

PART F

POST-SCRIPT AND NEXT STEPS

1. **A reflection: the path I have constructed and where it will go next.**
2. **Stop press: disaster work never ends - the latest story as it unfolds...**

The final reflection of this thesis on the path I have created since my first disaster is but a brief pause. Like many other occasions in the past, my next steps have started before I have completely finished my present task. After giving priority so long to reflection and writing, I noticed my energy for action gathering again as ideas for my post-thesis life began to form in my mind. They would have remained ideas to be worked on later, but for a quite unexpected turn of events told in the story with which I conclude this phase of my professional journey. Even if I feel I want to get off the path of disaster, it feels that the choice is not entirely mine and there is work yet to be done. My opening quotation seems relevant once again:

“It is not for you to finish the task, but you are not free to desist from it”

- Ethics of the Fathers, 2.21

F I**THE PATH FROM DISASTER NEVER ENDS...**

The eminent disaster sociologist Thomas Drabek, reflecting on the choices he had made in the development of his long disaster research career, wrote:

“I have chosen to pursue my dreams. That is, first, I have become excited about a question and have then borrowed or invented the methods to pursue it. In my early years, unique events – certain disasters – stimulated the initial research question. Two decades later, I posed the question and waited for appropriate events”

- Drabek, 1997: 22

I found this statement affirming of my own process. The journey since my first experience at Hungerford has been a long and passionate exploration. The passion grew from a conviction that, though the Hungerford disaster had been managed well in many respects considering the field of work was not well developed, many aspects could be managed better. If people could be offered the right information and support early enough, their stress could be reduced before it became entrenched and their problems could be solved before they became intractable. With better management, repercussions in the community and the stress of rescue and recovery workers could be prevented or managed more healthily. If managers had more understanding, then the role of schools and the needs of young people and their teachers and carers could be found a place in the recovery.

My Hungerford experience was quickly followed by other experiences at Lockerbie and on Merseyside in the wake of the Hillsborough tragedy. I began to notice patterns and themes that they had in common and the differences caused by the specific details of the disaster itself, the communities they affected and the relationship between the two. From these observations, questions began to crystallise which I carried with me to later disasters and other traumatic events, including my personal tragedy, the death of my daughter, Ann, and the research and campaigning that followed.

The questions intertwined with my own sense-making process out of which my Trauma Process Map emerged to guide myself and others. Other frameworks were developed

and tested that not so much gave answers to my first questions, but provided more questions and processes that promoted an enquiring mind in myself and, in turn, the people I worked with. The maps and models I created, described in Part C and D, came from layer upon layer of reflections from my experience combined with ideas from many sources that resonated with them, and sometimes challenged them. They are original in the way I have brought these influences together into presentational forms that can be adapted to many situations and be used by people, even if they have no specialist role or expertise in disaster work. The use of the multi-dimensional coping model ('BE FIT & Phys) for building rapport, coping capacities and planning methods of response and Kfir's simple crisis intervention model, provided mechanisms for encouraging an enquiring, participative approach from professional and lay helpers for any kind and length of interaction. The idea of empowering individual community members and groups, public and commercial organisations as 'agents of recovery' enables positive ripples to spread through all parts of the disaster community to act as a counter force to the ripples of disaster. The Trauma Process Map proved to be a useful guide too for planning timely responses that enable people to have more choices about recovery, with the 'clash of the gods' concept illustrating how styles of managing the response need to change as the pace and tasks of crisis management evolve.

Reflecting on my contribution to the field of disaster response, I would claim that these maps and models provide the concrete, practical evidence of the specific combination of concepts, processes and methods I have brought to the field. Though many aspects of my work have been inspired by others, I have developed them for my own specific purposes and produced original adaptations of them. The Trauma Process map and applications are original constructions created from many reflections on my own experience. So too are the diagrammatic formulations of the 'Bridging the Gap' and the 'Fishing Nets and Stepping Stones' concepts for explaining the need for community outreach and the application of Handy's 'gods of management' ideas to the different phases of disaster management. Another original construction, the S-S CIRA model, provides a comprehensive model that ensures my own specific style of context sensitive disaster assessment and management that is the hall-mark of a participative approach to disaster response rather than the application of prescriptive, pre-determined procedures. The uniqueness of these models lies in the fact that they are not just descriptive and theoretical. They are designed for practical use and to be flexible enough for many types of use by different people in different situations. They are founded on practical theories created and refined in the field before being placed in a wider framework of cognitive knowledge.

My models thus offer a process, rather than a prescription, that can be adapted for different contexts because they have been devised from practice from a variety of perspectives in multiple contexts. This suggests other aspects of my contribution to the field – frameworks that allow flexibility and holistic approaches in situations that are highly contextual with many variables. I have a breadth of skills, experience and understanding drawn from many professions and a grasp of the theories and models that these have produced for working with disaster. When I approach a new disaster contract, I am not bound by any one model so I can enter with a broad range of tools and an open, enquiring mind that puts the people and context first and the methods and models at their service. My colleague in Omagh, Sue Pittman, saw this as the hallmark of my practice. Coming out of the bounded, clinical setting of a Psychiatric Hospital, she told me how she had to unlearn her existing approaches and learn anew about how to meet disaster in the raw in community settings unbounded by walls and prescribed protocols.

My holistic, ecological approach allows me to deal with many aspects of disaster response as a whole, rather than separating them. This is unusual in a field where many people specialise and sometimes forget that the impact of disaster is a multi-dimensional affair. In particular I can work with children and adolescents in home, community and school contexts which many disaster workers cannot or will not do, while my skills range from working with and managing community and organisational systems, through group work to short and long-term therapeutic work with individuals. My very specific contribution has been my pioneering efforts in the UK to define the role of the school and other young person's agencies in disaster and trauma response and then take action to encourage the implementation of pre-disaster education and comprehensive, phased post-incident management.

My involvement with the CARPP programme and the research for this thesis has added another contribution not yet made as coherently as in these pages. This concerns the application of action research philosophy and practice to the intense, volatile context of disaster work. This has contributed to the way I use my models and the use of these as tools of action research to generate practical knowing. My learning about the philosophical basis of action research, and in particular a participative world view, has enabled me to claim a place for participative, emergent styles of work in a field that is heavily dominated by research and practice that privileges traditional positivist scientific research practices that many like myself find difficult to apply to intensely human situations.

While my particular style of disaster work can be attributed in general to the inclusive, creative and organic nature of action research approaches, three specific aspects of my work have arisen because of it. The first is my development of a specific form of post-trauma response (the S-S CIRA model) and my own methods of group stress debriefing. In my accounts of these methods, I have exposed the underlying world-view and beliefs that underlie my thinking. Such exposure is rarely found in the literature on immediate post-trauma interventions and I have argued that it is this omission that has led to the destructive and polarised controversy surrounding the post-trauma debriefing debate. I believe that the major philosophical differences between people on opposing sides of the debate account for the fact they the conflict continues so ferociously.

Secondly, my attention to the micro-processes of practice and process demanded by action research has generated knowledge about such processes in disaster response that are rarely reported except as raw, unprocessed stories from the field. Most literature on disaster management response concentrates on prescriptive strategies, methods and techniques of response rather than on the various personal and professional processes that are involved in entry and engagement, maintaining a presence and leaving a disaster situation which I have addressed in Part D. I have also included the psychological issues involved in the dynamics of the insider-outsider and the scape-goating complex that is commonly found in the repercussions of disaster. The inclusion of a wide range of issues bridges the gap between emergency managers who have been guilty of ignoring psychological issues in themselves and in their work as much as some psychologists have been guilty of forgetting the wider social context and practical concerns of survivors.

Thirdly, action research has given me the backing and rigour to claim a place for a style of disaster work that allows me to operate in a world where women's ways of knowing and being can easily be dismissed and devalued. I have been able to create a practice where I can operate in a very natural, low-key and non-elitist manner without having to rely on an over-inflated ego or the status and structures of an academic or professional institution or a commercial organisation. The greatest contribution I feel I have made has been the empowerment of lay people (including young people) and general community professionals to respond to their own disasters in an informed, rigorous and participative manner using action research to value their existing knowledge and co-generate new ideas.

In relation to the developing field of action research, this thesis makes a contribution through its demonstration of how a range of first, second and third person possibilities for attention and action can be held in real-time moments of practice. It illustrates how decisions can be made and actions can be co-created with disciplined, purposeful reflection even in very volatile situations demanding a context sensitive approach. I have shown how my early professional practice, which used action research implicitly, has been enriched and given more rigour so that action research has become an explicit and essential part of my professional practice and everyday life. It is not just an extra tool of practice but a way of being that infuses my attitudes and the ground from which I experience and act in the world. This is particularly important in a field where attitude and relationship are the roots, trunk and branches from which methods can grow. In this way, I have claimed a place for action research that does not exclude people by its jargon, grand strategies and labels. More specific contributions include my taxonomy of first-person enquiry methods according to their place in moving a person along the arcs from inner awareness to changes in outward behaviour. Section B3 is my contribution to articulating the real-life dilemmas in my quest to demonstrate quality and integrity as I integrate action research in situations where purpose and intent are driven by different values from my own.

I now turn from a reflection on the contribution of this thesis to my professional field and action research to a reflection on how I turned it into a written form. The process of presenting this journey has been long and tortuous. My decision to present a glimpse of the whole process, rather than one specific aspect in depth, has caused many problems, not least in the cutting of many detailed accounts of actions and reflections. I have, however, persisted and remained true to myself and my purpose. I joined CARPP to do something that contributed to my work and my field. More than anything else I needed to make sense of the essence of the whole. It was this that I had to carry in my mind and body every time I entered a disaster response or any other post-trauma work. Whenever I was invited to train people or do a lecture, it was a sense of the whole that people demanded – in an hour or a few days, seldom longer. The field of work was new and funding was, and still is, short for pre- and post-disaster human recovery work and people in my position. I was not ready to narrow my focus to one aspect until I had a fuller understanding of the whole and could place my experiences and insights in the context of the theories and practices of other disaster and trauma researchers and practitioners.

Like Drabek, my journey in disaster work has lasted nearly twenty years. I return once more to T.S. Eliot to sum up the whole process and the processes within:

*"In order to arrive there.
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy
In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by a way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not"*

- From 'East Coker' in 'The Four Quartets'.

and, like T.S. Eliot, draw from the hope in the words of Julian of Norwich, that in the end:

*"All shall be well, all shall be well
And all manner of thing shall be well"*

- From 'Revelations of Divine Love', 1373

Now that I have come to the end of this part of my journey, I look back, as I do with my disaster responses, with mixed feelings of satisfaction and disappointment with the forms I have used to present such complex, living processes here in these pages. My desire to interweave the pages with the images from art and nature that have inspired my journey will have to wait for another occasion. I console myself as I do after a disaster response – that I have done what I can with what I have and the imperfections will keep me moving and enquiring to do them better elsewhere. As a practitioner with an action researcher's mind, I can delight in the many spin-offs my efforts have produced. Even the discarded accounts have already found a purpose in inspiring and facilitating others. My Community Epidemiology study, presented as my Diploma paper (Capewell, 1998c) is one example, and the in-depth study of the controversy surrounding post-trauma debriefing methods (Capewell, 2004) is another. The latter prolonged my writing process but deepened my understanding of the discomfort of living in the clash of different research and practice paradigms and gave me more confidence to argue my case for my own approaches. It also helped others, in Croatia,

Australia and this country, to make their case too against a powerful positivist lobby attacking their practice-based knowledge.

Much of my practice feels as if it has been developed from many moments of opportunistic action in which I could exercise my training and experience. I want to refine this view in the light of Torbert's definitions of action inquiry (Fisher, Rooke, Torbert, 2000) and see it as opportunism coated with many other layers of intuition, forward thinking and the coming together at critical moments of all that I know in my heart, mind, body and soul. It is the culmination of years of experience, observation, enquiry, thinking and, at times, total immersion in this subject as well as an integration of what I brought from my pre-disaster career and the values guiding my life. I sense I not only grab the moment but also make sure that further moments are created in order for the consequences of the original moment to be followed up and, guided by my values and beliefs, transformed into useful social action.

As I have progressed through my writing, my passion to return fully to practice has been revived and what I do next will be the true measure of the value of this thesis. My passion for improving pre- and post-disaster work has now been joined by my passion for practitioner-based action research. The more confident I have become in action research, the more I have discovered others who consciously or subconsciously share the same philosophy. They include my colleagues in the ESRC project run by the Centre for Studies in Criminal and Social Justice at Edge Hill College, Joanne Tortorici Luna in Los Angeles and Sally Mackay and colleagues in the State Community Department and Emergency Management College, Victoria, Australia who already have links with Yoland Wadsworth's (2001) action research centre in Melbourne. My friends at the Community Stress Prevention Centre in northern Israel have long been action researchers, though they may not name it as such, and the writing of a recent contact in Canada, Ken Hewitt, shows he has the values and purpose of action research:

"My background is in the physical environment and geo-hazards. Yet I have come to believe that social understanding and socially just and appropriate action are the more crucial issues for the contemporary disaster scene."

- Hewitt, 1995:.318

My next step is to take action research and community orientated disaster response into both local and global arenas. On the local level, I intend to set up courses to

increase the capacity of lay community members to be enquiring effective local 'agents of recovery'. On the global level, I intend to create a network of action researchers in disaster response to promote collaborative enquiry and a participative approach as a basis for community-based disaster preparation, using whole systems methods, and recovery, using 'in the moment action-reflection' and other methods described in this thesis.

The process and products of this thesis make these intentions possible. The process and products are my evidence that I have gone some way to recycling the pain and been worthy of the suffering of myself and those who I have walked alongside.

Watching the documentary '*The Hungerford Massacre*' last night (7th December, 2004), was a timely signpost that proved to me how writing this thesis has finally placed my first experience of disaster firmly in the past.

F 2

STOP PRESS:
THE LATEST STORY – DISASTER WORK NEVER ENDS...

T.S. Eliot again provides words for the place I find myself in now:

*“We shall not cease from exploration
 And the end of all our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started
 And know the place for the first time”*
 - ‘East Coker’ from the ‘Four Quartets’

The ending in F1 turned out not to be my real ending. I now end as I began with a new cycle of action-reflection, a story that I did not expect to tell...

“At 18.13 on a dank autumn evening, 6th November, 2004, the Paddington to Plymouth train, travelling at 100mph and carrying three hundred passengers, ran over a car driven in an act of suicide onto a level crossing, just before reaching Newbury. The catastrophic derailment killed seven, including two children. One hundred and fifty passengers were injured and the rest, along with witnesses, lay rescuers, emergency service personnel and relatives waiting at the station, were exposed to intense traumatic images and fear. One of the dead, a woman, was Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive of West Berkshire Council, thus a bereaved man and organisation were responsible for the disaster response.”

As I was frantically trying to meet deadlines for submitting this thesis, I did not respond as usual, apart from offering some information and brief consultancy. However, I observed the slowness of the official response and its minimal nature – books of condolence, leaflets, and a nine-to-five help-line run by volunteers for two weeks. There appeared to be no pro-active support from the Education or Youth services for schools with injured and bereaved staff and pupils. Not to act in my own community felt like a betrayal of what I had been researching for seventeen years and this thesis. I asked myself, “*What can I do?*” given my thesis stress. I was particularly concerned for the uninjured but deeply shocked passengers sent home on coaches immediately. The

small rural community of rescuers and witnesses also appeared to have received no informed support other than what neighbours and clergy could give. No one appeared to be showing leadership in the community to encourage these groups to take preventative action for their shock.

I persuaded the main town church to sponsor two public meetings for me to give a talk about the impact of disaster and coping ideas, as a volunteer member of the community. The first meeting was daunting, not knowing who, if any, would attend. It went well and some bridges between need and help have been built and crossed. I have created some community 'agents of recovery', including a local journalist, youth leader and teachers. A local solicitor who acted for many survivors of the Paddington train crash contacted me. He turned out to be the solicitor I had contacted in relation to Story 2, 'Giving myself Justice', showing that even negative events can have positive consequences. He came to my meeting and we have agreed to meet weekly as the start of a Disaster Practitioners Enquiry Group. After my second public meeting, I was invited to be present at an open legal surgery about compensation issues. Every survivor who attended chose to talk with me and more contacts were made and coping ideas passed on. Most had received help for physical wounds, but little or nothing from GPs or hospitals for the wounds of traumatic shock. I am working with the youth leader to seek ways of reaching the many young people on the train.

I feel liberated working in this free atmosphere, not having to manage the defences and power games of Local Authorities. My new solicitor colleague has an impressive grasp of trauma reactions and his colleagues are eager to learn. He shares my passion for giving help before problems are entrenched and, at last, I have an ally in my own community who, like me, will emerge to exercise leadership when needed. Serendipity is working as one chance contact leads to another. En route to the Memorial Service in Reading, I met a friend on the station who had just met his friend whose daughter had survived the crash. We were introduced and the conversations flowed as we travelled to the service together. Later, he phoned to say my 'just being' alongside helped him cope. Our actions are bearing significant fruit for the individuals concerned. More can happen once this thesis is submitted. I have used my values to choose between the competing demands of the final polishing of my thesis and the social action that came my way. If I use the question posed in B3 to judge my choices, "*Can I live with myself?*" I know that I can because human flourishing has occurred from emergent collaborative actions born of practical knowing as we create new paths. Finally, on 11th December 2004, this thesis stage of my path building has to finish here.