hand, at all times, we are modelling a way of behaving and being in those spaces for other people. I think that is where The Community Table comes in, and that is the really significant model of practice that I think we have developed which is a space where*

things can happen on multiple levels. We offer a sort of therapeutic environment through artmaking for the refugee community, but also we offer a space reflection, learning companionship for all those other people in those spaces. We know those spaces we offer in northern France have a big influence. Our partners, our colleagues and volunteers and so on work and engage with individuals" (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

The next element considered was what facilitates meaning-making.

E felt the art materials and media on the table were significant in enabling meaning-making because they were appropriate. They connected and resonated with people. If these materials are appropriate, people will then make their own meaning out of something with them: *"People are often a bit mystified about it [TCT] because it doesn't look like anything else that's offered, but I think that in time people began to understand it as a sort of a space where people can be kind to each other, through some quite quirky materials with some thinking behind it. But I hope that people get a sense that this isn't just a surface offer but there is some integrity to it, I do think people pick that up. So the young man who was with us yesterday … He was trying to make sense of it [TCT] throughout the hour he was with us, but as he went through the process of looking through the black and white photographs which were of places all over the world—taken by the female photographer in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, they've got a sort of history to them, and then he was looking at the fossils—he began to sort of get a sense of connectedness to something at the table. It's stuff that's far away; it's stuff that's been lost and found"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

G echoed that the art materials and media have a big part in helping people make meaning: *"The art materials and media have to act as a sort of catalyst for something to happen—and my sense is that is what makes meaning for people, because you feel that when you are in the work and they occur, and that's what people tell us directly"* (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

G also felt that a significant part of making meaning for people was to be witnessed making things or telling their stories in relation to them: *"This idea of being witnessed, it's such a simple thing, but I come back to it being so valuable to people.*

You realize that people are so marginalised here—such a complex thing of being forced into these positions, of always being seen as kind of on the edge or in need of something—and trying to find ways where you're not always engaged in that role here is really important because [there] are these other parts of people that are significant, and you see that animate people when that part comes alive again" (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

This idea of witnessing brings with it the notion of someone watching and being part of a shift or a meaning being made. It opens possibilities, hope, and choices (Learmonth, 1994). The art therapy process allows journeys, stories, and experiences to be witnessed and then to be reformed and regrouped, helping connect narratives, imagined and real, with the aim of instilling resilience (Lloyd et al., 2018a).

D correlated with this, as he felt meaning was made by *"the relational and absorption of using materials in the presence of other"* (Participant D, phase 1 of data collection).

C noted meaning-making slightly differently. He saw TCT more as collective engagement, everyone joining in together rather than the suggestion of some witnessing. For him, this sense of community at TCT was reminiscent of his own Sudanese cultural heritage, where community was pivotal: *"People come together and do things together*" (Participant C, phase 1 of data collection). This, for him, was a way of making meaning.

E noted the importance of the group: *"I'm very interested in groups and the fact that individuals can find spaces within groups and connection both to themselves and to other people"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

G sees the placing in a wider context also as a crucial element of helping meaning-making and making sense of something: *"The discussions that happen around or maybe it's the space to discuss and think together—I really think it makes a huge difference to what's going on because it's about awareness of what's going on as a group around the table, it's not just us. I am going to use a really French term: 'animating' an activity. We're really thinking about the whole context—the table, the room, the courtyard, the street….*

"We extend it, our—into the teams we work with, it does not just sit with us—that's why we people just come back is because we create some meaning for the teams we work with…. Here with volunteers and the staff we are used as a thinking space—whether it's people sitting at the table, conversations we are having before or after, even during the work, we're frequently used for that. And we get asked to do trainings, rebuilding a sense of networking and understanding of systems here… It's really essential to have this as part of the work somehow."

(Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

H talked about learning as part of making meaning and seeing people engage with each other and the art materials but without any pressure on them. She specifically saw the meaning-making occurring through some kind of creative spontaneity:

"There's a lot of learning that happens on the table, that's one thing that we are always talking about… I think there's something really special as I get to see what people access around The Community Table, which is this kind of ease and lack of pressure, spontaneity… You have people really get to use the materials, use their ideas just as they occur to them, and it's without pressure, which—I really like it" (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

(I) agrees with this. She sees that a shared group space, where activities can be witnessed and this collective aspect, enables meanings to be made: *"I think people are kind of getting to explore different—different sides of their ideas, talking about something but also doing something else that their hands—it just, you know, I think you can kind of get to these really unexpected places just because of the variety of what's happening around the table, and everybody is kind of getting to contribute something from a slightly different angle"* (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

This chapter explored the emergent themes in response to the research question: What are the meanings for participants of the practices of The Community Table? These themes were around home—that TCT was familiar; safe space—that TCT was a safe place to be; culture—that TCT had a culture in itself but also enabled people to build on their own culture; time—that TCT was a place where people could have time to do something for them; and meaning-making—that TCT was a place where people could make meaning out of their experiences.

Chapter 7: Research question 2: Findings

This chapter explores the findings from the data analysis process, organized around the second research question: What is the perceived impact of The Community Table, if any, on participants? Table 23 below outlines the themes, characteristics, and subthemes.

Table 23: Themes for research question 2: What is the perceived impact, if any, of TCT on participants?

Theme	Characteristics	Subthemes
Absorbing: "Totally absorbing times" (D)	Destressing, calming, and relaxing	Personally therapeutic Immersion Distraction
Valued: "I appreciate you coming, it made an impact on my life" (C)	Beneficial and important	Autonomy A sense of self
Able to cope: "Makes me feels stronger" (A)	Managing something difficult better—emotional regulation	Hope
Making a social connection: "This is the first conversation that I have had for three months" (G)	Inclusion Antidote to loneliness, accepting someone for who they are	Democratic

Introduction

In response to the perceived impact of TCT, four themes—absorbing, valued, able to cope, and making a social connection—all came up as repeated patterns across all the data of what the perceived impact was, if any, on participants at TCT.

The characteristics of the first theme—absorbing—were around suggestions of the impact of TCT being destressing, calming, and relaxing. The subthemes were personally therapeutic, immersion, and distraction.

The characteristics of the second theme—valued—focused on being beneficial and important, with subthemes around autonomy and a sense of self.

The characteristics of the third theme—able to cope—was around managing something difficult better—emotional regulation. The subtheme was hope.

The characteristics of the final theme—making a social connection—were inclusion, antidote to loneliness, and accepting someone for who they are. The subtheme for this was democratic.

There is no consensus on what constitutes appropriate, evidence-based practices for psychological support in the immediate and midterm post-trauma phases (Gersons and Olff, 2005; Hobfoll et al., 2021). Given this, exploring the impact of TCT helps to offer insights into how TCT is experienced as being effective in the emergency context of northern France and beyond. It is crucial to offer evidence about whether TCT is a model of practice that benefits individuals in such settings.

The data collection included a diverse range of participants, aiming to understand TCT from multiple viewpoints to get a collective and shared understanding of TCT practices. This approach provided insights into different aspects of the experiences felt by all involved. There was a benefit to interviewing the two asylum seeker participants (A and C) while in a safer environment where they were beginning to explore asylum at the time. This differed from the vulnerable position most asylum seekers who use TCT are in. Consequently, A and C could consider the impact of the practices with a more longitudinal perspective, not just the immediate effects but also the long-term impact. They felt that the positive impacts they experienced extended beyond the “here and now”. The practices at TCT helped them cope beyond the sessions, enabling them to build positive memories and resilience in facing ongoing difficulties.

All participants perceived the impact of TCT as positive. Initially, I was concerned about the lack of critique. Participants were very complimentary of the experience of TCT; I considered whether refugee participants felt they could be critical to someone who offered support to them. When I returned to the data, I realized several things which helped to resolve this conundrum. The criteria for who was suitable for recruitment included who was interested in partaking in the research of their own volition, who had used the interventions more than once, and who was assessed to be able to emotionally stabilize themselves. This did not exclude anyone who may

have had a less positive experience. The research question was what the *perceived impact* of TCT was. The response that was given was about participants' own experiences and their perception of other people's experiences. I have no evidence to dispute this, these were their responses, and disputing this would make all the data questionable. Returning to the data and considering latent meaning from the participants, I noticed there was some critique. Participants did critique, it was just not in direct response to the research questions asked.

An example of this is with A, who referred to things being harder when TCT was not present. Days felt longer and he was less "*Happy"* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection). This tells us not only that he missed TCT, but that it was not there enough, which impacted on him negatively. Participant C was able to state negative experiences he had had with other support networks there to help him. He described that he was terribly treated by the homeless hostel where he had short respite, which gave him *"a negative way of thinking"* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection).

Participant H and (I) both commented as to how they sometimes felt they did not do anything or add value to TCT. They explored this reflexively, but this still reflects some critical elements about TCT. These considerations provided evidence that not everything was seen through rose-tinted glasses.

Notably, everyone felt that TCT had a positive impact on both themselves and other participants of TCT. In the first phase of data collection, the responses from B and D, a humanitarian worker and a volunteer, respectively, indicated that the TCT model provided benefits to all involved and that it was personally therapeutic for them personally.

In the second phase of data collection, TCT facilitators not only recognized the benefits for TCT participants but also acknowledged that they themselves benefitted from the practices. F, G, H, and (I) particularly noted the positive impact the practices had on them: *"I have to say that Wednesdays are often the best day of my week. I think the interactions that I have here are delightful and really delight me*" (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

Now each theme with reference to the subthemes will be discussed.

1) Absorbing: "*Totally absorbing times"* (D)

I spent some time considering how to define this particular theme. I kept in mind Braun and Clarke's (2022) comments about the necessity of defining themes with a central shared meaning. After reviewing the data, the "absorbing" element derives from a quote explored below, which exemplifies the theme. For this theme I define "absorbing" as something intensely interesting and engrossing. The act of being absorbed allows someone to be immersed (a subtheme) in an activity, providing a distraction (a subtheme) from their current feelings. This concept was expressed in various ways by participants.

Wood (2000) describes absorption as being engaged in the moment with what we are doing. She considers whether the kind of play children engage in relates to a lack of self-consciousness, simply defined as absorption. To be absorbed and immersed in an activity, one needs to be comfortable or in the right environment (Wood, 2000).

Artmaking involves being lost in one's own thoughts, and being absorbed creates the possibility of having mental space (Wood, 2000). Participants' descriptions of their experiences of being absorbed, or witnessing others' absorption, describes one of the ways in which TCT practices have an impact. Absorption allows for a sense of focus, being engrossed in something, which can distract from difficult experiences and shift a negative mood. The actual process of making art requires focus and concentration. Having access to such spaces can add to people's capacity to consider how they feel.

D found TCT personally therapeutic, but then defined why: *"My immediate response how personally therapeutic I found them. Your visits to the house [safe house in Calais for young male asylum seekers] were often my most happy times in the house, just being with a bunch of people around the house totally immersed in what they were doing, things like making a castle with cards and then it being knocked down—totally absorbing times"* (Participant D, phase 1 of data collection).

D chose an image relating to one of his favourite activities (see Figure 29).

He said: *"That powerful moment of self-expression, release from pressure… being beyond words frees you up"* (Participant D, phase 1 of data collection). But he also recounted watching others: *"On that table there were times when people could re-engage with their childhood totally absorbing. A young man making videos with you, they were remarkable times. There was focused concentration, expressing memories that were really important. I think that links into what I was just talking about… The significance is that it enables people to remove themselves for a short time from the immediacy of people's lives, absorbing them so they can express something about their lives before being in Calais. It's a moment of self-expression"* (Participant D, phase 1 of data collection).



Figure 29: Participant D making a house of cards (© Art Refuge)

H found that it shifted her own negative thinking. She felt inspired by people's absorption and creativity at TCT: *"I love being around people who are doing things*

with their hands and visual things… playing with reflections and bending light all over the place… It gets me out of my own head and feeling really pressured… Yeah, I can make a bit of space for myself in some of these ideas… The conversations are so rich and, actually, trying to digest the complicatedness of these situations" (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

(I) observed people's absorption and how TCT seems to help people find peace: *"We've seen a lot of characters coming in and they're quite unstable and take a while to do things… Then they sit down for a few hours to build a building, and you can see them finding a peace, focusing, and activity, I think that's very important. It takes the minds of whatever problem you are experiencing from what I see"* (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection). She described how she got completely immersed in the activities: *"There is a completely different dimension where you can just completely transport yourself to somewhere alien by trying to build this world, that escape, there is something magical about it"* (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

F noted how the feeling of absorption was difficult to describe: *"It's a very complicated thing to describe because at the same time it's a little bit separate from the world, at the same time you're totally in it"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

The idea of absorption as being engaged in something other than one's immediate concerns can promote a sense of calmness. Promoting calmness in a crisis is pivotal. While some anxiety is a normal, healthy response and a necessary defence mechanism, the promotion of calmness supports emotional regulation during and beyond a crisis (Hobfoll et al., 2021).

A noted how his absorption at TCT changed his mood and destressed and relaxed him: *"Yesterday when I woke up in the morning at the start of my day, my mind was completely different until I joined Community Table… Building house was beautiful. When I did this my mind completely changed, I relaxed, I forgot everything stressful that was happening. In the morning I didn't feel happy because of so many things in Calais, in the morning and in the afternoon, I saw different things, I was bored before in the city, it was rainy and cold, I felt tired and sad when I joined table, but after a*

while I felt relaxed" **(**Participant A, phase 1 of data collection). For A, his experience at TCT was an antidote to the difficulties of daily existence in Calais.

The notion of stress seemed to resonate; focusing on something other than difficulties offered respite from stress and anxiety, however brief. B noticed how people focused at TCT and the impact: *"TCT is good for breathing and good for stress"* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

F observed someone who came to TCT: *"Well, this young guy was 24. He was looking at the people making houses, and I said, 'Would you like to make one?' And he said, 'Yes, that's what you do when you're stressed'"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

F repeated in both phases of data collection that TCT was a calming space: *"It's quite calming space, it's calming"* (Participant F, phase 1 of data collection); *"TCT quite often calms people down"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

As Wood (2000) says: "When we remember places where we have felt at home, we remember ourselves and reclaim the capacity to be absorbed" (2000, p.51). So the ability to be absorbed is an indicator of a successful impact in terms of the practices of TCT.

2) Valued: "*I appreciate you coming, it made an impact on my life"* (C)

The term "valued" in this theme is meant to denote something held in great esteem or possessing admirable qualities, something worthy or having honourable merit. The essence of this theme is that participants felt a sense of being valued. They experienced this personally and through artmaking and viewing, recognizing that people and the artwork at TCT are valued, seen as beneficial and important. When someone is valued, it instils a more confident sense of self and enables a sense of autonomy (subthemes). A core aspect of working with refugees is the disempowerment they experience, and, as formerly discussed, the loss of a sense of place and personal identity. Artwork becomes a mediator of feeling valued, and the maker gains self-esteem.

The notion of making something special is derived from anthropologist Dissanayake, who noted the significance of the arts in evolution. She considers it a universal human behaviour to recognize that some things are special and to treat them differently from the everyday (Dissanayake, 2013). Across all cultures, including those without a concept of art per se, there is a propensity and need to make things special. This transforms certain activities from everyday reality to something extraordinary, beyond those meeting basic survival needs. Ritual and play are forms of normal human behaviour set apart from the everyday (Dissanayake, 2013).

Hobfoll et al. (2021) identify the importance of agency and sense of self (further discussed in the theme below around making a social connection). In psychological terms, self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capacity to self-regulate thought, emotions, and behaviour (Bandura, 1997; Carver and Scheier, 1998; Hobfoll et al., 2021). Therefore, the idea of something like an artwork being made special and valued can lead to a person feeling more valued, counter their sense of uselessness, and enhance self-efficacy.

All participants noted a positive impact of TCT on their lives and that it added the sense of being valued. However, being valued manifested in different ways in the data. There was a reciprocal sense of being valued in that participants felt valued by the interpersonal relationships and the practices, and there was also a sense that TCT itself was something of value as an entity and it was missed when not present. This raises the question of whether the same sentiment would be expressed if TCT were present every day.

The quote taken for the theme was from C, who said: *"I so much appreciate you coming, it made an impact on my life. It is important to appreciate Art Refuge in Calais. Your friends are very kind, giving refugees something to do. I hope all your team never give up with people"* (Participant C, phase 1 of data collection).

He went on to say: *"Art Refuge has a lot of effect on people. What would happen if Art Refuge was not there? Then what would the situation be? I think there will be no emotional psychological support and people would feel even more isolated. TCT and things like this to helped displaced people feel human again and that they are not useless"* (Participant C, phase 1 of data collection).

A noted the gaps and absence of TCT, which highlighted his valuing of TCT but was also a critique as to TCT not being there as often as needed: *"When you're not here* [Art Refuge] *I feel I have lost something. Something is not there that is important"* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection). This infers how much A values the TCT as an entity but that it impacts him negatively when he is not there.

B noticed the absence of TCT but noted how there was a sense of continuity from the images on the wall: *"I want to think out loud—I guess there is a continuity of the space when you are not there, not only the table but the photos that you have up from the sessions, and sometimes people come over and want to show me and tell me this is me"* (Participant B phase 1 of data collection). The images on the wall seem to hold a sense of making special and instil a sense of pride in people. It is also an example as to how someone views having an image they did on the wall as cherished.

B also acknowledged the Art Refuge work supporting staff teams as extremely valuable: "*I loved working with you guys, your work would be giving me signs about how we are doing things generally in the day centre, your feedback in the meetings and seeing you work at The Community Table"* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

Another aspect of feeling valued came from the experiences B had of Art Refuge being responsive and adaptive to personal needs as well as in relation to the immediate context or situation. This was in the form of emotional validation, where there was recognition, understanding, and expression of acceptance of other's feelings. B felt the feelings of asylum seekers were acknowledged by the Art Refuge team, but also the team acknowledged that staff may have difficult feelings: *"When we had a bad event… you offered us two sessions for the staff after this difficult time, which was great"* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

This sentiment was further underscored by the image he chose to accompany his interview (see Figure 30 below). The image depicted five champagne corks pierced by nine-centimetre nails, which had been deliberately positioned in front of the entrance to the day centre with the intention of puncturing the aid vehicles' tyres as they entered the car park. This action was perceived as a direct attack on the centre

due to its work with refugees. The Art Refuge team suggested that he create a cyanotype (sun print). In an active manner, B threw the corks onto treated paper, which, when exposed to the sun, created a print. He expressed gratitude for being asked to create the image and remarked on how sensitively this process was handled, capturing the emotions he experienced at that specific moment. He expressed a desire to shout “Stop this!” as he threw the corks everywhere. Subsequently, he posted the image he created on Twitter (now known as X).

B expressed feeling supported and valued by the artmaking process. He shared the image with me, kept in his new office in Paris, viewing it as a powerful representation and reminder of the situation. He felt that the process allowed him to transform anger into something positive and into a form of activism, where he could shed light on the issues and politics surrounding refugee work. B perceived a sense of reclaiming autonomy in a situation beyond his control, attributing value to his feelings.



Figure 30: Cyanotype image posted on X (formally known as Twitter) (© Art Refuge)

E reiterated the significance of having good quality materials in terms of helping people feel valued: *"I hope that people feel appreciated and validated. I think that the quality of materials we offer is a really significant part of that—we try to bring the very best"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

G considers how it is not only the quality of the materials but also how they are used in the space. G felt that people value TCT because no demands or pressure is put on people, and they are responded to in a direct way: *"It's not simple as just saying 'Hello' to someone or playing a game, I don't know, there is a real need for something else to happen and hold space or exchange that goes beyond just responding to someone's needs or demands. Because often those demands can't be met here, and people know that, but they still come and need this space to happen, and whether that's an exchange between themselves or something else that's happening at TCT, that's what's really valuable about TCT… That's what people tell us directly. They say this is important for them and they want to know when you're back. They take images away with them or send their images to another member of their family elsewhere or something like that"* (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

E goes on to say: *"You realize that people are so marginalised here—such a complex thing of being forced into these positions, of always being seen as kind of on the edge or in need of something—and trying to find ways where you're not always engaged in that role here is really important because [there] are these other parts of people that are significant, and you see that animate people when that part comes alive again and they need to step into that space. Then there's a gradual rebuilding of trust in relational spaces that can happen"* (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

What emerged from the data is that TCT counters refugees' feelings of uselessness by giving them a sense of being valued. G talks about people being marginalised. If people are marginalized, then they are placed in a position of minor or marginal importance. This resonates with C's comments about how TCT counters refugees' feelings of uselessness by giving them a sense of being valued and valuable.

G feels this idea of not being there to "give things" is an important strand of TCT, as it means we are there for the person rather than having a transactional relationship.

What is meant by this is an interaction that is focused on a clear expectation of benefit on both sides. This concept of having a transactional relationship with those who have less power than oneself was critiqued by both B and D, as they have both

witnessed this uncomfortable dynamic in humanitarian work where things are just given or asserted by an aid organization that are not necessarily asked for or chosen, but there is an expectation in the transaction that a refugee will be grateful and give appreciation to the workers (this concept will be returned to in the making social connection theme further down). Both B and D strongly felt there was an inference that, in exchange for things being given, there was an expectation that there would be deference or gratitude, even when this was not something asked for.

But there was another sense of value that C highlighted which was in fact the actions of artmaking. He noted a suggestion that was made to him by the Art Refuge team when he was in a hospital bed in Calais which was to draw. He recognized the value that was given to his situation and the consideration of what may best support him, not just in the now but also going forward in his life: *"This it really helped me when I had my interview in the Home Office. If I did not have Art Refuge to help, it was very difficult for me. It helped me know how to get my story straight in my mind. This it helped me now with the Home Office"* (Participant C, phase 1 of data collection).

He also noted how being valued gave him a sense of respect for himself. At a time when he was ill in a homeless hostel in Calais, the team visited him. Although this was not at TCT, it was part of the work that the team invested in to sustain TCT and therefore important to register as an element of the impact of TCT. *"During time in the homeless shelter, I felt respected and valued knowing I have friends from the UK coming to visit me. I felt very emotional that people cared about me"* (Participant C, phase 1 of data collection).

E, F, G, and (I) describe an attitude that the team has at TCT, which is to value people. For E this as an aspiration: *"I hope that people feel recognised as fellow human beings who have valuable things to bring into the space, just as we might do as well. I hope that people feel appreciated and validated"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

E, F, G, and (I) all emphasized the significance of value in their interviews. They expressed their personal aspirations and motivations to ensure that those they worked with felt valued. A primary focus of their work was to ensure that individuals felt valued, included, and worthwhile. The concept of being valued is intersubjective,

implying a shared process where both parties recognize and appreciate each other's value. Participants unanimously agreed that feeling valued, recognized, and validated is crucial. TCT provides individuals with a sense of being valued, acknowledged, and recognized.

3) Able to cope: "*When I join TCT it makes it a happy day and makes me feels strong"* (A)

This theme delves into the impact of TCT on strengthening individuals emotionally and enhancing their ability to cope with their circumstances. Participants noted that TCT contributed to building their coping abilities and aiding emotional regulation against negative feelings. With this is the subtheme of hope, which is one of the things that underpins an ability to cope.

Experiencing positive emotions such as joy, humour, interest in various activities, feeling valued, and experiencing love can broaden individuals' capacity to cope with difficult circumstances (Fredrickson, 2001; Fredrickson et al., 2003). Nurturing hope is a fundamental element in enabling individuals to cope with adverse situations and can serve as a measure of resilience, which is the ability to bounce back from difficulties (Gibson, 2006; Hobfoll et al., 2007; Watson and Shalev, 2005). Resilience is evidenced by individuals successfully adapting in the face of adversity or significant threats (Charney, 2004; Feder et al., 2009).

Psychosocial activities that foster hope post-crisis or trauma play a crucial role in promoting positive emotional resilience (Hobfoll et al., 2021). Hope serves as an antidote to catastrophizing, allowing individuals to envision a better future (Hobfoll et al., 2021). In psychological terms, hope is defined as a cognitive process that connects to a sense of agency and awareness of what is needed to achieve one's aims, along with a positive outlook that a future goal is attainable (Haase et al., 1992; Snyder et al., 1991).

However, it is important to note that this perspective may be critiqued as predominantly Western, with the emphasis on self-agency potentially overshadowing beliefs in a higher power (Antonovsky, 1979; Hobfoll et al., 2021). Nonetheless, evidence suggests that hope has a significant place in post-crisis support. This could be through spiritual or religious beliefs or when there is encouragement of

community-wide efficacy and agency. By joining with rather than doing for communities and individuals, self-efficacy brings with it a sense of hope (Hobfoll et al., 2021).

The quote taken for the title of this theme was from A, who described his feelings when considering the impact of TCT as “happy and strong”. He went on to describe not only how TCT made him feel “happy and strong” but also how it gave him hope, which made him stronger and gave him a sense of faith in the world and people: *“I want to say thank you to The Community Table and all other people. I am here because of all these people who support us when I am tired, it’s raining and cold in the streets here and nobody cares about you. In France it’s sad, I felt cold and hungry, this does not give you hope. With TCT we feel happy and strong, especially with people from the UK. They give me hope”* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection). A wanted very much to go to the UK and felt that, by being with British people, this gave him a sense of hope that he was near the UK and his goal was achievable.

I noted in my reflexive research journal that, in his interview, A discussed how he had used the typewriters at the table: *“A had used the typewriter at TCT to type a series of letters to people he had met on route to Calais and those who had helped him in a variety of forms. At this time he was still living in ‘The Jungle”, outside in a makeshift tent. He described how difficult this was, having to wash his clothes outside and struggling with personal hygiene. He found this process dehumanising. A took a great deal of pride in dressing as well as he could, and he mentioned feeling a sense of shame and humiliation in the way that the general public looked at refugees as disgusting and smelly. He spent a great deal of time using the typewriter to carefully type out letters to all the people he had met on his route.*

“He said: ‘When I was a child, I saw the typewriters being used, as they didn’t have computers in Afghanistan. I love to use the typewriter. I think of memories of the past when I start writing—it makes past memories come back. I feel very happy and strong.’

“We had seen how important the letters were, and he used to say to take them and say to us that he read them at night in his tent by torchlight to remind himself of good

people" (Extract from reflexive research journal: researcher's notes from A's data collection 2020).

"The situation in Calais is bad, no one wants to be in this situation, the things that happened before I write about and keep with me—I don't have contact with a lot of those people, but writing the letters it is very good for me, it makes me happy, and memory become clearer. I met some people from different countries and had a good time with them. I was in horrible situation—they helped us in The Jungle and gave me hope. When I write something it is good for my memory, it gives me a strong feeling" (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection).

The action of using the typewriters will be discussed later, in the theme around art materials and media, as will connecting to past, present, and future. But TCT gave A the ability to regulate himself by enabling him to remember good things, consider positives in a negative situation, and instil a sense of hope.

C reiterated that TCT shifted negative thinking: *"TCT made me be able to think more positive feelings and able to have thoughts that it will not always be like this"* (Participant C, phase 1 of data collection).

F sees TCT as a place where feelings are held: *"I think sometimes it can open something out. I do think that the attention that we pay to keeping TCT an emotionally holding space means that if a tear falls, or a little bit of someone's life pops in, it's kind of held in the space"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

She also describes a moment, which she feels all facilitators have witnessed at TCT, which is a shift in a person from a negative way of thinking to a positive one: *"Well, I think it's a very complex thing to try and describe, to be honest, because there's so much that goes on. There are the materials on the table, and when one of those moments happens, it usually happens that the person has made something from all those materials that absolutely responds to what they need on that day, whether it be putting flowers in slides or making prints or writing stuff. Sometimes it's linked with something that's going around all the table, sometimes it's linked with one of the people holding the table"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

F identifies how it is difficult to describe the shift in a person from negative to positive thinking, but she saw that this shift enhances their ability to cope with their circumstances.

4) Making a social connection: *"This is the first conversation that I have had for three months*" (G)

Social support and ongoing positive attachments to people and social groups are critical in mitigating stress and trauma (Norris et al., 2002; Vaux, 1988). Social connectivity is empirically recognized as one of the most constructive principles of care after a crisis (Hobfoll et al., 2021). Being socially connected during or after a trauma enables practical problem-solving, shared emotional understanding, normalization of experiences, and shared coping strategies (Hobfoll et al., 2021).

This theme explores the aspects of social connection that came up as a positive impact of TCT. The subtheme was democratic, and, in this sense, it refers to TCT being a place for all in a context where many people on the move are not accepted into many public places or spaces.

A lack of social connection is a significant risk factor for developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after a trauma or crisis (Solomon et al., 1986). Numerous studies across various countries, religions, and cultures have highlighted the importance of social support in indicating better emotional wellbeing and recovery following a crisis or trauma (Altindag et al., 2005; Bleich et al., 2003; Galea et al., 2002; Hobfoll et al., 2006; Norris et al., 2005; Punamäki et al., 2005; Weissman et al., 2005).

However, it's important to recognize that there can also be competitiveness and tension related to cultural and religious differences, along with racial, ethnic, social, and tribal divisions (Hobfoll et al., 2021). Careful consideration must be given to managing specific types of social support, including emotional closeness, social connections, a sense of self-worth, and reliability, to counterbalance intercultural tensions that may exist.

In Calais, managing social engagement is crucial due to existing tensions among different community groups and increased violence. Incidents such as stabbings and

shootings highlight the need for attention to social dynamics. Additionally, in TCT activities in Paris, participants often living on the streets may have limited social interaction, making social engagement even more vital for their wellbeing.

The quote defining this theme came from G: *"We recognize being here, that we enable conversations to happen that are really valuable to people, just in the fact that people say this is the first conversation that I have had for three months"* (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

F considers: *"We quite often have the person at the end of the session saying to us that this is the first time I've talked to anyone like that for weeks, you know. So there is that kind of need for a communication, not necessarily about somebody or about what they're going through, it can be about, you know, [they] might end up talking about the colour of diamonds or something"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

G sees the impact of inclusion as very significant: *"To have conversations and play in even if it's very short time sometimes, we see how touched people are, they always tell us thanks for coming, thanks for listening to me, this is an amazing space, and just having the conversation. And I think it's very important. I've learned to know the value of The Community Table though… You know, they come and they say, 'It's so important that you are here for us because there's nobody else who is'"* (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

There is a recognition from people that social connection gives them a sense of worth, being treated as a person rather than having a pathology or as a refugee. A, B, C, D, and (I) all saw this as a core impact of the practices at the TCT.

E also saw a key component of the meaning of the practices as a socializing forum for people and highlighted that TCT model deliberately moves away from pathology and focusses on resilience. This is consistent with Hobfoll et al.'s (2021) premise that, in crisis, psychosocial practices need to focus on aspects of resilience building, and part of what helps this is social connection.

"Because we are working with people in transit, the work really <u>is</u> crisis support… It is the other end of the continuum of art therapy; in art psychotherapy sessions you

*have with an individual in a room over a period of time, our work is the other end of the continuum. Crisis support is a sort of socializing forum for people, a space where it is an open invitation assuming people have strengths to build on rather than having a deficit model." (*Participant E 2nd phase of data collection.)

B notices how people who need social connection gravitate to TCT: *"You know, I have been observing The Community Table from time to time in the day centre, and I see how people are interacting with The Community Table. I see people who are not necessarily vulnerable but isolated in some way, they seem to come to the table"* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

E noted how important it was that TCT was there for everyone, including staff and volunteers: *"We realised, when working in this space, how important it was that, actually, this space is for the refugee community, but it becomes even more important for the refugee community when other people join, and the fringe benefit is that the others who join, like the staff and volunteers, also gain from it"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

The aspect of people choosing to come to TCT rather than being forced or made to was reiterated by H and B as significant. H sees it as a democratic choice: *"I think it appears to provide a sort of contrast to the power and control and atmosphere around immigration, so many things that are mandatory and, yeah, you don't really get to express yourself, you know, live as a fully liberated person, so being able to see people make these choices on a micro level, I can see that that makes a difference for them"* (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

B wondered if the needs of volunteers and humanitarian workers can sometimes overwhelm those they are supposed to be working with. This leaves asylum seekers feeling obliged to respond and unable to really resist, without a space to have an opinion or a choice. B felt this happened often. He gave a particular example of his own interaction with a man. It struck him how significant it was to have a "normal'' conversation with a man he worked with: *"I want to share you with something… I remember very well when you first started, one man was staring at TCT, and he asked me what is this? He said it's for children… I took a minute to discuss with this him… and explained it was his choice to join in, but people found it helped with their*

stress. I never had the opportunity before to talk to him, he was always in a very bad way, so for the first time we had a proper conversation, and it was about TCT. Refugees don't have a chance to even criticize anything, they are supposed to just accept it. TCT gives the opportunity to talk about their surroundings… It wasn't about Dublin agreement[44] or his situation but about something else. It was a conversation about something independent" (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

B felt that, by engaging in this simple conversation, it enabled this man not to be just a "refugee" but to be a person having a conversation that was not about his situation; he was not brushed off.

H described how she saw the impact of connectiveness, and that people could take what they wanted from the experience at TCT *"depending on the individual and what they are wanting to bring, what they're wanting to take, which is wonderful, you know. You have some people just come and sit and soak up the environment and listen to other people talking, and might not talk… and also I think helped by the creativity of this space. You could tell it's nice for them to have someone busily around them making something. They might not necessarily do it themselves, but it's good for them just to be there. And part of the thing I really like about this work as an open-endedness is that you can come and do as much or as little as you want; it's really lovely. I think there are not very many moments as an adult where you actually do get to make that sort of choice, and also in a community setting surrounded by other people"* (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

This chapter explored the emergent themes from the research question: What is the perceived impact of The Community Table, if any, on participants? Four themes developed: (1) absorbing, which focused on the significance of being absorbed at TCT, which helped people to feel less stressed, calmer, and more relaxed; (2) valued—people felt they were beneficial and important when at TCT; (3) able to cope, where people felt that TCT made them manage something difficult in a better

[44] Regulation establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national. https://www.unhcr.org/uk/media/dublin-regulation#:~:text=Regulation%20establishing%20the%20criteria%20and,by%20a%20third%2Dcountry%20national

way and supported them to emotionally regulate; and (4) making a social connection, where people felt TCT was inclusive and offered socialization with others.

Chapter 8: Research question 3: Findings

This chapter explores the findings from the data analysis process, organized around the third research question: What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact? Table 24 below outlines the themes, characteristics, and subthemes.

Table 24: Themes for research question 3: What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact?

Theme	Characteristics	Subthemes
Art therapist's stance: *"Like a mother, but calm"* (B)	Caring Holds in mind Attunement	Experience Efficacy Transference Wider context Team supporting each other Collective thinking
Art materials and media: *"The art materials and media act as a sort of catalyst"* (G)	Art materials appeal Tactility Sensory Aesthetic Enthusiasm Attraction	Culture Nostalgia and pleasure
Grounding: *"Here and now"* (E)	Supporting self-soothing techniques Emotional regulation	Past, present, and future Recalibrating
Imagination: *"Making space for the possibility of it"* (H)	Playing with symbolism—imagining something other	Relational aesthetics Mentalization
Embodied experience: *"It is real for me, it is real for me, I am inside it"* (A)	Mind and body connection	Aesthetic

Introduction

The following five themes—art therapist's stance; art materials and media; grounding; imagination; and embodied experience—all came up as repeated

patterns across all the data of what the mechanisms of change were that brought about any impact at TCT.

The characteristics of the first theme—art therapist's stance—were around caring, holds in mind, and attunement. The subthemes were experience, efficacy, transference, wider context, team supporting each other, and collective thinking.

The characteristics of the second theme—art materials and media— were art materials appeal, tactility, sensory, aesthetic, enthusiasm, and attraction. The subthemes were culture, nostalgia, and pleasure.

The characteristics of the third theme—grounding—were around supporting self-soothing techniques and emotional regulation. The subthemes were around past, present, future, and recalibrating.

The characteristics of the fourth theme—imagination—were around playing with symbolism—imagining something other. The subthemes were relational aesthetics and mentalization.

The characteristics for the fifth and final theme—embodied experience—were around the mind–body experience. The subtheme was aesthetic.

Understanding the mechanisms of change in therapeutic settings like TCT involves identifying the processes or events that lead to therapeutic change. In the case of TCT, this includes exploring how actions, attitudes, and practices contribute to the meanings and impacts experienced by participants. While there is a lack of specific research on effective interventions in the immediate, mid-term, and post-mass trauma phases, relevant studies on group art therapy and community art therapy offer insights into potential mechanisms of change.

For example, Gabel and Robb (2017) identified five therapeutic factors in group art therapy: symbolic expression, relational aesthetics, embodiment, pleasure and play, and ritual. Gabel and Robb's (2017) therapeutic factors resonate with those that came up about TCT and identified in Table 22. This therefore identifies that TCT is liken other group art therapy practices.

Goldstein Nolan and Mumpton (2023) defined practice approaches in community art therapy, emphasizing ethical considerations, inclusivity, justice-orientation, theoretical expansiveness, egalitarianism, and understanding nervous system regulation. These approaches have elements that connect to the themes in Tables 19, 20, and 21. But all these practice approaches were considered in either semantic or latent ways in response to the third research question as being part of what the mechanism of change is that brings about an impact for participants. Both Gabel and Robb's (2017) and Goldstein Nolan and Mumpton's (2023) studies highlight the connection between TCT and other group art therapy practices.

In the context of TCT, participants identified the interrelationship between relational, creative, and community elements as key determinants of positive change. They highlighted the importance of facilitators' stance, attitude, and experience and the creative use of materials and media. Additionally, participants emphasized the aesthetic elements of artmaking and materials, as well as relational aspects such as kindness and caring from facilitators. Themes in Table 22 that related to the meanings of the practice, such as feelings of home, safe space, and belonging, were also seen as integral to the mechanisms of change at TCT.

Overall, participants felt that TCT provided an environment where individuals could be immersed, engaged in meaningful visual activities, and feel part of a supportive community. These processes contribute to what participants described as the impact of TCT as outlined in Chapter 7, such as emotional regulation, distraction from negative experiences, and a sense of belonging, all of which are important factors in therapeutic change.

1) Art therapist's stance and attitude: "*Like a mother, but calm"* (B)

This theme focuses on the stance and attitude of the art therapy facilitators, which came up as a key mechanism of change of what caused the positive impact of TCT. Participants viewed the art therapist as responsive and able to attune with all those who sat around TCT. The theme's title—art therapist's stance and attitude—represents repeated patterns from the data of the particular actions of the art therapists at TCT. Stance in this sense is meant as *a position* that the art therapist

holds at TCT; attitude is meant as the *point of view and frame of mind* that the art therapist has at TCT.

Some of the particular actions that were noted by participants included:

- offering calm unconditional support;
- offering encouragement and interest;
- being sensitive and attentive;
- being present;
- allowing individuals to choose if they wish to attend and what they want to do;
- not imposing an agenda;
- working with individuals' unique experiences;
- being mindful of transference and counter-transference;
- working reflexively in the moment;
- co-facilitating with team members who had lived experience of displacement;
- having a collective approach.

These actions are integrated into the discussion below of examples from the data and some references to theory. The subthemes of experience, efficacy, transference, wider context, team supporting each other, and collective thinking are woven into the examples from the data, the discussion, and references.

The quote for this theme came from B, who said: *"You know, I have been observing The Community Table from time to time in the day centre, and I see how people are interacting with The Community Table… I also don't know if you remember, but children and minors*[45] *come to your table straight away. I don't know why, but I have seen this. But you have this posture, I never thought that before, like a mother, but calm"* (Participant B phase 1 of data collection).

It could be seen as a humorous response to the idea of mothers not being calm, but B suggests a deeper exploration into the positive traits associated with motherhood, particularly the unconditional support, encouragement, and interest that mothers typically provide to their children. The notion of being calm in this context could imply

[45] There are a large number of refugee unaccompanied minors in northern France between the ages of 10 or 11 upwards.

that the facilitators at TCT do not exhibit the emotional turmoil often associated with deep involvement in others' lives.

Hobfoll et al. (2021) describe a core feature of practice in crisis contexts as the promotion of calmness. The contexts where TCT functions are highly stressful, particularly the setting of northern France, where people are in a heightened state of anxiety and tension. As acknowledged in Chapter 3 when discussing trauma-informed practice, some anxiety is normal and necessary, as there is a need for vigilance. There can be paradoxical responses in such settings where there are high levels of emotional arousal from some people, as well as others experiencing a numbing response, which does provide a sense of protection from overwhelming feelings (Breznitz, 1983; Bryant et al., 2003). This type of hyperarousal in crisis contexts can impact on how risk is perceived in whatever the external environment is, even if it is safe it can be perceived as potentially harmful, over-exaggerated and seen as a threat. Therefore, a situation can be perceived as threatening even if it is not (Hobfoll at el., 2021).

A primary reason as to why psychological debriefing is not recommended in such contexts is that it can enhance these hyperarousal mechanisms that exist in the aftermath of a trauma or crisis. When, actually, what is necessary is for people to calm down and restore a sense of balance and equilibrium (Hobfoll at el., 2021).

Reassuring someone who is in such a situation that they are not *going crazy* or that there is not something wrong with them is pivotal (Solomon, 2003). A phrase commonly used by the art therapy facilitators to participants of TCT who are distressed is "You are reacting in a normal way to an abnormal situation."

The art therapist's stance and attitude theme concerns the deliberate presentation of art therapists at TCT, emphasizing their particular traits as art therapists.

A, B, C, D, H, and (I) all highlighted the significance of the art therapists' attitude and stance, recognizing the unique value they bring to the therapeutic environment. It was H and (I) rather than art therapists who acknowledged the value of art therapists. Despite being esteemed members of the team, they acknowledged the importance of the art therapists' intentional attitude and stance. This encompasses factors discussed in the introduction, such as offering calm unconditional support;

offering encouragement and interest; being sensitive and attentive; being present; allowing individuals to choose if they wish to attend and what they want to do; not imposing an agenda; working with individuals' unique experiences; and working reflexively in the moment.

The intentional attitude and stance of the art therapists also involves being mindful of transference and countertransference.[46] Raised by E, F, and G, this also included understanding the broader context of TCT and collaborating effectively within the team. E, F, G, H, and (I) emphasized the importance of teamwork and support among the facilitators, which plays a crucial role in responding to the emotional challenges inherent in their work. Moreover, there is a recognition that TCT does not operate in isolation but is interconnected with other teams and organizations, requiring collaborative efforts to establish and maintain its operations successfully. E, F, and G also highlighted the significance of co-facilitating with team members who had lived experience of displacement having a collective approach. This collective approach to TCT aligns with the concept of the Portable Studio, as described by Kalmanowitz and Lloyd (1997; 2005), where art therapists carry with them an internal sense of studio that enables them to work effectively in various settings. However, TCT goes beyond individual practice, representing a collective endeavour upheld by the facilitating team and the organization Art Refuge. This collective structure and culture provide a framework for the art therapists to navigate the complexities of their work, ensuring that TCT operates safely, ethically, and successfully.

B elaborated on his description of the art therapist facilitators not only as "calm" but as "Zen", which highlights their composed and serene demeanour and likely contributes to the supportive and nurturing atmosphere at TCT. However, this theme extends beyond the calmness of the facilitators to encompass their overall stance,

[46] Transference is the unconscious redirection of feelings about a specific person on to someone else (in therapy, this refers to a client's projection of their feelings about someone else on to their therapist). Countertransference is the unconscious redirection of those feeling from a therapist toward the client.
https://mywellbeing.com/for-therapists/transference-and-countertransference#:~:text=Transference%20is%20the%20redirection%20of,therapist%27s%20feelings%20toward%20the%20client (accessed 27/1/24)

characterized by sensitivity and attentiveness, which fosters a sense of support and care among participants.

Another example is what B said when he made his image of the corks with nine-centimetre nails: *"We discovered the cork with nine-centimetre nails which had been thrown over the fences to destroy tyres… and I think you felt how angry we were… You [referring to the art therapists] said is it okay that we offer something? You did it in a delicate way which I appreciated. We did this picture—I threw the cork everywhere and I wanted to say stop this again! I was so happy as you showed up just at the right time"* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

It's pertinent to note what B says about asking to offer something, the use of his term "delicate", and his feeling that we showed up at the right time. Although he felt we showed up at the right time, it was coincidental, but there was a realisation that we understood and responded to a difficult situation and realised that there would be emotional fall-out, and this was appreciated. A relationship with B had developed with Art Refuge over a number of years, which enabled epistemic trust.[47] B felt this stance and attitude of the art therapists also came from the experience of having worked for several years in Calais, which gave an overall understanding of the context. This aspect of trust and acknowledgement of the skills that we can offer to other teams and organizations is identified as a key element of the mechanism of change. Part of developing epistemic trust is about consistency, being there when you say you will be and being consistently responsive.

It is not only this notion of consistency which represents the stance of art therapists, G sees it as important to develop an understanding and relationships with surrounding networks and organizations even things on the fringe. G describes this as "*on the edges".*

G says that this is a large part of her work in Paris: *"That's a big part of my work… which is on the edges, building a sense of networking and understanding of systems*

[47] Epistemic trust is an individual's willingness to consider new knowledge as trustworthy and relevant, and therefore worth integrating into their lives. https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/application-summaries/research-summaries/epistemic-trust-in-adolescents/#:~:text=Epistemic%20Trust%20(ET)%20is%20an,learn%20from%20the%20social%20environment (accessed 19/10/24)

here, because it's really essential to have this as part of the work somehow… We also really think about all the other bits that make up people's needs, both with the teams we work with as well as those at The Community Table. This is, you know, mental health wellbeing, resilience, and culture, the role of culture… I feel like we hold that part for people as it doesn't exist elsewhere… So we are trying to meet that kind of basic need… which is actually really essential in having a sense of meaning in your own identity. I think part of this is our continuity, which is hugely significant because you know the other kinds of programmes that exist here—they come and go and they are very short term usually—and they might be quite loud and take up a lot of space sometimes, but they don't have a longevity to them—there's not another group that runs in the same way—and that is really important for people" (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

Having this stance and attitude towards the edges of the work, thinking about the organizations and teams where TCT is hosted and offering expertise about mental health wellbeing, resilience, and culture helps to develop epistemic trust with not only those around TCT but also organizations around TCT.

E, F, and G all discussed how facilitators often take on the absent role of a family member. This is connected to understanding the implications of transference and counter transference. G notes how having some kind of therapeutic grounding of the implications of this is crucial. The ability to be responsive within a situation and not reactive is a core element of the attitude and stance of the art therapist's responding sensitively. The quote below explains how G sees the art therapist stance as pivotal to this aspect of TCT.

"It's important that you have some kind of therapeutic grounding when you're doing this work, but you have a sort of sense of standing in for. Sometimes you really feel your role, especially because of our gender and the fact that we are mostly working with men, but not just that. Sometimes age—you are kind of used as an aunt, sister, or a mother, or all of these different things, because those significant relationships aren't present*… There is a real transference sometimes. I say it's important that you're a therapist because you need to understand that that's what's happening and you're not actually that person, and that will end when you part at the end of that day. You do need to be able to fill that role a bit with people. But maybe it's also the*

normalizing social relations and points of exchange; just because of this marginalization, they really are not available elsewhere for people here. They don't get to have that regular community or social exchange" (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

Using an element of what might be termed as transference can work in one's favour but needs to be managed carefully. F describes how it takes mindful thinking: *"It's kind of heightened sense of presence, which is for the other, but you don't completely abstract yourself, you are still there, you know, but you are kind of standing in—for something or someone"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection). F, at a later stage of the interview, commented about her own associations of TCT being like a family kitchen table and how the therapists take on a maternal presence: *"You know, I was thinking earlier today, watching E giving people bits of plasticine and then they were making animals, I was thinking about the kitchen table; I was thinking of the mother giving bits of pastry to the children"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

There is a representation of something familiar and familial that seems to transcend across cultures. Another aspect of attitude and stance is having awareness of being attuned. This is both to where someone may be at emotionally, but also to not asking too many questions of people. Being attuned and having an awareness of attunement is part of what B described as being like a mother: offering calm unconditional support; offering encouragement and interest; being sensitive and attentive; being present; allowing individuals to choose if they wish to attend and what they want to do and not imposing a personal agenda; working with individuals' unique experiences; and working reflexively in the moment.

"There is a sort of a sense that we are attuned, I hope that people feel that they have been recognised, acknowledged, and heard. It's the very small things, the nuances, the number of times someone has said, 'Please don't ask me my name, please don't ask me how I am, I just want to have a conversation with someone, I just want to have a conversation with someone about whatever, it may be about philosophy or education. I want an authentic connection.' I think that is what people are looking for, and I think sometimes something that they get is a sort of authentic connection.*"*

(Participant E, phase 2 of data collection)

B and D noted, like E, that not asking too many questions of people and giving gentle responses to questions asked is important. I personally have witnessed times that refugees have been asked questions by well-meaning volunteers but see the struggle for refugees who can be constantly asked to retell their story, which can be retriggering. Additionally, I have seen a number of researchers asking many questions and refugees feeling aggrieved that their stories are “stolen”, reused, or retold by others outside of their control without any clear parameters as to the purpose.

Authenticity, genuineness, positive regard, and congruence are all attributes considered fundamental to common factors of psychotherapy and art therapy practice (de Witte et al., 2021). Core to this is the internal work the art therapist does, which is being reflexive in the moment, having to wait and have faith in a process that being there for someone and using these practices of attunement will have an effect.

F describes this physically: *“You’re feeling it really in your body, that is a really important moment, and you just need to be aware of this. It’s a lot about holding”* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

Part of this could be being responsive, not reactive, to a situation or the context itself, the attributes that participant B noted as being calm or zen.

G describes it as holding on to a feeling and this being reflective and reflexive. By reflective I mean the ability to pause and think about one’s practice and consciously analyse the situation, and by reflexive I mean being able to respond appropriately, recognizing the wider complexity of circumstances within the situation.

G sees this as a certain amount of questioning oneself: *“What am I doing? Am I providing enough? Am I giving enough of myself or am I just sitting there doing nothing?”* (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

However, this can also be a pressure because it is not easy to have this stance and attitude. Art therapists as HCPC registrants have a duty to “develop and adopt clear strategies for physical and mental self-care and self-awareness, to maintain a high

standard of professional effectiveness and a safe working environment" (HCPC Standard of Proficiency, 2024, p.3).[48]

E describes: *"It takes a certain amount of energy, resilience, and ongoing work to stop feeling burnt out or exhausted. It's important to get on top of all the stuff you can. We know that you can feel helpless and hopeless and useless at different points of this work, and you sort of feel useless"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

Reflective and reflexive practice from art therapists as part of their stance and attitude is crucial, as it allows them to effectively manage the challenging experiences encountered at TCT. For instance, they may internalize feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and uselessness observed in participants, reflecting the difficult circumstances faced by those attending TCT. This process can be seen as a form of countertransference, where the therapist absorbs the emotions of their clients. Understanding this is necessary to enable taking a responsive rather than reactive stance and attitude.

The TCT facilitation team recognizes the importance of processing their own experiences and understanding the impact of the context on themselves and their clients. They navigate this by acknowledging their limitations and understanding what they can and cannot do in overwhelming situations. Importantly, they prioritize working alongside participants rather than imposing their own agendas, allowing individuals to lead the process.

The reflective and reflexive process as part of the stance and attitude of the art therapist is important, as it also models this for other facilitators.

For (I), initially grappling with her role as an artist with lived experience of displacement was challenging. However, she has since embraced her role and finds meaning in prioritizing direct work at TCT. Reflection is important for all the facilitating team. Through reflection, (I) began to understand that her presence was enough. The art therapists have a duty of care to support other members of the facilitating team. Paragraph 4.8 of the HCPC Standard of Proficiency highlights the

[48] https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/standards/standards-of-proficiency/reviewing/arts-therapists---sop-changes.pdf (accessed 17/10/24)

need for art therapists to have an active role in both participating in and providing, when relevant, training, supervision, and mentoring practice (HCPC Standards of Proficiency, 2024[49]).

"So sometimes I question my presence at the table as an artist, what do I bring? Sometimes I feel like I don't bring enough, and it took me a while to learn that my presence is enough rather than still constantly searching for something to do. As an artist I always had an end goal, and outcomes. I'm sitting here and there's no outcome, so I needed to learn this is okay, and I really love it now! This is one of the beautiful things I love about TCT and Art Refuge… What we are doing is quite important, and we're not just pretending to do this or it's not just a tick list, we're there on the front line and we are doing the work, because, like I mentioned earlier, there's so many organizations that they get huge funding that's working with this community [refugees], and their contact is so little and I hate that… That's something Art Refuge does so beautifully" (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

H has also struggled with questions as to what she was doing, but she observed she learnt from the art therapists in the space as to how to be patient and allow people to come to TCT themselves: *"I think there are definitely times, probably down in the drop in, where I sort of would stop and think, 'What [are] we doing?', 'What am I doing?', 'Why is that?', 'What's going on?' And, also, 'Why is nobody here?', and I think also it's to do [with] having just enough patience and being able to sit with whatever is in the room. Then people do come, and it begins to make sense. That is a skilful piece of managing, I think I learnt quite a lot from you and E. This… this kind of holding and waiting and also doing your own thing, and then when people begin to join, you are just expanding that outward. I think I've sort of tried to learn this from watching, from trying to absorb seeing you and E and whoever else we have been working with. I think also that's something to do with opening the space out to people and in a very non-pressurizing way, then also I think there's a real sort of self-containment in that often we will just sort of sit and do our stuff and then it will come, and people come and join in, and I think there is a quality of them picking up on something that's already happening… It allows the people who have kind of come in*

[49]https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/standards/standards-of-proficiency/reviewing/arts-therapists---sop-changes.pdf (accessed 17/10/24)

and join us to really make the decision to join us rather than having anything pushed on them" (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

Another aspect of the stance and attitude is related to how art therapists encouraged agency. B felt very strongly that refugees had no choices and saw TCT practice of someone choosing themselves to come to TCT as being a key element of the success of the model. B gave an example of a discussion he had had with a refugee about his experiences of living in "The Jungle": *"It had been raining, a car drew up and out of the car came some raincoats, exactly what he needed at the time, but he did not go to the shop and buy it or choose it himself, it was something being done to him. There was no space to criticize, he just had to take whatever raincoat he was given. As someone who has nothing, he has no choice, even though he did need the coat, it may not be the actual coat he wanted, but he cannot complain… From a volunteer point of view, you want an immediate result as to what you are giving, often they want to know yes, I am doing something, it's useful, it's important, it's urgent, of course it's important. But something about how you [TCT] are being present with others in the space. I always had this vision of this work as feeding people. Giving clothes and tents, of course this is important, but being present in the space with others is the most important. I always thought with volunteers, refugees are not here so you can help them… It is difficult to be in this space as a volunteer or as a staff member and to sit and wait… It is difficult to wait and wait for someone to come towards you. But it's so important to let them choose to come to you if they want to"* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

What B refers to is a critical aspect of enabling someone to self-advocate. This helps restore their sense of self, which is so vulnerable in the midst or after a crisis or trauma (Hobfoll et al., 2021).

B noted how significant this was: *"Not in the aim or the object, but the way that you do it. It is about being present. I remember I told volunteers not to force people, please come and join us… Giving people the space and the choice. You [TCT] let people observe what you are doing, and, if they are interested enough, t*hey *will come and join. They might not be ready for the moment, so it may be tomorrow or next week. Give people the choice, because most of the actions around help is always about giving or imposing something, forcing someone to accept because they*

do not have any choice. An example is of food: it is my ingredients, my choice with my taste, you are forced to accept because they have no choice. You give them the choice, they come to you if they want. There is a chair for everyone, everyone is free to join or not. I notice that sometimes people come to you and say, 'Hi, how are you?' They ask you, 'What are you doing here?' And you answer, and then they leave and that is all they want to do, and you accept this. Very short chit chat and that is it" (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

E sees it as part of the experience and skills of the team that delivers TCT: *"Everything that we do is about building a relationship with people and looking at ways of doing that. I think that's where the skills of the people who deliver TCT lies"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

G sees it also as the facilitating team thinking together about the wider context, the space, and what might impact TCT that day: *"The really wide context and you're thinking about those differences and how they impact on what's going on, what it feels to be in that space together, on that day. And you need to be able to use each other as a thinking space and also support each other in the work at TCT. You know if you see someone getting really stuck in it, an intense conversation with someone gently intervening; it can happen to any of us at TCT sometimes. You need someone with the right kind of experience… to discuss and think together. I really think it makes a huge difference to what's going on because it's about awareness of what's going on as a group around the table, it's not just us. I am going to use a really French term: 'animating' an activity. We're really thinking about the whole context—the table, the room, the courtyard, the street"* (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

However, E stated that it is important that not just art therapists facilitate TCT: *"It has become increasingly clear to me the importance of having people who have lived experience in the team… It makes so much difference to people, particularly in Folkestone where people have arrived, to find people who themselves have been through the process of displacement"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

An additional element of the stance and attitude of art therapists is them being mindful of creating a collegiate and collaborative environment within the team. This is

particularly resonant in a context where there may not be any external infastructure present and the TCT functions in situations that are tense and volatile.

H, (I), E, and G talk about the supportiveness of working in a team, which is seen as mutually beneficial between the art therapists and the other facilitators. E and G see it as an important element that enables the art therapist's stance as it offers a collective support. Although H and (I) have a slightly different angle, they appreciate this: *"And, you know, I think we definitely have important moments of being as a team… and that's really important to me, to actually be able to go there together as a group of people working in [a] space together"* (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection). (I) agrees: *"I feel like we created a lot of friendship through this process—and providing that space, being here constantly and not losing touch with each other"* (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection). G identifies it as a framework: *"Working in a team creates a framework, I think, as a therapist. It's kind of [a] frame of the work when we don't have such physical boundaries that are in a traditional clinical space. You have to really work on that kind of internal sense of a framework, like a portable studio, but I think we have extended it here to something important for a group of people to be thinking together and we extend it beyond, into the teams we work with—it does not just sit with us. That's why people come back, because we create some meaning for the wider teams we work with too. You know here, with volunteers and the staff, we are used as a thinking space—whether it's people sitting at the table, conversations we are having before or after TCT, we're frequently used for that. And we get asked to do trainings, and that's really useful for people, and so I think that's really part of the work, actually, and it wouldn't work if we didn't do all this extra stuff… We can hold something else in the space together"* (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

2) Art materials appeal: *"The art materials and media act as a sort of catalyst"* (G)

This theme encompasses patterns that emerged in the data related to the art materials and media. These were seen as a key mechanism of change at TCT by participants. The characteristics of the theme art materials appeal include tactility, sensory, aesthetic, enthusiasm, and attraction. These were all regular patterns that came up in the data. The subthemes were culture, nostalgia, and pleasure. These

were either more one-off or latent areas that came up. The subthemes are also woven into the discussion.

The selection of art materials and media in art therapy is a critical aspect of the therapeutic process, as they serve as vehicles through which individuals express themselves and create meaning (Moon, 2010). At TCT, the choice of materials is deliberate and thoughtful, often incorporating unconventional items with historical or cultural significance to evoke nostalgia and connection.

The art materials and media used at TCT, ranging from traditional drawing tools to unique items such as miniature bricks or kaleidoscopes, are sourced with care and attention to detail. The intention is to provide a rich and diverse palette that encourages visual self-expression and narrative development. This approach supports participants in exploring their inner worlds, enhancing self-awareness, self-esteem, and emotional regulation.

The aesthetic appeal of the art materials was evident to all the participants in the research, who appreciated their unique qualities and sensory elements. The deliberate use of familiar and nostalgic items resonated with participants. This was considered as fostering a sense of comfort and familiarity within the therapeutic space.

The significance of the art materials was consistently highlighted by all participants, who praised their soulfulness, creativity, and ability to capture imagination. The aspect of them being familiar and nostalgic was important. These materials play a crucial role in facilitating meaningful engagement and creative exploration at TCT, contributing to the overall therapeutic experience.

In my own reflexive learning journal, I noted the use of scale and perspective with the use of large-scale maps and small objects, plastic enlargers, and a box of very small figures of people normally used for architectural models: *“I find myself fascinated with the playing with scale and perspective that happens at TCT. The tablecloth map scale is big alongside the small bricks, and dioramas [see example in Figure 31 below] are created; alongside houses, people use plasticine to create little additions to their house and add small people. Backgrounds are added using postcards or black and white photos from the collection Art Refuge has. I think the*

small scale allows people to have a sense of control in creating their own world. But the act of making something small against something big gives a sense of perspective, which seems to hold and reflect something about people's situations, recognising that they cannot change larger things but are able to shift things in a small way. I wonder if this gives a sense of agency?" (Extract from reflexive research journal, 2022).



Figure 31: Shining light on a diorama (© Art Refuge)

The title of the theme came from G, who said: *"The art materials and media act as a sort of catalyst. We are somehow curators—what you put down on that table becomes a pop-up exhibition or a pop-up installation… You're opening something up to people who then have a place around the table. You have these materials and getting to use them for a time, and I think it sort of signifies being part of a larger thing. I think there is definitely equality and exchange with each other… people getting to try things out and do things and show them to each other, their ideas*

interpreted and kind of moved on by other people. I love seeing ideas travel around the table" (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

G considered the materials as a core mechanism of change and the convenor for people to get involved and connected. G felt the materials were *"a point of engagement… a kind of launch pad into things, I think that probably reflects in our materials and how we think in the materials… You do a lot of your thinking through your choice of media, what you're going to put on this table, because what's going to provide a kind of access point for people to engage"* (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

D saw the art materials as a catalyst to build a relationship with others, too: *"Building relationships around the table, trying to relate to each other, is what we are trying to do; we are there trying to build an intimacy. The materials you bring to the table, they are a trigger or catalyst to build the relationship"* (Participant D, phase 1 of data collection).

There needs to be a great deal of thinking about what materials should be used, when, and why. E identified that the importance of tuning the use of materials to details of the context include things like the time of day and the weather: *"So we have learnt that we need to be as careful in the selection of materials as in all other aspects of the work, in terms of the timing, the presentation, attunement to the weather, and so on and so forth… But also, having said that, we did learn by trial, like plasticine is a useful material even [if we personally] do not really like it, that a building material like the bricks was really valuable… We also learnt that drawing in 'The Jungle' was useful, but it was not the only way to go. When we first started, we had imported the sort of traditional art therapy culture into that space, which didn't necessarily use the most valuable tools. We use non-traditional materials now. We need to find the right tool for the job at that particular time"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

E went on to explain how weather can impact the choice of materials: *"Probably in February there would have been probably several hundred people in the day centre. It would have probably been raining outside… We would have decided that, once again, because shelter is diminished by the rain, the experience of finding shelter,*

and because people are coming in wet and needing to dry off, somehow the building materials lend themselves to those particular circumstances. We don't, for example, use them so much in the summer. There are times in the winter that offering these miniature bricks that we use seems to be the right tool for the job" (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

But she also highlighted how important it was to understand the materials, know their properties, and also have an intention for bringing it to TCT: *"With any new material we bring onto the table… I feel that we have to know why we are bringing it. It's no good just to sort of bring it and see what happens. We need to have understood how to use it first"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

But another aspect is that often items are "pre-used", sourced from markets or collections found in vintage shops. E sees this as a way of connecting to people's own experiences and memories. She describes a collection of black and white photos that are often used: *"A lot of the materials have a prehistory. They have come from somewhere else; they've had another life. So the photographs—so this was the great pyramids near Cairo, was possibly taken in the 70s [showing researcher the photograph]—I don't know this woman who's no longer alive and this archive has come our way. But lots of people have been able to relate to this image, which connects to memory"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

H and (I) described how the choice of materials is significant: *"I think materials are clearly thought about so carefully… I think part of that selection process, with each thing there's some kind of thinking done as to what it might signify—what it might help somebody achieve or what it might bring up for somebody. And I think both kind of putting all of these things together from different places but also a careful selection, it's interesting as I'm kind of saying these things, there's lots of different meanings and that it is also sort of nebulous as to what people take away at any given moment, but I think there's like an orientation that it's very much consistent in all of the instances of this work that I've seen"* (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

People associate TCT with the materials used, but, also, when they see others using certain things, they become interested. (I), like G, noted that once they see materials

being used and activated, they develop on from this and begin to develop their own ideas: *"I think the tools and the materials is another familiarity… They remember the bricks and they want to use them… There was a stamp out today, I was doing some stamps, and this guy says, 'Oh, I want to do stamps, but I don't want to do it like that. I want to do it all methodically, all lined up and everything.' It took him somewhere, and all happy memories where he said he used to do this kind of thing. I think the materials are really important, and selecting what works and the energy that Art Refuge puts into really creating [and] choosing the right material. We always talk about the materials—'What material should we take?' E has a genius mind finding what could work"* (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

Like G, (I) notices how the table becomes expanded with ideas, one person seeing something that another person picks up on: *"I love when we sit down and I am trying to create something. I am just here to play and see what we can discover… Today I started to build this village, and I just started it and it went really far, everybody started adding things, so a tiny, tiny village became a huge village with lots of people, and it's the conversations that go round it. There were some beautiful conversations, and people talking about their families, and people talking about in my village is this and this is existing, so they're trying to replicate that"* (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

H describes how the aesthetic aspects connect with people and mentally transports them to somewhere else: *"I do think that the thoughtfulness of the materials is part of that, and also that these things are often old, beautifully made, or aesthetically interesting, but you actually, you know, you do get to inject a bit of visual difference, or textual or whatever that is, it's probably very powerful. I think there's something about the way that the materials also echo or evoke bits of people's experiences, the map particularly. And then also what we were talking about this morning about portals and mirrors, and I'm thinking particularly about, you know, the contents of today's table that we see—it changes. You know, I've seen those things at work today and actually transported-ness [sic] of them. I think there is something about reminding people that place, a sense of place, can change, and you know also they can sort of control this on a micro scale, [it's] really powerful and actually, because*

people are adults, it stops it being infantilizing; it's quite empowering." (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

H also notices her own response to the materials when describing her visual response in the data collection and how the materials evoked a great deal in an aesthetic and sensory capacity. They evoked something personal for her, connecting with her own family and memories of childhood: *"I was feeding the silver into the typewriter—I just love that it takes these imprints so beautifully—I have been writing on it today with the ballpoint pen, not that I can read what I have written… [see Figure 32]. Hmm, I have always loved pens and paper, and I think the physical act of writing is, like, it's such a creative one and choose how you are going to write the words, and I always thought that was really exciting, in a way, of kind of stamping a piece of personality. It's sort of quite a standardized thing, writing—and also, so my twin is a visual artist, and so I can see this in many areas of our lives. If my twin does one thing, I have to do something that's slightly different so I can vary twin-type behaviour. I always loved mark making… I liked calligraphy sets as a child, but I never had a calligraphy pen like this"* (Participant H).



Figure 32: Participant H, arts-based response in data collection

A related to the aesthetics of the bricks very much: *"Good material that we have on our country too. They look beautiful and clean"* (Participant A phase 1 of data collection).

But, like H, both A and B really connected with the typewriters. A commented on the importance of the quality of the materials. He was impressed with the durability, and it seemed to represent something for him: *"It is good when you print with typewriter paper, it is great, very strong, not local paper, very good paper… A hundred years ago people wrote on the same paper, it lasts a long time and even in water"* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection).

For participant A, the typewriter paper's strength and durability were particularly noteworthy, especially given his circumstances of living outdoors. He appreciated how the paper held up even in rainy conditions, showcasing its practicality and resilience.

Participant B, on the other hand, was drawn to the aesthetic qualities of the typewriters themselves. He found them to be poetic, sensory, and highly evocative, suggesting that the typewriters served not only as functional tools but also as symbolic artefacts that elicited emotional responses and memories: *"I was really attracted to the typewriters; I never had the time to use them. I observed people using them, and I wanted to use them but did not have the time. I was keen to read the letters that people wrote and the ones you posted on Facebook and to see how people interacted with the machine. It attracted me so much. There is something about the sound, something about memories, the sound, a sound, a letter, an echo, it is beautiful—it is an affirmation of I am, I am present, there is an echo, I exist… I am understood even to myself. The writing machine—I am present, I am not a shadow, I am not an undesirable person, I am not a virus, I am not a criminal, but I am here in this space—they recognise me"* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

C said he liked drawing but recognised the variety of materials used, including an animated film made with him (discussed in Chapter 7): *"One day there was a movie, Mr Fox, a lot of fun in a time of pain. I was not expecting myself to be able to [make] a movie like this. I used to draw, but I saw many young people liked to build houses with the small bricks and the typewriter, they liked the sound. I also remember making kites in 'The Jungle'"* (Participant C, phase 1 of data collection).

D liked the bricks: "*I particularly liked the bricks, building the construction and tying in the building with other people, and linking the different activities around the table… The bricks inspired me to go to the construction museum; the whole thing was inspired"* (Participant D, phase 1 of data collection).

G chose to bring a box of postcards to her interview for the data collections (see Figure 33). She describes her love of them: *"I brought the box of postcards because I love working with postcards, and we have written about postcards, and it's something I used in my work prior to using them in Art Refuge. But when we introduced them in Calais, they were immediately taken up. Their format is special because they're these objects you can send, and I've always collected postcards, these images, and sometimes they have text on, and I'm always on the lookout for postcards that might join the box, and some of these are really old, have come over*

multiple locations. I look for images that might join the box, images that are unusual or that are strong images. I look for images that have cultural references that aren't European particularly. I am always looking for things that are going to resonate potentially for people whose experiences I imagine or know a bit about, or I look for different places. I look for aesthetic interest and to have as diverse collections [as] I can; I suppose that you never know what people are going to pick up. And I like the fact you can have a really ancient picture which could have the first bronze sculptures that have ever been made—an archaeological object or a piece of contemporary art or a photograph of a place or something like that. And so those are kind of one of the media that people can easily access, and, you know, when you're sitting down next to someone, or they start a big box of postcards, it's a nice way to start a conversation, and also it doesn't require language, so even if you can't find a language together, you can still look at an image together" (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).



Figure 33: Participant G with a box of postcards

Postcards have resonance when working with refugees (Usiskin et al., 2020); they carry new images and hold memories (Phillips, 2020). But all the materials and media used hold resonance for people, connect to memory, activate people's imagination and sense of aesthetic, and bring some pleasure.

3) Grounding: "*I think there is something about this table being about helping people feel grounded in the here now"* (E)

This theme is based on patterns that came up in the data that link to the concept of grounding. These are a variety of techniques to stabilize, reduce, and manage strong, emotional states that would otherwise be overwhelming and help to re-focus on the here and now. But, more than this, the characteristics of the theme grounding were around supporting self-soothing techniques and emotional regulation. The subthemes are around past, present, future, and recalibrating. These were all aspects of what were seen to be a mechanism of change for participants across the data.

The concept of grounding was developed by Lowen (2004). Grounding connects the psycho-physical presence in the "here and now". Emotions arise as physical sensations in the body before they come to our consciousness (Craig, 2015; Damasio, 2000; Sigal and Rob, 2021). Being aware of and knowing what is happening inside our body is called interoception (Duquette and Ainley, 2019). This internal sensory system is where physical and emotional states are recognised and responded to. This can be impacted dramatically by trauma, where it becomes much harder to emotionally regulate difficult and uncomfortable feelings. Grounding comes from the notion of literally having one's feet on the ground (Lowen, 2004). Connecting with the physical sensation of being present and fixed in the now enables moving away and distracting from distressing memories and experiences. Grounding techniques include using the five senses of sound, touch, smell, taste, and sight, which help connect up the physical and psychological.

The interoceptive processes are identified as a way for us to understand our emotions (Critchley and Garfinkel, 2017), but the lack of interoceptive abilities is linked with several mental health difficulties (Sahib et al., 2018). Traumatic events can lead people to have difficulties with the mind–body relationship, suggesting possible poor interoceptive ability (Sigal and Rob, 2021). This, in turn, can lead to difficulties in being aware of and managing one's own emotional needs and ability to emotionally regulate oneself.

Emotional recalibration is an important element of the meanings of the practices of TCT, and being immersed and distracted, as well as an ability to cope, was a positive outcome of the impact of the practices of TCT. Facilitating grounding is a mechanism of change that enables emotional recalibration.

This theme encapsulates all the elements described above; however, it is not only about grounding but also processing. By this I mean the act of beginning to connect to an experience or feeling. There is a spectrum of how grounding may impact on someone and if it leads to processing depending on the situation itself. It is possible to actively be grounding and processing at the same time.

The quote from this theme comes from E, who describes how she felt one of the meanings of the practices of TCT was to help ground people in the here and now. In former themes I have discussed the art-based response from E (phase 2 of data collection). In what follows, E expands her thinking further; she was talking while drawing out letters: *"Well, I'm looking at these words in front of me that came from yesterday—lost and found, far away—and I feel that I want to ground the table a bit more. I want to do one more… so I want these words Near and Here. So we have Far and Away, but I feel we need something about Near and Here. I think there is something about this table being about helping people feel grounded in the here and now. I think we are working with people in such precarity here in this space, and we have to respond to them in the here and now. That is our job, and it can be one of the hardest things to do… to be with people now and here…*

"I think it can only be here and now in this setting, and this idea of grounding, we have started to use that idea more and more and more as we realised how mad and ungrounded this place is—not this particular day centre—and because we wouldn't be able to set this table up in this space if it wasn't brilliantly managed, as sometimes there are 500 people in the day centre or more" (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

Grounding techniques at TCT involve utilizing the art materials in conjunction with relational elements to create a sense of calm and emotional stability. Participants noted how individuals often experienced an emotional shift towards a more positive and calm state of mind while at TCT.

This theme highlights the role of the art materials as a mechanism of change in facilitating grounding practices. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and (I) all recognized the significance of these materials in helping participants recalibrate emotionally and ground themselves. Through engaging with the art materials, individuals were able to redirect their focus to the present moment and alleviate distressing emotions.

Moreover, the presence of the art therapists and the supportive group environment also contributed to the grounding process. Participants emphasized the importance of the therapeutic relationship and the sense of belonging within the group, which provided a safe space for individuals to explore their emotions and experiences.

By combining the use of art materials with relational support, TCT effectively fosters emotional recalibration and grounding among its participants. This approach addresses both the sensory and interpersonal aspects of promoting emotional resilience and wellbeing.

A described how much he liked the typewriters*: "When I write something it is good for my memory… Using the typewriter gives me a strong feeling"* (Participant A, phase 1 of data collection). But more than this he recognised the act of using it to write something, and the outcome of using it gave him a strong feeling. Below I outline how I considered this in my own reflexive research journal:

"*A frequently used a typewriter at TCT. In his interview he referenced how he loved the typewriter, and it reminded him of home. Having witnessed him many times at TCT, I observed that he pressed the keys very hard. We often spend time showing people, particularly those too young to have previously used typewriters, how they need to sit upright when typing, the need to press keys hard and to listen for when the bell tings, which alerts when to move the paper lower on the roll. A spent a great deal of time using the typewriters at TCT, during the period of time when he lived outside in 'The Jungle'. He would type in an unusual way, really pressing very hard on the keys and punctuating each word like an exclamation. In his interview he talked about how he liked the paper, as it was strong and lasted even in water. He used to write letters on the typewriter to all the people he met on his journey from Afghanistan who were kind to him. These letters were never sent; he kept them with him and looked at them at night in his tent to remind him. This was very important to*

him, and he described this as a way of him being strong. This seemed a way for him to affirm how there were some good people in the world who were kind at points when he was struggling with the difficult experiences of being on the streets. But more than that, the physical action of pressing the keys hard seemed important. This seemed to be part of his process connecting his mind and body. The physical touch of pressing hard alongside the ting of the bell were very noticeable. A said at night, when he was sad, he looked at the letters and these reminded him of good things. A found a way of regulating himself in the here and now" (Extract from reflexive research journal, 2020).

The typewriters are very popular at TCT in Calais; often people will come and type their name and leave. E noticed this: *"There's something about the writing and fragments of words that seems to ground people—the fact that people can come to write a couple of words and write their name and feel like they have left something, a mark"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

But it is not just the words that are important. It is something about the kinetic movement involved, the co-ordination, and the interpersonal element (being taught how to use something and learning how to master it) which integrates the overall experience of this. Using art materials can connect with both a mental/emotional (mind) and physical (body) experience (this mind body connection will be explored further in the theme embodiment).

Connecting to a sensation or experience helps to ground people, and this sensation overrides other negative distractions and allows a focus on the here and now.

E describes how introducing Spirographs helped people to feel more connected up because of the physical experience it induced. Spirographs[50] are a toy used to make geometric drawings with devices that produce mathematical patterns and curves. The two differently sized plastic rings have gear teeth on the inside and outside of the circumference. These rings need to be able to be held in place (by hand, tape, or pins), while a ballpoint pen or similar is placed in one of the many holes. The ring is then spun around the smaller ring and a variety of geometric patterns are produced. It takes a little time, focus, patience, and concentration to get the hang of it, but they

[50] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirograph

are familiar to a number of people from childhood: *"We've got these spirographs which are fairly new at the table. We introduced [them] about a month ago; they are another recalibration. Once you get how to use them it's like, 'Ahh, yes, I am connecting myself and I am feeling more connected up.' So yesterday we had an experience where there was a young man writing some words that really weren't necessarily joined up words, and then he found the spirograph and his whole being sort of changed. It was an 'Oh, this is a… Wow, I can do this.' There was a real sense of him sort of discovering a more centred part of himself. You can quite quickly—once you grasp it—join things up. So this is a really fascinating new development in relation to the materials, and then sometimes it goes wrong—you lose control and it's not quite working—and then you have to recalibrate; so maybe these kinds of materials are partly about recalibration"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

Physically centring oneself is grounding; being centred as a psychological term refers to our mental and physical state of being in a good, calm, and peaceful position. Mindful physical activities can help someone become centred, such as breathing exercises or yoga. These are seen as grounding, which in turn helps one to get into a position where one might be more centred. The spirographs are distracting, as you need to physically hold a ring down and focus on moving the other disk around it. Like the typewriters, they demand a certain amount of physical activity, making you focus on the physical activity in the here and now.

(I) noticed how people regulate in the space and become grounded, which is exhibited by them being calmer: *"If somebody comes in with a little bit hectic kind of behaviour, I see by the end of the session they all have changed, they have calmed down—they were very busy with the tasks they have been doing. I think there is something about with the blocks—people have to get it straight and right, otherwise it's going to fall off. It feels like they're reordering, restructuring their mind when they're doing this thing"* (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

E's observations highlight the diverse ways in which grounding techniques are integrated into the activities at TCT. The rhythmic and methodical nature of building with miniature bricks provides a tangible and calming experience, supporting individuals in regulating their breathing and promoting a sense of stability.

Furthermore, E emphasizes the importance of connection with place and space in the grounding process. By engaging with the materials in a playful manner, participants are encouraged to explore their memories and imaginations, transcending temporal and spatial boundaries. This dynamic interaction allows individuals to navigate between past, present, and future experiences, fostering a sense of continuity and hope.

E underscores the holistic approach to grounding at TCT, incorporating sensory, emotional, and imaginative elements to promote wellbeing and resilience: *"Building enables people to become more engaged in quite a rhythmic methodical process, which itself allows for regulation of breathing but also allows something to be built—and constructed. Those are reasons in themselves why we bring out the bricks; over and above that we bring them out because it enables people to talk about space and place, on all sorts of different levels. So it might just literally be 'I am going to make a shelter', or 'I am going to talk to you about my future home', or 'This can become my future home; it works.' Those bricks are brilliant because they can ground in the moment and allow for reflection back and reflection forward."* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

This element of time and space is used to advantage. The idea they can ground in the moment by allowing reflection back and reflection forwards is what I have conceptualised as *time travel*. What I mean by time travel is moving one's thinking backwards to positive past memories and forwards to future memories, like when you have a stuck zip, sometimes jiggling it up and down helps it shift. This process links to what Hobfoll et al. (2021) describe as the promotion of hope, the ability to be able to consider something beyond the now, which, in fact paradoxically, enables you to be in the now as you become more aware that there is the potential for things to change into something different, possibly better.

The use of View-Masters at TCT adds another dimension to the grounding techniques employed, further enhancing the sensory and reflective experiences of participants. These devices, with their vintage imagery and stereoscopic viewing mechanism, evoke a sense of nostalgia and memory, inviting individuals to engage in a journey through time and space. They portray left eye and right eye images of the same scene (fractionally different from each other) which, when viewed through

the machine, is seen as a single three-dimensional picture. Art Refuge has a collection of View-Masters often used at TCT. The reels have images from the 1950s to the 1970s: pictures of tourist attractions, travel views, animals, and plants. The design goes with the aesthetic of the typewriters and connects with the aspect of nostalgia and memory.

The act of viewing images through the View-Masters requires a deliberate orientation towards light, symbolizing the intentional focus on illumination and clarity amid the complexities of emotional experiences. This process aligns with the concept of time travel I have conceptualized, allowing participants to reflect on past memories and envision future possibilities while remaining grounded in the present moment.

By incorporating such diverse and immersive materials, TCT fosters a multifaceted approach to grounding, promoting emotional regulation, self-awareness, and a sense of hope for the future. This creative use of art materials not only enriches the therapeutic experience but also empowers individuals to navigate their emotional landscapes with resilience and optimism.

E describes how the use of the art materials gives people the ability to "*join things up"* when she describes observing people use the View-Masters: "*These materials are resonant, and I think that allows people to connect in with them and join things up. So it's a bit like when we have the View-Masters. With the View-Masters, it's about using your eyes. They are where you are responsible as an individual, your eyes make that connection to see the images three-dimensionally. And that's an interesting thing because it's activating both parts of the brain, bringing oneself into focus—and see this image. We've witnessed people finding a sense of 'Oh, wow, really' [deep breath], arriving at something, seeing these images, and then there's a broad smile. We've witnessed it again and again and again, and it doesn't matter what the image is, it's this looking with oneself… that's about recalibrating"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

E describes how she believes materials like the View-Masters resonate with individuals and aid in connecting various aspects of their experiences. This raises an intriguing question about whether this process is primarily grounding or a form of processing, similar to what occurs when individuals engage with the typewriters.

These materials may facilitate individuals in processing difficult experiences or negative thoughts.

By “processing”, I refer to the brain entering a learning state that allows problematic experiences to be assimilated and stored in a more self-soothing part of the brain. While E describes the experience as “joining up”, it could also be linked to individuals processing, regulating themselves, and engaging in self-soothing behaviours.

However, at TCT it may not matter if the experience is grounding or processing, as it is dependent on the circumstances and state of being at the time of the individual using the materials. Both grounding and processing are helpful to alleviate difficult feelings.

Guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)[51] recommend treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and trauma, such as narrative exposure therapy and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR). These therapies focus on supporting the processing of negative material, shifting it from the left to the right hemisphere of the brain. In EMDR, rhythmic horizontal eye movements are utilized to expedite the processing, aiming to reduce fear in the brain’s circuits. This bilateral stimulation bypasses areas of the brain that may have become “stuck”, facilitating a more adaptive processing of traumatic experiences (Pagani et al., 2017; Pagani et al., 2012).

Grounding can also be accompanied by elements of psychoeducation. Psychoeducation involves teaching or learning about and being able to understand mental health and wellbeing. It provides individuals with tools to navigate their emotions and experiences effectively as to how to look after the impact of stresses and anxieties by themselves. Being more aware of your state of being, both mentally and physically, is the beginning process of being able to learn to alleviate difficulties such as stress or anxiety. Here, E discusses an example of how teaching grounding techniques such as breathing helped a young man: *“I do quite often think about the young man who sat between the two of us recently at the table, who was presenting with clear mental health problems. We were physically there so we could tune into him, help him breathe and tell him psychoeducation and about why he might be*

[51] https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng116

experiencing these feelings, and then we brought it to the art. This is an example of being present with someone and being able to tune in with what they want and need through their body" (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

This highlights the necessity of art therapists to understand about trauma-informed practice and anxiety and the physical presentations that may occur and have tools with which to help support grounding in the moment and that someone may be able to use by themselves if distress occurs again.

Art therapists themselves need to understand the implications of working alongside those who have experienced trauma, because of vicarious or secondary trauma.[52] This is an indirect experience of or exposure to a traumatic event that impacts the person working with the trauma survivor. Therapists are at risk of developing similar symptoms to the traumatised people they are working with, experiencing themselves things like anxiety, hypervigilance, hopelessness, irritability, avoidance, gaps in memory, and emotional numbness (Bride et al., 2004).

Art therapists also need to ensure prevention of burnout and use tools that enhance their own ability to ground themselves. Using artmaking and creative physical activity, doing things that are soothing and enjoyable, and seeking support and emotional connection with others are all important ways of ensuring self-care in therapists (Sigal and Rob, 2021).

4) Imagination: "*Making space for the possibility of it"* (H)

This theme encompasses patterns that emerged in data around play and creativity that I have grouped together under the name imagination. The characteristics of the theme imagination were around playing with symbolism and imagining something other. The subthemes were relational aesthetics and mentalization, which are woven into the discussion.

Imagination in the context of this theme is meant as the process of forming new ideas, images, or concepts of things that are not present to the senses.[53] But more than that, it is also the ability to play with symbolism and metaphor, imagining

[52] https://www.ptsduk.org/secondary-trauma/
[53] https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/

something other, using aspects of relational aesthetics and mentalization. The ability to imagine or conjure up something that is not present can help someone hope and offer motivation to continue in difficult circumstances (Hobfoll et al., 2021; Kalmanowitz, 2013). In a crisis, it may be the concept and the potential of using imagination that supports someone's ability to survive (Kalmanowitz, 2013).

Imagination helps our capacity to organise our mental representations into something coherent and meaningful (Johnson, 1987). Play is a known form where imagination is used. Immersion in play and/or creative activity can distract and present potential opportunities to see things differently, reform, and reimagine.

As identified in the previous themes of art materials appeal and grounding, creativity and imagination through art can transport people, even for a short period of time, from feelings of being scared to a sense of potential. Artmaking encourages thinking through doing; making art is a creative process which forces the maker to be engaged in the moment and resolve problems creatively as they arise (Kalmanowitz, 2013), which in turn enables confidence.

Levine (2019) sees aesthetic forms of meaning-making as key to our comprehension of human existence. It is not just the playing but the solidifying something from the imagination into a form that enables a real depth of understanding when trying to make meaning (Levine, 2019).

Using metaphor, as in the qualities of one thing that can be symbolically carried over to another, is also a way of imaginatively carrying meaning. It is not just a form of words but a way humans process understanding and make meaning (Johnson, 1987). A metaphor is a way people understand, structure, and experience, by bringing two seemingly unrelated elements into a comparison.

Gilbert (2014) describes the challenges of visualizing future development because it is difficult to imagine who we might become, and then we think that, because we cannot imagine, it will not happen. But art and other people can help us to imagine.

Following on from the notion that art and other people can help us to imagine, relational aesthetics is a set of artistic practices which considers human relations and whatever their social context is as pivotal (Bourriaud,2002). In art therapy, relational

aesthetics is interpreted more as connecting with people through art, sometimes outside of verbal language (Franklin, 2012; Moon, 2007).

The concept for this theme came from H thinking about what meaning the practices have at TCT. She began by thinking it was a meaning of the practices but then developed into considering it to be a mechanism of change that occurs at TCT. She describes how those at TCT in Folkestone are waiting for their asylum claim to be processed: *"There is a period of waiting and preparing for the next thing and not really knowing what that is going to be, and I think part of the nature of being here is that you—you have to wait, exploring what the possibilities of the next thing are… We get to show people things that lead to possibilities... We get to show people things that are positive and exciting through being creative and imaginative"* (Participant H, phase 2 of data collection).

In art therapy, play and creativity are linked to the concept of imagination. All participants consistently highlighted the role of play and creativity at TCT, describing how it enabled the exploration of alternative possibilities. The experience at TCT was characterized as enjoyable and playful, with the use of art and play seen as opening up new avenues. While the term "imagination" wasn't explicitly used by all participants, participants emphasized the concept of TCT facilitating possibilities through artistic expression and playful engagement. The term imagination is used as the title for this theme as it encompasses the elements of play and creativity and the possibilities of imagining something other which were identified as mechanisms of change in the data.

Therefore, this theme focuses on the acknowledgment of the use of imagination and its associated possibilities, which contribute to the positive impact of TCT. To illustrate this theme, I have included excerpts from the data collection that mention imagination, as these passages provide tangible examples of how imagination functions as a mechanism of change at TCT.

E felt imagining was a crucial element to the work, moreover that imagining was something that could be collective: *"We… at the best of times, we can get into the place of not knowing and not being the experts, which is quite a difficult space to be because you have to be quite grounded. And then we can imagine together, and I*

think the best moments are when we are able to imagine with someone else, and we have done that at the map. We know we have done that at the map. You know, what if the grass is green over there but blue over there? Or at the table, what if we all went for a walk to the top balcony and saw the view? I don't know, whatever… I think getting to the point of 'What if?' together gives people the ability to feel they can think; they can imagine and therefore they have hope. Hope and cope. Hope is a remarkable word" (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

This suggests that there is a concerted action of supporting people to get to a place where they can imagine. E reiterated this later: *"I read a poem with someone, and it said if you can imagine and you have ideas and thoughts and something else, you can—you can climb over borders and fences and basically can do anything, and I said, 'What do you think?' and he said, 'Yes, I agree you have to be able to imagine.' And it's interesting. I think one of the things is, when grounded at the table, imagination becomes possible"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

E went on to describe how books and metaphor help this to happen: *"We have lots of books here, and this is an interesting one [points to the book]… It's a migration of birds which actually, in a funny sort of way, is quite fascinating and beautifully written, even if it was written in the 60s and is very out of date. It allows for a reading that is in parallel, a metaphor, obviously, because it's not about migration of people. It talks about all the things, the roots and people being… birds being blown off course. There's a lot of metaphor in things that we provide*" (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

F, in the first data collection phase, described her experiences of the online Community Table during the pandemic, when face-to-face work was halted. She discussed the difficulties of creating a space online virtually, so she herself imagined TCT: *"It's a virtual table, a big table which you can kind of imagine, with a big red and white checked tablecloth, and you have place mats, and you take your place"* (Participant F, phase 1 of data collection).

During the pandemic, there was a significant need for imaginative adaptation as the team transitioned to online work, navigating the complexities of individuals being physically located in different spaces. Domestic, found, and natural objects became

integral components of the online platform, with the team playing with scale and movement to activate the senses. The camera on devices such as laptops, iPads, or phones emerged as a tool in itself, with facilitators encouraging participants to experiment with covering and uncovering the camera, exploring concepts of transparency and opacity (see Figure 34). Through these interactions, participants engaged in metaphorical representations of social distance and physical separation, symbolizing the evolving rules and dynamics of the pandemic (Usiskin and Lloyd, 2020).

F retells how *"people were very connected up to one another through objects, the photos particularly, so there was the core of it. It was very moving… I think that all those games are great, as they are a gateway for being together."* (Participant F phase 1 of data collection).

This is similar to concepts behind relational aesthetics where there is a goal to create a social situation where people become caught up in the experience. The task F describes was deliberately designed to activate people's imagination through playing with everyday objects around them.



Figure 34: Participant F, image from phase 1 of data collection

The active use of mentalizing, a process in which we infer the inner thoughts and intentions of others (Wu et al., 2020) is a frequent occurrence at TCT. Being able to imagine is a core aspect of mentalization. On a visit to Calais, I noted in my reflexive learning journal: *"TCT was in the unusual setting of a launderette run by an NGO, where refugees were able to have their clothes washed. While this was happening, they were able to relax in a calm, quiet atmosphere where we were invited to offer TCT. A man joined us at the table where there was someone building a large compound and another man was writing poetry. My colleague asked him his job or profession, something we have found to be empowering for refugees, as often it is assumed they are uneducated. 'I worked as an oil engineer,' he said. 'Oh', we said, impressed, and I asked, 'Is that what you would like to do in the future?' 'I have no dreams', he said. 'I am a refugee.' As the time passed, he sat with us, being part of the playing and chit chat. Towards the end of the time, we listened together to the man who had been writing poems as he recited them. His poems spoke of a love interest, heart ache and sadness at not seeing his mother. The oil engineer then asked, 'How is Canterbury?' We asked, 'Do you have friends or family there?' 'No', he replied. 'I just like the sound of the name. I would like to go there', he said. Suddenly he was able to think of a different possibility and imagine. I wondered if the time he had spent at the table enabled him to dream a little about Canterbury. Being part of TCT, where collectively and individually people were engaging creatively, enabled him"* (Extract from reflexive research journal 2022).

The act of social interaction, creativity, and play can stimulate imagination and open up the possibilities of thinking about things. The art therapists at TCT use their own imagination to help stimulate others at TCT.

5) Embodied experience: *"It is real for me, it is real for me, I am inside it*" (A)

This theme is titled embodied experience. This title aims to encompass the moments that people have described as mechanisms of change which have been connected to a mind–body experience where something has enabled a shift in mood or feeling. By embodied experience I mean a conscious form of a feeling or idea that may lead to a physical sensation. The characteristics for the fifth and final theme embodied experience were around the mind–body experience. The subtheme was aesthetic.

Embodied experience manifests in the body's movements through artmaking and relational elements through the connection with the mind and becomes a means to shift or transform feelings and thoughts. These experiences can occur on an individual basis but also with and through the engagement of the wider group (Gabel and Robb, 2017).

The concept of the mind–body connection is fundamental in various art therapy models, aiming to bridge physical and mental experiences. In the context of this research, this connection is especially relevant, as participants of TCT are often in a state of crisis, experiencing the multifaceted impacts of trauma on mental, emotional, neurological, and physiological levels (Van der Kolk, 2014). Part of being in a trauma state can be experiencing a disconnection with external sensations and one's internal felt state (Van der Kolk, 2014). A way of repairing this is to become more aware of one's physical self through the senses by embodiment (Malchiodi, 2020).

Paradoxically, while it's crucial to acknowledge the need for a safe and secure physical and psychological environment before delving into trauma processing during crises (Hobfoll et al., 2021), the data analysis highlights that elements of emotional processing do occur at TCT through embodied practices of using the art materials in a relational context.

Although trauma treatment isn't the primary focus at TCT, there's evidence of emotional processing among participants. Some individuals in distressed states have learned to self-regulate, facilitated by the art materials, the interpersonal relationships fostered by art therapists, and the supportive environment provided by TCT connecting their own mind–body experiences.

In this theme, the elements of embodied experiences include a sense of pleasure and a sense of release through an embodied experience, which are evidenced as mechanisms of change at TCT. This emerges in several different ways, through felt sensation physically, emotionally, and cognitively. There are similarities and differences between feelings and emotions which also have contradictory aspects. Burton (2020) sees that an emotional experience, by reason of being a conscious experience, is automatically a feeling, like the physical sensations of hunger or pain. However, not all conscious experiences are also feelings, because they lack a bodily

sensation attached to it. An emotion can only be felt through the emotional experiences that cause it; however, these experiences may also be latent, therefore unconscious (Burton, 2020).

The use of the art materials transforms the symbolic into the real but also vice versa, transforming the symbolic into something that feels tangible, real, and embodied.

The quote for this theme came from A phase 1 of data collection: "*It is real for me, it is real for me, I am inside it*." For him it was a space he created that he actually felt he inhabited at that specific time. The houses he built embodied the feeling of home both past and future, but for him it was real, and it was a positive association and brought him joy. *"I join TCT and make houses. I love houses like the ones from the country that I come from… When I try to build house… the rooms and everything, it is like my house… One day I will have a house like this… A hundred things in your mind you forget once you start building the house… It is real for me, it is real for me, I am inside it. One day I will build this house"* (Participant A phase 1 of data collection).

A little later, A also added a memory of building a model of London Bridge one day at TCT: *"When I build a house, I remember something—I remember the memory of London Bridge and I directly go into that place. I enjoy trying to build houses"* (Participant A phase 1 of data collection).

A had a very *felt* experience when he used the small bricks. It brought him directly back to the experience and he actually felt he was there, which for him was joyful and pleasurable.

However, this does raise a question: What if these feelings of reality that A experienced were unpleasant ones? There is a need to carefully balance an embodied experience by not going too deep and triggering a trauma state. Springham and Huet (2020) identify how things can go wrong in art therapies because of its psychoactive[54] power. Art therapists need to be aware of the power of

[54] Something that affects the brain and causes changes in mood, awareness, thoughts, behaviours, and feelings.

art to make something that may seem subjective to actually seem real, and they should assess participants' psychological vulnerability to this (Springham, 2008).

TCT model actively considers these factors, with careful attention and mediation of experiences by the art therapists (as identified as part of their stance and attitude). This prevents experiences from switching into something too overwhelmingly negative. It also reiterates the importance of trauma-informed practice. Springham and Huet (2020) additionally emphasize the importance of art therapists being reflective, not introducing their own objectives or intentions, and highlighting the need to be critically aware of the people they are working with. This includes their mental states and an awareness of the power of an embodied experience. The intention of TCT is to support with positive experiences and mitigate against a deep dive into trauma.

Most participants discussed a *felt* element of their time at TCT or discussed witnessing that experience. The aspects of joy and pleasure came through as discussed in the previous research question. When thinking about impact, C described the fun he had when making a stop frame animation. D, F, H, and (I) all described witnessing and having embodied experiences themselves, where there were moments of joy encapsulated or caught up in a moment. This is the idea that people can have a sensory feeling experience which then leads to a more meaning-making state and having a significant creative experience at TCT. This is the embodied experience of the connection of mind and body.

B describes his interest in typewriters as a visceral experience which helped him find a meaning, and that he witnessed others experiencing something meaningful for themselves: *"I was really attracted to the typewriters; I never had the time to use them. I was observing people, and I wanted to use them but did not have the time. I was keen to read the letters that people wrote and the ones you posted on Facebook and to see how they interacted with the machine. For me there is something about the sound—something about memories, the sound, a sound, a letter, an echo, it is beautiful. It is an affirmation of I am, I am present, there is an echo, I exist… I am understood even to myself"* (Participant B, phase 1 of data collection).

He reiterated this when asked about what he thought might be a mechanism of change at TCT. He referred again to the importance of enabling a voice for people and that voice being witnessed. For him, the typewriter was a way of manifesting the embodied experience of refugees being present: "*One more time it is like the writing machine; it helps people feel. 'I am present, I am not a shadow, I am not an undesirable person, I am not a virus, I am not a criminal, but I am here in this space.' I don't know how I can say it: 'They recognise me'"* (Participant B phase 1 of data collection).

B described an embodied experience when he explained about the making of the image that he chose for the arts-based data collection (see Figure 35). The image making itself had a kinaesthetic element, and the experience was clearly a consciously felt experience; there was an intentionality in the act of making it and there was a symbolic use of the corks. The posting of it on Twitter (now called X) enabled a conscious cognitive thought process.



Figure 35: Participant B throwing corks, arts-based data (© Art Refuge)

E described an experience of supporting someone's anxiety by breathing with them, and this enabled them to do something creative. This was also cited earlier, in the theme of grounding, but it is deliberately repeated because it also illustrates embodied experience: *"I do quite often think about the young man who sat between the two of us recently at the table, who was presenting with clear mental health problems. We were physically there so we could tune into him, help him breathe and all the psychoeducation stuff about why he might be experiencing these feelings, and then we brought it to the art. This is an example of being present with someone and being able to tune in with what they want and need through their body. I think we had the bricks in front of us, and I think he then built something. I think he said he couldn't possibly build anything at the beginning; he said he couldn't possibly focus, or how could we ask him such a thing, but then he got into the breathing and was then able to build something"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

The act of breathing with the man, supporting this process, and him experiencing rhythmic breathing enabled him to move onto being able to focus on something else, enabling the body to calm down. This enabled the man to think creatively, or at least in a kinaesthetic/sensory way.

E also discusses how important being playful is; the act of being playful, the use of humour and skill, can help to create an embodied experience: *"Playful… is a really important word, definitely very key, but it also links to processing stuff. It sort of brings at times humour, which is really integral to the work, as we know, levity. But it is also very serious. We have seen people build towers in a playful way but also with huge skill, so it is a really important aspect to talk about"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

As E identified in the quote above, often towers were built at TCT with the variety of materials on the table. This became a very performative process, with people making sounds of *ahhh* and *ooooh* when the towers became taller, or wobbled. Many of the refugees at TCT were professional architects or engineers, and the playful and serious elements merged, with great consideration given to the structure and balance.

The concept of playing as a way of creating an embodied experience was identified by D, who told of witnessing a young man at TCT: *"I also remember very well the young man playing with the car. He was 16-, 17-year-old and became like a 4- or 5-year-old, to see the pleasure in his face, pushing the car around and over the edge, was a delight"* (Participant D phase 1 of data collection). This was an occasion where I was at TCT, and this young man was pushing a small toy car towards me and I was pushing it back to him. It seemed all he could manage, but, as D witnessed, he found a pleasure and joy in this process of movement and reciprocal engagement with another.

D discussed how he loved this process of making towers with wooden bricks and with using cars, but, more than that for him, it was a *felt* physical release when the towers fell down, the idea of building up with drama and playful tension and then something falling down representing a release: *"That powerful moment of self-expression, release from pressure through non-verbal, beyond words, state of being beyond words, frees you up"* (Participant D phase 1 of data collection).

As F described in an earlier theme, you can witness someone who suddenly becomes more than immersed in an experience: *"We've seen it happening so many times, absolutely unmistakable … Sitting around the table and everyone was kind of fiddling about… and then they suddenly saw someone suddenly mobilized. I think this was making a house, and when you see it, you can't mistake it—knowing exactly what happens—you just get caught by something, and then you're in it and doing it, and you're absorbed in it, and you're in a little bubble"* (Participant F, phase 2 of data collection).

F uses the word *mobilized*, which resonates with an embodied experience. (I) also described an aesthetic/pleasure response to using the art materials in her arts-based response in the data collection process and how it evoked an experience of creative flow. But also there was a rhythm, a movement that happened with the stamps, that evoked a meaning for her: *"I fell in love with the stamps right today, and it's beautiful, so relaxing to just to create patterns. I'm not very methodical so I just let it flow, and just go for it. I got this coloured paper and E brought in these beautiful stamps; they are beautiful [see Figure 36 below]. It flowed beautifully, but then I want to put lines on it, because I guess life is not as beautiful [laughing] and there are obstacles, and*

they are obstacles—I think these are obstacles, and we have to overcome these obstacles. Maybe I will stamp over it again" (Participant (I), phase 2 of data collection).

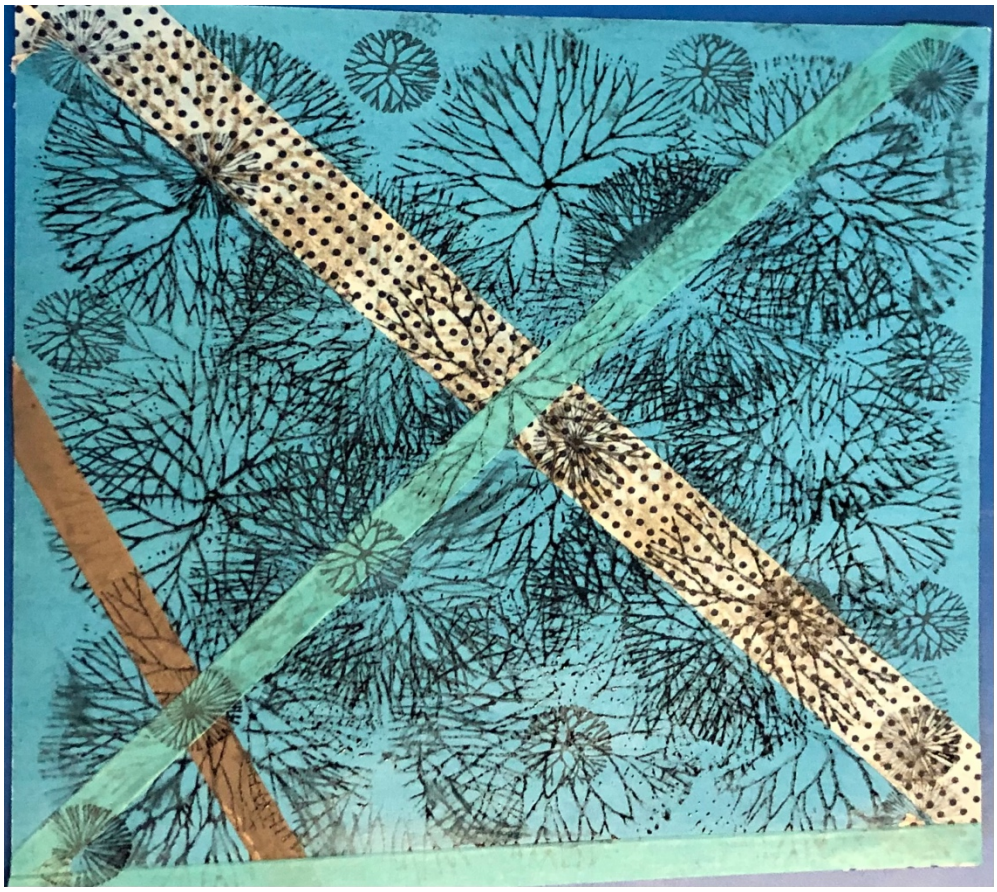


Figure 36: Participant (I), arts-based response from data collection

G discusses how important the beginning and end of TCT sessions are and how these are managed. This is to ensure a safe transition from an embodied state of being in the space to the realities of a hostile environment outside: *"We were talking about this with the trainees yesterday and why are the endings so important. There is emphasis on what the end of the session is, and usually what happens is... Everyone who's really engaged at that point ends up wanting to help clear up and put away and, like, it becomes a really significant joint act together. But I also said, you know, it's also important because we have to start the session gently enough so that it's not a big shock, as you have to transition back out into something, and you have to transition out into this really hostile environment. And so, taking care of the materials, packing up and all of these things is really important for us because then we kind of both—we set out into this environment, the same environment, together,*

but we're going to experience that totally different. We only bear witness to how other people experience that world; I'm not going to have those experiences that they are" (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection).

These points are indeed pertinent and resonate deeply, underscoring the importance of sensitivity and understanding within the overall context. They serve as a reminder of the necessity to create an environment where individuals can fully engage in embodied experiences and experience embodiment, while also recognizing the potential difficulty in transitioning out of that safe space. Therefore, thoughtful and deliberate pacing when opening and closing TCT becomes crucial, ensuring that participants feel both supported and empowered throughout their journey within the therapeutic setting.

This chapter explored the themes relating to the research question: What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact? The art therapist's stance describes the important role they play at TCT, identifying particular elements; the art materials and media focused on the significance of the art materials; grounding highlighted aspects of self-soothing techniques and emotional regulation; imagination looked at playing with symbolism; and embodied experience was about connecting the mind–body experience.

Chapter 9: Interpretation: Theoretical framework

This chapter aims to interpret the findings that were identified through the data analysis, with the goal of creating a theoretical and practical framework for TCT in humanitarian settings.

The reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) has defined themes that relate to the research questions concerning the meanings of the practices, their impact, and the mechanisms of change that led to that impact. Taken from the findings, the elements described below are the theoretical concepts behind the principles of TCT which create a theoretical framework for TCT.

The rationale of TCT to offer psychosocial support in humanitarian crises helps to contextualize the theoretical framework. The findings emphasize that, although a great deal of work focuses on the immediate context in the "here and now", they also acknowledge how working in a context over a long period of time helps to respond appropriately to the needs. Being adaptive to any evolving dynamics related to the context was seen as significant when working in both short- and longer-term timeframes.

To develop a theoretical framework, the themes from the findings were reduced to a smaller group of themes. These smaller number of themes are now termed elements and include the spirit of *all* the themes from the findings. Each element will be defined and described, and the interpretation contextualized with a discussion.

The nine elements are the theoretical constructs underpinning TCT. These are temporary home, time travel, cultivating hope, the role of art therapists, art materials, conscious engagement with both macro and micro contexts, reflexive thinking, social connection, and democratizing a space.

1) Temporary home (see Table 22, p.178)

Definition

This element reflects the significance of the loss of home due to displacement and the impact of this on the meaning and intention of TCT. Home in this sense is meant as a place where we feel comfortable and protected. The central aspect of this

element is how TCT responds to the loss of home by providing an environment, even if it is temporary, where people feel comfortable and protected. But, more than that, by creating such a space, people can emotionally recalibrate, part of which is to make meaning of their experiences if they choose. The loss of home is mitigated by creating a safe space where individuals can engage in artmaking, helping them process emotions, derive personal meaning, and feel comfortable and supported in the company of others. Included in this element is safe space and meaning-making.

Home, safe space, and meaning-making were key aspects of the response to the first research question: What are the meanings for participants of the practices of TCT?

TCT could be a temporary home, practically offering a safe space in the turmoil of the context of which participants are a part, with the intention of providing something in relation to the wider psychological impact of displacement. TCT constitutes a space in which participants can feel comfortable and protected in an environment that is experienced as safe, both psychologically and socially.

The findings identified themes centred around making meaning related to home, and the significance of a safe space responding to the impact of displacement and, the loss of a place (which at one stage was safe). Being displaced means the loss of what is known as *home*. Participants A and C highlighted their loss of a home through their images in the art-based data. Both commented on the importance of having somewhere familiar and homely and where they felt welcome, ergo *safe*.

All participants saw TCT as a convivial and necessary space where individuals could choose to emotionally recalibrate. All participants felt the meanings of the practices of TCT resonated with and responded to people's basic emotional needs in a crisis context, providing a safe, nurturing space. All participants saw TCT as something familial, reminding them of family and community in different ways. All participants reported using TCT to derive personal meanings, particularly around concepts of home, family, and culture. Therefore, TCT can provide a place where a meaning, or a sense of meaning, can be created if people choose to. The aspect of choice is integral, allowing participants to determine if and how they want to make *their own* meaning out of *their* experiences.

The nature of being a refugee, it could be argued, is defined by the loss of their home (Taylor, 2013). Therefore, when working with refugees, the impact from the loss of home by displacement should underpin any theory related to TCT. Ideas of home and what it means are often culturally based, however. How home is conceptually thought about does not necessarily have to stay still; through memory, imagining, and longing, ideas can change, develop, get remade and recreated (Al-Ali and Koser, 2002).

This allows the potential to think there may be a time where one can have another home, or a different kind of home. This does not take away the pain of loss. However, it does allow the realization that somewhere else, other than where one is, can be or could be in the future considered home.

A home is not just a spatial entity; it is conceptual and temporal, with time, space, and relationships being elements that make this up (Papadopoulos, 2021). This emphasises the additional losses attached to involuntary displacement. The loss of so much can bring existential questioning. Participants considered the temporary and relational aspects from loss of home to be more pertinent than the material aspects of loss of home, and they emphasised how significant *memories* and *reminders* of home were. The artmaking activities at TCT help to make explicit the *memories of home and* connect with the temporal and conceptual (Usiskin and Lloyd, 2024). But it was also the relational elements that made something feel safe, sitting with other people around the table. This was alongside the familiarity of objects at the table and the artmaking.

The loss of home manifests in several ways, including "*nostalgic disorientation"* [55](Papadopoulos, 2021, p.145). Nostalgia is used at TCT alleviate the disorientation that comes with displacement, bringing memories from the past into the present, which in turn helps to relate to the time and space they are in now.

Participants acknowledged that TCT was a safe comfortable space, even though there is no privacy. The relational elements and the familiar act of sitting around a table together were identified as features that created this safety. To ensure

[55] Nostalgic disorientation is explained and contextualised in chapter 6

TCT has these features, there needs to be careful consideration as to *how* to go about making something feel safe and comfortable at TCT. Although one cannot necessarily replace what has been lost, creating a safe-enough environment like TCT offers a place where people can choose to explore or not to explore these themes. The aspect of choice and self-efficacy is also part of feeling safe. What is pivotal is creating the right atmosphere where someone feels safe enough to engage with these themes if they wish to. Key aspects that help TCT become a safe space are the underlying key practices in setting up and running the TCT. These include placing TCT in context to its surroundings and careful consideration of the curation of the table itself. By this I mean the action and process of selecting, organizing, and looking after the art materials and objects on TCT. These aspects are the process of responding and adapting to the context, the people, all the while considering the aesthetic as well. Both aspects need to respond and adapt to the context and the people, all the while considering the aesthetic as well.

Specifically considering the needs and preferences of those participating in TCT helps to create a safe space. Moon (2007) suggests that the making of meaningful spaces for communities happens through artmaking and helps reframe marginalised spaces. In urban design, placemaking prioritises the creation of public spaces, which are tailored to the requirements of a community (Ungvarsky, 2025). Ethical placemaking (Eckenwiler, 2021) offers a framework for understanding and placemaking humanitarian settings. It is about creating and sustaining environments that support human flourishing, particularly for those who have been displaced or marginalized (Eckenwiler, 2021). Ethical placemaking is a response to structural injustice, and TCT enables participants to rebuild a sense of place through relational and aesthetic engagement.

The loss of home and place became even more significant in northern France because of the plight of asylum seekers who remain homeless waiting to cross the English Channel over to the UK. There is a deliberate squeezing out of space for people to stay, even for very short periods of time (Lloyd and Usiskin, 2020). So understanding the specific impact of displacement in situ, and being responsive to that, is critical. As a response to displacement, TCT is therefore successful in its

intent in creating a welcoming, safe *temporary home-like* space in which meaning-making can happen.

2) Time travel (see Table 22, p.178)

Definition

Time travel is a term I developed to describe the process by which TCT participants actively move from memories to future hopes, which helps them manage in the now.

This element focuses on the idea of time and space, both practically and conceptually, and the impact of time and space in response to both displacement and a crisis context. The concept of time manifested in several different ways; it was acknowledged how important it is to have time to oneself to be able to creatively engage, but also as a way of fusing space and time and acknowledging the different pace of time and space that people may have.

The TCT and its focus on the social and cultural interactions focuses on a connectiveness and allows a felt experience of being in a place that has an intention to be relational, rather than just a space. Through the relational, abstracted, imaginative and creative elements at TCT, people can time travel. The temporal aspects of displacement are explored by moving between the past, present and future to try to make meaning if they wish. It allows the participant to find their own pace, rhythm and time that makes sense and is familiar to them. The support of the art therapists along with art materials and media that provide a sense of nostalgia or resonance allow this to happen. This is helpful if someone is particularly stuck in an unhelpful emotional state.

In a conceptual sense the past, present, and future all hold importance related to the loss of home, the loss of actual known space, objects and ideas, and significant relationships. If someone has been forcibly displaced from the socially constructed time, space, and people that represent home, it challenges their understanding of their place in the world (Papadopoulos, 2021; Taylor, 2013). The loss of home is not simply something geographically far away; it also belongs to something past. Minkowski (1908) emphasises that time and space are

intrinsically connected with the notion of spacetime, a mathematical model that fuses space and time into a single continuum.

In a practical sense participants saw that a significant aspect of the practices at TCT was to provide the time and space needed to process experiences, and this is at a pace chosen by them (amongst other things). This was achieved by drawing on memories connected to culture, family, and community from the past. It was this approach that enabled individuals to manage their present circumstances and consider a future with potential.

The notion of time is considered by Papadopoulos, who coined the term "*onto-ecological unsettledness*" (2021, p.142). This is where someone who has experienced displacement loses their ability to make sense of or understand where they are. The time and space they are now in is so different from what they knew, they feel existentially lost. This follows the premise that displacement is not just about material and tangible losses but also about having feelings around lack of familiarity and all that comes with it. With the state of being of unsettledness comes a yearning for being settled. This was enacted by returning to the previous patterns of what was familiar or finding a sense of a temporary feeling of being settled (Papadopoulos, 2021). Making forms of cultural connection is a helpful bridge to enable this. People relate to physically defined areas that connect with their own culture and understanding of social systems, meaning the patterns and networks of relationships that make up the bigger picture and coherence of the interrelationships between individuals, groups, and institutions (Pellow, 2003).

Participants reported that one way of feeling settled, even for a temporary and short period of time at TCT, was through the familiarity of making things with objects and doing activities that reminded them of past things. Examples of this were when participant A noted that the small miniature bricks reminded him of home and his country, while participant C noted there were activities at the table that he used to do in his country. By being able to reminisce and remember, it enhanced identity and a sense of who they were and still are.

Einstein's ideas on time and space inspired and helped to formulate this element of time travel. Einstein (1995) developed the notion that space and time are intrinsically

interwoven and connected but not in a linear way, coined as spacetime continuum. The relevance of spacetime relates to Einstein's consideration that things are seen individually in spacetime continuum, relative to the circumstances one is in. He also famously stated that the distinction between past, present, and future is an illusion (Carroll, 2022). Again, this has multiple interpretations, but significance here is that time is not a simple linear experience.

Psychological distance is another way in which to consider time. It is the degree to which one feels removed from an event, the reference point being oneself in the here and now. However, if from a psychological perspective we see things from the here and now, how do we conceptualize memories and predictions? Psychologists Trope and Liberman (2010) identify that how that distance is manifest could be by the separation from oneself to other people, events that happened, what one knows, how we see something hypothetically, and notions of time (Trope and Liberman, 2010).

Hypothetical in this context relates to something that is imagined or suggested and is possibly not real (Trope et al., 2007). Memories and predictions or hope for the future are all mental constructions; they transcend the immediate experience of the here and now to represent things that are not present in immediate reality. Even though people are capable of thinking about the past, present, or future of experiences, they generally put more worth on immediate events (Trope and Liberman, 2010).

There are numerous ways in which people make sense of objects and events. Trope et al. (2007) suggest that the greater the temporal spatial hypothetical or social distance from the events, the more abstractly it might be represented. An object helps to place a memory in context. This introduces the notion that the art-making activities and objects at TCT not only help to create meaning in an abstracted form, but the abstracted form is helpful because of the psychological distance making it less triggering[56].

There are numerous relational notions of space and time in terms of personal and emotional responses (Augé, 1995; Bachelard, 1958; Foucault, 1997; Kant, 1998;

[56] In this context a trigger is meant as a state of strong emotional stimuli related to a past experience

Kuper, 2003). But while everyone faces a reality of space and time, different cultures see this through their own perspectives (Kuper, 2003). People have their own personal and emotional responses to particular places and spaces that hold memories and meanings (Bachelard, 1958). Refugee camps and the living sites where asylum seekers are staying are bleak, and they represent an anthropological space of transience (Augé, 1995). Being in those spaces emphasizes the loss of identity and home and stresses a longing for what has been lost. Having time and space to engage in reflection and to emotionally recalibrate was noted as significant by participants. There were broader implications, including having a place to be able to be oneself, being comfortable in the company of others, and being in a relational space. A relational space enables people to feel comfortable enough to time travel, hat I mean by a relational space is positive interactions that help to mould that space, including both social and cultural elements. It is important to acknowledge the interrelationship between the different people who may be in that spatial context and the experiences and intentions they bring to that space.

TCT facilitated the making of positive nostalgic memories by enabling individuals to make meaning from past experiences while being present in the moment and opened possibilities for contemplating the future.

To bridge disorientation around time and space, it is important for facilitators to take into account the physical space in which TCT is located, making adaptations to address influential temporal factors such as politics and weather. This helps to create a safe space at TCT and connects it to the present, as in the here and now.

TCT and its focus on the social and cultural interactions highlights a connectiveness and allows a felt experience of being in a place that has an intention to be relational, rather than just a space. Through the relational, abstracted, imaginative, and creative elements at TCT, people can time travel. The temporal aspects of displacement are explored by moving between the past, present, and future to try to make meaning if they wish. It allows the participant to find their own pace, rhythm, and time that makes sense and is familiar to them. The support of the art therapists along with art materials and media that provide a sense of nostalgia or resonance allow this to happen. This is helpful if someone is particularly stuck in an unhelpful emotional state.

Engaging in time travel within the therapeutic context encourages individuals to explore their past experiences, present circumstances, and future aspirations. This multifaceted approach fosters a sense of agency and empowerment, as individuals recognize their capacity to shape their own narrative and envision a brighter tomorrow. By integrating into the practice of TCT ways of facilitating time travel, TCT provides participants with a valuable tool for emotional regulation and resilience-building, ultimately promoting mental wellbeing and a sense of optimism.

3) Cultivating hope (see Table 23, p.211, and Table 24, p.232)

Definition

This element identifies the role that TCT can play in supporting people to be able to emotionally cope in difficult circumstances and imagine something better. A crucial aspect of this is the ability to think beyond now and to have a sense of optimism or hope for a better future. Hope offers a counterview to the aftereffects of a trauma (Hobfoll et al., 2007). It connects to a sense of agency and the notions of things having potential and people seeing possibilities. This element includes aspects from themes responding to the research questions “What is the perceived impact of TCT, if any, on participants?” and “What are the mechanisms of change that bring about that impact?”

TCT was regarded as positively impactful, fostering more positive thinking. It was perceived as a calm, creative, and inclusive space where individuals could immerse themselves in activities and emotionally recalibrate. This, in turn, opened possibilities for hope and aspiration. Experiencing positive emotions can help to build resilience, creating an environment where using imagination is seen to be a positive mechanism of change.

Early stages of this doctoral research emphasized understanding the intentions behind the work through literature exploration, practical experience, and data collection phases. From literature exploration, practical experience, and data collection, hope emerged as a significant theme in supporting resilience and in assessing the positive impact of TCT. Participants (A and C) acknowledged that TCT helped them reframe their situations and envision a more positive future. The role of hope in promoting and sustaining individuals during and after crises was evident

throughout the research (Hobfoll et al., 2006; Hobfoll et al., 2021; Purgato et al, 2018), highlighting its capacity to foster coping mechanisms in adversity by envisioning positive change.

Another aspect of cultivating hope through resilience is through self and collective efficacy. This is the ability to influence one's own behaviours and motivations within a social context (Bandura, 1997). Hobfoll et al. (2021) emphasize promoting stress resistance and resilience, part of which is promoting hope, as core objectives of psychosocial practices, with self and collective efficacy playing a crucial role in achieving these goals.

A primary rationale for offering adapted art therapy at TCT is not to treat pathology but to foster resilience. It's crucial to understand that reactions displayed by the refugees and individuals we engage with should not be pathologized or viewed as indicators of future mental health issues (Hobfoll et al., 2021). However, it's important to recognize severe distress and acknowledge that some individuals may have ongoing mental health challenges that require interventions beyond the immediate scope of TCT's approach. Crucial for TCT is the ability of the facilitators to hold in mind the multiplicity of feelings and experiences that people attending may bring. The feelings and experiences people bring include positive thinking and complex and difficult negative feelings.
Recent hope theory suggests that social settings, including family and friends, alongside spiritual influences, significantly impact one's ability to maintain a positive outlook (Bernardo, 2010; Bernardo and Mendoza, 2021; Bernardo et al., 2018; Colla et al., 2022; Du and King, 2013). This underscores the importance of broader support systems in nurturing hope rather than viewing it solely as an individual trait.
A critical aspect of TCT is including wider people within the context in addition to asylum seekers. This has several rationales: firstly, to create a community of support around asylum seekers (discussed below in element 8 about social connection), and secondly, to address the wellbeing needs of other people (workers and volunteers) who work within that context.

What was recognised as a mechanism of change at TCT was supporting the ability to hope. The mind–body connection is crucial in promoting positive thinking. According to polyvagal theory (Porges, 2011), the mammalian autonomic nervous

system and its responses influence adaptive behavioural strategies. By integrating mind and body and reframing negative experiences, individuals can shift their responses. Dana and Porges (2018) expands on Porges' (2011) theory by introducing the concept of "glimmers" (Dana and Porges, 2018, p.67), which are brief moments of joy that evoke positive emotions in both body and mind. Glimmers serve as contrasts to triggering moments that activate the mammalian autonomic nervous system's defensive fight-or-flight response. Biologically and emotionally, experiencing a glimmer promotes a state of connection and regulation, signalling safety and calm to the nervous system. These micro moments play a pivotal role in reshaping the nervous system towards emotional resilience. Glimmers can be cultivated through creativity, social connection, play, metaphor, and humour, echoing how negative associations can be triggered by sensory cues such as sights, sounds, smells, tastes, actions, or behaviours. Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) theory of creative flow is also resonant. It considers a state where individuals become deeply immersed in enjoyable activities, transcending awareness of time and self and achieving peak happiness. TCT facilitated feelings of creative flow, it was universally described as having a positive impact by all participants, providing a space where individuals could immerse themselves in activities, destress, and find calm and relaxation. Creating a convivial atmosphere where there is a sense of peace and connectivity with others helps to generate glimmers, which contribute to cultivating hope.

Participants valued TCT highly and reported feeling valued and accepted after attending, including the art therapy facilitators who found fulfilment in their work. Participants expressed feeling better equipped to emotionally recalibrate, aiding in coping with the present and fostering hope for the future.

4) The attitudes and stance of art therapists (see Table 23, p.232)

Definition

This element considers the specific role of the art therapists at TCT and highlights the necessary skills and abilities needed by them to be both robust and effective. A key part of this element is what was termed in the findings in Chapter 8 as the attitudes and stance of the art therapists. This element predominantly responds to

the research question: What are the mechanisms of change that bring about the impact?

The art therapist's stance and attitude were seen to be a pivotal positive mechanism of change. These were defined more specifically as the art therapists encouraging both self and collective efficacy for those attending TCT, which meant allowing individuals to choose and not impose an agenda. Predominantly, this included working in a bespoke way with individuals' own unique experience; being adaptive and using a variety of techniques such as grounding and mentalization; and being mindful of transference and countertransference. Also, attitudes and stance include using a collective approach such as seeing TCT as a whole group intervention rather than individual, so a need to understand group dynamics. The role of the art therapist included offering unconditional support, encouragement, and interest; bringing a sense of calm, sensitivity, and attentiveness; and, crucially, using reflexivity in the moment and being present with the experience of the here and now while recognising the longitudinal impact of displacement and trauma that people may have or might experience.

The role of the art therapists was seen as a core mechanism of change that contributed to the positive impact of TCT. The art therapists themselves acknowledged also the importance of the diverse facilitation team that welcomes people with lived experience of displacement who are not therapists (which will be explored more in element 8, social connection, and element 9, democratizing space). Most participants underscored the importance of qualified and experienced art therapists in facilitating TCT. The art therapists were viewed as essential for holding, adapting to, responding to, and grounding various emotional responses. For example, participants A and C highlighted the kindness and dedication of the art therapists, noting their passion for art and culture.

Art therapists were recognized for creating a relational and kind atmosphere, being knowledgeable and experienced in using art materials, and possessing appropriate psychological understanding. This also included aspects such as using grounding techniques and having skills to adapt in the moment. Additionally, the art therapists themselves viewed the inclusion of artists with lived experience of being displaced and a diverse (as in a wide variety of intersections of people represented) facilitation

team as enhancing their role, as they bring valuable cultural diversity. While the art therapists acknowledged several of the specific skills highlighted, they also noted that facilitators with lived experience of displacement added significant value to TCT and to the whole team.

The interpersonal and relational skills are central to the role of art therapists in the creation of a relational space at TCT. Additional skills that the art therapists bring introduce playful creative practices with the aim of fostering self-awareness, and regulation of perceptions of time and space (Abbing et al., 2018; Deboys et al., 2017; De Witte et al., 2021; Gabel and Robb, 2017; Nolan, 2019).

The stance and attitude of the art therapists includes understanding the psychological complexities that may manifest with people who attend TCT and how to support them. Following a crisis or trauma, individuals are at risk of losing their ability to manage their situations effectively (Foa and Meadows, 1997; Resick and Schnicke, 1992). Therefore, the aim of psychosocial support is to challenge negative views of someone's competence and promote the ability to manage adversity independently (Hobfoll et al., 2021). Supporting the belief that individuals can cope with trauma-related events enhances confidence and leads to longer-term positive outcomes (Benight and Harper, 2002).

The supportive actions of the art therapists identified included promoting efficacy; maintaining a sense of calmness; providing a caring presence; acknowledging distress; encouraging pleasurable activities; and attuning to the emotions of participants (Benight and Harper, 2002). Attunement involves being aware of and responsive to others' feelings and emotions (Goldstein Nolan and Mumpton, 2023).

Part of the supportive actions at TCT use ostensive communication, as in communication through gestures and interactions rather than words. When art therapists show curiosity and interest in participants' use of art materials, this opens possibilities for self-discovery and building epistemic trust (Springham and Huet, 2018). This initiates mentalization, the ability to imagine mental states in oneself and others, which aids in reflecting on interpersonal events and fostering trust in social interactions (Havsteen-Franklin, 2016; Moore and Marder, 2019; Springham and Camic, 2017).

At TCT, relational aesthetics also play a crucial role, where emotional interactions between individuals and the art they create or experience within a group setting become pivotal. The art therapists help to navigate how the art becomes a visual and non-verbal medium for feedback and expression within the therapeutic context. They actively choose and curate TCT, adapting the materials to the context, rationale, and intent of that specific iteration of TCT on that day.

5) Art materials (see Table 23, p.232)

Definition

This element refers to the importance of the art materials, which ones are chosen, how they are used, and how they are curated by the facilitators at TCT. Included in this element is the way in which art materials stimulate imagination and embodied interaction with them. Art materials are the tools which the art therapists use to help support those at TCT to imagine and embody feelings (if they wish), by giving form to a feeling and experience using the art materials.

The use of relevant art materials at TCT was seen as another key mechanism of change that brought about a positive impact. Participants also saw the art materials as conduits which supported emotional regulation. Participants identified that the art materials resonated with them (and they witnessed them resonating with others) both aesthetically and culturally. The thoughtful choice of art materials, along with encouragement to play and imagine, was seen to have facilitated an embodied experience, where a mind–body experience enabled a shift in mood or feeling.

Thoughtfully chosen art materials and media at TCT activated participants' capacity for play, emotional recalibration, cultural connection, meaning-making, and imaginative exploration. The selection of culturally and aesthetically relevant materials, coupled with sensory engagement and interpersonal dynamics, emerged as a significant mechanism of positive change. But it was not just the art materials themselves. Participants emphasized the pivotal role of art therapists in facilitating and containing the process of using art materials. They also recognized the broader team's contributions, such as understanding specific art materials and the artistic skills of how to use them that could be shared. It was not just the art materials themselves that were important, but also the ability to use them. Notably, E and G

(art therapists) highlighted the importance of collective artistic participation, including asylum seekers and other team members, in enriching the therapeutic environment with the idea of collective artmaking. Marshall-Tierney (2021) describes how, when art therapists make art alongside those they work with playfully and creatively, artmaking helps build trust and co-create meaning.

While all participants acknowledged the importance of art materials at TCT, they noted that their value extended beyond mere utility; it was their interpersonal and collective use that proved most impactful. The imaginative and transformative potential of materials such as large maps, small bricks, plasticine, typewriters, View-Masters, postcards, and black-and-white photos transported participants into new dimensions. Considering scale, balance, rhythm, and sensory engagement bridged mind–body connections, fostering embodied experiences that resonated beyond the therapeutic setting.

Research supports the view that artmaking processes in therapy promote relaxation and creative flow (Abbing et al., 2018). Art therapy offers a space to develop and apply creative skills through visual expression (Bosgraaf et al., 2020; De Witte, 2021; Van Lith, 2015). It aids those who struggle with verbalizing or externalizing challenging experiences and facilitates mentalization (Abbing et al., 2018; Bosgraaf et al., 2020; Czamanski-Cohen et al., 2019; Deboys et al., 2017; Gabel and Robb, 2017; Havsteen-Franklin, 2016). Furthermore, art therapy supports grounding in the present moment, clarifying thoughts and emotions visually (Abbing et al., 2018; Czamanski-Cohen et al., 2019; Deboys et al., 2017). But there is still limited literature as to the actual specificities of art materials and their significance in the therapeutic interactions (Moon, 2010), which makes it important to identify them in this theoretical framework.

Using art materials in art therapy uniquely integrates body and mind in an epigenetic manner, positively influencing how the body interprets emotional cues and countering somatic distress (Czamanski-Cohen and Weihs, 2016). Embodiment through artmaking enhances self-awareness and supports a non-victimized sense of self (Czamanski-Cohen and Weihs, 2016). Art materials that invoke pleasure and play activate kinaesthetic and sensory experiences, aiding in emotional processing (Blomdahl et al., 2013; Hass-Cohen and Carr, 2008; Hinz, 2006).

The Expressive Therapies Continuum (Hinz, 2020; Lusebrink, 2016; Lusebrink and Hinz, 2016) categorizes artmaking into four levels: kinaesthetic/sensory, perceptual/affective, cognitive/symbolic, and creative. Each level represents a progression in information processing, from sensory engagement to complex cognitive symbolism, culminating in the creative integration of all these aspects. The Expressive Therapies Continuum highlights the potential of art materials to support sensory integration, relational functioning, self-regulation, and cognition integration (Hinz, 2020; Lusebrink, 2016; Lusebrink and Hinz, 2016).

The use of materials such as typewriters, which engage movement, sound, perception, and symbolism, connect to and encourage the awareness of the implicit felt sense. Typewriters can help to reframe difficult felt experiences, traumatic experiences often hinder the use of words, therefore sensorimotor art making using materials such as typewriters can help to reframe difficult felt experiences.

Participants expressed enthusiasm for these kinds of unique and culturally resonant art materials used at TCT, which often evoked nostalgic connections or stories passed down through generations. For instance, participant A remembered typewriters being used in his village in Afghanistan. He shared how much he loved them, and he used a typewriter at TCT to write thank you letters to people who were kind to him that he had met on his journey. He read them late at night by torchlight while sleeping outdoors in a tent, reminding himself how kind people could be. The letters written at the typewriter became a medium for emotional regulation and recalibration amid challenging circumstances.

Participants E and G both emphasized the importance of art therapists investing in discovering culturally relevant materials and understanding the nuances of the formative contexts of those at TCT. It is important for art therapists to stay connected to the broader innovations and developments that happen in contemporary art practice, which includes the use of materials, and this is seen as an essential part of art therapy (Moon, 2010). Art materials need to be aesthetic and appealing so people want to engage with them and become absorbed or immersed in how they are used. For each iteration of TCT there also needs to be a clear rationale for what art materials are used, including their aesthetic and physical qualities and why these

relate to the intent of the practice, the cultural context it is in, and the culture of the participants.

Being able to imagine (discussed in Chapter 8) can offer someone the ability to perceive other possibilities. At TCT, the art materials play a role in helping people to imagine through images, but also by creating patterns (with the use of the small bricks, for example) and sensory cues with materials such as typewriters and plasticine with touch and movement.

6) **Conscious engagement with macro and micro contexts** (see Table 22, p.178, and Table 24, p.232)

Definition

This element emphasizes the importance of the facilitators of TCT understanding, working with, and adapting to (when appropriate) the macro and micro contexts TCT is in. This is underpinned by psychosocial principles, such as recognising the continual interconnection and mutual influence between psychological and social actions (IASC, 2007). Therefore, what is meant by conscious engagement with macro and micro contexts is not only understanding, working with, and adapting to (when appropriate) the context that TCT is set within, but also considering the psychological needs of individuals at TCT. This includes the wider macro context for those seeking asylum (such as Calais); considerations of why people might be seeking asylum (wider political landscape); the dominant political issues and ramifications in France and the UK that may be relevant; and also comprehending the relevant networks, infrastructures, and systems in the context itself (such as in Calais). The micro context is TCT itself, who attends and who facilitates, alongside the interpersonal dynamics that occur at the table. The key is the interrelationship between these two aspects of macro and micro and the need for mindful (conscious) engagement of both to underpin TCT. This means continual reflection and adaptation, when necessary, from those who facilitate TCT. Facilitators need to keep up to date with the macro and micro context and review, adapt, and respond so as to curate TCT appropriately. It is these traits that underpin TCT and help to provide a robust basis that allows "*a culture in which to build on"* (Participant E, phase 1 of data collection).

This element focuses on direct responses from participants who were facilitators which highlighted the critical need for thoughtful conceptualization in curating the TCT space and its contextual relationship. Other participants indirectly alluded to aspects of this.

Art therapist facilitators emphasized the significance of engaging with both macro and micro contexts. They underscored the importance of comprehending the rationale behind the services provided to asylum seekers. Crucially, they highlighted the necessity of cultivating relationships with other organizations within this context, alongside a comprehensive understanding of professional issues related to displacement. These included practical aspects such as communication; understanding the systems in the context; and connecting with other relevant organizations. The facilitators agreed on the need for the facilitating team to stay updated on news relating to asylum seekers and legal changes in both the UK and France, also for the art therapist facilitators to stay current with relevant art therapy practices and psychological thinking, including trauma-informed approaches, mentalization, and grounding techniques.

It was acknowledged that there was a significant amount of background work needed to set up such a welcoming and open space. G defined it as "*the work around the edges"* (Participant G, phase 2 of data collection). The thinking, planning, and organization involved in setting up TCT takes time and effort, which always needs to be factored in. This "*work around the edges"* was considered part of what made TCT successful. This included clarifying the relationship to the context and investment in understanding the specifics of what is needed, why, and how.

The micro detail of such things was considered an important aspect of the positive mechanisms of change identified by the facilitators of TCT. The detail included decisions about table placement; the selection of materials; session duration; and the intentionality of these elements. Creating a safe environment involved respecting and valuing cultural diversity; fostering a kind and convivial atmosphere; and offering participants choices regarding whether or not they attend, which activities they take part in, and how long they stay. Also of consideration was the seemingly insignificant but actually very relevant minutia of detail such as the impact of weather on the

choice of materials, and the overall consideration of the impact of such things on both the micro and macro level.

Central to TCT's success is its collective nature, involving not only the facilitation team but also the establishment of relationships with the broader community and organizations operating within the context. This systemic approach ensures the sustainability of TCT over time, even adapting during challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, when sessions shifted from weekly to monthly formats. The longstanding presence of Art Refuge in northern France has built trust with other NGOs and the refugee population, contributing to the continuity and effectiveness of TCT.

The practice of TCT involves working with asylum seekers in crisis contexts, some of whom may be experiencing complicated emotional responses to their situation. The work embraces both psychosocial practices and art therapy principles of practice. This means taking on the psychological and social complexities as well as professional responsibilities, part of which is being realistic and honest about what the team can and cannot do.

Conscious engagement with the macro and micro contexts helps to underpin the rationale and intent of the practice at TCT. The rationale of the work and the contexts in which TCT practices are symbiotic. For TCT to succeed, collective aims guide the art therapists, who draw on their professional knowledge, artistic sensibility, and community mindset. This approach integrates individual and collective therapeutic practices, placing the context at the centre of one's intentions and possibilities (Goldstein Nolan and Mumpton, 2023).

Art Refuge offers TCT in a variety of crisis contexts where, with some contexts, people are in more extreme circumstances. The work in northern France is such a context, with refugees waiting to make the perilous crossing over to the UK and living outdoors in extremely hostile environments. This impacts the intention of TCT. In each location where TCT is facilitated, there is a need to understand the context and to skilfully respond to it.

Hobfoll et al. (2021) describe the empirically supported principles for intervention in and prevention of mental health and wellbeing issues in early and mid-stages of

mass trauma and crisis. What this critically highlighted is that commonly used interventions in crisis contexts such as psychological debriefing not only do not prevent post-traumatic stress disorder but also are seen as potentially damaging (Carlier et al., 1998; Hobfoll et al., 2021; Litz and Gray, 2002; McNally et al., 2003; Rose et al., 2003). This spotlights why intentionality of the practice work is needed in relation to both macro and micro contexts. There is a necessity for formulation and reasoning[57] considering appropriate research informed psychological rationale is behind what, why and how to do any intervention supporting mental health and wellbeing is carried out, with the underlying motive of ensuring that no harm is done.

Conscious engagement with macro and micro contexts includes being able to move between the macro and micro presenting complexities and competing difficulties. On the macro level, this means not getting caught in offering to solve a problem or resolve difficulties, but instead offering interventions that support resilience and confidence building in individuals and groups. On a macro level Hobfoll et al.'s (2021) principles of intervention promote: a sense of safety; calming; a sense of self and community efficacy; connectedness and hope; were evidenced as inherent at TCT in the data. On a micro level TCT model can make adaptions to the specific context and offer the ability for people to view things physically symbolically and metaphorically through a variety of lens and scales which enables perspective, held through relational elements of group community and art therapy with the use of the art materials and media.

7) Reflexive thinking (see table 23, p.232)

Definition

The element reflexive thinking represents a core part of what is needed to create an environment that feels comfortable, safe, and culturally relatable to all participants.

This element will explain aspects of reflexive practice needed by TCT facilitators, which includes thinking about intersectional issues, but it's not defined as being only about such issues.

[57] Methods used in clinical art therapy to define the intention of the practice.

The first aspect is reflecting on intersectional issues. This was identified in the findings relating to the response to the research question: “What are the meanings for participants of the practices of TCT?” Participants identified the meanings of the practices as being culturally relevant, recognizing people’s culture, faith, and belief. A core aspect of underpinning an intersectional frame in which to function (at TCT) is the active use of reflexive thinking (Talwar, 2019). Reflexive thinking is the active use of examining one’s own feelings and reasons for acting in a certain way, alongside how these may influence what one does and how one thinks or reacts in a situation. And doing so with resonance to working in an intersectional way. Reflexive thinking by the art therapists can help to empower those they work with. An example of this was when the diverse intersections of different people around TCT were mentioned by E F G H and (I). Both H and (I) noted their own experiences as women of colour and how this was responded to positively by asylum seekers. (I) noted how it offered a sense of familiarity to people; she was able to culturally identify with those from her own and neighbouring countries, and they were able to identify with her. She felt this enabled her to act as a bridge into a new environment. Participant E, F and G all reflexively considered as white British women it was significant to have diversity within the facilitating team that people could relate to. Participant B E and G acknowledged that there needs to be intersectional reflexivity with an emphasis on their own conscious and unconscious systems of oppression that are potentially detrimental to those who we work with. Participant B noted how the therapists did this well and needed to teach other humanitarian workers how to do this. Talwar (2010) posits a need for a social justice framework in Art Therapy which acknowledge the significance of intersectionality and the multiplicity of things that define identity, particularly in relation to race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Kuri (2017) sees part of this as needing to challenge organizational polices that marginalizes those we work with experiences and invalidates them. Kuri (2017) sees part of this as needing to challenge organizational polices that marginalize those we work with, using an intersectional framework through which to recognise cultural and symbolic injustice. By doing this art therapists can empower the people they work with.

The second aspect of reflexive thinking is the team actively reflecting on their roles and engagement in an ongoing, iterative manner, listening, and being responsive

and adaptive to the needs of those who participate in TCT. This related to TCT being perceived as a cultural experience that felt familiar and resonant by all participants. Given the political and social oppression faced by asylum seekers, there is a crucial need for reflexive thinking about TCT by the facilitators.

The third aspect of reflexive thinking is in the consideration of TCT as an entity by the facilitators. Participants viewed TCT as an entity or phenomenon with its own existence or as a cultural event, although it was something that they had not necessarily experienced before it still felt familiar. The participants viewed TCT as being created and curated in an aesthetic and engaging way, they all found TCT familiar, genial, and culturally relevant and resonant. To ensure this, facilitators need to be able to examine their own feelings, reactions and motives and respond to the needs of participants rather than their own feelings, reactions, and motives.

A fourth aspect that was noted by participants was that cultural relevance was significant. The facilitators discussed the not only the complexities of working across cultures and borders, and emphasizing the need for reflexive thinking about power and privilege in the work. But that the TCT demonstrated the possibility of bridging different cultures and geographical borders across the France UK border through creative thinking. Reflexive thinking is needed to create an environment that facilitates people comfortably from the differences of cultures that may not necessarily be considered. Part of this is an ongoing iterative questioning that entails the facilitators examine their own feelings reactions and motives to challenge an unconscious bias, which may influence what they do or how they think in a situation.

A fifth aspect of being reflexive is having an open curiosity as to what people bring to TCT. It is important to recognise that people bring a number of complex feelings to TCT and, facilitators need to be mediating themselves ready to support all types of behaviours and feelings that people bring. Part of this is understanding there is a need to support hope and positive thinking, but also acknowledging this does not mean dismissing or ignoring all the challenges that asylum seekers face. It means having the ability to remain hopeful and positive but also acknowledge the injustices that are prevalent.

A sixth aspect of being reflexive is being *critically hopeful* which allows a critical analysis of power relations and how they influence one's emotional reality and

engagement in the world, while still attempting to build, imaginatively and materially, a different reality (Duncan-Andrade 2009; Ginwright (2015a); Ginwright (2015a). To maintain such a stance, it is integral to be reflexive.

The seventh aspect of reflexivity is the examination of one's own assumptions and judgements specifically in relation to displacement. Being an asylum seeker impacts on negative outcomes for both mental and physical health (Lindert et al, 2009). Lack of understanding of attitudes in a new country along with poor living conditions, lack of employment and variable social support all make asylum seekers vulnerable to mental health issues (Bhugra et al 2011). The loss of one's social structure and culture can cause a grief reaction and homesickness (Papadopoulos 2021). The experience resulting from loss of social structures, cultural values and self- identity can be devastating leading to cultural disorientation (Papadopoulos 2021). A response to this is to offer support to bolster individuals' cultural identity but to do this one needs to be honest and reflexive about the power dynamics within social interactions.

An eighth aspect of reflexivity is to ensure culturally competency, being able to shift to accommodate multiple cultural meanings. This includes recognizing the social and political oppression that marginalized people experience in relation to gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, economic status and citizenship status (Kurcher 2017) and responding to the losses. Kapitan (2015) identifies the need for art therapists to switch from their own personal cultural frame to one that considers an intersectional lens. Participant E noted the use of a large collection of postcards helping to promote cultural diversity in a visual way.

There are personal challenges around reflexivity it can be difficult and uncomfortable, honesty and congruence of the therapist is integral. Not only in terms of the rigour of understanding one's own position of power and privilege in an intersectional framework but, also the necessity of being able to be critically reflexive of populist views or opinions that could equally be from the political right or left of politics. A clear understanding of the intentionality and rationale of the intervention is pivotal, as is being genuine and congruent. Part of this is being responsive, this means not reacting to a situation but being reflective as thinking back to a situation and reflexive as in taking considered action as to how to adapt the situation in the

now. TCT should bring a humanitarian outlook having concern for the welfare of *all* those we work with and alongside with the aim of improving the wellbeing of them *all.* Kapitan et al (2011) sees Art Therapy wherever it is practiced needing to involve an art therapist who applies critically reflexivity with an open intentionality which in turn enables ethical practice[58]. Therefore, having an honest and curious approach with iterative reflexive thinking when facilitating TCT is necessary.

8) Social connection (see Table 23, p.211, and Table 24, p.232)

Definition

This element highlights the importance of social connection, inclusion, and accepting someone for who they are as response to loneliness. In response to the research question "What is the perceived impact of TCT?", social connection was recognized as fundamental to both the meaning and successful impact of TCT. The art therapist facilitators emphasized that a key element of TCT was the inclusion not only of artists with lived experience of displacement but also of other humanitarian workers and volunteers in the setting. They felt that the inclusion of these artists and other workers enabled a wider social connection for the asylum seekers, as they were able to relate to the lived experience of these artists. An additional perhaps surprising outcome was that social connection was seen as universally beneficial experience of TCT for everyone involved, participants and facilitators. The deliberate inclusion of all participants was seen to foster a democratizing space in a context in which such opportunities for inclusion were otherwise limited (which will be explored more in element 9).

Inclusion is also relevant to social connection, inclusivity at TCT hinges on several key elements that collectively create a welcoming environment. Central to this inclusivity is the creation of a safe space where participants, including those traditionally excluded from mainstream society, feel secure and valued. This safe environment is characterized by a convivial atmosphere that promotes a sense of belonging and restores faith among individuals who may have experienced exclusion elsewhere. Moreover, ensuring the facilitation team feels safe to deliver TCT is equally crucial, as when the team feel safe, they feel comfortable enough to open

[58] Discussed in more fully in the conceptual framework in chapter 2.

TCT to a wide range of people whom they may not know anything about. This safety is bolstered by teamwork and the supportive network provided by Art Refuge, which plays a pivotal role in upholding a sense of security within the team. The implicit trust among team members further enhances this feeling of safety, particularly in challenging or potentially unsafe environments. Engendering a sense of safety in the facilitating team emphasizes the importance of working closely with partner organizations and their knowing physical safety protocols to understand what to do if something goes wrong.

The concept of safety within TCT extends beyond physical security to encompass emotional comfort and the cultivation of a positive mood and atmosphere. By prioritizing these elements, TCT not only fosters inclusivity but also supports the overall wellbeing and effectiveness of both participants and facilitators alike in its humanitarian endeavours.

Hobfoll et al. (2021) highlight the significance of providing and supporting social connectedness in crisis contexts. Enabling social connection has several benefits, including practical problem-solving by gaining information; emotional understanding and the sharing of difficult experiences; the normalization of reactions to experiences that other people may recognize; and finding mutual ways of managing (Hobfoll et al., 2021). Important to note is that a lack of social connection and loneliness are risk factors for the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (Hobfoll et al., 2021; Solomon et al., 1986). Benight (2004) suggests that social connection links to a sense of community efficacy and empowerment. Part of this is being able to know where and with whom certain services are offered to asylum seekers. TCT serves as a place where signposting can happen when someone has a specific need. Knowing where to signpost people to also highlights the importance of TCT's facilitation team understanding and having relationships with other organizations in the context within which it functions to know what may be available.

While all participants recognized the significance of social connection, the participants who were facilitators commented on the importance of intersectionality. It was seen as crucial to have facilitators with lived experience of being displaced, people of colour, and the inclusion of humanitarian workers and volunteers. One of the various intentions of including others was to create a community around the

refugee population in a context where they are so disenfranchised. E highlighted how TCT "*becomes even more important for the refugee community when other people join"* (Participant E, phase 2 of data collection).

In order to create a community around and alongside asylum seekers to alleviate a sense of being disenfranchised, there needs to be some kind of a social connection with the context. Participant G (an art therapist) highlighted that TCT goes beyond Kalmanowitz and Lloyd's concept of the Portable Studio (1997; 2005). The Portable Studio concept, in which art therapists embody essential art therapy principles across diverse contexts, underpins TCT's rationale as a structured model of practice within Art Refuge projects. G noted that a development on from the Portable Studio was an intentional fostering of a wider community-oriented approach by TCT facilitators. This involves creating a supportive network around participants, encompassing local workers, volunteers, interpreters/cultural mediators, and refugees themselves. Therefore, social connection extends beyond the table to engage with the broader physical, social, and political context. This therefore widens social connection.

The Art Hive movement, pioneered by Janis Timm-Bottos, has some alignment with TCT. The Art Hive movement is grounded in principles of radical hospitality, inclusion, and creative engagement as tools for social connection and healing. The Art Hive has an ethos of welcoming everyone as an artist and fostering community through accessible, non-clinical artmaking (Timm-Bottos and Reilly, 2016). It functions as a "third space" (Oldenburg, 1999), and it is also known as a public homeplace where informal learning, relational practice, and aesthetic knowledge are valued. The approach is to decentralize power, reinforcing ethical and participatory values in art therapy (Timm-Bottos, 2018). The Art Hive movement allows a shift towards public practice art therapy, where creativity becomes a vehicle for healing, agency, and social change. TCT does offer an example of how art therapy can evolve through public practice, creating inclusive, relational spaces that extend beyond traditional clinical boundaries. Talwar (2015) advocates for alternative public spaces that challenge clinical norms and promote social justice through collective creativity. Goldstein Nolan and Mumpton (2023) further define community art therapy as a practice rooted in inclusivity, justice-orientation, and shared facilitation, and

Thompson (2019) argues that community art installations can empower participants and is a powerful and anti-oppressive way to work with marginalised communities. These perspectives support the Community Table as a model for developing the public homeplace in art therapy—one that is socially engaged, ethically grounded, and responsive to the lived realities of displacement and crisis. But this also presents challenges that need to be considered as to how these spaces can function in a crisis context.

A part of eliciting social connection for asylum seekers is acknowledging working in a politically fraught context. There are also cons around social connection; one con is that sometimes there are misunderstandings and differing opinions. Social connection can mean connection with people who might have a specific hidden political agenda. So, the intention of what the social connection is for is important. Participants B, H, and (I) discussed the impact of activism. I see activism as a spectrum, from the highlighting of injustices and the advocating for a better future to a doctrine of practice in support of or in opposition to one side of something that may be considered a controversial issue.[59]

In the northern France context, there are some grassroots activist non-governmental organizations who offer a variety of support to asylum seekers. Participant B, a humanitarian worker himself, identified how he had witnessed some of these activists wanting to support asylum seekers, and in turn often overriding those they were working with, driven by their own political views rather than seeing and responding to what was in front of them. While all the participants who were facilitators identified that their beliefs and values aligned with supporting asylum seekers who themselves faced daily social and political injustices, they understood the differentiation of highlighting injustices rather than prescribing a doctrine. Participants H and (I) talked about their own desire to be activists as one compelling reason that led them to engage with Art Refuge. Participants E and G made a clear distinction as art therapists that, although a driver to do the work was because of their beliefs and values, they understood the necessity to be reflexive to prevent being reactive in situations alongside the need to remain with the intentions of TCT.

[59] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/activism#:~:text=noun,side%20of%20a%20controversial%20issue

They felt the driver for TCT needed to be around cultural, historical, sociopolitical, and economic contexts and community dynamics, rather than the personal driver of the art therapists concerned. There was a distinction as to what art therapist facilitators felt they needed to take responsibility for alongside the other non-art therapist facilitators.

Appropriate boundaries need to be set out when thinking about social connection. The Health and Care Profession Council (HCPC) has clear expectations of registrants in relation to maintaining appropriate boundaries. The standards of conduct, performance, and ethics[60] set out in general terms how registrants should behave. This is an ethical framework within which registrants must work, and they outline what the public should expect from their healthcare professional. Pertinent is maintaining appropriate boundaries. This includes considering the potential impact that the position of power and trust you hold as a health and care professional may have on individuals when in social or personal settings. One must take action to set and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with service users, carers, and colleagues. This includes taking action to ensure your personal values, biases, and beliefs do not lead you to discriminate, and your personal values, biases, and beliefs must not detrimentally impact the care, treatment, or other services that you provide. This is to make sure your conduct justifies the public's trust and confidence in you and your profession.

Social connection also comes in forms of social media, with people on the move social media enables ongoing social connection, but this also has complications. As discussed in chapter 3, Art Refuge uses social media as a way of connecting to people on the move. An example of how Art Refuge uses social media exemplifies how to set boundaries in relation to social connection. Art Refuge uses social media to connect to people beyond TCT and to share the art produced (always with permission from the maker). The use of social media is careful and considered and navigates the complexities of often binary views in relation to sociocultural and political contexts with iterative reflexive thinking. HCPC social media guidelines outline the need to think carefully about what is shared online, both personally and

[60] https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-of-conduct-performance-and-ethics/revised-standards/

professionally. Throughout the use of social media, nothing should be shared that would bring your professional practice or your profession into disrepute. When using either a professional or personal account, conduct should continue to respect service users, their carers, and/or your colleagues and maintain fair access to services for all.

With any part of social connection, it is important to mediate misunderstandings. This includes the making and viewing of art, as it's a subjective and multifaceted process. Participants E, F, and G felt that art could not simply be seen as a mechanism of social good or a way for people to always socially connect. They all took the premise that art could be messy and controversial and irritate others; it could be difficult and say or demand things that others may not agree with. Within art therapy, the art needs to hold multiple meanings, otherwise it risks becoming propaganda. TCT was defined as understanding and encouraging shared power. An art therapist advocating personal views would create a mistrust in a setting where there are multiple complexities both individually and in wider communities. The art therapist needs to understand the multiplicity of lenses that things are seen through to enable an environment where there is healthy social connection.

9) Democratizing space (Table 22, p.178, Table 23, p.211, and Table 24, p.232)

Definition

This element explores how TCT was seen as a democratic space open for all and the implications and enactment of this. In this element, democratizing is meant as making something available to all people and includes aspects of co-production. Democratic space and democratizing came up in several ways in response to the research questions about the meaning and impact of TCT. All participants felt that TCT was a space for all. Within this were the notions of all participants being part of a community of people at TCT.

Participants E, F, and G noted how introducing the notion of the shared inclusive aspects of TCT differentiates TCT from most art therapy models. TCT operates without traditional assessment routes and is open access. TCT was used by other humanitarian workers and volunteers, which was identified as a way that it is a democratizing space. By being accessible to everyone, it shifted the axis, changing

the power dynamic of humanitarian worker working for asylum seekers to one of jointly gaining benefit from TCT. This inclusivity was emphasized by refugee, humanitarian worker, and volunteer participants and is distinct from social connection/inclusion. What also emerged as enabling this was the intentionality of the space, ensuring it is welcoming, open, and kind to those joining.

Springham and Xenophontes (2021) discuss ways of democratizing art therapy spaces in research and practice through co-production. Co-production is defined as people who use and provide art therapy services working together to develop theory in such a way that both the consensus and differences between each perspective are valued. They convincingly argue the benefits. Co-production works in an informal way at TCT, as it is seen as a collective working together. But TCT also offers something new to art therapy, in that it specifically includes everyone; inclusion is not determined by pathology. TCT is open to everyone in the setting. Participants commented on not only how they felt included and part of a community, but they had a say in what they could do and how they could do it, which reflected the intention of the facilitators.

Following the notion discussed in the previous element of a community around and alongside those seeking asylum, how to create this community in a democratizing way is crucial. Some literature around community art therapy offers ideas as to how to consider democratizing at TCT. Community art therapy is something that is practised in context and formed by the type of culture of the community itself. It has the aim of offering creative practices for individuals and groups for collective therapeutic benefit (Goldstein Nolan and Mumpton, 2023). Timm-Bottos and Chainey (2015), Talwar (2019), and Goldstein Nolan and Mumpton (2023) all see ways that community art therapy is democratizing, as it moves away from the more hierarchical relationships that exist in medical models to a frame where all participants are seen as equals and there is a sense of mutual support. This resonates with TCT.

This resonance continues with Goldstein Nolan and Mumpton (2023) defining community art therapy as something that needs to be practised skilfully and ethically, with a clear intent to make something democratic. This highlights how the right intentions should be key aspects of ensuring that TCT is democratic. TCT community ethos is that it is inclusive, democratic, and accessible, elements that

give people a sense of belonging, acknowledge social issues and inequalities, and encourage independence.

Some participants viewed TCT as a form of social action where people come together to support one another. Golub (2005) characterizes social action art therapy as emphasizing community empowerment over addressing individual relational dynamics and also the traditional power imbalances between service users and therapists (Golub, 2005). This approach focuses on harnessing the collective power within a community for the community's benefit and moves away from the idea of individual ideas of activism.

Kapitan (2015) argues that effective social action requires participatory and collaborative engagement, which could be seen as democratic. In this context, artmaking serves as a tool for individuals to explore their realities, identify their needs and strengths, and foster both personal and collective resilience and wellbeing (Kapitan, 2015; Kaplan, 2005). These principles resonate with how participants E, F, G, and (I) perceive the role of TCT, emphasizing community support and empowerment. Participants A and C also express a sense of belonging to a community through their involvement in TCT. Participants E and G both reflected on how TCT has brought something very different to art therapy practice. Participant E also expressed this view. Figure 37 illustrates how TCT is held in a wider system, and participant G felt that it is this system that allows inclusion and a democracy at the heart of TCT.

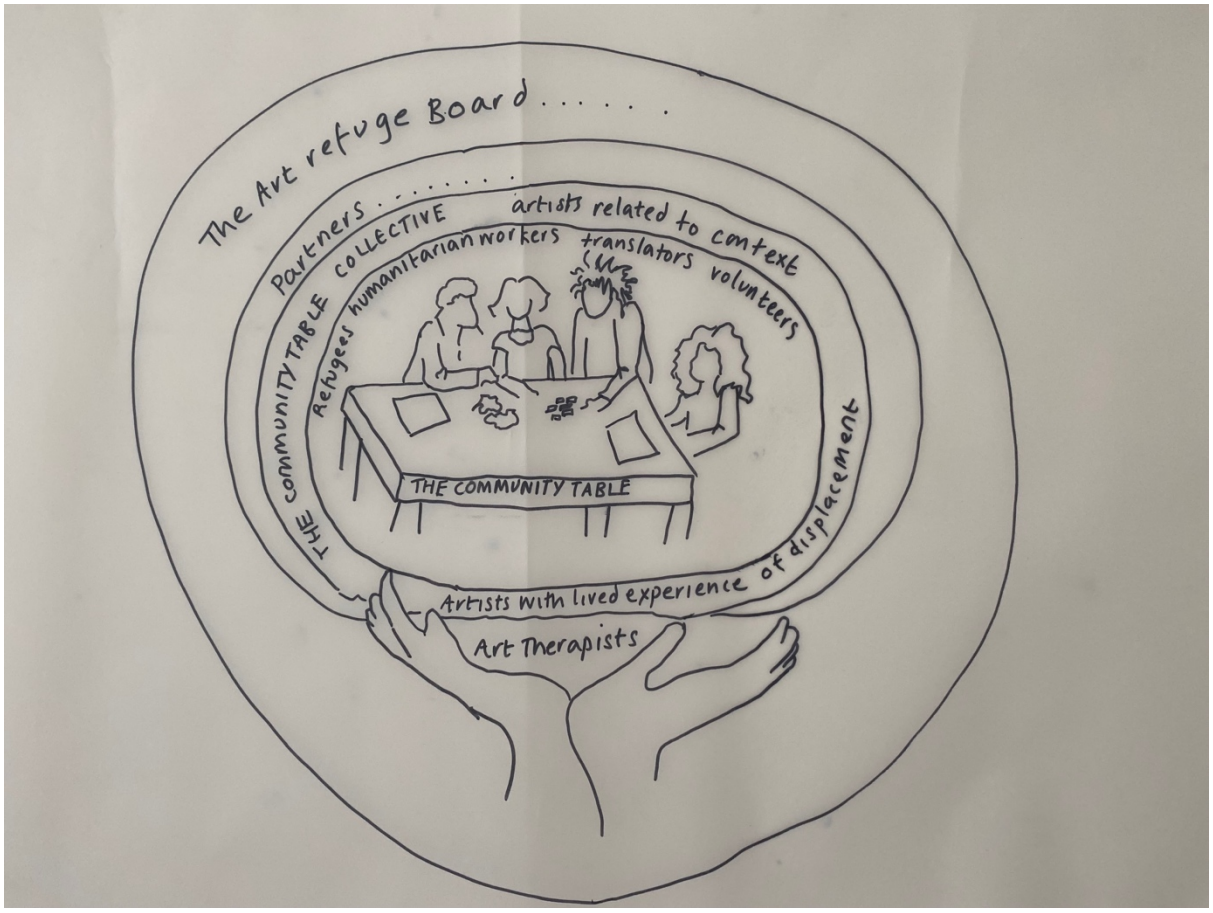


Figure 37: Systems (Miriam Usiskin)

Part of making a democratic space is formed by the type of culture of TCT itself. The people who have sat at the table are refugees, humanitarian workers, volunteers, translators, and, at times, even security guards, people who use the services and work in the settings within which TCT functions. The table is metaphorically held by the wider Art Refuge team known as The Community Table Collective. Meeting bimonthly, the collective holds the role of peer supervision and supports another thinking space about the work. Part of the wider team of The Community Table Collective are other artists and those with lived experience of displacement. Participants E, F, G, H, and (I) all mentioned The Community Table Collective. It was noted as a place that encourages cultural exchange and communication about differences and similarities between the contexts within which TCT functions. The Community Table Collective models a democratic space for TCT. The Community Table Collective and TCT are both held within the charitable aims and objectives of Art Refuge and a board of trustees who oversee the work, with formal policies such as safeguarding, health and safety, equality and diversity, risk management, data

protection, and communication containing the work. This enables TCT to have a robust structure in which it is held, and this robust structure allows a multiplicity of meaning for its participants and helps to create a democratizing space where people can choose if they want to attend, what they use at the table, what materials and media they prefer, and if they want to share about their artmaking.

Chapter 10: Conclusion and recommendations

This thesis investigated TCT as an adapted art therapy model developed and conceptualized by the charity Art Refuge. The purpose of TCT was to address the psychosocial needs of asylum seekers in France and the UK.

Global disasters, wars, pandemics, and environmental catastrophes have spanned the timeline of this doctorate and are likely to extend far beyond it, with new emergencies arising all the time. As a result, more people are on the move, forced to leave their homes in affected areas in search of safety and sanctuary.

Over the past five decades there was an estimated 110 million forcibly displaced people worldwide in 2023 according to the UN migration agency[61] Political tensions have continued to rise in response to the so-called “Refugee Crisis” of 2015. In northern France, the minimal support infrastructure provided to refugees in transit by the French and British NGOs and voluntary groups has been overshadowed by an increase in the number of people drowning while attempting to cross the English Channel. At the time of writing, the issue of “illegal” small boats carrying refugees desperate to reach the UK from northern France has continued to be an important topic. With a new government from July 2024, it is yet to be determined what changes in relation to this may happen. Shipwrecks have become increasingly common during attempted migrant crossings from France to the UK. Incidents of drowning are more commonly reported an example is on 23 October 2024, three people were confirmed dead after a boat sank, but the true number of missing remains unknown. In November 2024, the bodies of three people believed to be migrants were found washed up on the beaches of northern France.[62] People on the move and desperate to get to the UK face the risk of overcrowded boats not fit for purpose to navigate one of the busiest shipping routes in the world. Often, NGOs are left with the difficult task of identifying those who lost their life in the attempt to cross to the UK. They do their best to give respect to those people on the move but sometimes struggle to identify who people are and where they come from. With

[61] https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2022-interactive/

[62] https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/61192/channel-three-more-bodies-found-on-french-beaches (accessed 16/11/24)

gravestones in graveyards in Calais without any name, people become marginalised even in death.

There are now more people on the move than ever before. We live in turbulent times, and people need to find ways of coping, finding meaning and value with each other.

Summary of findings

Through systematic research, a theoretical framework was developed that shows how TCT acts as a vital, supportive, and impactful therapeutic space. The nine elements discussed in chapter 9 and seen in figure 38 (see below) make up this theoretical framework.

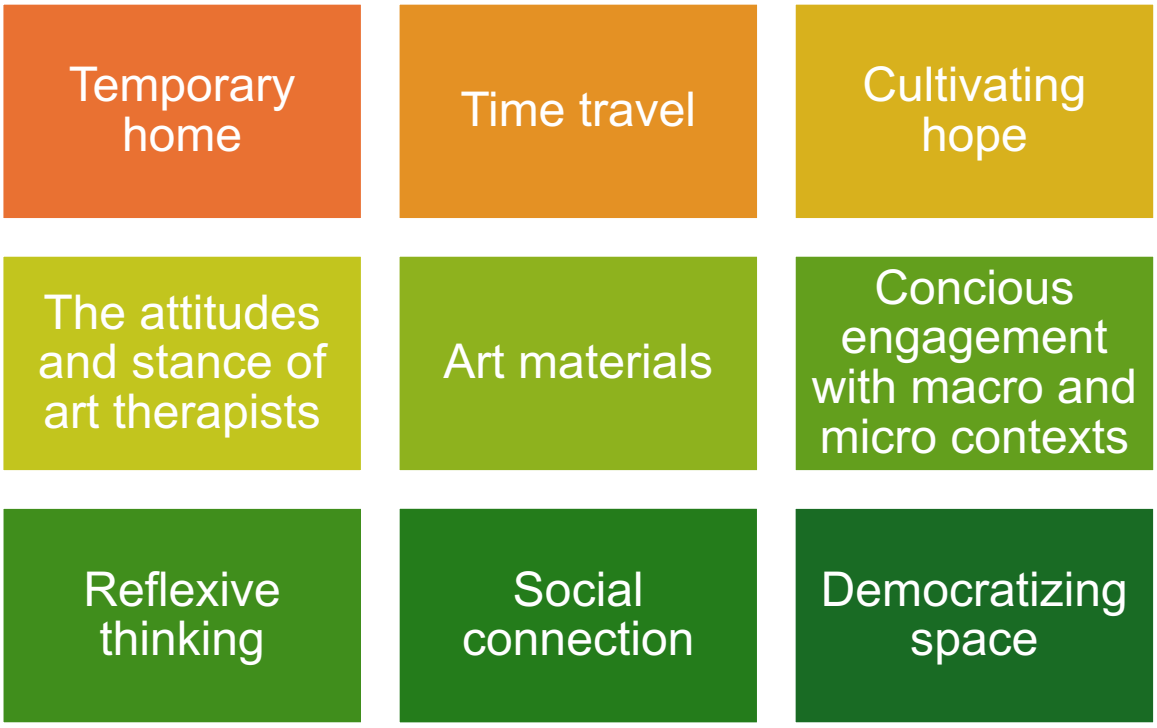


Figure 38: The nine elements in the theoretical framework of TCT

The findings identified how TCT was seen by all participants as having a positive impact on themselves and others. TCT created positive memories for people that connected to their home, culture, and identity. TCT enabled moments for participants that sparked joy through creativity and interpersonal relationships. Participants felt TCT gave visibility to asylum seekers marginalized by society due to their situations.

The asylum seeker participants described feeling more hopeful after attending TCT. They attributed this to being able to take with them some positive memories and experiences from TCT, and, in turn, this helped them to hope and cope: hoping for a better future helped them cope better with their present situations.

At TCT they felt valued and included in contexts where they normally felt marginalized and excluded. TCT was identified as creating a democratic environment, which has potential implications for promoting more democratic art therapy practices. This was elicited by actively involving and including a diverse group of stakeholders, including humanitarian workers and volunteers. Additionally, TCT impacted positively on humanitarian workers' and volunteers' health, wellbeing, and capacity to manage their work. Significant aspects that were identified as key mechanisms of change included the art therapists' attitude and stance; their actions and reflexivity; their understanding of the impact of displacement; their cultural sensitivity and reflexivity towards finding and using imaginative art materials; and a facilitation team that included people with their own experience of displacement.

Overall, the theoretical framework underscores how TCT operates not solely as a therapeutic intervention but as a platform that enables individuals to connect, express themselves artistically, and collectively navigate challenges while fostering resilience. This includes careful collective thinking by the facilitation team, understanding TCT's relationship with its context, seeing the value of art, and appreciation of individuals' culture and experience and the professionalism of the art therapists and wider facilitation team.

Recommendations for policy actors and practitioners developing and facilitating TCT

The recommendations presented here for TCT are not definitive and would need iterative assessment of their suitability by those wanting to use the TCT model beyond Art Refuge. They focus on the needs of displacement-affected people but could be adapted to other areas, enabling a template on which an art therapy practitioner could develop TCT. These recommendations are also relevant to any member of the facilitation team who may not be qualified or other relevant allied health professionals. Policymakers and practitioners can use the theoretical framework to design and conduct TCT and as a basis for further improving TCT and ensuring its responsiveness to the different contexts in which it may be used.

Table 25: Practice implications

	Practice implications
1. **Setting up TCT** *Consider the intention of the work.*	1.1 Consider the intention of the work, if it is needed and for whom, what is needed and why. 1.2 Consider the impact of displacement and loss of home, the impact of spatial geographic and environmental, cultural, and contextual disorientation: To mitigate this, actively promote self-efficacy and encouragement of advocacy through choice. 1.3 Be actively reflexive, responding not reacting to the context. 1.4 Consider how to create a physically and psychologically safe atmosphere. 1.5 Iteratively consider where TCT is situated in a wider context of other services as well as in relation to the physical space that it is held in, e.g., local and global politics, weather and seasonal changes. 1.6 Give time to prepare for the physical setting up of TCT, such as where the table is placed, and the need for it to be obviously accessible for people to attend. 1.7 Make active connections or partnerships with local NGOs, define where the local line of governance is held and any safeguarding processes. 1.8 Ensure TCT is open to all in the field including refugees, volunteers, humanitarian workers. 1.9 Consider the longitudinal frame and consistency of the intervention—monthly, bimonthly, or weekly sessions of 2 to 3 hours or one-off. 1.10 Consideration of how the TCT might be evaluated
2. **The work at TCT** *Use ongoing iterative reflexivity.*	2.1 Have a minimum of two facilitators always, including qualified experienced art therapist. 2.2 Ensure diversity in the facilitating team and those with lived experience of displacement. 2.3 Actively use trauma informed practice. 2.4 Actively use grounding techniques and psychoeducation.

	2.5 Actively use the temporal relationship to past, present, and future to ground participants in the here and now (time travel). 2.6 Actively encourage playfulness and personal meaning-making. 2.7 Actively use mentalization. 2.8 Actively be aware of the possibility of people entering into and out of an embodied state and support this safely. 2.9 Understand the limitations of TCT. 2.10 Actively support absorption, thinking about something other. 2.11 Actively promote calmness. 2.12 Encourage a sense of being valued. 2.13 Encourage and promote personal resilience. 2.14 Listen to and witness difficult emotional experiences. 2.15 Encourage inclusion. 2.16 Encourage a sense of community. 2.17 Encourage the use of imagination through art materials and media. 2.18 Actively consider a rationale for what art materials and media to use when, how, and why. 2.19 Actively use materials and media that relate to the context, culture, history, and experience of the participants. 2.20 Actively consider the aesthetic and sensory capacities of the art materials and media. 2.21 Actively encourage the use of imagination, 2.22 Actively encourage joy, 2.23 Ensure the facilitating team understand and know how to use the materials on offer, 2.24 Consider the impact of art materials and media on the environment; choose items that can be reused or repurposed and that are good quality, flexible, and durable. 2.25 Actively encourage participants to make personal choices of what art materials and media they wish to use. 2.26 Consider what happens to the artworks produced with participants.

	2.27 Consider the use of mobile phones and social media. 2.28 Actively co-produce with attendees at the table. 2.29 Actively consider ways of evaluating TCT.

Table 25 (see above) highlights the work needed to set up and facilitate TCT. These points are not definitive and may need expanding or contracting, depending on the intention of TCT and the context in which it is set.

Point one shows key aspects for setting up TCT, such as considerations of the space in which TCT is held and how to respond to the context practically, psychologically, and aesthetically. TCT's relationship to the context is imperative. There needs to be a clear rationale and understanding of the intent and purpose of TCT within the context: is there a need for it and what is that need? Investment of time is needed by the facilitation team to network and ensure inter-agency collaboration in the context in which TCT is held. Ensuring a link with the context by opening TCT up to other workers and volunteers creates a wider community of people, encouraging social connection and inclusion. TCT needs to take place within or alongside an organization that has clear lines of governance in relation to risk and safeguarding. How any forms of safeguarding are managed needs to relate specifically to contexts and local legal requirements.

Details of the environment, such as weather and light, are part of the practical and aesthetic areas that need to be invested in. An example is when it rains in Calais. As people are living outside, there is not only a mood shift but also practical implications, such as more people attending TCT. In the data, participant E acknowledged how the weather impacts the use of materials, such as when it was cold and wet, people wanted to use the miniature bricks more to build their imagined homes. These details are part of the success of TCT and were noted in the data as the thoughtfulness and care given to creating the table, all of which was acknowledged by participants. How TCT might be evaluated needs to be considered when setting up TCT, as well as what evaluation tools can be used and how.

Being clear about the intent and purpose helps to measure the success of TCT. Did it achieve its intention? Part of the ethics of TCT is an iterative, honest, reflexive consideration of TCT's purpose.

Point 2 focuses on what happens at TCT. The facilitators are key, and the data identifies and reiterates a basic tenet of TCT, which is that there needs to be a minimum of at least two facilitators including qualified art therapists. Most importantly, the diversity of the facilitation team needs to be considered, including those with lived experience of being displaced. The data emphasised that this added gravitas, understanding, and value to the work at TCT.

The art therapists' attitude and stance were a core element that emerged from the data, in particular to the mechanisms of change, and it is what helped to bring about a positive impact at TCT. Art therapists should cultivate an attitude and stance at TCT that includes being reflexive and curious and promotes positive emotional states and resiliency through creativity, promoting anti-oppression practice, social connection, and play. These points highlight the importance of these practices being taught to art therapists in training.

Art therapists being supportive, encouraging, and convivial came up repeatedly in the data, but there is also a need to understand limitations of practice, which is core to ethical practice and is a health care professions standard of practice for art therapists.[63] TCT's purpose is not to resolve ongoing persistent mental health issues but to support people in the here and now. An example of acknowledging limitations is keeping in mind that each session at TCT may be a one-off experience for someone and working with where they are at and being led by them, attuning with where someone is emotionally and not forcing any opening up of difficult experiences or memories.

The use of art materials and media are significant at TCT. The aesthetic, cultural, and sensory capacities of the art materials used are crucial to scrutinize. The materials need relevance to the context and the intentionality of the work at TCT. Additionally, there needs to be a view on what to do with the artworks produced at TCT, which again relates to context. Typical art therapy practice may hold onto images for the duration of the therapeutic engagement, whereas TCT, as described, works predominately with people on the move or in transit. This means they often do not want to or cannot take things they have produced, so developing a way of

[63] https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/resources/standards/standards-of-proficiency---arts-therapists.pdf

working using transitory materials evolved, and finding specific materials that could be reused and remodelled was important. The practice that was explored in this research used mobile phones as a means for photographing the work and recording memories for participants that they could carry with them. This then developed into using social media forums as a platform on which the work could be shared and viewed in the form of blog posts (Usiskin et al., 2020). Permission from any participant was of paramount concern and scrupulous care was taken never to identify anyone in particular, but the use of social media enabled participants to continue a visual dialogue with art refuge beyond TCT as well as being able to access their images on the website when they wish too (Usiskin et al 2020).

How facilitators (art therapists, allied health professionals, and other relevant professionals) can be trained to deliver TCT

Any training should use a structured approach that combines the theoretical underpinning of TCT with practical experience.

This would need to cover the principles of TCT, including its open-access nature, trauma-informed ethos, and role within humanitarian contexts. Facilitators would need to consider how to facilitate inclusive sessions that accommodate a diverse range of participants, including individuals seeking asylum, volunteers, and humanitarian workers. Core competencies would need to include group facilitation, collaborative practice with artists who have lived experience, and adaptability to dynamic environments. Practical training should cover setting up the physical space, including where the table is, and the use of accessible, non-directive artmaking techniques. A strong emphasis needs to be placed on trauma-informed practice, equipping facilitators with the knowledge to create safe spaces, respond to distress, and understand the impact of displacement and trauma. Interdisciplinary collaboration is also key, with facilitators learning to work effectively alongside medical teams, volunteers, and community organisations. Ongoing supervision and peer support are integral to the model, ensuring reflective practice and emotional resilience. Continued professional development opportunities would help facilitators refine their approach and remain responsive to the evolving needs of the communities they serve.

Evaluation and research methods that align with TCT

Given the complexity of humanitarian contexts and the nature of psychosocial support, evaluating the effectiveness of TCT requires a nuanced and context-specific approach. While outcome evaluation is important, it needs to be alongside reflexive analysis to ensure ethical and meaningful engagement with participants.

The evaluation of psychosocial practice in humanitarian settings is a growing field, but balancing evidence-based approaches with the complex realities of humanitarian settings is problematic (Massazza et al., 2022). Evaluating psychosocial interventions in humanitarian contexts presents a range of challenges due to the complexity of the settings, the diversity of affected populations, and the nature of psychosocial support itself. Humanitarian environments are often multicultural and rapidly evolving, making it difficult to apply standardised evaluation tools that may not align with local understandings of wellbeing or trauma (Tol et al., 2011; UNICEF, 2018). Psychosocial outcomes, such as resilience, hope, and social connectedness, are inherently subjective and multidimensional and may be poorly captured by conventional quantitative measures, which often lack cultural validity and baseline comparability (de Jong et al., 2016). Ethical concerns are paramount, particularly the need to avoid re-traumatisation, ensure informed consent, and protect vulnerable populations (IASC, 2017). Resource constraints can restrict the depth and scope of evaluations, while time limitations and practical complexities of not being able to keep in touch with participants often prevent longitudinal follow-up (ELRHA, 2023). It is difficult to isolate the specific impact of psychosocial interventions as there may be multiple responses in the sector. Furthermore, although frameworks such as the IASC MHPSS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework exist, they are not always consistently applied, and findings are often underutilised in practice due to disconnects between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers (IASC, 2017; UNICEF, 2018).

I propose two approaches for the evaluation of TCT: one is process evaluation and the other is principles-focused evaluation. TCT has a need for flexible, participatory, and context-sensitive evaluation approaches that prioritise ethical engagement and practical relevance.

Process evaluation is a valuable approach in humanitarian contexts and could be used to evaluate TCT, as it focuses on understanding how psychosocial interventions are implemented rather than solely assessing outcomes (Massazza et al., 2022). It examines factors such as fidelity to the intention, the reach of the intervention, and contextual influences. It can also offer insights into the mechanisms of impact and barriers to delivery (Moore et al., 2015). In crisis-affected settings, where interventions must often be adapted to cultural, logistical, and political constraints, process evaluation helps document these adaptations and supports real-time learning. It helps to identify what worked well and what didn't, what adaptions were made and why (Moore et al., 2015; Tol et al., 2011). It is particularly useful for capturing the experiences of both practitioners and participants (Tol et al., 2011), identifying ethical concerns, and ensuring that interventions remain relevant and responsive (UNICEF, 2018). Process evaluation complements outcome-focused approaches and enhances accountability, especially in complex, resource-limited environments (IASC, 2017).

Process evaluation could play a vital role in prioritising the ethical engagement and practice implications of TCT in humanitarian contexts because it does not solely focus on outcomes but considers how a programme and intervention are delivered, who is involved, and what dynamics shape the experience. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of relational, cultural, and contextual factors that influence therapeutic engagement. By foregrounding lived experience, facilitator roles, and participant feedback, process evaluation ensures that ethical principles such as inclusivity, consent, cultural sensitivity, and power-sharing are actively upheld. It also helps identify whether the practice remains relevant to the community it serves, adapting to shifting needs, environments, and social conditions. For example, evaluating how The Community Table is facilitated—who feels welcome, how materials are used, and what kinds of interactions occur—can reveal whether the space functions successfully. In this way, process evaluation becomes a tool not just for accountability, but for reflective practice, ethical responsiveness, and continuous improvement, ensuring that art therapy remains grounded in the realities and relationships of the communities it seeks to support.

The theoretical framework and practice implications developed in this research allow for a principle-focused evaluation that monitors and measures the TCT principles established by my research and holds the practice to account. These are outlined in Chapter 9: Interpretation: Theoretical framework (p.277) and Chapter 10: Conclusions and implications (p.310) and can both be monitored and measured against. The theoretical framework and practice implications highlight, in particular, the mechanisms of change that brought about a positive impact, which reference particular actions. It would be important to document any adaptations made due to cultural or political constraints (ALNAP, 2016) and to capture real-time feedback from both participants and those facilitating at TCT (UNHCR, 2024 b). These would also help to identify barriers, such as displacement and all that comes with it, language, and cultural stigma.

There does need to be clear accountability and evidence of learning, as outcomes are very difficult to measure, with an honest reflection of whether an intervention succeeded or not (Bollettino et al., 2024; ALNAP, 2016). The UNHCR-WFP (World Food Programme) Joint Hub (2025) and ALNAP (2016) highlight that interviews and focus groups, observations, a log of sessions and how many people attended, the demographic of who attended, and practitioners keeping a reflective journal are all key elements that help evaluation.

To discover the efficacy of TCT, one firstly needs to know the intended result, as aforementioned. Going forwards, this theoretical framework and practice implications will help define what the intention is at TCT.

This research did consider the impact of TCT, which was identified as positive, and highlighted very significant mechanisms that brought about that impact. A limitation was the small number of participants questioned. However, within this research there has been critical thinking, ensuring authenticity, accuracy, and detail generated by conceptualising and evaluating information gathered from observation, experience, reflection, and reasoning.

The future potential of TCT

The Community Table will iteratively develop over time, while ongoing reflexive thinking and research will need to happen to ensure its relevance.

In this section, six areas are highlighted as to the future potential of TCT. First is the potential of TCT to be further developed as a way of supporting humanitarian workers and volunteers. While there is clear recognition by humanitarian workers and volunteers in the field of the impact that displacement and crisis have on those displaced, the impact that it has on those working in the field is less overt. Therefore, a part of the potential of TCT is acknowledging the role that TCT plays in supporting other humanitarian workers and volunteers as well as asylum seekers themselves. Recognizing the importance of supporting humanitarian aid workers, both the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Health Organization have highlighted the high prevalence of secondary trauma among these professionals. They report that 80% are at high risk of developing vicarious trauma, with half exhibiting symptoms of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Vicarious trauma occurs when individuals in helping professions are repeatedly exposed to traumatic stories and images, leading to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, isolation, and burnout (Figley, 1995). Stress and burnout can be mitigated with adequate care and support for staff (Potocky and Guskovict, 2018). The findings not only highlight the positive impact of TCT on asylum seekers but also underscore the importance of TCT for supporting staff, emphasizing its inclusivity.

Second is the potential of TCT to be used and adapted in crisis settings other than the one I have investigated. The ethos of TCT could be modelled in other crisis contexts in a wide variety of settings, such as acute psychiatric settings, where art therapy engagement may be more fleeting as inpatient stays may be brief, or homelessness projects and crisis settings elsewhere in the world. Groups could actively include other members of staff or volunteers.

Third is the potential of TCT to challenge traditional, hierarchical relationships in crisis contexts. A key finding from the data was identifying that TCT introduced a democratic element, so offering TCT in other more traditional settings could challenge a lack of efficacy in a positive way, such as staff being invited to relate to service users in a different, more equitable way. However, investment in time to explore, investigate, and understand how TCT could fit into a context is needed, as well as time dedicated to the "*work around the edges" (participant G 2nd phase of*

data collection.) Which is the ongoing investment in time and ongoing understanding of the iterative changes in the context in which TCT is.

Fourth is the potential for this research on TCT to support the development of a bespoke art therapy specialisation in humanitarian contexts that contributes to extending the professional scope and identify of the art therapy profession.

Fifth is that, as we are living in times of austerity and the current cost of living crisis, there are depleted resources across statutory and non-statutory services, and TCT contributes a cost-effective response to distress. It can reach a much larger number of people than traditional models of individual therapy and offer group art therapeutic support where people can experience a social connection.

Sixth and final is the potential for TCT as a concept to be used as a methodology to elicit data about other psychosocial activities, or evaluations for other humanitarian practices.

Limitations of the research

There are limitations of this research, most notably the sample of participants only included two asylum seekers. What this means for the study is that there are curtailed views in particular for research question two about the perceived impact of the practices. Overall data the sample was small.

However, while the inclusion of only a small sample of participants is a limitation, it is important that the intention of the study was aimed at exploring the nuanced and subjective experiences of individuals within a TCT context. The rich, in-depth data provided by these participants offered unique insights into the interactions at TCT. This allowed for the formulation of a framework that, while grounded in a small sample, may resonate with or inform others working in similar contexts.

The study prioritized transferability over generalizability, the intention of the theoretical framework is not that it is definitive but a basis on which to develop, inviting practitioners and researchers to consider the framework as a flexible and evolving tool rather than a prescriptive model.

It is also important to recognise that the choice of the methodology and methods of the research was impacted by the particular crisis context, the vulnerability of asylum seekers and my role as a researcher-practitioner. Possibly more of a focus on only using arts-based methods to accrue data may have made the research more accessible to more asylum seekers. But in turn this may have limited the specific details of actions identified as positive mechanisms of change

Using a reflexive methodology too has challenges. Reflexivity demands congruence with oneself. This is not always easy and relies on personal integrity; this is why it is useful to have a clear rationale as to how, where, and why it is used within the research. In both practice and research, the significance of intent cannot be overstated.

Even though I come from a refugee heritage I am not, and have never been, an asylum seeker, and I acknowledge that I have explored this research from a privileged position. I also come with my own unintentional biases and cultural lens, which I have had to challenge, but even so the interpretation of the findings is seen through my own lens.

The diversity of the individuals, their roles and connection with Art Refuge as well as the cultural, geographic and language disparities of their situations need to be acknowledged. People's subjective experience is impacted by not only their own personal constructs but their cultural history and current context. This indeed includes me, both as a researcher and practitioner.

The position of a being both a practitioner and a researcher in a research project presented with both unique opportunities and challenges. While my insider knowledge provides deep contextual insights, it may have also introduced biases that affect the objectivity of the research. As discussed in chapter 3 existing relationships with participants could have created power dynamics that influenced responses or blurred ethical boundaries, such as ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Reflexivity and adherence to ethical guidelines were essential to ensure critical distance, and to mitigate over-identification with the research context or participants.

Recommendations for future research

There are multiple possibilities for future research, there are a few initial strands of future research. The first being further research that uses the theoretical framework to evaluate and assess TCT. The second being research that focuses on testing the validity of the theoretical framework using a wider range of facilitators and participants that includes (a) cultural mediators, translators etc, and (b) a greater diversity of asylum seeker.

Other future research could be around the transferability of TCT model to other contexts. The principles of creating a convivial and democratic space, working with the wider context, including other people working in the field, could be tailored to fit various therapeutic environments. This could include a variety of crisis settings, including acute settings in the NHS, working with homeless populations, or other crisis engagement that would see people for short-term and one-off therapeutic input. Robust research is needed in all these areas to strengthen the evidence base for both policy and practice (Chiumento et al., 2017), in relation to TCT.

Another research strand would be developing TCT as a methodology in itself. TCT can be used as a site of data generation where visual, verbal, and relational data are collected. With findings able to contribute to not only theory-building in art therapy, but areas around migration studies, and community mental health.

My original contributions to the development of the TCT model, knowledge, practice, teaching and training, and to the field of art therapy

Through my research on TCT, I have made original contributions to the development of the model and to the wider field of art therapy. My work has explored how art therapy can be practiced in open, communal settings, particularly within humanitarian contexts, where conventional clinical approaches may not be feasible or appropriate. I have identified nine key elements that underpin TCT: temporary home, time travel, cultivating hope, the stance and attitudes of art therapists, art materials, conscious engagement with macro and micro contexts, reflexive thinking, social connection, and democratising space. These elements offer a theoretical framework that supports a more relational, inclusive, and context-sensitive approach to art therapy and adapted art therapy practices. The practice implications help

frame how TCT is set up and how the work should unfold at the table. I have highlighted the importance of creating spaces that are welcoming, flexible, and responsive to the lived experiences of participants. My research also recognises the value of collaborative facilitation, including the involvement of artists with lived experience and other community members, which expands the boundaries of who can meaningfully contribute to therapeutic practice. These insights have practical implications for how art therapy is delivered in humanitarian settings and contribute to the development of a socially engaged, ethically grounded model of practice.

The theoretical framework and practical implications could lay the groundwork for more international discussion in the global art therapy profession about how to work in humanitarian settings, and they give a basis for an in-depth evaluation of TCT.

Being a practitioner, researcher, and educator has placed me in a unique position. Throughout this research, I have been able to bring developments from the TCT model into educational settings, learning from students and gaining insights and questions that have enriched the process. This iterative exchange has been fed back into the research and shared with the wider Art Refuge team. I have tested theories and practices in real-world contexts and reflected on outcomes and discoveries with the team, which has directly influenced the development and delivery of TCT. The impact of this research has been fed back to me by the Art Refuge team, and the response has been positive, recognising that rigorous investigation has added integrity and credibility to the model of TCT. It gives validation to the work they do and helps the understanding of the intentionality behind TCT. Insights from the research have also informed Art Refuge's training and lectures, providing a theoretical underpinning and rationale for the work.

Teaching about practice-based work that I actively engage in has enhanced both my credibility and the credibility of the research. As a dyslexic learner, discovering ways to overcome learning challenges has also enriched my teaching. The arts-based practices that I have used throughout this research journey have been integral. Using formats such as stop-frame animation to process and articulate ideas has been invaluable. This hands-on approach has allowed me to share practical strategies with students. Maintaining a reflexive research journal has been a transformative experience, and I now encourage students to adopt similar practices.

Using visual art to make sense of complex ideas has fostered deeper reflexive engagement but has also, at times, been a lifeline in terms of processing complex and difficult experiences. TCT has never been formally researched before, making this thesis a significant contribution to the field of art therapy. In a world marked by conflict and climate emergencies, the profession must respond. I hope this work contributes to the development of a more bespoke art therapy specialisation, extending the professional scope and identity of art therapy in humanitarian contexts.

Over the course of the doctorate, interest in TCT has grown. I have been invited to write about, lecture on, and present the model in various contexts—not only in France and the UK, but also in Ukraine, Belgium, Scilly, and online in Uganda and Sudan. I have co-authored book chapters and journal articles on TCT, and Art Refuge produced a film based on concepts developed through this research. I have presented at conferences and facilitated TCT workshops. Recent developments include delivering training on a rescue boat in the Mediterranean Sea, being invited to teach about TCT in Lithuania, using TCT to generate data for other research projects, such as MigRefHealth,[64] and being invited to facilitate TCT at the Being Human festival.[65]

The emphasis on culturally relevant art materials and the specific stance and attitude of art therapists introduces new knowledge. Most importantly, this research brings forward ideas about how to make art therapy more inclusive and how to democratise art therapy groups—contributing to new debates within the profession. By sharing these findings, I hope to inspire other practitioners to incorporate more creative and democratic thinking into their practices, thereby enhancing the impact and effectiveness of art therapy across diverse contexts.

New contributions to art therapy methodology and knowledge

Beyond practice, I have also developed new research skills, particularly in reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). While RTA has been used in art therapy research before, applying it in this context has deepened my understanding and enabled me to teach

[64] https://migrefhealth.co.uk
[65] https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/news-and-events/news/2025/university-of-hertfordshire-unveils-programme-for-being-human-festival

and encourage others to use it within art therapy methodologies contributing to knowledge. The flexibility of RTA allowed me to use stop-frame animation to help me process data for data analysis, analysis of research, and therefore data about art therapy. This notion in itself offers an original contribution to art therapy methodology and knowledge.[66]

RTA aligns well with art therapy due to its emphasis on subjectivity and reflexivity. It positions the researcher's perspective as integral to the analytic process (Braun and Clarke, 2019), which resonates with art therapy's focus on personal meaning-making and emotional nuance. Acknowledging researcher positionality and reflexive engagement challenges the notion of neutrality and supports non-oppressive practice, all fundamental aspects of ethical practice as an art therapist.

Viewing art therapy through philosophical lenses opens up possibilities for new theoretical developments—ways of knowing and understanding that consider the nature of reality and being (Van Lith et al., 2023). Artistic expression is subtle and complex, and RTA introduces a methodological stance that encourages art therapists to engage more critically and creatively with qualitative data. This contribution helps bridge the gap between clinical practice and academic discourse, an area that remains underdeveloped. RTA also allows for conceptual insights grounded in practice and may feel less daunting than other methodologies due to its inherently reflexive nature. It can illuminate how analytic decisions are shaped by relational dynamics, power imbalances, and therapeutic boundaries—issues often under-theorised in art therapy research (Van Lith et al., 2023).

Final reflections

While this research does not explore the reasons behind people's desire to come to the UK, it does consider the impact on their mental health and wellbeing and investigates ways to support them in this and other humanitarian crisis contexts. There is little to no psychosocial support offered by either the state or local and international NGOs, even though psychosocial practices are recognized as significant and important in crisis contexts (IASC, 2007). Debates continue regarding the effectiveness of psychological practices in reducing long-term stress and

[66] https://youtu.be/B0qBgWLcEHE

psychological struggles in crisis situations (Hobfoll et al., 2021). However, there is a strong rationale for offering psychosocial practices during a crisis, as they can play a crucial role in supporting individuals in situ and promoting better mental health outcomes afterwards (Hobfoll et al., 2021; Purgato et al., 2018a).

As an art therapist I have witnessed the benefits of using the arts to help people find a sense of place and meaning. Promoting this is important. This research investigated a new model of practice, TCT, which was found not only viable but successful in offering hope to participants and, by proxy, the ability to cope in difficult circumstances. This model responds to the psychosocial needs of individuals while considering the context in which it functions.

It is important to know and understand the spectrum of art therapy practices and models that work in particular fields, both with communities and individuals. Any new Art Therapy innovations can help to expand the profession worldwide to offer better access to services that use inclusive therapeutic approaches that are culturally relevant to those who use them. Researching art therapy innovations, and determining the specifics of these innovations, is imperative to ensure safe and ethical arts-based psychosocial practices in such contexts. This kind of research should be done using accessible, anti-oppressive, and participatory methods that reflect and consider the marginalization of those we work with.

I have clearly outlined my research position as a practitioner researching practice, which itself is inherently challenging. The research journey has often been personally moving, at times difficult, and at other times full of hope. This reflects the practice work itself. What was particularly powerful was hearing the refugee participants who wanted both to take part and have a voice and being able to support this. This was crucial and added real credibility to the research. There were a variety of different perspectives reflecting the situations of the interviewees.

What clearly came across from refugee participants was that they felt TCT had a positive impact; it enabled moments of creativity, imagination, and joy. They also valued the opportunity “to be seen” beyond their present predicaments. Hearing how TCT helps people who are refugees to embody a positive memory and/or experience and *carry it inside them* was indeed poignant. A surprising outcome included how

significant TCT was to volunteers and humanitarian workers and how it impacted on their own work positively, also hearing how important and significant TCT was to those who facilitated it. Another unexpected outcome was how TCT could bring a more democratic element to art therapy practice by including others who work in and around the context. It also shone a light on the actions and stance of the art therapists, alongside relevant art materials relating to people's culture and experience. Overall, there was a collective carrying of the art, culture, and experiences that happened at TCT, with people having a sense of being part of a community even if it was for a short time. In such a complex world, having moments to find ways to be creative and be with others sitting around a table elicits the potential to cope with the now and hope for a better future.

In March 2023, Art Refuge's CEO and I were asked to meet with a Ukrainian organization called First Aid of the Soul.[67] The organization offers creative interventions as well as mental health and psychosocial support services to Ukrainians affected by the war. The co-directors wanted to learn more about the work we were doing in northern France. Significantly, they said, *"There are no art therapy models of practice about working in a crisis war context that we are aware of.*" They asked, *"What do you actually do? What materials do you use and what is the rationale for them and why? How do you manage support for humanitarian/mental health workers in situ*?*"* Although Calais is not a war zone, as described previously, the human rights abuses and police violence and the lack of shelter, food, and water for refugees in transit constitute a humanitarian crisis context. This doctoral research has made me feel much more able to articulate what can been done and how and why it is useful. After our meeting, they asked us to present at a conference,[68] which led, in March 2024, to a further invitation to Ukraine itself to present directly to practitioners and offer training to local NGOs.

Since beginning the doctorate in 2018 and investigating the practices, the practices themselves have evolved, developed, and expanded. When I began, we worked in the large makeshift camp in Calais known as "The Jungle", in collaboration with

[67] https://www.firstaidofthesoul.org
[68] **The Art of Restoration in War Times: Creative approaches amidst ongoing crisis***, alongside* the All-Ukrainian Art Therapy Association and the International Association for Creative Arts in Education and Therapy (IACAET)

Médecins du Monde[69] and Médecins Sans Frontières,[70] offering weekly psychosocial activities in various psychosocial spaces. The work continued throughout the dismantling of the Calais refugee camp, and subsequent movement of the displaced people from it, and extended instead into the Dunkirk camp, distribution points, hospitals, safe houses, and community centres with Médecins du Monde and Secours Catholique.[71] Through pandemic restrictions we worked online supporting the frontline workers, developing new ways of working and launching the online project Coronaquilt.[72] While sitting around a table making art may not initially seem important, careful thought and the curation of what and how this is done does have profound impact.

When standing on the wide expansive beach on the French side of the border, tantalizingly, it does not look far to the UK (see figure 39). Even though the journeys across the border from France to the UK can be treacherous people still attempt it. The work at TCT has continued, and will continue, to grow.

[69] https://www.medecinsdumonde.org/en/
[70] https://www.msf.org/france
[71] https://www.secours-catholique.org
[72] https://www.artrefuge.org.uk/corona-quilt



Figure 39: Calais beach looking towards the UK

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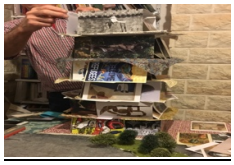
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Appendix 1

Going back to link themes with research questions using the image as an aide-mémoire

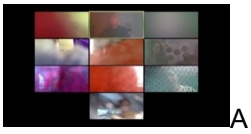
Participant	Meaning	Impact	Mechanism
Participant A  	***I join and make houses, I love house like in country that I come from – when I try to build house, room and everything, it is like my house*** *– one day I will have a house like this…* *The Community Table like when you go to* ***your grandmother's house, atmosphere like that*** *– all people, young and old, I need time for myself.*	*When you talk with someone good* ***it makes it better****…* ***the best experience*** *when Art Refuge are here it makes* ***the day a happy day and me feels stronger*** *it is* ***very good for me make me happy memory*** *become clearer* *I* ***feel relaxed.*** *talk with people nicely, they give me* ***hope*** *In France, sad feeling, cold, hungry, does not give you* ***hope*** ***Even if it for 5/10 minutes, people joining get something****.*	***I love to use the typewriter, I think my memories of the past when I start writing****, it makes memories come back, I feel very happy and strong****.*** *building house was beautiful,* ***my mind completely changes, I was relaxing, I forget everything*** ***I am busy with something, and I feel happy, not just for me but for everyone else.*** ***It is good when you print with typewriter paper.*** ***The materials I used which connects to memory and hope, typing and building.*** ***When I try to build a house, you remember something – I remember the memory, directly go into the place.*** *When you talk with* ***someone good*** *it makes it better.*
Themes	***House****,* ***home, family****,* ***time to myself****,* ***hope***	*Make me feel* ***relaxed, better, hope,*** *even joining for a short time* ***get something***	***Art materials****, typing, building, good quality—embodied meaning Someone good (therapists)*

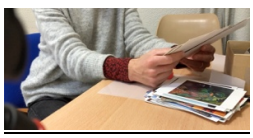
Participant B  	***It was important for me to extract time, to forget about daily life actions and work on the ground,*** *to take this moment* ***individually and in a collective way to talk about the situation.*** *to get deeper into a subject to understand* ***more of a feeling of something*** ***very good space****, and help people…* ***about solidarity—creating a space for people can express themselves, and sharing a space***	***it is good for breathing, good for stress*** ***I see how people are interacting with The Community Table****. I see people who are not necessarily vulnerable but isolated in some way,* ***they seem to come to the table****.* ***it was brilliant, it was the moment to have the teamwork***	*you have this* ***posture****, like a* ***mother, but calm*** *important skills* *you can teach other* ***people about these experiences and share your knowledge*** ***your work would be giving me signs about how we are doing things generally in the day centre****.* *the typewriters attract me so much.* ***There is something about the sound, something about memories, the sound, a sound, a letter, an echo,*** *it is beautiful; it is an affirmation* ***present in the space*** ***not to force people, please come and join us****…* ***Giving people the space and the choice. Letting people observe what you are doing*** *There is a chair for* ***everyone—everyone is free to join or not****, I notice that sometimes.* ***It is the atmosphere that you are building, what you create,*** *what you are sharing, you are talking to each other and just getting on.* ***The materials are inviting.*** ***the longer-term presence of the table and the photos, the writing machine. Ephemeral presence*** *with beautiful paper* ***and lots of meanings attached***
Themes	***Extract time,*** *a place to talk about the situation,* ***a good space, sharing solidarity***	***good for stress,*** *people use the table*	***Presence in the space, knowledge of the therapists, choice, atmosphere***
Participant C 	***It gave me the opportunity of things I used to do when I was at home in Sudan,*** *I found* ***safe space****.* *I drew and this* ***created hope****,* ***helped me to***	***great for the young people using the typewriter, it was like a game for them, they made poetry*** *It is amazing that you give time,* ***this value of art*** *you have—****it made a***	*it helped me know how* ***to get my story straight in my min****d This it helped me now with the Home Office* ***do things that we have done previously*** ***get out from isolation*** *and* ***with other people***

	organize things in my mind. *people* ***come together*** *and do things together, uniting humanity,* ***how important to live in peace in the earth*** ***help make people feel valued,*** *and* ***I know how hard it is to be displaced, unknown person*** ***emotional psychological support***	***good impact in my life.*** *If I was asked to measure* ***Art Refuge is 11 out of 10.*** ***People get a lot of support from Art Refuge—helped displaced people feel human again,*** *they are not useless.* ***it made me more positive***	***activity made me be able to think more positive feelings and able to think it will not always like this***
Themes	***Reminder of home, safe space, a place to organize things in your mind, peace, people coming together***	***Good impact in my life, positive, not useless***	*Activities that are* ***familiar, positive feelings make you think it will not always be like this***
Participant D 	***personally therapeutic*** ***visits to the house were often my most happy times in the house.*** ***immersed*** *in what they were doing, things like castle with cards and them being knocked down—totally* ***absorbing*** *times* *the significance is that it enables* ***people to remove themselves for a short time from the immediacy of people's lives, absorbing them so they can express something about their lives before being in Calais—it's a moment of self-expression***	***Your visits to the house were often my most happy times in the house***. ***Engagement involved both joy and hearing people['s] pain—I loved the idea*** ***the whole thing was inspired***	*I remember E playing with… There were times when people could re-engage with their childhood, totally* ***absorbing.*** *There was focused* ***concentration*** *expressing memories that were important* *being present and amongst people without having to ask questions* *In a gentle non-verbal way, using art materials opens a potential for intimacy.* *The* ***relational and absorption of using materials in the presence of other.*** *We are trying to help find a place for these people to Inhabit the uninhabitable.*

	where I guess it lets them express themselves ***It touches part of their being in a non-verbal way; they don't often get a chance to express things non-verbally. It is important having the window open for self-expression. That powerful moment of self-expression, release from pressure through non-verbal, beyond words state of being, beyond words frees you up.***		
Themes	***Personally therapeutic, a place you can self-express, a space you can be immersed (safe) beyond words***	***Made happy, inspired***	***Relational elements with the art materials***
Participant E  A  B	***We are developing a culture through which artmaking can hold whatever needs to come into that space.*** ***grounded in experience, theory, and we are creating a culture for people, a community, a culture for people to build on their capacity to cope, and to flourish*** ***the value art materials can play in people's lives where they've lost so much, and this idea that somehow the materials can connect*** ***with an internal sense of home, connection, connection with***	***he got into the breathing and was then able to build something*** *I hope (think) that people* ***feel recognised and fellow human beings who have valuable things to bring into the space*** *I hope (think)* ***that people feel appreciated and validated. I hope that people feel that they have been recognised acknowledged and heard.*** ***we know we have had some terrible experiences, the wrong platform, the wrong space, we haven't quite***	*I think that the quality of materials we offer is a really significant part of that—we try to bring the very best—a sense that we are* ***attuned*** ***how important it was that this space is for the refugee community, but it becomes even more important for the refugee community when other people join, and the fringe benefit is that the others who join, like the staff and volunteers. also gain from it*** ***validation and authentic connection*** *I need to be* ***committed –*** *to know what to bring* ***is understanding what is this thing that we do, and it is changed, and being able to respond to the changes that are in front of us and what is needed*** ***it's intentional, these materials are resonant, and I think that***

	memory, connection with sense of not being so lost ***sitting around the table is symbolic*** ***think there is something about this table being about helping people feel grounded in the here now*** ***I was observing him, almost felt like he was making meaning*** ***I think that in time people began to understand it as a sort of a space where people can be kind to each other*** ***a sense of connectedness to something at the table*** ***terms of crisis support a sort of socializing forum for people—a space where it is an open invitation, assuming people have strengths to build on rather than having a deficit model. It's not looking at understanding that they are coming with trauma that needs to be resolved, it's offering a space where people can build on their strengths***	***planned it quite well enough or tuned in to quite what is needed*** ***it served a valuable purpose*** *formed a strong attachment to a member of that team, and he had done brilliantly* ***we've witnessed more, hmm, finding a sense of "Oh, wow, really" [deep breath], arriving at something, these images, and then there's a broad smile. We've witnessed it again and again and it doesn't matter what the image is, it's this looking with oneself***	***allows people to connect in with them*** ***join things up… So it's a bit like when we have the View-Masters… your eyes… They are where you are responsible as an individual, your eyes make that connection to see the images three-dimensionally—that's an interesting thing because it's activating both parts of the brain, bringing oneself into focus*** ***it's not always in sync and we're not always in sync—and sometimes we bring the wrong things, and really, we must recalibrate*** ***when it is working, people make use of it—and by telling us, doing that, they will lead us*** *we can pick up on all* ***the body language and all the communications that are happening which are non-verbal, which is a huge part of our work.*** *There is the materials which are in front of us,* ***which we care for so well and have been honing over the last 5 years*** *we could tune into him,* ***help him breath and tell him psychoeducatio****n and about why he might be experiencing these feelings, and then we brought it to the art…* ***being present with someone and being able to tune in with what they want and need through their body*** ***We need to activate people ourselves to be more connected.*** ***somehow the building materials lend themselves to circumstances… there are times in the winter that offering these miniature bricks that we use seems to be the right tool for the job, enabling people to become more engaged in, erm, quite a rhythmic methodical process, which itself allows for regulation of breathing but also allows something to be built—and constructed***

			it enables people to talk about space and place, on all sorts of different levels ***Those bricks are brilliant because they can ground in the moment and allow for reflection back and reflection forward.*** *wonderful stones, from all sorts of places, sort of exotic crystals… that also lent itself both to a* ***timelessness and a specificity*** ***brought us back to place, memory, home, culture—so that built on his resilience, his capacity to feel strong and grounded and rooted in something*** ***I think we try to be present in the space, which means not bringing into it things that do not need to be there****.* ***We try to look and ground ourselves in the space, we pick up what is going on around us—and this is supported by the careful layout of the table, the environment that we create, an understanding of the context around us, the political vibe,*** *and then we try to* ***make connections in response to what people are sharing with us, which can lead to people feeling heard and validated to build on the capacity to feel they can cope better****.*
Themes	**Crisis support, safe space, home, familiar,** kind space, culture	***Valuable space where people are heard*** ***Witness a transformation in someone***	***Psycho-education, specific skills, art materials and media, formulation, consideration of culture, holding the space, therapeutic boundaries, mentalization***
Participant F  A	***inclusiveness—there are all these different categories of people, you know, in different places and who have different functions***	***all I did was spend a day with you, but I—that day was… the day I learned the most*** ***often calms them down.*** *We quite* ***often have the***	***time and space*** ***we are only starting to see the possibilities*** ***work we are standing in for significant others***

 B	***as if playing isn't serious, which, you know, I think playing is very serious*** *But* ***I think the main thing is this creating this space—it's an in between space which brings these possibilities with it****.* ***The Community Table—there's another aspect to it because we are all art therapists*** ***the table plays a central role in that—there is something very archetypal about sitting around the table…*** *There's something at the table about* ***bring visibility to a person***	***person at the end of the session saying to us that this is the first time I've talked to anyone like that for weeks you know*** ***we have a lot of quite familiars now who use us as a familiar resource*** ***people just get caught by something—and then you're in it and doing it, and you're absorbed in it and you're in a little bubble, maybe*** ***I could interpret that and say it's his name and he's placing backgrounds—and you can't really know—but it obviously did mean something to him***	*The Community Table, there's another aspect to it because we are all art therapists, although we don't say it is art therapy—switch into* ***a kind of attention which is particular to art therapy, I think*** *there's the whole reference with kind of* ***modern art and with aesthetics, with images,*** *looking at things* ***by the equipment on the table****…* ***something quite magical happened—often the material does seem to fit the bill without being particularly premeditated*** ***we're just kind of chatting a normal way*** ***there are the materials on the table, and when one of those moments happens, it usually happens that the person has met something, all those materials absolutely replies to what they need on that day—whether it be putting flowers in slides or making prints or writing stuff*** *you can have play with* ***this kind of—so make-believe stuff*** ***sitting next to them and pushing something over towards them*** ***but will help him go to bit further*** ***[art materials] are thought very carefully in advance*** *-* ***you must be vigilant and alert***
Themes	An **in between** space, **archetypal space,** family, familiar	***People use the space, witnessing people, alleviating loneliness***	***Art materials****, providing* ***time and space*** *to* ***play,*** *treating people as* ***normal, small actions paying attention***
Participant G 	***people's experience here is one of really existing on the very edges, and then there's so little avenues into points of connection, with community or a sense of place here****, that* ***I think that's become really one of the features of***	*Why are we getting people to engage?* ***We recognise from being here that we enable conversations to happen that are valuable to people.*** *they still come and need this space to happen, and*	*the* ***media must act as a sort of catalyst*** ***being witnessed*** ***rebuilding a sense of networking and understanding of systems here*** ***our materials and how we think in the materials, thinking through***

	this work here, *is* ***I recognize our role in, perhaps, bridging some of that, in terms of working with other spaces—other kind of institutions in the city to find kind of avenue, openings for people to experience other parts of the city here, connections*** ***it's a point of engagement*** *that's* ***really a kind of launch pad into things****,* ***an access point for people to engage*** *my sense is that is what makes meaning for this because you feel that when you are in the work and they occur* *so its meaning is making someone feel valued* ***we extend it into the teams we work*** *with—it does not just sit with us—that's why we people just come back is because we create some meaning for the teams we work with* ***meeting that kind of basic—what would seem basic—needs, and yet that layer is essential, in that sense of meaning in your own identity***	*whether that's an exchange between themselves or something else that's happening, that's what's valuable about the space* *because are these other parts of people that are significant, and you see that animate people when that part comes alive again, and they need to step into that space* *You know here, with volunteers and the staff, we are used as a thinking space—whether it's people sitting at the table, conversations we are having before or after, during the work, we're so frequently used for that. And we get asked to do trainings* *so frequently in this work people say to us, 'I* ***haven't spoken to anyone for months and months. You're the first conversation****'* ***people tell us directly they value the space*** **has a positive impact because people say it does**	***your choice of media, what you're going to put on this table*** **we're open to everyone** real need for **something else to happen and hold space or exchange that goes beyond just responding to someone's needs or demands**. Because often those demands can't be met here ***I think that's something that's important to people, that longitudinal relationship, and that's why this potential development into other spaces*** ***sometimes you're doing this, sort of, and it's important that you have some kind of therapeutic grounding when you're doing it, but you have a sort of sense of standing in for. Sometimes you really feel your role, especially because of our gender and the fact that we are mostly working with men, but not just that. Sometimes age—you're kind of used as an aunt, sister, or a mother, or all of these different things, because those significant relationships aren't present*** *There is a real transference sometimes.* ***I say it's important that you're a therapist sometimes because you need to understand that that's what's happening and you're not actually that person, and that will end when you part at the end of that day****…* ***But maybe it's also the normalizing what would not be normal social relations and points of exchange in any community, not just familiar roles that just because of this marginalization really are not available for people here. That you don't get to have that regular community or social exchang****e*. ***A therapist at least to have it in your team or within the people you are working with—it's just experience as well.*** ***who are we to curate people's experience, but you are somehow a curator—what you put down on***

			that table is a pop-up exhibition or a pop-up instillation ***we really think—we kind of think about all the other bits that make up what people's needs are, and, you know, mental health wellbeing, resilience, and culture, the role of culture, we hold that part for people, that's not it doesn't exist, it so much in all of those other bits***
Themes	***A space to be with others to meet basic human needs of being with other***	Used as a **thinking space,** asked to **do training, directly told by people** that they get something from it	***Longitudinal relationship,*** *art* ***materials and media,*** *acting as a* ***curator, trained experienced people facilitating, responding to people's needs***
Participant H 	***I get to see what people access around The Community Table, which is this kind of ease and lack of pressure, and, you know, it's really easy, spontaneous.*** ***people explore different—different sides of their ideas, talking about something, but also doing something else that their hands*** ***equality and exchange*** ***lots of different meanings and that it is also sort of nebulous*** ***exploring what the possibilities of the next thing are*** ***we got to show people things that are positive and exciting and creative*** ***a liminal space—I think then people do have the***	***it gets me out of my own head*** ***I can make a bit of space for myself.*** ***some people just come and sit and soak up the environment and listen to other people talking and might not talk themselves*** ***you can just sit and feel safe in the space, and also, I think, helped by the creativity of this space; you could tell it's nice for them to have someone busily around them making something*** ***appear to provide a sort of contrast to the power and control and atmosphere around immigration*** *And I have to say that Wednesdays are often the best day of my week.* ***I think the***	***of the variety of what's happening around the table, and everybody is kind of getting to contribute something from a slightly different angle*** ***people get is an invitation, and with that invitation, it's like it's—there's an—almost a formal extension of the hospitality*** ***materials are clearly that thought about so carefull****y.* ***I think making space for the possibility of it*** ***Well, I do think that the thoughtfulness of the materials is part of that, and also that these things are often old, beautifully made, or aesthetically interesting*** ***a bit of visual difference, or textual—it's probably very powerful*** ***the way that the materials also echo or evoke people's—bits of people's experiences—the map particularly. You know, I've seen those things at work today and actually transported them*** ***reminding people that place—a sense of place—can change, and, you know, also they can sort of control this on a micro scale—is really powerfu****l*

	possibility of contemplating something and might need something to concentrate on that's creative and be transported	***interactions that I have here are delightful and really delight me.*** *Positive personal impact*	***I think also that's something to do with opening the space out to people and in a very non-pressurizing way… there's a real sort of self-containment in that often we will just sort of sit and do our stuff and then it will come, and people come and join in, and I think there is a quality of them picking up on something that's already happening… It allows the people who have kind of come in and join us to really make the decision to join us rather than having anything pushed on them*** ***you know because people are adults, it stops it being infantilizing; it's quite empowering*** ***people do come, and it begins to make sense, that is a skilful piece of managing. I think I see quite a lot, you know, from you and B, this—this kind of holding and waiting and doing your own thing, and then when people begin to join, just expanding that outward.*** ***had moments of really feeling feelings as a team as well*** ***to be able to go there together as a group of people working in space together—to not just play—because of a lot of just playing, but we're not just playing***
Themes	***Liminal space, a space of possibilities, positive culture, a point at which to meet***	***Positive personal impact*** *enables* ***choice***	***Art materials media, skills of the therapist, open invitation, hospitable, holding and containing the group/space-choice and empowerment, open space, not pressured***
Participant I 	***I think giving a safe space, an escape from daily things that people do, in this case the displaced people, to find a space that's safe for them*** *to just play, forget about the normal daily worries that they have, and they have somebody there to listen to them and have a*	*the people* ***want to come back*** *to us **even if it's very short time sometimes** **people are aware from experience that we have—they always tell us thanks for coming, thanks for listening to me,***	***sitting and listening to them or playing, [what] we are doing is quite important, and we're not just pretending to do this or it's not just a tick list—we're there on the front line, and we are doing the work*** ***it's a familiarity that we provide, and I think the tools and the materials*** ***it took him somewhere, and all happy memories where he used***

	conversation with and I treat them normally as human beings. ***I think that's what The Community Table is for me and sharing, playing with, collaborating, and creating*** ***we're here purely for those people*** *it's* ***not an art worksho****p, it's not—and it's beyond that* ***the conversation, there's a lot of learning that happens on the table, that's one thing that we are always talking about—like me learning about different cultures***	***this is an amazing space*** ***I think it's very important I've learned to know the value of The Community Table*** *they are* ***in this environment that is completely alien to them, and we are—even just you saying I've been to your country—the familiarity, the shared experiences that comes, the conversations, they are learning from each other. I think we do have those deeper level conversations, having that moment of relaxation, of not worrying about what's happening. I think there is a trust during The Community Table activity. There is a trust that gets built, a safe space that we provide, beautiful conversations, and people talking about their families and people*** *talking about in my villag****e.*** *It's really* ***happy space*** *if somebody comes in with a little bit hectic kind of behaviour,* ***I see by the end of the session they all have changed, they have calmed down—they were very busy with the tasks they have been doing, reordering,***	***to do this kind of thing. The materials that were important as well as the location, I think the materials are important and selecting what works and the energy that Art Refuge puts—really creating, choosing the right material*** ***I think creating the safe connections with the materials plus being there to support if there's any trauma that arise now, you can talk to them; there is somebody that can sort them with that, I think that's important. It's not an art workshop; it's beyond that*** ***there are cases where people really opened up, and there are professionals who can sit there with them and guide them through that, and you know what to do*** ***it took me a while to learn that my presence is enough*** ***as an artist I always had an end goal, an outcome, so I'm sitting here, there's no outcome*** ***think maybe grounding people, maybe creating a community,*** *even though if it's for a short time* *during The Community Table activity,* ***there is a trust that gets built, a safe space that we provide*** ***I think us being there in a constant presence,*** *we are****—****I mean, I feel like we created a lot of friendship through this process, and* ***providing that space and being here constantly and not losing touch.*** ***I am from East Africa, I can understand what they think, how they are thinking, and the familiarity are very obviously very close and having knowledge of that is an advantage for me.*** *they came from different cultures, and one thing comes up at The Community Table*

		restructuring their mind when they're doing this thing	***I'm trying to teach them that it's okay for somebody to choose different perspectives, to have those choices as well, yeah, they don't necessarily have to marry an East African because they are East African themselves, it's individual choices instead of a society, so those conversations are quite important to see what the benefits of different cultures.***
Themes	***Learning culture, community, safe space, witness, play, sharing, collaborating***	*People come back,* ***happy space, witnessing people calm down*** *or* ***enjoying the space***	***Culture, community, no end outcome, presence, cross-cultural conversations from someone from same culture, trust, safe space, memories playing***

Appendix 2

Phase 1 data collection. Participant B: Arts-based data Image A (© Art Refuge)



Phase 1 of data collection. Participant B: Arts-based data Image A (© Art Refuge)



Participant B

B took part in phase 1 of the data collection face to face.

This interview took place with the manager of one of Art Refuge's partners, an NGO that runs a day centre in Calais for refugees in transit. He had worked in partnership with Art Refuge for four years.

B had asked Art Refuge to provide training for the team of volunteers and professional staff in Calais, and Art Refuge on occasions offered reflective artmaking interventions for the team. He referred to one particularly difficult incident when the day centre in Calais was under attack, with windows smashed and locks tampered with and nails thrown down to deliberately puncture the tyres of the vans and cars used by the organization. He made an image as a response and choose this image as significant. The image was a cyanotype, which is a camera-less technique created by laying an object on a paper coated with a solution of iron salts. It is then exposed to UV light and washed with water to create a representation of the object.

Participant B kept the image made and had it framed and up in his office. He also posted a photo of this image on Twitter, saying he wanted to turn his anger into something that was a message that they (him and his team) would not be defeated and would continue with their work.

"When we had a bad event and had to close the day centre [the day centre was attacked by right wing vigilante gangs who are against any sort of refugee service, and this forced a temporary closure of the centre], I felt bad that you arrived from the UK to find the place is closed, but then when you said we will still come and you offered us [the team] two sessions for the staff after this difficult time.

"We discovered the cork with nine-centimetre nails which had been thrown over the fences to destroy tyres, and I think you felt how angry we were. You said, 'It is okay that we offer something?'; you did it in a delicate way, which I appreciated. We did this picture. I threw the cork everywhere and I wanted to say 'Stop this' again! I was so happy, as you showed up just at the right time

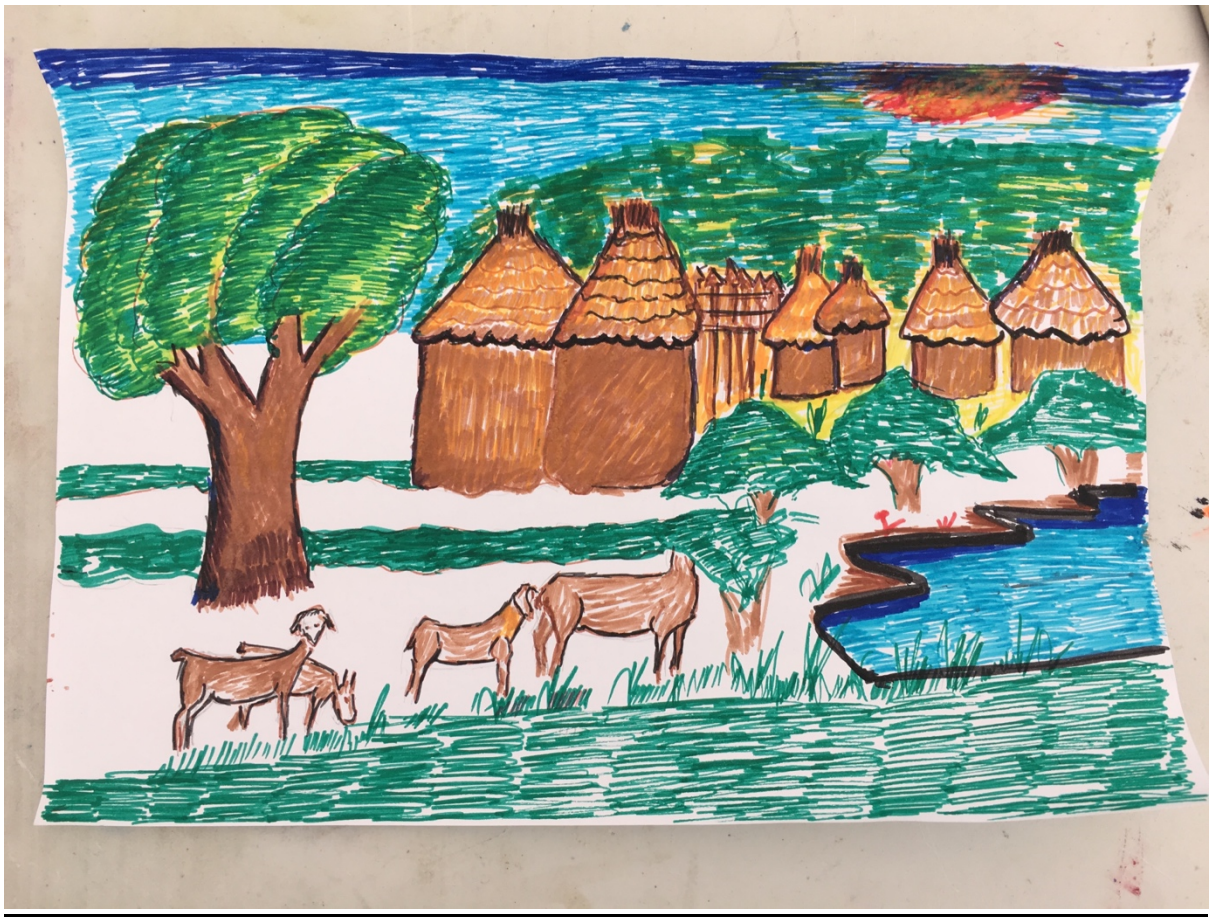
"I said, 'Can I take this with me?' and you said, 'Of course.' It was important to have. Alongside the image he kept the corks, saying, 'I put the corks with the artwork—it needed the artwork.'"

The image was an active action as a response to a situation where otherwise B felt powerless. He appreciated being asked to make the image and referred to how sensitively this was done and how it harnessed the feelings he had at that time. He said he threw the corks everywhere and wanted to shout, "Stop this!"

B acknowledged the Art Refuge work supporting staff teams as extremely valuable. B felt supported and acknowledged by the process of the artmaking. He showed me the image, which he keeps in his new office in Paris, and feels it is a strong representation and reminder of the situation. The process of him being able to turn anger into something positive and into a form of activism where he was highlighting the problems and politics of refugee work was significant for him. He felt there was a sense of him claiming autonomy about a situation beyond his control and that Art Refuge gave value to his feelings. The image has resonance for him and very particular meaning; the artmaking gave an outlet for his feelings. The specific medium of cyanotype that was used helped to give a strong visual representation. This denotes the specialist knowledge of the art therapists in presenting this technique at the time, using the right medium to produce the best impact or results needed at that time. This is significant to note, as elsewhere in his semi-structured

interview he spoke how he was drawn to the typewriters, which he felt were poetic, but he chose this image as an example which had real meaning and impact for him.

Phase 1 of data collection. Participant C: Arts-based data (© Art Refuge)



Participant C

C took part in phase 1 of the data collection, which was online due to Covid restrictions.

Participant C has been known to Art Refuge for several years. He first began using Art Refuge services in 2015 in the refugee camp on the outskirts of Calais known as “The Jungle”. He was very ill and was diagnosed with a tumour on his hip by doctors working in the camp . It was unclear if this was cancerous, and C had undertaken a treacherous overland journey from East Africa. Because of his physical vulnerability, C was placed in the camp hospital and eventually moved to the local Calais hospital.

He had to undergo chemotherapy and was eventually placed temporarily in a homeless hostel in Calais for the duration of his remaining treatment.

C is from Sudan and had to leave as his life was in danger—he ran a community school for children who came from deprived and orphaned backgrounds, and this school was not seen as favourable by the government. C left. He was left with no option but to leave, aiming to get to the UK where his brother lives. He left behind his wife and two children, with the aspiration of gaining asylum in the UK and bringing them to live there with him. C walked through Sub-Saharan Africa to Libya, where he continued his perilous journey overseas to Italy. This journey impacted on him immensely both physically and psychologically, and Art refuge followed his progress through his treatment, offering psychological support through the use of art. Throughout, C maintained a strong aspiration to go to the UK and be reunited with his brother. He tried through legal routes and was unsuccessful. After completing his treatment, he was forced out of the homeless hostel and was offered a place to stay with a volunteer at the day centre as he was still physically vulnerable. During this time, he volunteered himself in the day centre.

"When I met the Art Refuge [in the Calais camp 'The Jungle'] gave me the opportunity of things I used to do when I was at home in Sudan. I found safe space. I did draw whenever they came to the hospital [the AR team visited C], to draw things, and this create for me hope that things will change. Inside me I feel I am going to do what I was doing in my life previously. In the jungle hospital—the second period, the big hospital of Calais—the visit from the team helped me to organise things in my mind."

The interview with C was on Skype just at the beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020. This meant I was not in the same physical space as him, and the artwork chosen was one of a variety he had made with Art Refuge previously. C did not specifically talk about his own images; he was fairly modest, and I wondered if this reflected his culture. He discussed the making of the art in more of a generic way but that it connected him to things he used to do when in Sudan. He highlighted the importance for him of the work offering him a safe space. He used drawing to create hope that the situation would change and that he would be able to do what he had done in Sudan elsewhere. He felt that the Art Refuge support enabled him to connect to himself in a very cognitive way, helping him organise things in his mind. Elsewhere in the interview he mentioned forms of art materials and said he observed

young men really using the typewriters and building bricks and seeing them really enjoying them. He also remembered making a stop frame animation film called Mr Fox and said it gave him opportunities to do things that he would otherwise be unable to do.

His image is a scene of a traditional community, a village representative of what he left behind; a lot of his images had a lake or river which could be a way out? He was very clear about the significance of his own culture and heritage, as he stated very clearly in the interview that people in his situation are made to feel like a “nobody”.

Phase 1 of data collection. Participant D: Arts-based data Image A (© Art Refuge)



Phase 1 of data collection. Participant B: Arts-based data Image B (© Art Refuge)



Participant D

D took part in phase 1 of the data collection online due to Covid restrictions.

Participant D is a British volunteer who worked in the safe house where Art Refuge offered interventions. The Maria Skobtsova House in Calais was run by Euro Catholic Worker. It was a residential community that served people who have been pushed into the margins of society. The work began with refugees and migrants in the refugee camp called “The Jungle” (since February 2016). The ethos of the house was to not just try to “help” refugees but to be there with refugees, to support them when possible but also to become “friends”. Sometimes that took the form of helping in food distribution, visiting and supporting families, or helping at the day centre.

The house lived as a community that shares in meals, friendship, and daily prayer, sharing their hospitality with some of the most vulnerable of the refugees from the camp. Art Refuge offered an art therapy intervention in the house, which at the time focused on providing respite for vulnerable unaccompanied minors from the Eritrean and Ethiopian communities. The house was a small residential home, which at its fullest had 22 young boys staying. These boys often had injuries from police attacks or injuries from falling off lorries or other injuries sustained from attempting to cross the French–UK border illegally. The volunteer work in the house involved doing washing, cooking, and supporting the boys. Often the boys would venture out at night with the aim of crossing the border, making it highly stressful for the volunteers who were never sure if the residents of the house would come back or not.

“The image that I think about and wish to choose is immediately the tower of postcards that was higher and higher, the tension going on building—higher and higher, intensity of concentration… the desire to keep on going up higher and higher… push to build.”

The interview with D was done on Skype just at the beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020, which meant I was not in the same physical space as him, and the artwork chosen was one of a variety he had made with Art Refuge previously. In his interview, D discussed his love of the Art Refuge interventions. His choice of image and process in which it was made was interesting. I could not help but wonder if this was something about the high stress environment of the safe house. There was a culture that developed working in the safe house that was then translated to working

at the day centre around the table. Often towers were built collectively by those sitting around the table using Jenga, bricks, or postcards in a performative way with sounds of “ohhs” and “ahhs” when the towers were at risk of falling. There was a sense of camaraderie, humour, and collective involvement. D teased that I often caused the towers to fall due to my clumsiness. In another part of the interview D stated:

“*That powerful moment of self-expression, the release from pressure through non-verbal, beyond words, frees you up.”*

This gives the sense that D felt the activity as significant and a physical release from pressure; it is very physically felt. One knows that the tower will fall, so there is a bittersweet anticipation about waiting for it to happen.

Phase 1 of data collection. Participant E: Arts-based data Image A (© Art Refuge)



Phase 2 of data collection. Participant E: Arts-based data Image B (© Art Refuge)



Participant E

E took part in both phase 1 and 2 of the data collection. Phase 1 was online and phase 2 was face to face in Calais.

Participant E is a very experienced art therapist and visual artist who holds a senior position in Art Refuge. E is vastly experienced in working with displacement and has worked in situ in war-torn locations. The participant is well known to the researcher and worked closely with them. E partook in two interviews: one during lockdown (28/5/20) and the other after lockdown. I will discuss both images from the two interviews, the first designated as A the second as B.

Image A, phase 1 of data collection

The first interview with E was done on Skype just at the beginning of the first lockdown in May 2020. This meant I was not in the same physical space as them,

and the artwork chosen by E, who had a very clear idea of the image she wanted to use, was an image she had taken with her mobile phone of The Community Table in situ in Calais. There was a clear intent by E that this image represented something she felt was important.

"It holds many of the core ingredients of our work in relation to context, use of space [inside and outside evident at the edges of the frame] and materials, in this case mixed media: the use of film projection—analogue/digital, books of poetry, bricks, images of kites flying, and The Ship of Tolerance project documented on the wall."

E chose this image as a way of showcasing the work in relation to the context in which it occurred and the variety of materials used. E felt very specifically that the image should identify an outside aspect, as part of the context is that people are living outside in makeshift shelters. The image is a photograph, a representation of something which is important for E. The image includes a variety of materials but also referenced a project that we had been involved with, "The Ship of Tolerance". The image was a snapshot of something in situ, poignant given it was chosen at a time when we were unable to do face-to-face work, and maybe it was a reminder to E as to what was possible at a time when it felt impossible due to the pandemic. In the interview, E discussed an online intervention and reflected:

"It's different when you are sitting around the table in the day centre. We are able to pick up on all the body language and all the communications that are happening which are non-verbal, which is a huge part of our work and I think we really miss that."

I was struck as to how significant it was for E to choose Image A as a representation of the work during Covid when all our work became virtual and if it had resonance for E as a reminder of what we had done face to face. In the interview, resilience was discussed as a core part of the work, and E said that viewing images which are memories of better times was a way of coping during the prolonged lockdowns. E mentioned that this was a rationale for the Art Refuge Coronaquilt project (mentioned previously).

<u>Image B, phase 2 of data collection</u>

The second interview was post-Covid, August 2022. The interview took place face to face in situ in the day centre in Calais, France, sitting at The Community Table. The table was set up for a session for later that afternoon. This allowed the possibility of using the art materials used at the table. E was directed to pick up any of the materials that they felt drawn to and use them as we might when sitting at The Community Table. E began by saying:

"I want to respond to these words here [postcard-sized paper on the table with words Lost and Found written in stencil in felt pen and Far Away from TCT the previous day]. I'm going to do a drawing, and I want to write something. I am using a postcard piece of paper, which I love. I also love writing words, and this is just an easy way for me to start [begins with a felt pen marking out the word Near]. In fact, I might even do one of these [starts blocking out the letters, making them 3D]."

E drew throughout the interview using felt pens and small postcards and was responding to what was left on the table from the previous day. There were two postcards with stencilled words saying Lost and Found and Far Away.

"Well, I'm looking at these words in front of me that came from yesterday—Lost and Found, Far and Away*—and I feel that I want to ground the table a bit more. Yeah, so I want these words Near and Here, I feel we need something about Near and Here. I think there is something about this table being about helping people feel grounded in the here and now. And if we're going to think about lost, we think about found, because this isn't a space where we encourage people to be lost. This space is to hold everything and anything that they bring, and if we are talking about far away, we need to talk about Here and Near as well, I think."*

The drawing made E think about the conceptual aspects of what the meanings of the practices of The Community Table are. E adapts and responds to what is on the table, thinking what would be needed for the afternoon ahead by adding Near and Here. The word play reminds her of experiences before, and she describes it as a way of her coping with the complexities of the work.

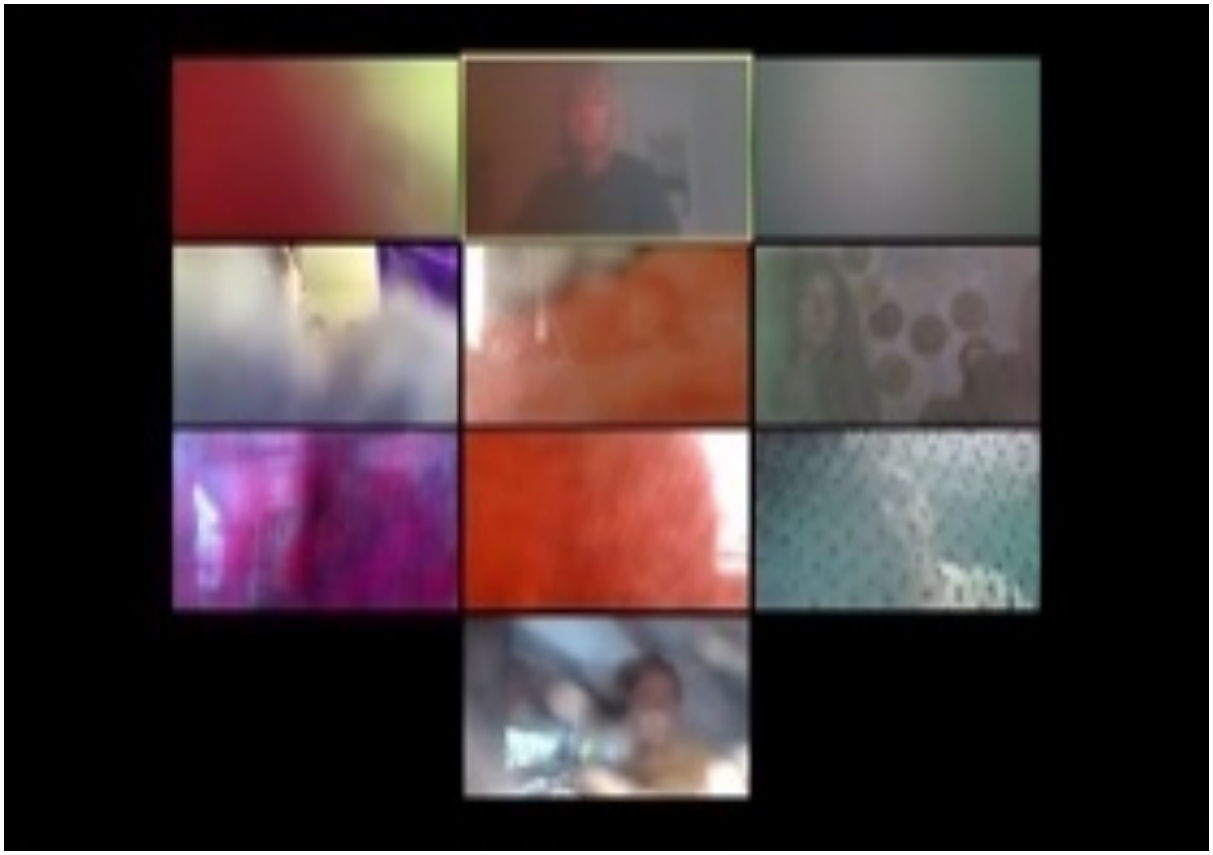
"At one point I was stuck on a small island off the Dalmatian coast in Croatia with a group of people who were displaced, and it was—it was challenging every possible way, and I decided that I needed a tool to help me keep sane. I started to write poems. I always had a thing for anagrams, so I chose a discipline and it was the word displacement, so I wrote a series of poems and it was called the displacement poems, and I was reading them the other day. They actually relate to the work in Calais. Within the boundaries of the word displacement there's quite a lot of words, I was able to actually challenge myself to focus on some really difficult subjects of War and the Horrors that happened in war through that word. If I would have had the whole of the English language it would have been quite scary and probably quite uncontained, but because I had this word it became actually like the new poetic challenge as well as a sort of an emotional challenge, but actually I produced some things, I still think I have some value, so I love playing around with words."

It's interesting to note E found a way of processing the work by using art materials but has found a way moving around words and setting a challenge or a boundary to cope with the difficult subjects that come up from the work. It also identifies the

importance of the therapists finding a way to process the work and the materials that come up from doing the work. A core feature of the team is to continue with their own artmaking practice as a way of processing the difficult experiences we see and hear.

Image A was a representation of something to show an example, and Image B was a response to what was on the table; a drawing using words seems to be a very cognitive (thinking) process.

Phase 1 of data collection. Participant F: Arts-based data Image A



Phase 2 of data collection. Participant F: Arts-based data Image B



Participant F

F took part in both phase 1 and 2 of the data collection. Phase 1 was online and phase 2 was face to face in Calais.

F lived in France at the time of the first interview, June 2020. She was still training to be an art therapist. The art therapy training in France is different to the UK trainings: it is not as established as it is in the UK, and it has less of an evidence base.

F had been on placement with Art Refuge in Calais and in Paris. F also acts as a translator from French to English and English to French when needed. F comes from a theatre background and, although new to art therapy, is vastly experienced in working with a wide range of people. The first interview with F was done on Skype just at the beginning of the first lockdown in June 2020. This meant I was not in the same physical space as them, and the artwork chosen was one of a variety they had relating to Art Refuge's work.

F was interviewed during lockdown, when the interventions had moved online as The Community Table Online. This was an invited group of refugees and volunteers who met and engaged in artmaking activities. These included stop motion animation and playing with objects to create images on screen.

Image A

After phase 1 of the data collection, in the semi-structured interview (which was conducted online due to Covid restrictions), F struggled to identify an image from previous interventions and from the Art Refuge library of images.

"Visual image is very tied up with emotions, a way of kind of reacting to them." (Participant E)

"I noted this particularly, as I found this a very interesting thing for an art therapist to say, as I would have imagined this to be implicit, given our profession." (Extract from reflexive research journal)

In the interview, F focused on the online interventions and was very struck by the attitude of the therapists.

"I can't compare too much as I have not seen many French art therapists working, so I can only compare to my student group or what other students are doing, but in my student group there is a pressure for everything to be very serious, which I resist the whole time. As if playing isn't serious, I think playing is very serious."

She in the end identified an image which was taken by one of the Art Refuge team as a screenshot during the online session (this was standard practice for the online work that was happening at the time), a screenshot of the participants creating an abstract pattern using the camera, which became collective with the setting on Zoom set as gallery. She felt that the playful use of the camera enabled an inclusiveness.

"Inclusiveness, a space that brings possibilities with it, time and place playing an in between space."

The pandemic was a very particular time, and I was struck by F's comment that visual image was tied up with emotion. Was it that maybe it felt too close and personal to discuss a visual image?

Image B

The second interview took place in situ in Paris, November 2022. F had since qualified as an art therapist. F was invited to bring materials that were used from The Community Table session that had been going on. She brought some wooden alphabetic letters and a book about carpets. She described that she found the book in a junk shop and bought it because they do a lot of work at the table with backdrops. (Often dioramas are made at the table, scenes created with houses built

with the small bricks, and images are used to make a background when a photo is taken of the scene.)

"Well, it's a book of all of the world's most beautiful carpets. I found it in a junk shop. I bought it because we do a lot of work with backdrops and we sort of used an awful lot as a backdrop to rather themes, and with winter coming in it's nice to have all these colours, blankets."

Throughout the interview she played around with the letters (as in A, B, C wooden letters), using the book as a base. She said the letters were a new addition to the table. She said that she brought these items with her to the interview as she had seen a man using them spelling his name out with the letters, putting them on different backgrounds and taking photos of them. She was wondering about the meaning of this, saying she could interpret this as him placing his name in different environments, relating to his experience of displacement, but then she added she did not really know if this was the case.

She said she loved anagrams and often used them. At the end of the interview together we observed the words she made.

"I wrote house, I wrote hope, I wrote night, and I wrote mouse, but I don't think mouse is symbolic. The mouse is in the house and, erm, the Ouse is the river Ouse where I was brought up. I didn't think of it there like the sort of suggestions."

I considered that it seemed hard to get a specific image from both interview experiences and wondered if it was inhibiting to ask colleagues to make art. F had clearly stated that visual image was a way of reacting to emotion. This made me consider how and if some of the team felt they had to hold a professional perspective when being interviewed.

Phase 2 of data collection. Participant G: Arts-based data



Participant G

G took part in phase 2 of the data collection, which was face to face in situ in Paris.

Participant G is an experienced art therapist who was a core and founding team member working in Calais. She moved to live in France and took a break from the Calais work to have a baby and, on her return, worked on the project based in Paris. The participant is well known to the researcher and worked closely with them.

G was invited to bring materials that were used from The Community Table session that had been going on. G brought a box of postcards to the interview, with a pen, some tape, and tracing paper. G did not make an image. I asked at the beginning of the interview what she may wish to use them for. Her response:

"I don't know, but we'll see. I am just going to have them here and use them here as a reference point."

In the interview we discussed art materials a lot and I questioned why she brought the box of postcards.

"*I brought the box of postcards because I love working with postcards and we have written about postcards [in a book chapter] and it's something I used in my work prior to using them with Art Refuge. When we introduced them in Calais, they were immediately taken up. Their format is special because they're these objects you can send. I've always collected postcards and there are these*

images and sometimes they have text on, I'm always on the search for postcards that might join the box, and some of these are really old, have come over multiple locations."

"I look for images that might join the box, that are images that are unusual or that are strong images. I look for images that have cultural references that aren't European particularly. I am always looking for things that are going to resonate potentially for people whose experiences I imagine or know a bit about, or I look for different places. I look for aesthetic interest and to have as diverse a collection as I can. I suppose you never know what people are going to pick up. And I like the fact you can have a really ancient picture of the first bronze sculptures that have ever been made, an archaeological object or a piece of contemporary art or a photograph of a place or something like that. It's a kind of media that people can easily access, and you know when you're sitting down next to someone, and they start looking through a big box of postcards, it's a nice way to start a conversation and it doesn't require language, so if even you can't find a language together you can still look at an image together. And interestingly now we start to use a lot more text—is not something we did in Calais at all, we use more text in our work, a lot more words—writing in our work."

I was very aware that G did not use the art materials or pick out any of the postcards, so I asked, "Do any of those postcards or a series of postcards speak to you at the moment?"

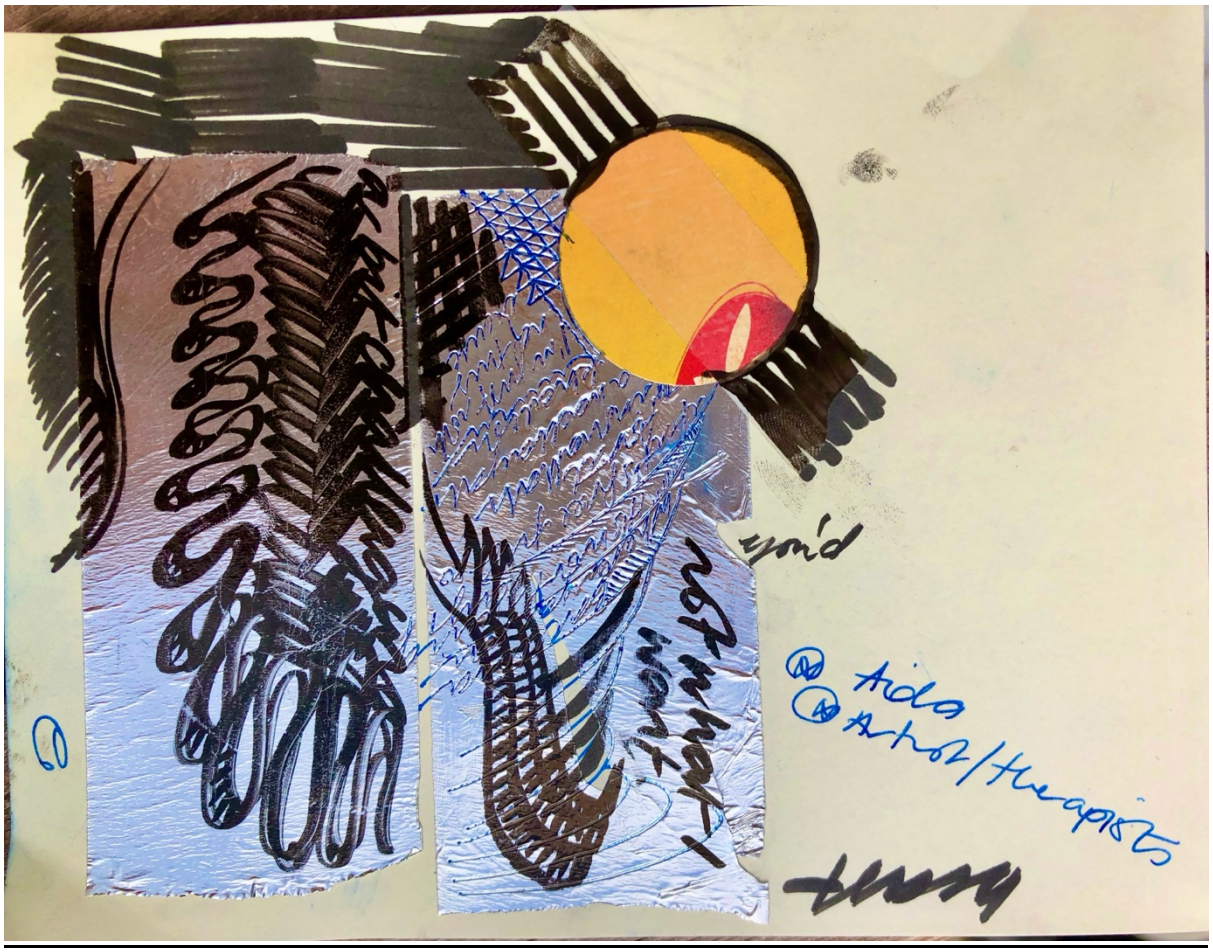
"*I'm just trying to think. It's funny, I don't know why it is, but last time I was here in Paris I went to an exhibition, I went in search of postcards. I went to one museum that I know has a good postcard collection, specifically to get some more. And then I realised that last week, when I wasn't here, the trainees were using quite a lot of the postcards, so lots of the images that were new had popped up in the photographs that they had taken [of the table in action to post on social media] and I thought that's funny. There is something, and I don't know why it's coming to mind, but as an artist you're always thinking about what's this connection between your own aesthetic regard or interest and what is going to resonate with other people. For me, galleries and seeing culture, whether it's art or going to an old archaeological site, are really important for me, and I feel strongly about people's ability to access points, so I suppose the postcards function for me as a kind of portable gallery."*

G reflected on the role of the therapist:

"*We always question our role, who are we to curate people's experience, but you are somehow a curator. What you put down on that table is a pop-up exhibition or a pop-up instillation. We have thought about those as pop-up museums.*"

For G, the art materials acted as a kind of prompt or conduit to access thoughts and reflections about the work. I also had to note that G did not make art in the interview and again wondered why.

Phase 2 of data collection. Participant H: Arts-based data



Participant H

H participated in phase 2 of the data collection in situ in Folkestone.

Participant H was the newest member of the team that I interviewed. H joined the team as a local artist (poet) volunteer when we began in Kent with newly arrived refugees in the then-controversial Napier Barracks. The barracks was an old disused army barracks which housed single men seeking asylum in dormitory-style accommodation. Art Refuge's ethos is to always try bringing local people from the context in which we work to join the team. H is not a qualified therapist but is an active poet, community worker, and artist.

H was interviewed in situ in Kent after participating in a Community Table session. She brought in the image she had been working on at the table and continued it throughout the interview. When I noticed she had brought the image with her, she said:

“I’m just doodling around. I like this a lot [reference to a silver roll of paper]… You can sort of emboss into it… I really like, yeah, I really like the silver. There is something impressable about it; you can dig in the pen.”

H was very open to looking at her artwork, and towards the end of the interview we relooked at it together. During the interview, H mentioned a few times about not being qualified and how pivotal she had found the experience of going to Calais (she had gone with the team on a couple of occasions).

H: “I feel like it has a sort of ancient Egyptian look to it.”

Researcher: “Oh yes?”

H: “Mmm, I don’t know, looking Icarus like… Well, I really like the silver tape. Actually, I think I discovered that I liked in Calais when we were last there… In Calais I was feeding the silver into the typewriter—I just love that it takes these imprints so beautifully. I have been writing on it today with the ballpoint pen, not that I can read what I have written.”

H really valued being with a wider team of people. She also spoke about the value she got from being at The Community Table and how it developed her own art practices.

H discussed a lot in her interview about how the work impressed her; it had been a very significant experience for her. I wondered if something about the image was about her own growth, and the experience of doing such work was being embossed on her own psyche. The image reminded her of something that was ancient Egyptian, another time and another culture which may be related to the work with Art Refuge.

Phase 2 of data collection. Participant (I): Arts-based data



Participant (I)

(I) participated in phase 2 of the data collection in situ in Folkestone.

Participant (I) is an artist based in Kent with a history of displacement. She came to the UK as a young person. She is an experienced and successful photographer and uses her art as a means of activism. (I) is a significant member of the team as an artist and a person who has had lived experience of being displaced. (I) was interviewed in situ in Kent after a Community Table session. (I) made an image using stamps and tape throughout the interview. The stamps were very particular, as they represented the tops of trees as used by architects when making architectural drawings. As many of the art materials used at the table, they were vintage, beautifully presented in a tin box with a number of different types of treetops represented. The stamps were used in conjunction with an ink pad, the stamp placed onto the ink pad and then onto the paper, printing the treetop pattern.

"I fell in love with the stamps right today, and it's beautiful, so relaxing to just to create patterns. I'm not very methodical, so I just let it flow and just go for it, and I got this coloured paper and B brought in these beautiful stamps. It's flowed beautifully, but then I want to put lines on it. I guess life is not as beautiful [laughing] and there are obstacles, and they are obstacles—I think these are obstacles, and

we must overcome these obstacles. Maybe I will stamp over it again. Resilience and overcoming different traumas, barriers. There's always barriers."

The image reminded me of routes that were marked out on the large maps that we often bring out in Calais. I also considered that (I) used routes and lines in a serious of artworks that she made and exhibited. In the interview we discussed some of the challenges of the work and the intentionality and cultural identity. There was a poignancy to the comment that there are always obstacles, which made me think about the borders and boundaries that those we work with face continually. In the interview, (I) discussed her own experiences of racism, and I wondered about the borders and boundaries that (I) herself experienced.

Appendix 3 Visual timeline: Notes on images

2018–2019: The beginning

The first year of research was trying to work out what exactly the research journey was going to be and how to consider what we were doing. The use of maps became relevant as a reflection of the beginning of my own journey and how I was going to orientate myself through the research.

Calais living site. Themes: Home, homesickness

The rhetorical question of what we can usefully do here was influenced by the realities of seeing people trying to survive living outside. This image was discreetly taken at a living site in Calais. It shows the brutal reality of people on the move living outside in tents, homeless. My initial impetus for doing research was to try to understand what we were doing in the complex and ethically challenging setting. This image influenced the beginning stages of research.

Placing a world map up helped to orientate everyone in the vicinity. Themes: Imagination, relational aesthetics

This image represents how we used the map to help ground and orientate everyone in the area—people on the move, humanitarian workers and volunteers—to become orientated in the space where we were. People were often unaware of their specific location in relation to where they had come from.

Placing maps on the ground outside. Themes: Safe space, time.

The maps used on the ground outside at humanitarian distribution points became like a table. Placing the map on the ground changed the nature of the place into a space where there was a surface on which people could play, like a tabletop.

Building houses. Themes: Home, art materials

Even in dire circumstances outside, people used the bricks to build mostly homes and houses of various sorts. This felt profoundly resonant, with men embracing the use of the bricks.

Map placed on ambulance. Themes: Imagination, relational aesthetics

The notions of versatility and adaptation were key elements of the work, and placing the map on the side of the ambulance was another way of engaging people. The

map became a large-scale art piece that people would stand around and look at. It became a focal point in which people on the move, volunteers and humanitarian workers, would engage together.

Making art on the beach with the Art Refuge team. Theme: Meaning-making
We found as a team it was important for us to find ways of decompressing from the overwhelming situation we were working in. Spending time on the Calais beach, taking photos and making art together, became a ritual. This image was one of a few playing with the visual metaphor of the world map in the elements.

2019–2020: Formulating a rationale for research; Registration
Deciding exactly what to and how to research, like the work itself, felt overwhelming, but focusing on the practice itself and reflecting on it was pivotal. Through teaching and trainings and my own artmaking processes, certain aspects became clearer, such as the importance of art materials.

Playing with enlargers in Calais. Themes: Art materials and media
We found clear plastic enlargers useful as a way for people to play with looking at things differently, both literally and metaphorically.

Giving a training in Athens using postcards from TCT in Calais. Themes: Safe space, art materials and media
While doing a training in Athens for a group of psychotherapists, we used postcards. The postcard in this image was taken at TCT in the safe house in Calais and is of a plasticine boat made by a group of young men from East Africa. The boat was a replica of the one they had taken on the perilous route from Libya to Italy. In Athens, participants were tasked to place the postcards in a variety of settings outside, then they took an image of a postcard in situ, creating a new image altogether. Considering where the postcards might go became important, thinking about how images change in different contexts.

Using collage at a UH Ed Doc day about research methods: Looking at the fire. Themes: Art therapist's stance
Using collage helped to formulate my own thinking as to what I was researching and how to look at it. I found myself making a mirror in which to reflect on the work, which I saw as a fire.

BAAT international conference. My own response art—a leaf boat. Theme: Embodied experience

While attending a workshop at a BAAT international conference about using natural objects in art therapy, I found myself fully immersed in making a leaf boat, reflecting resonant issues of the work in Calais.

TCT at the BAAT international conference. Themes: Culture, absorption

As part of a masterclass, we set up a Community Table at the international conference. At that point I realized how significant this model of practice could be within the art therapy profession, in particular in an international conference, noting how culture played out in a number of ways and noting the level of absorption of people who attended TCT at the masterclass.

The Ilya and Emilia Kabakov foundation showcasing Art Refuge's work. Themes: Culture, art materials and media, valued

The Ship of Tolerance was an onsite project on a specially made wooden boat which was sailed on the Thames in London. The project was dedicated to educating and making connections with people from different continents and cultures through art.

Art Refuge made a series of sails in Calais with people on the move using a cyanotype technique. The process highlighted the importance of shining a light on the capacities that people on the move had.

2020–2021: First phase of data collection

This period covered just before and during the worst stages of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Collecting data at TCT. Themes: Art materials and media

The first phase of the data collection began in Calais just before Covid-19. The first interview went well and was after an iteration of TCT. What was notable was the emphasis on the significance of the art materials.

Doing a workshop at UH with students about the work in France. Themes: Art therapist's stance

Teaching about art therapy during the first data collection phase helped to consolidate the rationale for research. Bringing the maps that were used in Calais to

the students at the university helped to connect the up-practice research and teaching. This experience highlighted the importance of teaching real-life, up-to-date experiences to those training to become art therapists and the need to be clear about the attitudes and actions that trainees need to learn.

Beauty 1993—Olafur Eliasson (taken at an exhibition). Theme: Safe space, imagination, embodied experience

This picture, taken at an exhibition, inspired thinking about how weather could become something beautiful. This led to consideration of how to make beauty out of everyday experiences. The light catching on a shower of water creates a rainbow; small moments of beauty in one's environment help to hope and cope in difficult circumstances.

My own response art—water colour patterns. Themes: Art materials and media, grounding

This period of research was challenging due to government restrictions. Finding ways to adapt and respond while also looking after my own wellbeing was made easier through using art. Repetitive patternmaking and rhythmic movement using watercolours was calming.

My own response art in relation to Covid-19. Themes: Time, grounding

Art Refuge developed the Coronaquilt project (https://www.artrefuge.org.uk/coronaquilt-gallery), which inspired me to start using embroidery. This was a very mindful activity which required focus and repetitive attention, which was calming.

My own response art—gold thread on a tissue spelling "Fragile". Themes: Imagination, grounding

This was an experiment which really represented a particular time in my research journey where everything felt very fragile.

2021–2022: First cycle of data analysis and progression

Plasticine figures at TCT. Themes: Able to cope, making a social connection

Plasticine emerged as a very important material at TCT, very portable and reusable. People used it to create a variety of forms.

Materials at TCT. Themes: Art materials and media

I noticed that, after having to work online for so long, once back face to face the tactile and kinetic aspects of the art materials became increasingly important.

Response art—trying to focus on data analysis. Themes: Able to cope, grounding

I struggled to focus and concentrate with so much discord and change around after the pandemic. I found going back to mindful embroidery helpful in thinking about the data analysis process.

Arts-based data, Participant A: Looking at it in a different light. Themes: Valued, able to cope

Looking and relooking at the data was part of the data analysis process. I explored changing the focus and light tones on the images to view them in a different way.

Response art—can't see the wood for the trees. Themes: Absorbing, able to cope

I used image-making when writing things up to help process aspects of reflective and reflexive practice. I felt that I was so immersed in the work itself that sometimes I lost sight of what I was doing. Image-making helped me to take a step back and reflect on where I was and what I needed to do for the next steps.

Small plasticine creature on the beach in Folkestone looking out to France. Themes: Imagination

Working in Folkestone with men who had been placed in the Napier Barracks, a controversial Home Office contingency accommodation, was interesting, as on a clear day you could see across to the northern French coastline. This was a mirror of the work in northern France, where on a clear day you could see the English coastline.

2022–2023: Second cycle of data collection and data analysis

Second cycle of data analysis at TCT. Themes: Meaning-making

It felt much easier to collect data in situ. This image was from the arts-based data produced from one of the first interviews I was able to do face to face in the second cycle of data collection.

Response art—waterwheel. Themes: Meaning-making, art therapist's stance

This was another image I made in which I was trying to make sense of the developing data. Thinking through images and metaphor helped to articulate the findings.

Response art—working out how things fit together. Themes: Meaning-making
I found myself making a puzzle and ensuring the pieces fitted together.

Response art—trying to make sense. Themes: Meaning-making.
The data analysis process felt cumbersome and complicated, so to help find a way to make sense of all the bits I started putting all my fibre arts patches together to make an overall picture.

The beach in Calais. Themes: Imagination
Looking at the shoreline in Calais has been an ongoing fascination, given the proximity to the UK. My own shadow has a foreboding element to it. It is always poignant standing near the shore thinking about those who have died trying to cross over to the UK.

Finding world maps on the beach. Themes: Imagination
Seeing patterns in the shoreline is an entertaining pastime, particularly when you spot the sand, sea, and wind creating its own representation of the world map.

2023–2024: Third and final cycle of data analysis and writing up findings
Letters of refuge, Kings College. Themes: Social connection, culture
https://www.kcl.ac.uk/events/new-exhibition-explores-displacement-in-the-past-and-present

Taking part in exhibitions related to the research helped to test out and consolidate developing theoretical ideas.

Folkestone: Taking TCT to Napier Barracks. Themes: Able to cope, social connection
Using TCT model in different settings helped me to understand more about its possibilities.

The beach in Calais. Themes: Safe place, culture

The Calais beachfront has now become such a familiar setting, this photo shows a trompe l'oeil on the promenade. Over the years of working in Calais, I noticed distinct cultural differences to working in the UK. Understanding some of these differences helped me to consider how to create a safe space.

TCT in Lviv, Ukraine. Themes: Safe space, culture, meaning-making

In March 2024 we were invited to Lviv to offer training and speak at an art therapy conference. We were invited to a school for special needs children and created a Community Table with the staff team. While we were there, there was an air raid and we sat in a safe designated corridor using art materials while the sirens rang out.

Meeting with graphic designers in Lviv. Themes: Able to cope, valued, culture

We met with people who had such an ability to be resilient in very difficult circumstances, and they highlighted the importance of artmaking and creativity as a means to help hope and cope and support resilience. In this image they are showing a book they designed which had an image of a large amount of people sitting around a table, reminiscent of TCT.

The deck of *SS Humanity* rescue ship in Sicily, Italy. Themes: Able to cope, absorbing

In September 2024 we were invited to do a training for the crew of the rescue ship. Being able to articulate the what, why, and how of why arts-based psychosocial practices are so important highlighted to me how much I have learnt from this research journey.