

THE VALUE OF AN
INCLUSIVE STUDENTS AS RESEARCHERS (ISAR)
MODEL OF PARTICIPATORY VOICE

By

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

On observing a lack of opportunity for post-secondary college students with learning disabilities to experience, practise and develop their agency and self-determination, this study investigated the potential contribution of student-led Participatory Action Research (PAR) to provide such opportunity. Fielding's (2001) *Students as Researchers* (SaR) model of Student Voice was adapted to better include a core group of seven student-participants over a five-term period.

The value of an emergent *inclusive Students as Researchers* (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice' was explored, through how it was perceived and experienced by participating learning-disabled students. The study drew heavily upon the *Value Creation Framework* (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020) in its attempts to accessibly elicit participatory value-experiences through testimonial data, involving creative, multi-modal methods, such as *Photo-interviews*. Datasets were thematically analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), through an iterative, abductive process involving theoretical integration.

Findings revealed numerous articulations of positive value-experiences in iSaR activity, and participation in iSaR proved to be incredibly transformative; participants identified as researchers, and not only did they make a difference, but they learned that they *could* make a difference, they learned *how* to make a difference and then they learned how to *better* make a difference. This evidences how iSaR activity contributed to student agency and self-direction - the development of which is invaluable as preparation for adulthood, in that students grow to believe they can make a difference to undesired factors which may have a negative impact on their adult lives and health.

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Post-humanly speaking, a wealth of support came from beyond the life-death binary - from my parents, who smiled encouragingly at me from the ever-present screensaver image of them x

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

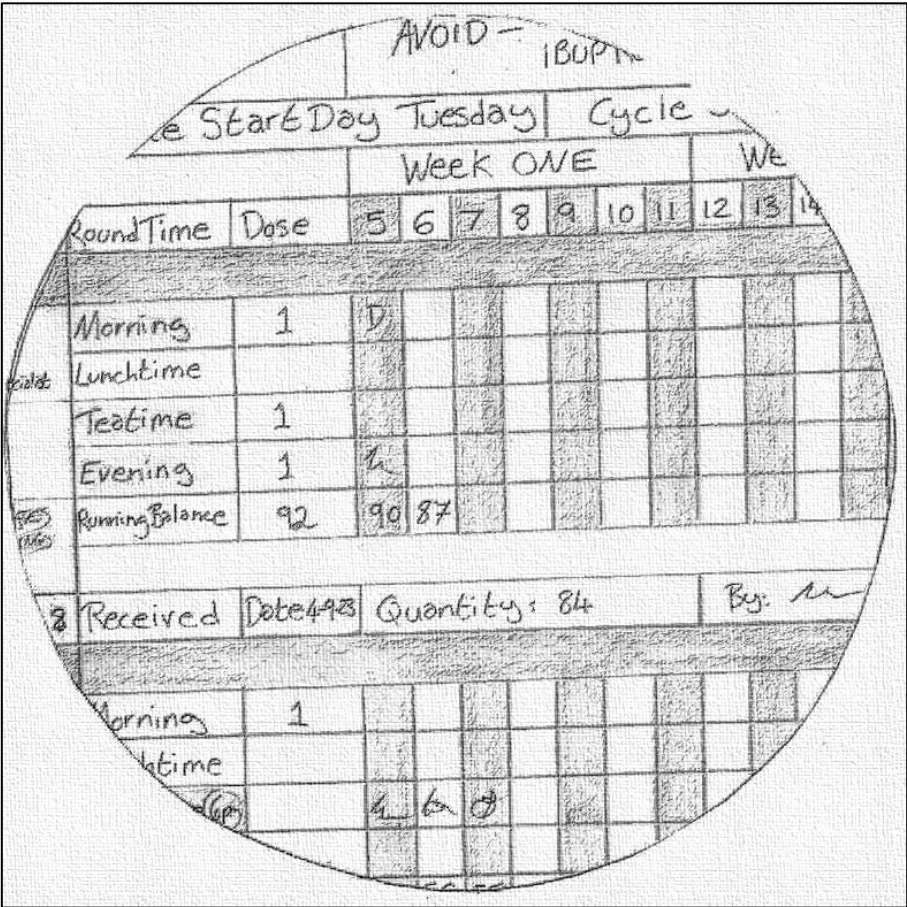


Figure 1. 'Journey to the Conference' - Part 1

Getting 'signed off' to administer participant medications whilst offsite.
*anonymised Medication Administration Record (MAR) chart.

[NB. The images heading each of the eight chapters of this thesis were originally intended to illustrate a co-written article about co-presenting at a research conference, which would use the format of comics. Unfortunately, nothing came of this, but they seem to have found a perfect home in this thesis.]

1.1 Personal context for the research

'We can easily patronise people like Joey, but it's perhaps wiser to be jealous.'

(Unwin, 2025, p.240)

I came to this research as a practitioner-researcher with over 25 years of experience living and working around people with learning disabilities, as family member, friend, supporter, teacher, and more recently group facilitator.

There was a strong personal motivation which drove me forward in my pursuit to create accessible and inclusive opportunities for this group of people, and that was one of deepest gratitude and allyship. In (very) early adulthood, I experienced extreme societal prejudice for, not only giving birth at seventeen, but for choosing to dress unconventionally, sporting a tattoo, unusual hairstyle and several piercings (in the nineties, this was not as uniformly accepted as it has become in recent years). Pedestrians would cross the street on seeing me, and so I withdrew more from this society which refused to accept me.

I can clearly remember the day, at the turn of the Millenium, that this feeling of isolation began to shift. I had recently moved to a new town and remember walking past a notice in a shop window asking for volunteers to support people with learning disabilities to access recreational activities, such as crafts, dance and drama. The moment I stepped through that door, my life changed, and I knew what I wanted to be doing. What I experienced whilst 'supporting' these people, was support. No person I encountered there looked at me with any judgement; they didn't see me as a 'teenage, single mother' or a 'hippy' – they saw me as

Helen and *accepted* me as Helen, and I am still repaying my gratitude for the chance to *become* just Helen.

Had I had been born several decades earlier, I would, as a 'teenage, single mother' have been labelled a defective and immoral adolescent (Unwin, 2025) or a '*moral imbecile*' (Tomlinson, 2017, p.35) and would possibly, as a member of the unpropertied classes, have been institutionalized alongside people with learning disabilities under the Mental Deficiency Act (HM Gov, 1913, online). Indeed, according to Walmsley (2000), '*sexual lapses, or even the possibility of them, were far more likely to prompt action than intellectual or physical impairment as such.*' (p.69). I feel all too acutely the historical shadow of threat of that '*action*', that people with learning disabilities must still fear, and even experience. This here is another reason why I empathize with this group of people – but for history and luck, we would share the same potential fate of incarceration.

And so, I utilise the skills I possess, of creativity and pattern recognition, in the service of, and allyship with, people with learning disabilities. As a visual learner, I have always excelled in organising and expressing my ideas clearly and visually, and have found, through preparing teaching, and later, research resources, that I am able to create *accessible* resources with which to include and engage learning-disabled students in the planning, activities and evaluation of research. These strengths and motivations have shaped the trajectory of what follows, and will hopefully continue to do so, post-doctorally.

1.2 Broader context for the research

The rights to, and provision of education for (school-age) children with learning disabilities only began to enter English law in 1970, as they had previously been *'deemed to be ineducable because of the severity of their mental or physical impairment.'* (Tomlinson, 1997, p.187) Although not compelled by law, the first commercial 'special' schools were founded, as far back as the late eighteenth century, to support the education of those whose disabilities were more physical, such as the deaf or blind children of the wealthy, propertied classes, to ensure that their education befitted their station, according to class. The Royal National College for the Blind, as example, was set up in 1872, offering *'blind students a good education which would lead on to worthwhile employment'* (RNC, 2025, online), an education also stretching into post-secondary territory.

Almost a century after the founding of this first specialist college, a 1973 survey revealed the lack of opportunities for Children and Young People (CYP) with learning disabilities to access *further* education: *'Of those considered suitable for further education, 51 per cent were without any provision at all'* (Tomlinson, 1997, p.188). That this survey only included those deemed educable and did not include CYPs with any 'severe' learning disability, revealed the bleak picture of that time. Since then, however, there has been an exponential growth in all stages of specialized education, including the post-16 sector. This was due in part to legislation contained within the Disability Discrimination Act (HM Government, 1995, online) protecting disabled people's rights to services which are provided to members of the public, and the Children and Families Act (HM Government, 2014), which stipulated the rights to access education and health services for

CYP with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) up to the increased age of twenty-five.

Specialist post-secondary provisions or specialist colleges, also referred to as Independent Specialist Colleges (ISCs) or Independent Specialist Providers (ISPs), for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), now number almost one hundred and forty in England and Wales (Natspec, 2025, online). This growth, however, has been variable throughout the countries comprising the United Kingdom (UK). Learning-disabled students in Northern Ireland, for example, '*are [only] eligible to remain in school until the end of the school year during which they turn 19.*' (Gibson et al., 2025, p.15), and according to Capability Scotland (2025, online), there is currently only one Scottish specialist post-secondary provision, with councils preferring to meet need within General Further Education (GFE) provisions.

I have briefly detailed the historic context of specialist post-secondary provisions to better introduce and situate my fieldwork within the landscape which shaped this doctoral study. I provide more detail regarding the participating provisions in an upcoming section, but as overview here, this fieldwork took place across four specialist post-secondary provisions within the West Midlands / North Wales regions of the UK. In what follows, I explore the potential lack of opportunity, within the current strong vocational focus of such provisions, for students to practice, experience and develop agency and self-determination.

The focus of specialist post-secondary provisions is strongly guided by labour market needs. Government policy emphasises the importance of employability

for learning-disabled students (HM Gov, 2023) – a point taken up within the latest *Solving the SEND crisis* report, which advises ‘wider access to work experience’ (UK Gov, 2025, p.12). Although commendable in many ways, this vocational focus lends itself more to *training* than teaching. Training is a very staff-led, knowledge-transference approach to teaching and learning, providing little opportunity for students to practise ‘wielding’ their agency in any self-determined way; here, learning is the compliant following of instruction and routine. This learning approach is not conducive to the development of agency; it rarely engages learners’ curiosity or ignites their innate motivation to learn, nor does it encourage or facilitate skills for lifelong learning:

‘People become very passive learners, rather than active, and if you want to have developed groundbreaking skills and knowledge, they have to be active, they’ve got to be engaged. And sometimes we socialise children into that by not letting them ask questions, not build on that natural curiosity and engagement’ (Shevlin, 2025, 24:31)

This is not to say that there is no need for this type of learning; it has a useful function when it comes to learning new vocational skills or learning to drive, but, as I articulate in the next chapter, this study took the view that humans are always in the process of becoming – we are not finished learning as soon as we ‘learn the trade’ or once we have graduated or become employed: *‘It’s not about putting a full stop to people’* (Shevlin, 2025, 19:02). With this study’s introduction of learning sessions designed to engage students’ curiosity, and in which students were supported to observe and practise exercising their agency in a self-determined way, I believed a more positive balance could be established, which

would more fully prepare students for life after college and future learning opportunities. This doctoral study explored the possibilities and challenges within such an aspiration.

1.3 Problem definition

The problem that I wanted this study to specifically address was the lack of opportunity for post-secondary students with learning disabilities to develop agency and self-determination, even within the organised ‘voice’ activities of a Student Council whom I had been observing. I am taking Wenger-Trayner’s definition of agency here, as *‘the power to make a difference’* (2020, p.4), and temporarily adopting Wehmeyer’s definition of self-determination, as *‘acting as the primal causal agent in one’s own life and making choices and decisions regarding one’s quality of life, free from undue influence or interference’* (1999, p.57). These concepts will be explored in greater depth later in this chapter and in Chapter 2.

‘Student Voice’ practice is very rarely student led. Over several years of observing Student Council meetings and activity, I had been reluctant witness to scenes of dependence and compliance, when I should have been observing scenes of emancipation. I will argue later that the current function of Student Voice may be more aligned to the needs of college quality assurance processes than the needs of students themselves.

These observations and experiences propelled the trajectory of my work towards developing an alternative model of student ‘voice’, and in this doctoral study I

have been particularly interested in creating opportunities for students to practice, observe and thus develop their capacity to act (agency) with a focused intention to purposefully create the life experiences they wish to have (self-determination). I see this as my contribution to their preparation for adulthood. As further contextual information here, Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) is an aspect of development which features within Section E of *Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs)*, which are completed in collaboration between students with SEND and their families, and education and health care professionals from the Local Authority. For the purposes of this study however, I shall be taking the 'lower-case' meaning of this phrase.

1.4 Making a difference

The difference I wished to make through my doctoral study was for post-secondary students with learning disabilities to develop agency and self-determination in preparation for adulthood. With this as my guiding vision, I began to sketch out a theory of how agency and self-determination could be developed through participation in student-led research. This tentative theory was informed by the assumptions that a) agency and self-determination are developed through repeated and numerous opportunities to practise, observe and articulate experiences of change-making (successful or not), b) that an effective vehicle for students to practise planning for and affecting change is Participatory Action Research (PAR) and c) that students with learning disabilities would require training and careful support to engage in PAR and affect change. The diagram

below (Figure 2) illustrates this emergent theory of agency development through student-led research activity.

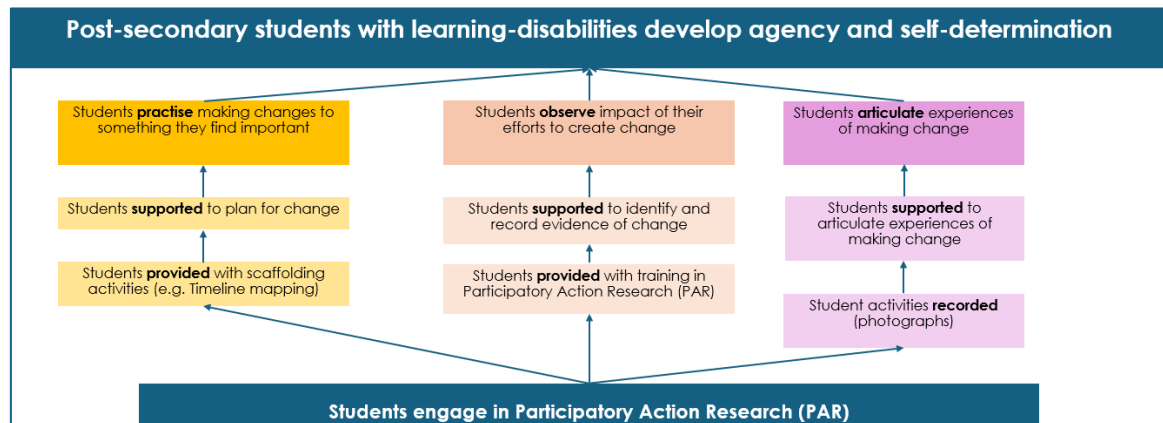


Figure 2. Theory of agency development through student-led research activity

I sought to trial and operationalise the above theory through the development and refinement of an inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of student ‘voice’ (or participatory ‘voice’, as it was later termed). Within this iSaR model, the collaborative, student-led qualities of Fielding’s (2001) Students as Researchers (SaR) model of student voice (detailed in Chapters 2 and 3), would be accessibly adapted and embraced, utilising the processes of Participatory Action Research (PAR).

1.4.1 The plan

The plan was to invite a core group of learning-disabled, post-secondary students to participate in experiential and accessible PAR training and then for them to initiate and lead on PAR activity around one or more issues of their choosing. This activity would be conceived as an aspect of iSaR practice, or as iSaR activity.

Participating students would be supported to examine and articulate their experiences and achievements in making a difference to their college community through their research, both within the group and outside the group, through peer research. In paying attention to their experiences of research processes, the group would be able to better observe, articulate and develop their agency, and practise self-determination.

The iSaR model of practice would then be adapted to be delivered as a series of workshop sessions to similar groups of learners in other local specialist post-secondary provisions catering for students with learning disabilities, and the effectiveness of this model of participation would then be explored within other contexts.

1.5 Importance of the study

With the findings from the recently updated ‘Learning from Lives and Deaths – People with a learning disability and autistic people’ (LeDeR) report revealing that, for example, ‘*avoidable deaths of adults with a learning disability [...are] still nearly double the rate compared to the general population*’ (King’s College London, 2023, p.17), the need for learning-disabled students to be supported to develop their agency and self-determination as preparation for adulthood is highly evident and of great importance. This focus of personal development works towards ensuring that young people with learning disabilities believe that they *can* attain the quality of life they desire and deserve, that they *are* able to make the necessary differences to affect that change (with support, if needed) and that they

are moved to believe that change *is* possible; they don't have to remain compliant and accepting of unsatisfactory conditions which put their well-being, health and life at risk.

As I write, I hear of yet another avoidable hospital death of a man with Down's Syndrome, who was not offered food for nine days before dying of starvation (itvNEWS, 2025). I'm not under the illusion that my work could ever make a difference which would stop such atrocities, but I must try to make any little difference of which I am capable.

1.6 Background to the study

My academic interest in Student Voice surfaced through my Master's Degree in Education (MEd) dissertation study which was inspired by NUS and Natspec research, highlighting how, within both mainstream *and* specialist colleges, staff were '*struggling to involve less-able and/ or non-verbal learners to have their views heard and articulated*' (NUS and Natspec, 2018, p.3). The resulting dissertation study, designed to address this need and published as an article in Good Autism Practice (Evans, 2021), involved the creation of a small Student Researcher Group (SRG) to collaborate in the pursuit of co-creating accessible 'voice' mechanisms with which to elicit the 'voice' of the wider college community. The SRG was loosely based on Fielding's (2001) *Students as Researchers* (SaR) model of Student Voice (to be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), but as my study's focus was on the development of accessible 'voice' mechanisms, I placed more import, at that point, on the adaptation of creative methods to elicit 'voice' than

the value of the vehicle that was the SRG, to access 'voice'. Initial findings indicated that learning-disabled students could be highly effective as co-researchers, at trialling and adapting accessible 'voice' mechanisms to elicit the views of their peers. The findings that encouraged further investigation into the value of an accessible SaR model, centred around the student-participants' increased motivation to engage in research when taking the role as researchers - initiating the focus of the research and leading the research process themselves (albeit with support), and how that had led to some personal development, such as increased confidence.

On successfully proposing this doctoral study to explore the value of an inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of Student Voice, I was first required to conduct another dissertation study, this time for my Master's Degree in Social Research (MASR), which was condition of the ESRC funding for this study. Through the MASR study, I chose to pilot accessible PAR training activities with a small group of learning-disabled students, in order to better guide the planning of the training aspect of this larger doctoral study. This small group could be viewed as the first example of an iSaR group. The study actively sought students' experiences of participation in PAR training activities through tangible feedback activities, and findings highlighted participants' feelings of joy through participation in research, the sharing of stories and getting to know each other better as result of participation. Participant feedback from the MASR study, regarding the accessibility of research tools used and the suitability of venue/timings etc also informed the planning and preparation of the training aspect of this PhD study.

To view this doctoral study within the context of a *broader* research design, it may be beneficial to utilise Gorard's (2013) full cycle of social science research and development. The flow chart below (Figure 3) illustrates the evolution of a research idea through three separate studies (MEd, MASR and PhD), using arrows to indicate feedback loops from one study to the next, outlining how they are linked. From the introduction of a Student Researcher Group to implement the co-creation of accessible voice mechanisms (MEd), to the piloting of PAR training required by student researchers prior to undertaking PAR activity (MASR), to the further development, refinement and evaluation of an inclusive model of Student Voice in which learning-disabled students take on the role of researchers (PhD); the opportunities brought by doctoral study have facilitated a significant leap in knowledge and practice.

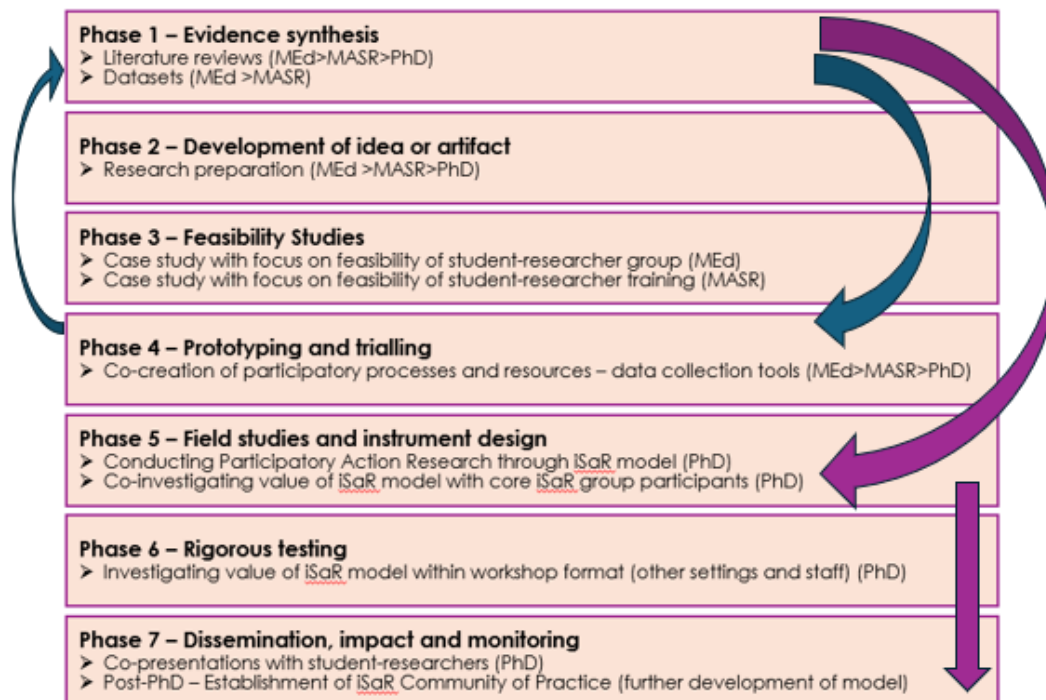


Figure 3. Flow chart based on Gorard's 'outline of the full cycle of social sciences research and development' (2013, p14)

For additional clarity, around my development of the iSaR model, I will bring to attention here, the fact that the creation of this thesis, specifically its literature review, has also been instrumental in iSaR's development. I purposefully narrowed the focus of the narrative literature review (Chapter 3) to include only those participatory studies found to involve learning-disabled students as co-researchers or researchers. The insights and best practice shared within these studies were therefore able to inform and inspire the further honing of my iSaR model of practice.

1.7 Overview of study

1.7.1 Research aims

To provide a plausible account of whether and / or how iSaR activity might contribute to the personal development of participating post-secondary students who are learning-disabled, and to evaluate this new model of Student Voice (or participatory 'voice', as it shall be called henceforth in relation to iSaR) through student testimony.

1.7.2 Conceptual framework

To investigate the value experienced by its student-participants, this study utilised a specific framework of value, developed by Social Learning theorists Bev and Etienne Wenger-Trayner (2020): the *Value Creation Framework* (VCF). I chose this model as it focuses on '*the human experience of agency and meaningfulness*'

(Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.43) through participation. The VCF provided me a structure with which to a) systematically review existing literature, b) elicit, understand and build upon the value-experiences of student-participants, and c) generate narrative data through adaptation of a common VCF story-frame tool. It has also offered a way to conceptualise and report on findings and the plausibility of iSaR activity's contributions towards student-participants' personal development, including their development of agency and self-determination.

The VCF will be discussed in more depth in later chapters, but as introduction now, the framework is formed of eight value-creation cycles of participatory experience, each representing a different kind of value: *Immediate, Potential, Applied, Realized, Enabling, Strategic, Orienting* and *Transformative*. The term 'cycles' is used to describe value evolving over time, and value is created both within and across cycles. *Within* each cycle, value is created '*progressively and iteratively over time* [...and *across* cycles, we can see] *the process over time by which these cycles lead to each other and end up making a difference*' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.76). This lends itself perfectly to my exploration into the value and impact of iSaR as experienced by student-participants.

1.7.3 Research questions

(RQ.1a) What was the value of an inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice', as perceived and experienced by participating post-secondary students who have a learning disability?

(RQ. 1b) What were the enablers and disablers of the flow of learning between and across value-cycles, experienced by participating post-secondary students who have a learning disability?

(RQ. 2a) What was the value, experienced by participating students from other post-secondary college provisions for students with learning disabilities, when the iSaR model of participatory 'voice' is replicated in a workshop format?

(RQ 2b) How has the mindset and practice of college leaders from post-secondary college provisions, participating in iSaR workshops, altered as result of their observation / experience of the iSaR model?

1.7.4 Demographical scope of study

Student participation within this study was solely restricted to learning-disabled students, aged 18-25 years old, enrolled on post-secondary college programmes, and those who met the recruitment criteria; where this was not possible, college leaders from participating provisions became participant (as explained in 1.7.6).

1.7.5 Geographical scope of study

This study centred around the location of the host college in the West Midlands region of the UK, and reached, through workshop facilitation, into North Wales - an area which is contained within the reaches of the map in Figure 4 below. The host provision, is a large, rural, specialist post-secondary provision, located in Shropshire and accommodating approximately 150 day and residential students enrolled on vocational learning programmes or Supported Internships. It has a small number of 'satellite' provisions in the area, one of which hosted one of the workshop series, featured later.

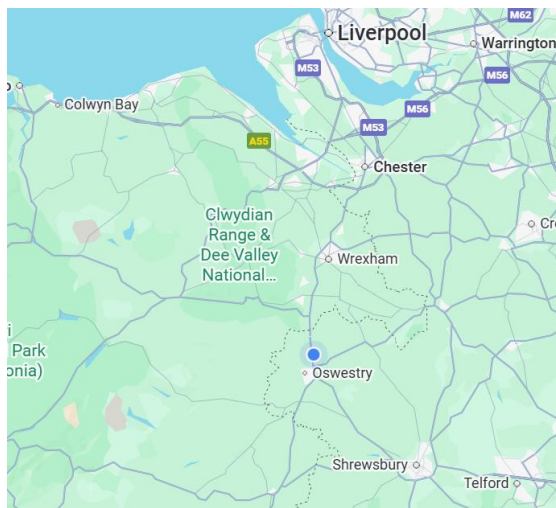


Figure 4. Geographical scope of study

1.7.6 Participants involved in the study

This doctoral study should be understood as having two parts, with the core iSaR group and its activities taking precedent, and the iSaR workshops as a secondary focus; space in this thesis has been weighted and allocated accordingly. Table 1 (below) provides an overview of student (and staff) participation throughout the

entire study and gives detail to the types of provision or programme hosting the study's fieldwork. The instances whereby only college leaders were participant, indicate where, due to their mixed abilities, the student group did not meet the criteria, but were still able to participate in the series of workshops.

Study phase	Provision	Type of provision	Context	Duration	# of participants
PRIMARY (Core iSaR group)	Host provision	Independent Specialist College (ISC)	Discrete group	2 terms (Spring and Summer 2023)	7 students
				3 terms (Autumn, Spring and Summer 2024)	3 students
SECONDARY (iSaR Workshops)	P1	Smaller satellite provision run by host college	Discrete group	4x workshops	6 students 1 college leader
	P2	Supported learning programme run by General Further Education college	Discrete group	4x workshops	8 students 1 college leader
	P3	Independent Specialist College (ISC)	Student council group	4 x workshops	1 college leader
	P4 (Host provision)	Independent Specialist College (ISC)	Student council group	8 x workshops	1 college leader

Table 1. Overview of participation in entire study

1.7.7 Methodology of study

This study developed and evaluated an 'inclusive Students as Researchers' (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice', as experienced and perceived by participating post-secondary students who had learning disabilities. To elicit the 'voice' of the core iSaR group, I utilised multi-method data collection/generation

tools to ensure the 'voice' of participants was adequately supported in articulating value-experiences and that it remained central to the formation of new knowledge. These accessible methods (detailed in Chapter 4) involved the use of photographs, Lego and tangible activities in regular (termly) individual interviews. The value of the iSaR model would only be viewed as being that which was articulated by participating students, with the intention to centre the 'voice' of student participants who have learning disabilities, and in that way, students would be 'passed the microphone' and be accepted, and applauded, as rightful collaborators in the building of the knowledge contained herein.

I analysed the above student datasets abductively, integrating the themes previously constructed within my MASR study with the inductive processes of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) and then through further integration with the established themes provided by the *Value Creation Framework* (detailed in Chapter 4). In this way, the value of participation in iSaR activity, experienced and perceived by learning-disabled students would be clearly identified. An additional story-creation activity involving photographs and tangible activities was used to generate data with participants with which to further explore the plausibility of iSaR activity's contribution to their personal development.

The rationale behind the secondary, iSaR workshop phase of this study was to explore how transferable the iSaR model was into other post-secondary provisions / programmes for learning-disabled students, with both discrete groups of learners and with mixed-ability Student Council groups. As such, I was only able to gain basic student feedback, using '*Reflections booklets*' (detailed in Chapter 4) containing accessible questionnaire questions, from two out of the

four student groups. These data were analysed using simple quantitative methods. I also collected qualitative data, in the form of *Entry/Exit questionnaires* and *Interview transcripts* (also detailed in Chapter 4) from college leaders from each participating provision to explore how / whether their mindset and practice had altered as result of their observations of iSaR practice, and to gauge the likelihood of them embedding the model into their own practice. These data were analysed using simple quantitative methods and thematic analysis.

1.8 Position statement

Although experienced in many ways, having worked with learning-disabled people for so long, I came to this study as someone new to the field of Inclusive Research; I had been learning about and immersing myself in this landscape in preparation for this study, just as my participants were expected to - in participating in it. In this way, I did not feel disconnected from participants as researcher; we were learning to research together, together; we were each in the process of becoming inclusive researchers.

At the beginning of my journey through this terrain, there was no clear pathway and certainly no guidebook, nor experienced colleagues with whom to consult, and so the situation seemed to have fitted the ideology of Social Learning (discussed in Chapter 2) very well - in that the iSaR group approached the unknown together, kept vigilantly aware of our practice, and came up with new knowledge together. This thesis was the first step in sharing this knowledge.

1.9 Conclusion

In having laid out the personal and broader context of this study, I have justified my motivations and reasons for attempting to make a difference to the future lives of CYP with learning disabilities in the way that I aspired to. Through provision of an overview of the study, I have identified how I chose to implement these intentions. My study does not attempt to claim causality, as it has no intention of measuring agency and its development (if that is even possible), but it does attempt to explore the idea that student-participant engagement in iSaR practice may plausibly *contribute* to the development of agency and self-determination.

1.10 Overview of thesis chapters

Within the next chapter I detail the two key theories guiding this study (*Social theory of learning* and *Dis/human theory*), discuss agency and how it may be operationalized, and explore how my research and iSaR model was informed by theory. In Chapter 3, I focus on the ontological construct of ‘voice’, and in particular – participatory ‘voice’. I then move to consider the epistemology of ‘voice’ and conclude with a highly focused review of literature with which to inspire development of my iSaR model. Within Chapter 4, I detail and justify my choice of research methods, used to facilitate iSaR sessions, peer research and the evaluation of the iSaR model itself. Chapters 5 and 6 chronicle the findings across the entire study, and Chapters 7 and 8 bring all the theories, ideas and findings back together in order to offer new theoretical and practical insights to a field in its infancy – inclusive participatory ‘voice’ in educational studies.

CHAPTER 2 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

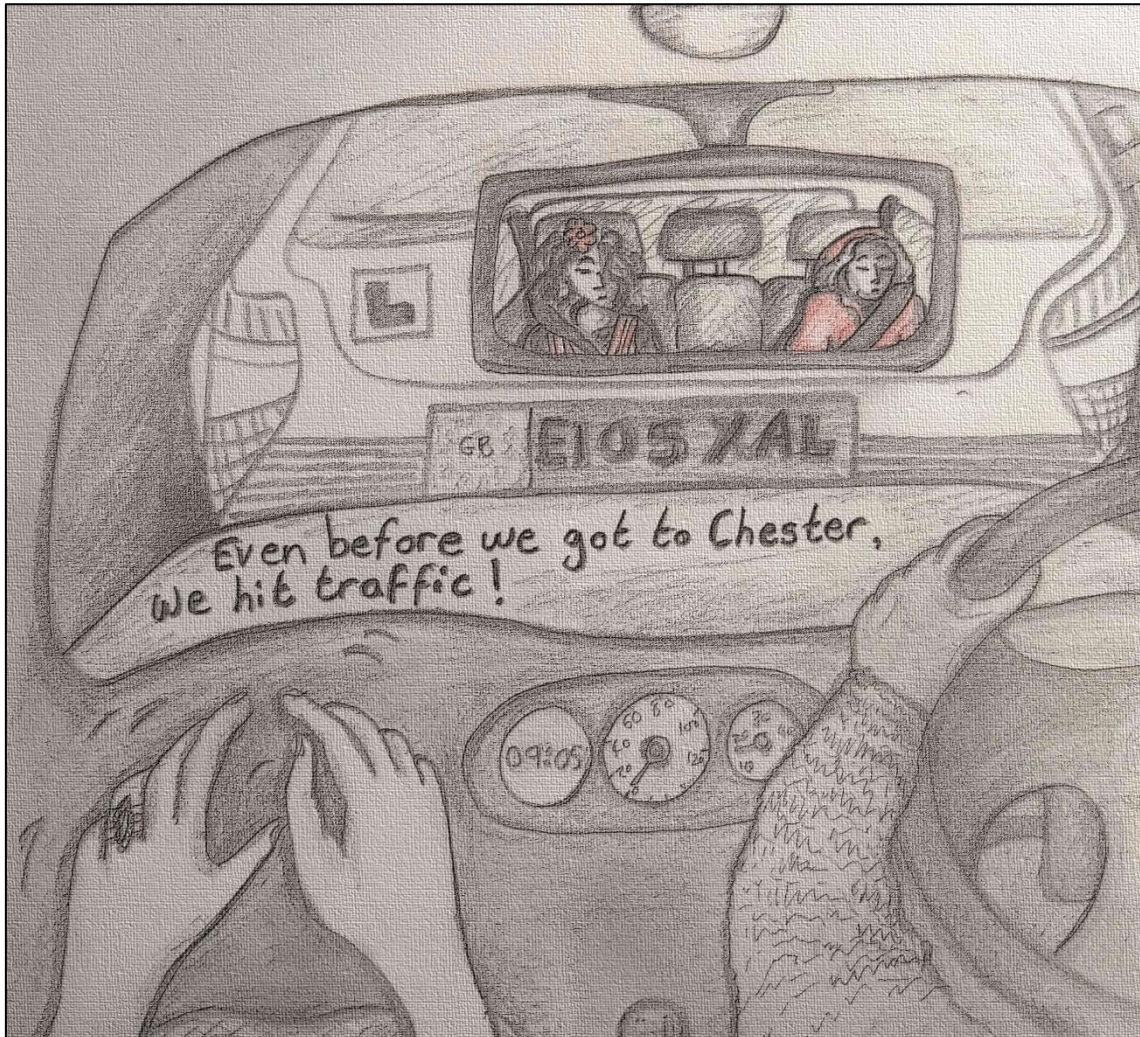


Figure 5. 'Journey to the Conference' - Part 2 – Running late

Participants wanted to travel to the conference via college car and not train, as they felt it would be more convenient – given the train station was a fair distance from the conference venue. Unfortunately, we were diverted enroute, and I had to call ahead to ask conference organisers to rearrange the order of presentations.

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore more fully the theories chosen to guide this study and will explain why it has been useful for me to focus on two theories in orienting the

study. Firstly, I have chosen to utilise aspects of the *Social theory of learning* and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2020) *Value Creation Framework* (VCF) to inform and guide my own methodological framework within this study. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the VCF has provided me a structure with which to a) systematically review existing literature in Chapter 3 (Part 3), b) elicit, understand and build upon the value-experiences of student-participants, and c) generate narrative data through adaptation of a common VCF story-writing tool. The VCF has also provided a conceptual framework through which to frame, analyse and report findings, allowing me to articulate the contribution of iSaR activity towards student-participants' personal development, including their development of agency and self-determination.

Secondly, I felt it important to embrace and position my study within Critical Disability Studies (CDS) – more specifically, the posthuman theory of disability: 'Dis/human' (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2016), located in the *Dis/ability studies* arm of CDS - as a helpful paradigmatic lens with which to explore ideas of disability, self-development and 'becoming'. Both theories support the theorizing of agency and, after first outlining the two theories, I shall discuss their theoretical interactions with regard to the notion of agency. I then focus on the definition and operationalization of agency, before bringing it all together with a discussion on the (theory-informed) development of the *inclusive Students as Researchers* (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice'.

2.2 Social theory of learning

In 1991, Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave explored the complex relationship between learning and participation seeming to occur within the apprenticeship model of learning. They conceptualized apprenticeships as a process, or vehicle, of learning which provided a refreshing alternative to popular transmission-style models of learning and developed a theory of *Legitimate peripheral participation* to articulate how participation increases over time with learning, along with identity. They proposed that learning was a process of participation, an idea Wenger returned to and further developed in 1998 with his *Social theory of learning*. This theory consisted of four interconnected components: Practice, Community, Identity and Meaning, and focused on learning as social participation (see Figure 6 below).

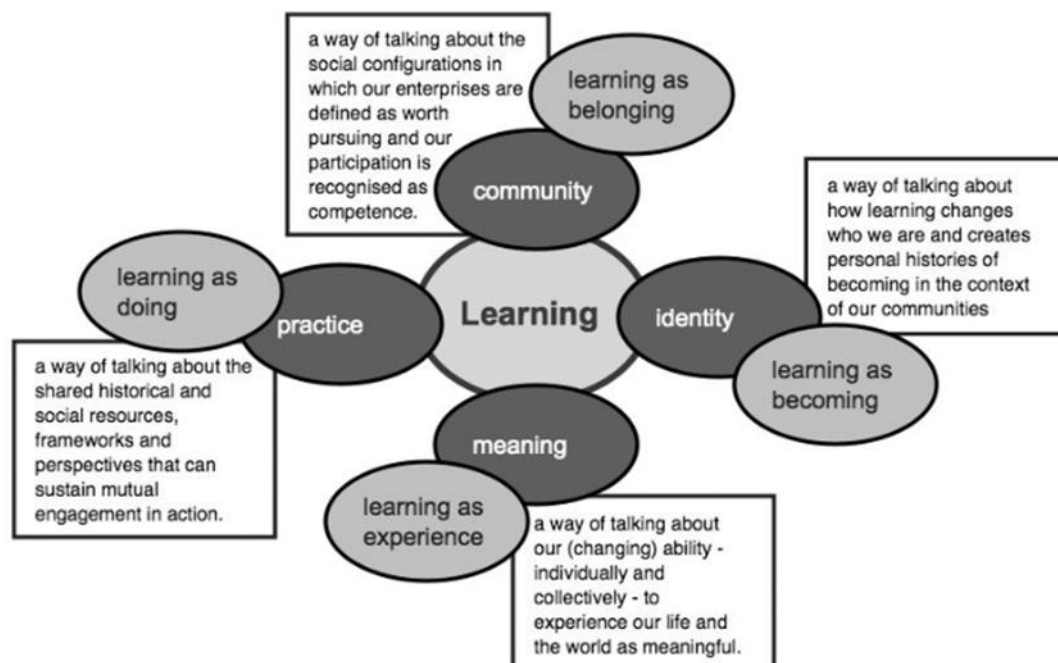


Figure 6. The four components of learning (Wenger, 1998, p.5)

I shall return to these components later in the chapter.

2.2.1 The development of the *Value Creation Framework* (VCF)

Along with introducing his Social theory of learning, Wenger's 1998 paper explored the conceptual and design considerations involved in creating learning communities, i.e. Communities of Practice (CoPs), through which to enact social learning and facilitate meaningful participation. In 2011, joined by Trayner and de Laat, Wenger devised a framework to support the evidencing of value experienced through participation, notably within CoPs: the *Value Creation Framework* (VCF).

The original framework design outlined five cycles of value which could be experienced through social participation: *Immediate*, *Potential*, *Applied*, *Realized* and *Reframing* value. In 2019, a sixth cycle of value was added by a research team featuring de Laat: *Expected* value, adapting the VCF to meet their need to capture the value of sharing aspirations during '*the first stages of community development*' (Dingyloudi, Strijbos and de Laat, 2019, p.212). This value was not taken up, and indeed, some research teams still rely on the original format, as will be shown in the next section.

An article published in 2017 outlined a seven-value VCF, with the additional two values being *Strategic value* and *Enabling* value (Wenger-Trayner *et al.*, 2017). The most current version of the VCF, and the one embraced within this study, was introduced in 2020 by Etienne and Beverley Wenger-Trayner, in their book '*Learning to Make a Difference*', with the inclusion of an eighth cycle of value: *Orienting* value. In this latest work, they also expand the concept of social participation, transcending that which is only enacted within Communities of Practice, so as to be applicable to any *Social Learning Space*. They

conceptualize a *Social Learning Space* to be any ‘*particular experience of engagement that takes place among people in pursuit of learning to make a difference.*’ (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.13), differentiating the space from that created through formal Communities of Practice.

The values of the VCF will now be briefly explained, as they currently stand, and these will be returned to in Chapter 3 with further detail. Experiences of value may flow into and/or through eight value-cycles within the VCF: *Immediate, Potential, Applied, Realized, Enabling, Strategic, Orienting* and *Transformative*. The journey of value (or learning) may take any course through a participatory experience, although value is often first experienced as *Immediate* value, through the feelings one gets by just being with others in a shared space or endeavour. These feelings, if strong enough to spark curiosity, may flow into experiences of *Potential* value, fuelling ideas and collaborative plans. If these plans get actioned, then the experience of taking part presents as *Applied* value, and the results of these collective efforts present as *Realized* value. These four value-cycles are considered key values within any participatory project, although not all participatory experiences reach a *Realized* value.

Greater participatory success may be experienced through the support gained from within the group, through facilitators or other group members, and the provision of inspiring resources or activities, and these can be seen as experiences of *Enabling* value, as they enable learning to pass into new value-cycles.

Support from outside the group, accessed through wider collaboration is viewed as *Strategic* value, which also may be experienced through sharing results with the wider community.

Experiences of *Orienting* value may occur as the group finds out about its practice landscape and begins to position itself in relation to those from different settings within the landscape, and in doing so, learn new ways of doing or being.

Transformative value is experienced through the multiple ways that learning, participation and belonging within this landscape affects one's identity. Figure 7 below illustrates the VCF using the principles of Easy-read, and I shall discuss later how this was used to engage and include student-participants in the more theoretical aspects of the study.



Figure 7. Easy-read translation of the *Value Creation Framework*. Adapted from the VCF (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020)

2.2.2 Similar studies utilizing the *Value Creation Framework* (VCF)

The *Value Creation Framework* (VCF) has been used within a diverse range of research studies, and although it has been most prominent in Education Studies (Guldborg *et al.*, 2021), other disciplines range from Agriculture (Chanyau and Rosenberg, 2024), Sport (Duarte, Culver and Paquette, 2021) and Health (Seguin, Culver and Kraft, 2023), to name a few.

The majority of studies using the VCF feature professionals as research participants, perhaps due to the VCF's historic relationship with Communities of Practice. I found only two empirical studies utilising the framework which featured students as participants: Forbes (2020) and Chandler and Perryman (2023). These studies feature undergraduate students and online learners (respectively) but they make no mention of learning disabilities, although the former does include students as young as seventeen. I have found no study utilising the VCF involving learning-disabled students, or learning-disabled participants in general; none of the studies reviewed in Chapter 3 used the *Social theory of learning* as conceptual framework or the VCF as methodological framework either.

Forbes (2020) used the VCF to elicit and articulate students' value-experiences of a novel, collaborative learning initiative within a music degree programme in Australia. They recruited ten first-year undergraduate students of Music - seven of whom were in the 17-20 age bracket. Responses from end-of-semester questionnaires (completed during sessions) were used as data, as well as attendance and assessment records from over the one-year duration of the study. Findings were analysed using NVIVO (qualitative data analysis software), and '*value indicators from the VCF were used as an a priori coding scheme*' (Forbes,

2020, p.211). Thematic analysis was then used to establish the final results, reported through each of the five cycles of value: *Immediate*, *Potential*, *Applied*, *Realized* and *Reframing* value. These values are based upon the earlier developmental stage of the VCF (Wenger, Trayner and de Laat, 2011), mentioned above, which has since been added to. The study, however, still holds some potentially useful insights for me – even though I am using a more up-to-date version of VCF: this article tracks value across value-cycles, from *Immediate* value to *Reframing* value, which is an interesting idea for comprehensive reporting, so too is their inclusion within each value cycle of both positive experiences and challenges along the way.

Chandler and Perryman (2023) examined the impact of micro-credential courses provided by The Open University, UK. They used a survey and narrative interviews to gather data from Open University learners enrolled on micro-credential courses, such as ‘Online teaching: Creating courses for adult learners’. All participants were over the age of twenty-six and, of the thirty-nine survey participants, nine went on to participate in the interview. Findings from these interviews underwent narrative analysis, and only really introduced the VCF (again, the 2011 version) within the article’s *Discussion section*, as an area to be explored further. They continue by providing an example of how they *might* have used the framework to assess value using one learner’s narrative, and so the VCF is not a major element to the study, more an after-thought – therefore not incredibly helpful to inform this study.

2.2.3 The influence of VCF on my study

My study was highly influenced by the Social theory of learning *and* the VCF. Through the conceptualization of the iSaR sessions as a Social Learning Space, I was able to take on the role as facilitator rather than teacher. This enabled a strategic move away from transmission-style teaching and learning approaches, providing the student group with the real opportunity to take more of an ownership of their learning.

The VCF offered me the perfect framework to explore, develop and evidence a breadth (and wealth) of value-experiences, as it is not just an evaluation tool – it can be used to support facilitators to build *more* value into group activities and learning experiences.

I have already detailed how I implemented the VCF in my study, and in Chapter 4, I outline how other studies using the VCF approached the writing of *Value Creation Stories*, discussing how my study has adapted such story-writing methods, through the design of a novel *Photo-based Writing Scaffold*.

I chose the VCF specifically because it provided such a clear and logical framework to capture value-experiences of participants, and these were of central importance to my study. I was also somewhat familiar with the Social theory of learning as I had begun to discuss aspects of this within my discussion of findings from my MASR study. For this doctoral study, I had explored one alternative theoretical model; I had constructed a *Theory of Change* (ToC) for my initial PhD funding proposal and although I have since continued to play with this, as I plan future iSaR model development, it remains more of a planning tool rather than

one which is able to guide and capture elicitations of value. It was also one theory too many to absorb fully into this study; the ToC is something, however, which I hope to return to in future studies, with the notion to introduce it to student-participants as a planning tool for PAR projects (see Discussion chapter).

In terms of participant demographics, and to my knowledge, this study is the only one of its kind, in its utilisation of the VCF with CYP who have learning disabilities, or indeed participants of any age who have learning disabilities.

2.3 Social model of Disability

This study centres the participation of learning-disabled students, and as I found nothing to inform my inclusion of this group of participants in research, within VCF literature, it is important to also frame it within the larger landscape of Disability Studies, of which the *Social model of Disability* appears to be synonymous (as the latter was coined by Michael Oliver - a disabled activist and lecturer, designing Master's degree modules which would now be classed as Disability Studies). Oliver (2004) cited the 1976 publication of 'The Fundamental Principles of Disability' by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) – a disability rights group, as catalyst for the emerging principles which would form the *Social Model of Disability*. The document pointed to society - not impairment, as the truly disabling factor which isolates and excludes people from participating fully in society. The *Social model of Disability* was '*not about the personal experience of impairment but the collective experience of disablement*' (Oliver, 2004, p.7)

2.3.1 Critical Disability Studies (CDS)

Academics working within *Critical* Disability Studies (CDS) acknowledge and uphold this socio-cultural understanding of disability, yet seek to *build* upon Disability Studies, reflecting '*critically on the ways in which the field might be further enhanced to support and understand the lives of all disabled people*' (Liddiard *et al.*, 2022, p.12) in a more reflexive way, which is responsive to societal change, such as technological developments.

Like Disability Studies, CDS has an established affiliation with participatory research and co-production, as it seeks to understand the lives of disabled people in a non-hierarchical and non-medicalized way. Participatory research has the '*explicit intention of subverting the traditional research dynamic, whereby the researcher is viewed as the expert and the research participant employed as a research tool rather than being meaningfully engaged in its aims and processes*' (MacLeod, 2019, p.4) and is therefore well aligned to the Social model of Disability and the affiliated '*Nothing about us without us*' disability movement (Charlton, 1998). I return to this idea of subverting research when discussing the Dis/human approach.

2.3.2 Dis/ability studies

Dis/ability studies are a further building up of theory, relating to how ideas of disability should be studied alongside ideas of ability: '*We need to recognise that being able [wrongly] equates with being a valued member of society [... and that]*

this, often, uncritical acceptance of ability – as if it were a natural part of the human condition – needs shaking up.’ (Liddiard et al., 2022, p.15).

According to Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2016), who are key theorizers in this emerging field: *‘to dis is to trouble’* (p.5), and therefore the unique needs and styles of disabled people as they enter new situations and environments should be viewed positively, celebrated even, for the way these qualities open out possibilities and offer new ways of doing, thinking and being; a disruptive force is also, by nature, a creative force.

Dis/ability studies look at the many ways in which disability disrupts assumptions... such as what it means to be human and able:

‘Dis/ability usefully disarms, disrupts and disturbs normative, taken-for-granted, deeply societally ingrained assumptions about what it means to be human and what it means to be able’ (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2016, p.6)

2.3.3 Dis/human theory

Liddiard et al. (2022) coined the term *‘Dis/human’* to represent a theoretical *‘straddling of humanism and the posthuman’* (p.22). Reflecting a posthuman viewpoint, which accepts human rights discourse whilst simultaneously expanding humanist notions of human, Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2016) rejected the humanist trope of:

‘The fully functioning person as an entity psychologised, internalised, rational, autonomous and individualised self – distinct, bounded and separated from others.’ (p.8)

They combined their efforts to *‘find new vocabularies in order to honour the humanness inherent in dis/ability alongside its disruptive potential’* (p.1) In doing so, they specifically interrogated the phenomenon of intellectual disability, as this seemed to significantly disrupt and challenge normative assumptions of what it means to be human.

Amongst this new vocabulary was the term ‘dis/autonomy’, capturing the relational qualities of what happens when disability (and specifically, *learning* disability), disrupts the normative ideal of human autonomy, and how it plays out in a *‘distributed, relational and extended manner’* (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2016, p.10). I will certainly return to this idea of *‘distributed competence’* (op cit.) in my discussion on relational agency and in the Discussion chapter.

Goodley and Runswick-Cole also explored child-development, quality of life, and citizenship as sites for potential ‘dis/ing, causing me to muse on how disability has the potential to disrupt normative ideas of *research* within my study, in my quest for accessibility and maximum engagement with learning-disabled participants; this brings the subversive mission of participatory research back into view (as previously discussed).

2.4 Theoretical interactions

Having provided an overview of both theories used to inform this study, I shall now detail the points in which I believe the two theories interact and connect. I return now to Wenger's (1998) *Social theory of learning*, and one of the four components of learning: Identity. Identity describes '*learning as becoming*' (Wenger, 1998, p.5), and as '*a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities.*' (op cit). As my study intended to explore how participation may contribute to altered (and hopefully enhanced) identities, this is an important component to explore further.

Humans are not static nor are they complete, and this idea of *becoming* is evident in Dewey's definition of learning capacity being a '*force positively present*' (Dewey, 1916/1966 in Sousanis, 2015, p.138) or an innate potential to be developed within a learner - rather than transmission-style learning, which views the learner as an empty vessel to be filled from an external source. In 'Unflattening', Sousanis (2015) illustrates this concept of learning-potential using a visual metaphor of the winged fruit of a sycamore tree, known as 'samaras', or 'helicopters' in common parlance. If we read this as learning potential or capacity, we see the idea of learning to be working with and nurturing what is already there - dormant and ready to sprout. Within this analogy, learning occurs in the optimal environment (physical and social) to encourage the emergence of potential from one's innate capacity.

But learning is also a social act, so perhaps a better metaphor for identity and *becoming* is Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of humans as rhizomes, as

'not discrete and separate individuals but involved in a constant process of becoming through connection and separation.' (Greenstein, 2016, p.31). I have therefore chosen the Dis/human paradigm as it *'views all people as incomplete and in the process of becoming, and resists the binary of dis/ability'* (Greenstein, 2016, p.17).

As the *Social theory of learning* focusses on identity, by *'[narrowing] focus on an individual person but from a social perspective'* (Wenger, 1998, p.145), we see the individual and the collective identity (and agency) at the same time. Likewise, the dis/human understanding of rhizomic interconnectedness of humans, offered by Greenstein (2016), embraces our non-binary identity as both individual and collective, becoming through *'connection and separation'* (p.31).

According to Koppers (2009) however, *'many disabled people [being a non-homogenous group] do not see themselves as part of a movement or group of movements [...] they struggle with the contradiction that pertains to all group identifications: to be oneself, singular and to be a part of a group alike'* (p.221). This viewpoint bears consideration when engaging in participatory research - as groups are constructed of individuals, some of whom may not experience or accept a group identity.

There is a wonderful quote within Dis/human literature concerning connectedness within a group:

'If humanism is built on the notion of 'I think, therefore I am', the posthuman might be coined by the phrase 'I am connected, therefore we are'

(Liddiard et al., 2022, p.21)

Within the *Social theory of learning*, group identity or identity of participation is an identity established through the '*relations of participation*' (Wenger, 1998, p.56), and in *Dis/human* discourse, our relations and connectedness mean we are '*never wholly dependent or wholly independent, but emerged in relationships of interdependency*' (Greenstein, 2016, p. 33) and '*distributed competence*' (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2016, p.10). There is so much resonance between the two theories in this respect.

Greenstein describes a '*group rhizome*' (2016, p.32) which functions through interdependency, giving an example of a group member who, not being able to communicate a preference, had their (likely) wish, of a drink of tea, advocated by an observant friend within the group. Thus, they were still participating, albeit through an advocating group member. This is a clear example of *relational agency* (Burkitt, 2015) which will be discussed in the next section.

This section has made several associative, 'rhizomic'-even connections between the *Social theory of learning*'s understanding of identity as *becoming* (individually and collectively) and a *Dis/human* paradigm, which views all people as incomplete and in the constant act of *becoming*. Combined, these two theories provide a rich understanding of *becoming*, and mapping out the relationships between the two has allowed me to clearly justify the appropriateness of this combined paradigmatic lens in relation to my chosen theoretical and methodological framework.

2.5 Agency defined

As previously stated, I shall be using Wenger-Trayner's definition of agency throughout this thesis: that agency is '*the power to make a difference*' (2020, p.5). With this in mind, I believe that, if I can support the development of agency in participating students, they may be better prepared to fight for a better quality of life for themselves (and those around them) and not accept unsatisfactory life conditions.

Agency can be conceptualised as a phenomenon which can be experienced individually, collectively and relationally. When looked at individually, agency is linked to autonomy and independence (Burkitt, 2015), and with '*intentional action, exercising choice, making a difference and monitoring effects*' (Bahou, 2012, p.237). From a Dis/human perspective, there needs to be some awareness of how disability may disrupt a solely individualised view of agency, requiring qualities of a more '*distributed, relational and extended manner*' (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2016, p.10).

Archer (2015) precariously linked individualised ideals of agency to a person's worth: '*When I am passive, I count less*' (p.329). There is a risk of such a viewpoint inspiring ableist notions that those unable to experience and wield agency at an autonomous level, are of less value, and somehow less human. So, perhaps we do need to 'dis/' the notion of passive/active participation and open it out to embrace a more collective and relational understanding, where one could, with '*distributed competence*' (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2016, p.10), experience dis/autonomy or relational agency.

If we were to look beyond even Bandura's notion of collective efficacy (2000), we would find ourselves back within the realms of the rhizome. Burkitt (2015) stated that all agency is relational, and rather than agents, people should be viewed as interactants. Khader (2008) also suggested that agency is located within relationships, coining the term '*agents-in-relation*' (p.106) as an alternative to 'agents'.

My personal thoughts are that relational agency is a useful way to conceptualise the potential for those whose communication needs are significant, to advocate for themselves through and with others. I also believe that our interdependence means that everyone acts with some sort of relational agency; nothing we do is done in isolation. I do, however, appreciate Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's thoughts on the matter: '*We find it a bit of a distraction to wonder too hard whether agency is individual or collective. It is neither and both; or it is more like a dance between the two*' (2020, p.60). And so, when I mention agency, this should also be understood to encompass notions of individual, collective *and* relational agency, as I am not sure how I would or could separate them.

2.6 Agency operationalized

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) view '*the engagement of uncertainty as a key act of agency*' (p.60), and so when attempting to operationalize agency, I have chosen to adopt an inquiry-based pedagogy, rather than the still-popular 'banking education' concept of education (Freire, 1996) which may also be conceived as a transmission-based style of teaching and

learning. The model that most aligns with the mission of operationalizing and developing agency, in my opinion, is Fielding's (2001) *Students as Researchers* (SaR) model of Student Voice.

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SaR is a student-led approach; the issues investigated by student groups using this model are *'identified by students who are trained in the skills and values of research and enquiry'* (Fielding, 2004, p.307). The resulting research is situated within the students' experiences and therefore holds more meaning for them, thus aligning with Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's assertion that *'there is no agency without the ability to claim some degree of ownership over the meaning of action'* (2020, p.61).

This is in direct contrast to the staff-led and performative nature of most common Student Voice activities, and Fielding is clear on his views of the ineffective nature of such staff-led initiatives:

'Initiatives that seek student opinion, e.g. via questionnaire or focus group, on matters identified, framed and articulated by teachers/other adults are also unlikely to go beyond the initial flush of enthusiasm.' (Fielding, 2004, p.306-7)

I have already made strong inference as to my own (equally damning) views on this same matter, with regards to Student Council activities. I agree with Fielding, in that *'transformation requires a rupture of the ordinary'* (2004, p.296), and until the spaces of 'voice' are truly shared and inhabited by both students and staff, the potential to develop a *'radical collegiality'* (Fielding, 2006, p.308) is lost:

'[...] the public arenas that exist in schools tend to be segregated into those for students, those for staff, and those designed for and by staff to talk at rather than with young people. What the dynamic of a new wave of student voice now requires is the emergence of significant occasions [...] where students and staff [...] engage as equals, as co-enquirers in and co-contributors to understanding how, as a community, it helps its members to live good lives together.' (Fielding, 2006, p.311-2)

This overlapping of social spheres (students and staff) was explored by Bahou in their 2012 study which followed seven separate SaR projects, created by Lebanese school students. Bahou proposed that the very success of SaR initiatives lies in the equal engagement of both students and staff within this shared dialogic, or 'hybrid' space:

'Identifying adult allies and audiences who will genuinely engage with young people's critiques and aspirations of schooling is crucial to nourishing student voice and agency.' (Bahou, 2012, p.247)

As this study did not involve disabled participants, it has been left out of the main literature review of this thesis, but I felt it important to include it here, as it concerns agency, student-led research and 'voice', and Bahou was attempting to do something very similar to myself. Bahou's study was designed with the intention to *'explore the processes that established and optimised the conditions for Grade 7/8 students [...] to acquire and apply research skills as instruments for activating student voice for agency'* (Bahou, 2012, p.233).

Seeking evidence of SaR's success in developing student agency, the conditions found to be most successful, centred on the careful facilitative support offered by the teacher, which '*enabled students to accept the responsibility for effecting changes themselves*' (op cit), rather than the common (found in six of the seven projects reviewed) reliance on teachers to make the changes, thereby '*reinforcing students' status as passive dependants*' (Bahou, 2012, p.242). Although this is good to know and I shall attempt to replicate such 'optimal conditions', throughout this thesis, I believe that ethical participation must be as much as possible, appropriate and desired, and if that means less impact then so be it.

In developing their sense of agency, student-researchers, such as those participating in the above, could explore alternative identities, away from being passive recipients, and perceive of themselves as in the process of *becoming* purposeful, agentic beings. Other personal skills purported by Fielding and Bragg (2003) to be developed through student participation in SaR initiatives are both abundant and meaningful. These include communication skills, planning and scheduling, analysing documents and writing for different audiences and contexts. As a student-researcher articulated:

'The development for me as an individual was huge and I do not think that mainstream education would have provided me with the opportunities and skills that Students as Researchers did.' (Harding, 2001, p.56).

The SaR model as stands, however, would require significant adaptation to be accessed by learning-disabled students. There has been no documented attempt to conduct an inclusive SaR project with students who have learning disabilities

(apart from my own), leaving a significant gap in knowledge and praxis, as may be observed within the next chapter.

2.7 Developing an iSaR model

I repeat Fielding's quote here - that '*transformation requires a rupture of the ordinary*' (2004, p.296), as hint to what was needed to develop an inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice'. Taking a Dis/human approach, I needed to interrogate the Students as Researchers (SaR) model of student 'voice', exploring which aspects or practices to hold up to the '*disruptive potential of disability*' (Liddiard *et al.*, 2022, p.22), attempting to pre-empt accessibility issues around research practices.

I wondered how disability might offer new processes to '*reshape and refashion*' (op cit.) the SaR model into a more inclusive one? New forms of practice *did* evolve and will be described in detail in later chapters, but for now I shall just highlight some key considerations, made prior to commencing the fieldwork.

2.7.1 Research training

I hypothesized that one element of SaR practice in particular- research training, would need to be significantly reworked into a more accessible and positive experience for learning-disabled participants:

'In the SAR process, students typically received some form of training from university academics in research techniques such as interviewing,

constructing questionnaires and so on, largely within a positivist framework.' (Bragg, 2007, p.349)

To this end, my MASR study (mentioned earlier) was conducted to pilot a programme of accessible, experiential research training with the learning-disabled participants of that study. One important finding from this pilot study was the participants' perception that the pace was set too fast, with too many activities crammed into the allotted time. So this was something I kept in mind when designing the schedule for the training term.

2.7.2 Initiator role

That SaR practice requires students to take on the role of initiators was another important element which I believed would need significant focus prior to commencement of the fieldwork. That '*student leadership [was] constitutive and distinctive of this [SaR] approach*' (Fielding, 2004, p.307) caused me concern. This was not because I doubted learning-disabled students' capability in leading proceedings, but because I was deeply aware of how little practice their past transmission-style, 'deposit-based' education had provided. I had noted through my two previous studies with learning-disabled students that they were not used to leading and would frequently ask me what they would be doing next; I felt that they may potentially require more time, practise and support in developing self or group-determined actions.

2.8 Conclusion

Within this chapter, I detailed the two key theories chosen to guide the study (*Social theory of learning* and *Dis/human theory*), explaining how I used them and why it was useful for me to focus on these in orienting the study. I then focused discussion on agency and how it can be operationalised, as this is the golden thread running through my work. I concluded the chapter with an exploration of my development of the iSaR model, specifically as an accessible adaptation of the established SaR model, looking at how a Dis/ability approach could be used to beneficially disrupt and adapt this model.

I shall return to these two chosen theories within my Discussion chapter, where I interpret my findings through the lens of CDS and elements of the *Social theory of learning*, utilising the theoretical structure of the VCF.

In the next chapter, I explore the phenomenon of ‘voice’ as participation, and review the existing literature featuring learning-disabled student-participants in participatory studies.

CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

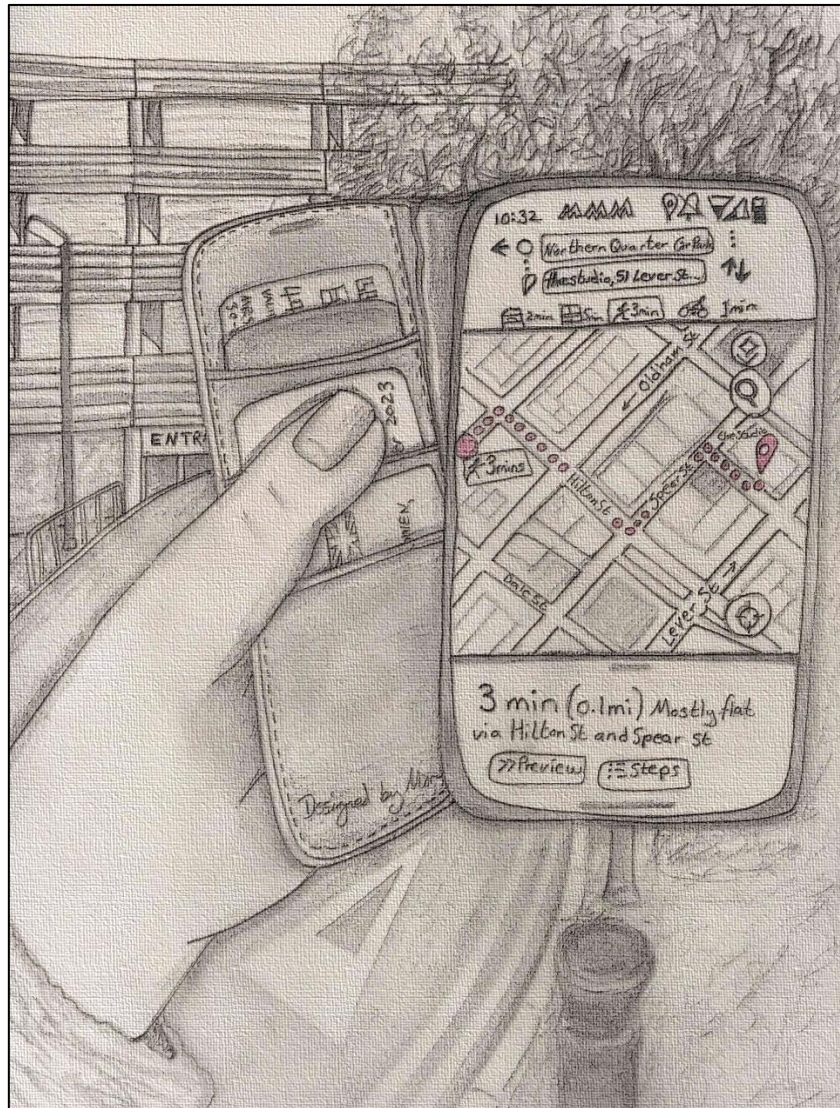


Fig 8. 'Journey to the Conference' Part 3

Manoeuvring student-participant in a manual wheelchair through Manchester, whilst Google Maps reassures us the journey will be 'mostly flat'... and that we'll still be late.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter has been organised into the following three parts:

Part 1 features an ontological analysis of ‘voice’, exploring the concept of ‘voice’ as constructed by educational institutions. The construct of ‘voice’ is then interrogated through several of its commonly assigned functions: as expression or representation of student expression; as systemic; as rights-based and as participatory. I conclude this section by outlining a novel adaptation of the VCF with which to explore the qualities of participation found within literature featuring learning-disabled student-researchers engaging in participatory studies.

Part 2 features an epistemological analysis of inclusive participatory ‘voice’ in educational research and explores the possibilities and practicalities of building knowledge around inclusive ‘voice’ through participatory studies contextualized within educational research.

Part 3 features a review of the literature found which has engaged learning-disabled student-researchers in participatory, educational research. Although this review uses a specific framework (that introduced within *Part 1*) for systematically reviewing the literature, it is a *narrative review*, as it ‘documents, analyses, and draws conclusions about what is known about a particular topic. Its purpose is to produce a position on the state of that knowledge.’ (Machi and McEvoy, 2022, p.3). This position, or thesis statement, will be articulated at the end of the chapter, after the strengths and gaps of the literature have been identified, to summarize what has been discovered and what is yet to find out. I determined to use findings from my review of this literature to inspire and refine the development

of my iSaR model of participatory 'voice', addressing gaps in knowledge and practice in the process.

The chapter has been organised in this way to follow, and justify, a trail of thought which led me away from seeing my developing iSaR model as one belonging solely to the practice of Student Voice to one which transcended this institutionally-constructed system of 'voice', embracing personal development and *participation* as its dominant motivation; I began to conceive of iSaR as a model of participatory 'voice'.

3.2 Part 1 - Ontological analysis of 'voice'

In this section, I explore and define the construct/s of 'voice' within the specific context of Education, offering four core definitions: 'voice' as *expression, or representation of student expression*; 'voice' as *systemic*; 'voice' as *rights-based*; and 'voice' as *participatory*. In this last, I explore the development of models of participation, concluding with the reworking of an existing conceptual framework: Wenger-Trayner's and Wenger-Trayner's (2020) *Value Creation Framework*. This novel adaptation, which has absorbed several aspects of existing models of participation, provided a robust, ethical and rights-based framework with which to review the selected literature in Part 3. As the focus of the resulting review was on examples of inclusive participatory 'voice' in educational research, the adapted framework has been temporarily coined the *Social Learning Model of Inclusive Participatory 'Voice' in Educational Research*. Firstly, however, it would be beneficial to explore the differences between voice and 'voice'.

3.2.1 Voice and 'voice'

Social ontology questions the *'nature of reality and how one ought to go about explaining social facts, relations and processes.'* (Tollefsen, 2014, p.85), and so, first, it feels necessary to differentiate between *voice*, the phenomenon and *'voice'*, the construct.

The functions assigned to social objects, such as voice, can be split into two groups: agentive and non-agentive. Searle (1995) described non-agentive functions to be those which are *'not imposed on objects to serve practical purposes but are assigned to naturally occurring objects and processes'* (loc 434). This definition fits voice, the phenomenon well, as voice is an instinctive, naturally-occurring process. Voice has been described as the *'meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community'* (Hadfield and Haw, 2001, p.487). The function assigned to voice here is to build social understanding by the transmission of meaning from one individual to another within a community.

Agentive functions, in contrast, are those which are purposefully constructed. *'Voice'*, the construct, has been assigned numerous and varied agentive functions; its meaning is therefore subjective and dependent on need. Given the extent of its subjectivity, Hadfield and Haw (2001) warned against loss of shared meaning around the concept of Student Voice *'as it becomes disconnected from the different theoretical sources and critical praxis from which it originated.'* (p.486) Indeed, definitions and agentive functions of *'voice'* alter dependent on

who is communicating and how they are communicating (and who is *not* communicating); who is listening and how are they listening (and who is *not* listening); and who decides who should be listened to (and not listened to). It may be best to clarify, at this stage, that when speaking of voice/ 'voice', it is not just *mouth words* to which I refer; meaning may equally be transmitted using gesture, sign language and images, even silence or non-compliance.

As an imagined concept, 'voice' is ontologically idealist; it has been intentionally constructed for the specific agentic functions required of it by organisations and institutions. The institutions relevant to 'voice' in this study are specifically educational institutions, and when 'voice' is mentioned, it is synonymous with the practice of Student Voice, 'pupil' voice or 'learner' voice. The attributive nouns: engagement, involvement, participation and inquiry have also been used, as in 'student engagement', to the same effect.

As implied by Hadfield and Haw (2001), 'voice', in education, has been assigned multiple (and variably complimentary) agentic functions, ranging from personal to political. In what follows, I shall explore 'voice' as: *expression, or representation of student expression; systemic; rights-based; and participatory*. This is not an exhaustive selection and what follows is intended to give a broad overview of educational 'voice' practice, predominantly within the context of specialist post-secondary provisions for students with learning disabilities.

3.2.2 'Voice' as expression, or representation, of student expression

Educational 'voice' practice, or Student Voice, is commonly perceived as a vehicle for eliciting student views and wishes, and for understanding student

experience (with the articulated intention to improve it); students are regularly invited, through specific 'voice' activities, to share their feelings about past or planned educational experiences. To believe that 'voice' activities can extract the authentic voice of students however would be naïve, and we are cautioned by Byrne (2017) to question '*the very possibility that language can ever accurately reflect experience*' (p.38).

Depending on the intended purpose of 'voice' activities, Student Voice may be sought in its (i) singular, (ii) plural or (iii) collective form:

(i) Every year, in England, students who are holders of Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are invited to an individual review of how this plan is meeting their needs. It is a legal requirement for each student's singular 'voice' to be sought, in the form of feedback and the sharing of their developing aspirations. As illustrated anecdotally below, I have attended such meetings in the role of personal tutor:

To support one particular (non-speaking) tutee's 'voice', I was moved to facilitate a *Talking mats*® (Murphy and Cameron, 2008) conversation beforehand, producing a report which articulated their future aspirations, so they could present their 'voice' to their parents and social worker at the review.

(ii) An example of plural 'voice' would be findings extracted from Student Perception of Course questionnaires (SPOCs). Containing the views of numerous individuals, the data produced would (most probably) be heterogenous

and therefore require collating to provide some sort of 'big picture' reflecting the views of the wider student body.

(iii) An example of 'voice' in its collective form, would be through the workings of a Student Council to deliver a message to college leaders, which would be seen as representative of the 'voice' of the wider student body (as detailed in the next section).

3.2.3 'Voice' as systemic

The most common system of educational 'voice' is the Student Council, especially within specialist post-secondary provisions. Student Councils are formed following constitutional or institutional rules and systems, whereby the student body vote to democratically agree on representatives whom they wish to speak on their behalf. A Student Council, formed of an institutionally-decided number of Student Representatives, is therefore an artificially-constructed social group which, lasting one year, is relatively short-lived. The 'voice' sought through Student Councils is mostly elicited through surveys, suggestion boxes and focus group discussion, and findings from which are conveyed back to management teams as representative of the 'voice' of the wider student body.

Due to their age and social position, the 'voice' of students, classed within this thesis dissertation as children and young people (CYP), does not hold much identity power. Identity power, according to Fricker (2007), '*depends in some significant degree upon such shared imaginative conceptions of social identity*' (p.14), i.e. stereotyping. Burroughs and Tollefsen (2016) identify the prejudicial

stereotypes concerning children involved here to be: '*irrationality, suggestibility, and unreliability*' (Burroughs and Tollefsen, 2016, p.359) and it is these perceived deficits in CYP's capability and maturity, which result in them being '*wrongfully undermined in [their] capacity as a knower*' (Fricker, 2007, p.17).

To have one's '*capacity as a knower*' (op cit.) doubted because of prejudice and a lack, or reduced level, of identity power has been coined by Fricker as '*identity-prejudicial credibility deficit*' (2007, p.28) and can be described as testimonial injustice, which is a form of epistemic injustice. According to Fricker, identity power is critical for any individual or group to be afforded with sufficient credibility to be effectively heard. A 'voice' which is only *representative* of the student body leaves much to be desired, but presenting 'voice' collectively, through a Student Council, does seem to allow students to acquire some degree of testimonial credibility and can be viewed as a way of fighting testimonial injustice and increasing identity power. As well as being made of multiple students (power in numbers), the fact that Student Councils are formed with the *specific purpose* of being listened to, could lead us to conjecture that this social entity will hold more identity power than any individual student, rendering it more likely to be heard.

As with all social groups, the Student Council is assumed to have collective intentionality, with its members sharing attitudes, actions and goals (Tollefsen, 2014). However, I would argue that the *attitudes* of Student Representatives are prescribed within their 'role description', their *actions* are directed by a staff member responsible for student 'voice', and their *goals* are influenced by management, often for the sole purpose of aligning with institutional action planning. This position is strongly argued by Bragg (2007):

‘The fact that student voice now appears to be fully compatible with government and management objectives and that senior staff are introducing it with the explicit aim of school improvement, causes disquiet, even concerns that it might be cynical and manipulative, intentionally or not masking the “real” interests of those in power.’ (p. 344)

Perhaps this systemic purpose of ‘voice’ has its place, but not in identity power discourse. The staff-led nature of Student Councils potentially negates any power ‘gains’ and may dilute or ignore the ‘voice’ that truly needs to be heard.

An additional criticism of Student Councils is that by their privileging of the collective ‘voice’, there is a danger that the singular ‘voice’ gets lost and the notion of heterogeneity is devalued or ignored. The ‘voice’ of a small group of carefully selected individuals - often the most articulate (Fielding, 2001; MacBeath *et al.*, 2003) and/or popular, can never be representative of the whole, especially where members are solely from privileged backgrounds and do not consult the wider student body. More progressive institutions would support their Student Councils to, in the least, conduct accessible peer research with the wider student body, ensuring that their ‘voice’ is more representative.

3.2.4 ‘Voice’ as rights-based

It is appropriate here to introduce the legal obligations of all educational institutions to provide opportunities for students to exercise their ‘voice’. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), (United Nations,

1989) was ratified by the United Kingdom in 1991, raising the profile of student 'voice' dramatically in its wake.

As an important aside here, children's rights are arguably not suitable within discourse around *all* students who attend specialist post-secondary provisions, as these students range from the age of sixteen to twenty-five years old, and the UNCRC was only built to protect the rights of children up to the age of nineteen. This is why I use the phrase Children and Young People (CYP), as this seems more respectful towards and inclusive of the older students, whose own rights will be discussed at the end of this section.

The principal rights, in terms of the 'voice' of Children and Young People (CYP), are contained within Article 12 of the UNCRC, giving CYP (i) the right to express their views and (ii) to have these views given due consideration *'in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.'* (United Nations, 1989)

Lying at the heart of children's right to 'voice', Article 12 has been a key influence on the behaviour of researchers, as well as educators (Rose and Shevlin, 2017), moving them to see CYP not as data points, but as participatory beings with the *'capacity as a knower'* (Fricker, 2007, p.20) and knowledge-builder.

In 2007, Lundy and an interdisciplinary team of researchers were commissioned, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), to conduct research identifying where children's rights, contained in Article 12, were falling short. Several barriers affecting its implementation were identified, under *'six core themes: implementation; family life and alternative care; education; play and leisure; health, welfare and material deprivation; and criminal*

justice and policing'. (Lundy, 2007, p.928). As well as adult participants, over one thousand CYP across Northern Ireland participated in the research. This included those children both in school and not in school, and in both mainstream schools and special schools. As well as focus groups, creative methods were used to support accessible participation for children, including *'drawing pictures, writing stories, designing posters or undertaking tasks which were appropriate to their level of understanding'* (Lundy, 2007, p.929). The study found that *'children's views were not sought or listened to or, worse, that they were afforded only minimalist, tokenistic opportunities to participate and engage with adults, was a theme which permeated all aspects of the research study'* (op cit.).

The barriers affecting the implementation of Article 12, it was found, were not created through children's inability to express themselves, but in their *perceived* lack of capacity and maturity, their *'identity-prejudicial credibility deficit'* (Fricker, 2007, p.28):

'Adult concerns tend to fall into one of three groups: scepticism about children's capacity (or a belief that they lack capacity) to have a meaningful input into decision making; a worry that giving children more control will undermine authority and destabilise the school environment; and finally, concern that compliance will require too much effort which would be better spent on education itself – (Lundy, 2007, p. 929-930).

As result, Lundy (2007) felt that there was a clear mismatch between 'voice' rights and 'voice' practice, and began raising awareness of the legal obligations contained in Article 12. She warned that phrases arising from Article 12, when

reduced to abbreviated forms, such as Student Voice, encouraged a more subjective reading, thus weakening its impact. Article 12 is a right which is not to be viewed in isolation, and to support educators and decision makers to understand the full extent of their obligation, Lundy created a new model, coined the *Lundy Model* (see Figure 9 below), which conceptualised Article 12 in conjunction with other key rights from the UNCRC.

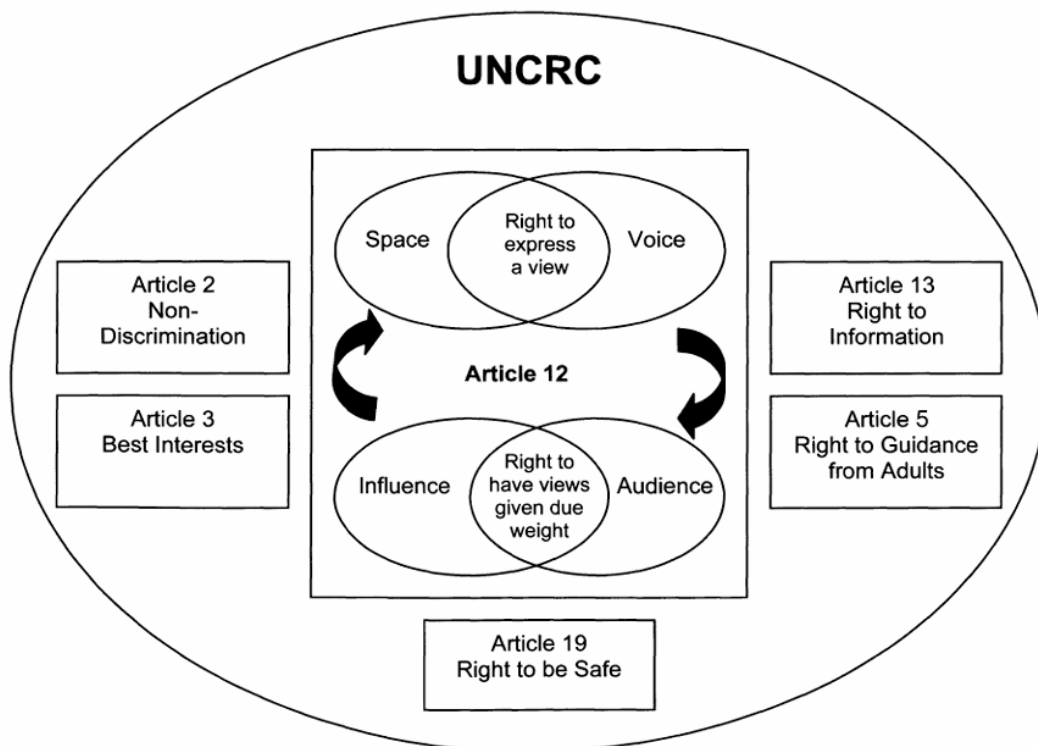


Figure 9. Conceptualisation of Article 12 (Lundy, 2007, p.932)

The Lundy model is a useful tool to measure how well CYP's rights are being met, illustrated here with some very recent findings from the '*Young Researchers Young Voices*' project, reporting that:

‘Some CYP (with additional needs) did not feel they had the language skills or confidence to ask for changes to their support. Some feared that asking for changes might harm their support’ (Barwell et al., 2025, p.2)

The CYP featured in these findings, undoubtedly experienced institutional barriers preventing their enacting of agency and ‘voice’. In this instance, it would seem that communication supports and the provision of a safe space to share views was missing (*Voice and Space*). There was also an expressed fear of agentic actions or requests being misconstrued as disruptive, a belief which could only hinder development of agency and self-determination. Thus, the above example also reveals poor practice in the remaining aspects of the Lundy model (*Influence and Audience*). I shall return to this model in section 3.2.5, when I explore the development of models of participation.

If children’s capacity as knower is brought to question, *disabled* children are at risk of having rights being ‘*doubly denied by being disabled and by being a child*’ (Goodall, 2020, p.28). On stating that only a child who is ‘*capable of forming his or her own views*’ (United Nations, Article 12, 1989) should have the right to express themselves, and that they should only be taken seriously in accordance with their ‘*age and maturity*’ (op cit) - a message which is far too open to interpretation, disabled children remain at the mercy of adult judgement, and there is a real risk of disabled children being denied their rights and experiencing epistemic injustice due to perceived incompetence.

The rights of those students attending specialist post-secondary provisions, who are over nineteen years old, are protected by Article 21 within the Convention on

the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (United Nations, 2006) which, like UNCRC's Article 13, ensures '*Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information*'. The principles featured in Article 21 seem more inclusive in its recognition of communication differences and promotion of accessible forms of communication, including sign languages, Braille and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

3.2.4.1 Implications for policy

Rights protected by such conventions as the UNCRC and CRPD should be articulated and addressed within institutional 'voice' policy and strategy, to evidence their application. In their work regarding participatory rights and models, Shier (2001) made policy suggestions for educationalists, which included questions posed to ensure the minimum legal requirements of the UNCRC were met, for example, they ask: '*Is it a policy requirement that children's views must be given due weight in decision-making?*' (p.111) More progressive policies were then encouraged by Shier, in which children were more involved in the decision-making, with questions posed such as: '*Is it a policy requirement that children should be involved in decision-making processes?*' (*op cit.*) and, to an even greater extent, "*Is it a policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?*" (*op cit.*). Shier's work will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The above UNCRC minimum requirement (that children's views must be given due weight in decision-making) can be found within the new area of Ofsted's most

recent inspection toolkit: *Inclusion*, which looks at how learner needs are identified and supported:

‘working closely and effectively with learners and apprentices, parents (where appropriate), professionals and staff, and ensuring that learners’ and apprentices’ views and aspirations are included in decision-making about the support they receive’ (Ofsted, 2025, p.10).

What is slightly concerning with regards to future institutional ‘voice’ policy is that the above is the only inference to Student Voice within the entire document, potentially leaving provisions without any fundamental incentive or strategic direction to further develop ‘voice’ policy.

It is probably appropriate therefore, at this point, to include the UK’s statutory guidance document: *SEND Code of Practice* (HM Government, 2015). This document arose from Part Three of the Children and Families Act (HM Government, 2014), which stipulated the rights to access education and health services for CYP with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) up to the increased age of twenty-five. Although the ‘voice’ aspect of the *SEND Code of Practice* guidance is mostly aimed at local authorities to ensure the involvement of CYP and their parents in service planning and review, it affects college provisions, as these are amongst the named allocated services and are required by law to facilitate the upkeep and reviews of legal, working documents like Education and Health Care Plans. This guidance requires that the views of CYP are supported and that they must take precedence over the views of parents (HM Government, 2015).

This individual ‘voice’ of CYPs is currently supported, in England, with the use of a one-page profile, as illustrated in Figure 10 below:

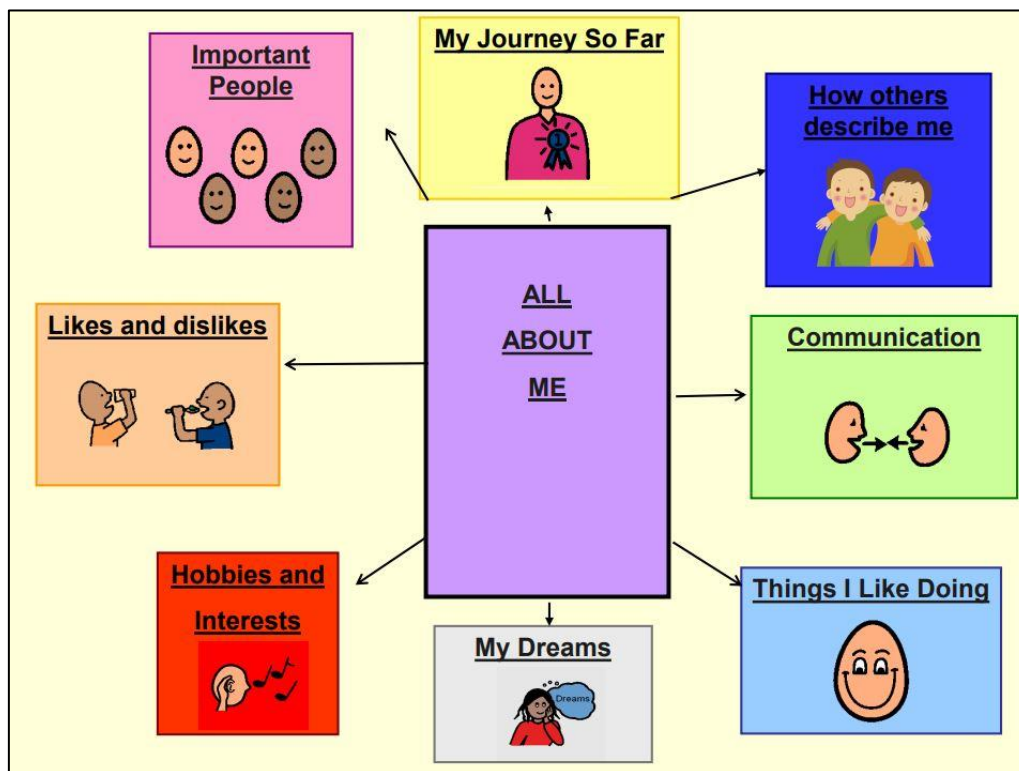


Figure 10. Example template of a one-page profile (SENDIASS, 2025, 'My Views')

The format of these profiles is not set and can involve the creation of PowerPoints or be created more tangibly using Talking Mats® (Murphy and Cameron, 2008) resources to visually support the discussion, for example, as illustrated (anecdotally) earlier in section 3.2.2. Along with the full EHCP document, these are also meant to be regularly updated, in line with annual EHCP reviews, to document the changing aspirations and preferences of the developing student. This practice certainly adheres to the maintenance of the UNCRC and Article 12.

Natspec is a membership organisation supporting over 100 specialist post-secondary colleges in the UK, by providing training, networking opportunities and

best practice guides. In *'Enhancing the learner voice'*, Natspec (2022) provide 'voice' practitioners with a *Best Practice Checker* (p.9) to support them to increase the a) *Inclusiveness* of 'voice' activities, with questions such as *'Have learners been involved in the planning [of this activity]?'*, b) *Purpose*, with questions such as *'Will all learners benefit from this activity?'*, and c) *Meaning*, with questions such as *'Will learners be supported to understand the meaning of this activity?'*. Although, these prompts do not fully commit to a student-led practice philosophy, they do provoke important critique around student participation levels in 'voice' projects. That the organisation presents a 'Learner Voice' award each year, using this checklist as criteria, provides extra incentive for membership colleges to enhance their 'voice' practice.

The host college was one such member of Natspec and has maintained a 'voice' policy for several years: *Student involvement and Learner Voice Policy*. Within this policy, the college states:

'The college aims to ensure that learner voice mechanisms are learner led, fully integrated throughout the organisation and reflective of our multi-site operation and the evolving support needs of our current and future cohorts.'

(Host college name, 2025, p.2)

There is, however, no publicly-available accompanying strategy detailing how the policy should be implemented, although the policy does state that the effectiveness and impact of policy areas, such as *'3. Ongoing development of the organisation to ensure a culture of learner led involvement'* (Host college, 2025,

p.3) are regularly monitored. I have yet to observe any evidence of further development in this area since the cessation of my PhD study's fieldwork but remain hopeful of the wider impact of iSaR workshops on the developing practice of 'voice' practitioners (RQ2b) – two of whom were from the host college and satellite provisions.

3.2.5 'Voice' as participatory

When put into practice, and to meet legal rights-based obligations, 'voice' must become synonymous with participation. Hart (1992) describes participation as *'the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives.'* (p.5) For 'voice' to be heard (and potentially acted upon), some level of participation is required, be that answering a question or collaboratively forming the right question to be asked. Some theorists see participation as a purely student pursuit, whereas others believe it should involve the collaboration of both the student and staff body (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; Fielding, 2001; Lansdown, 2018).

Several models of participation have been created (or commandeered) for the purposes of (i) evaluating the extent of participation in 'voice' initiatives and/or (ii) guiding rights-based 'voice' practice, as previously seen in Lundy's conceptual model (2007). I shall now explore the chronological development of models of participation, as I feel it is important to understand how such concepts develop over time.

3.2.5.1 Arnstein (1969)

Arnstein's focus was on *citizen* participation, and in an attempt to address and expose levels of power (or access to it) within *so-called* participatory projects, they created a typology, famously depicting a metaphoric ladder. Arnstein's ladder (1969), as it is still popularly called, had eight rungs, representing a hierarchy of participation levels -running from *Manipulation* (categorised as *Nonparticipation*) to the eighth rung labelled *Citizen Control* (categorized as *Citizen Power*), showing this latter to be the ultimate aim of participation, as illustrated in Figure 11 below:

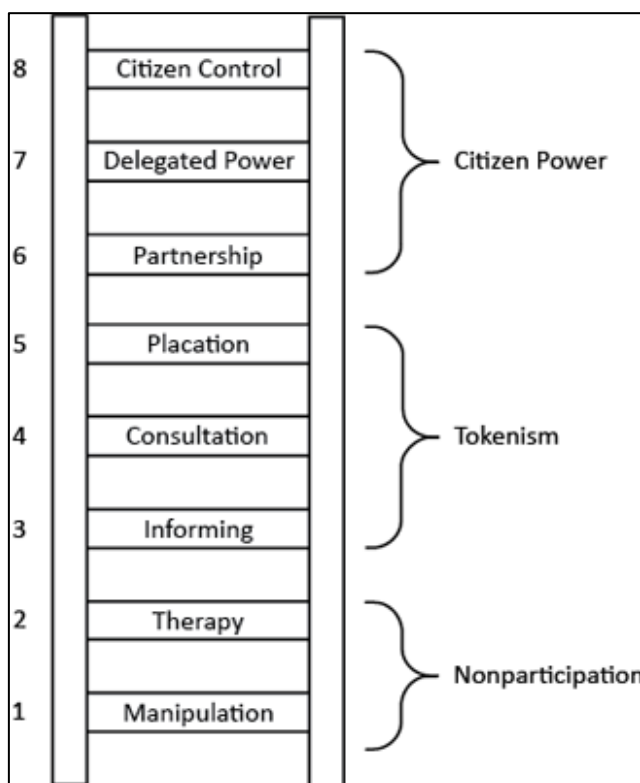


Figure 11. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

Arnstein saw participation as '*a power struggle between citizens trying to move up the ladder, and controlling organizations and institutions (intentionally or*

otherwise) limiting their ascent to the 'top', thereby barring citizens' ability to claim control or power for themselves'. (Collins and Ison, 2009, p.361)

Despite being over fifty years old, the ladder is still very much in use in wide ranging areas of practice, including education, and it is still (unimaginatively?) viewed as the *"benchmark' metaphor for describing and evaluating participatory activities'* (Collins and Ison, 2009, p.359).

3.2.5.2 Hart (1992)

With the advent of the aforementioned UNCRC (United Nations, 1989), Hart was consulted by UNICEF regarding interpretation and practical application of the rights within the convention and was commissioned to write *'a book on the subject'* (Hart, 2008, p.21). Hart took inspiration from Arnstein's ladder but constructed a schema which had at its zenith, not a powerful citizen taking control, but a child growing into an effective, *involved* citizen, sharing control with adults. The rungs on *his* ladder seem almost to be designed as a *rite of passage*, providing the child with increasing opportunities to practice citizenship:

'A nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens are involved, particularly at the community level. The confidence and competence to be involved must be gradually acquired through practice. It is for this reason that there should be gradually increasing opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy, and particularly in those nations already convinced that they are democratic.' (Hart, 1992, p.4)

Similar in many ways to Arnstein, Hart's ladder supports eight rungs, as can be seen in Figure 12 below:

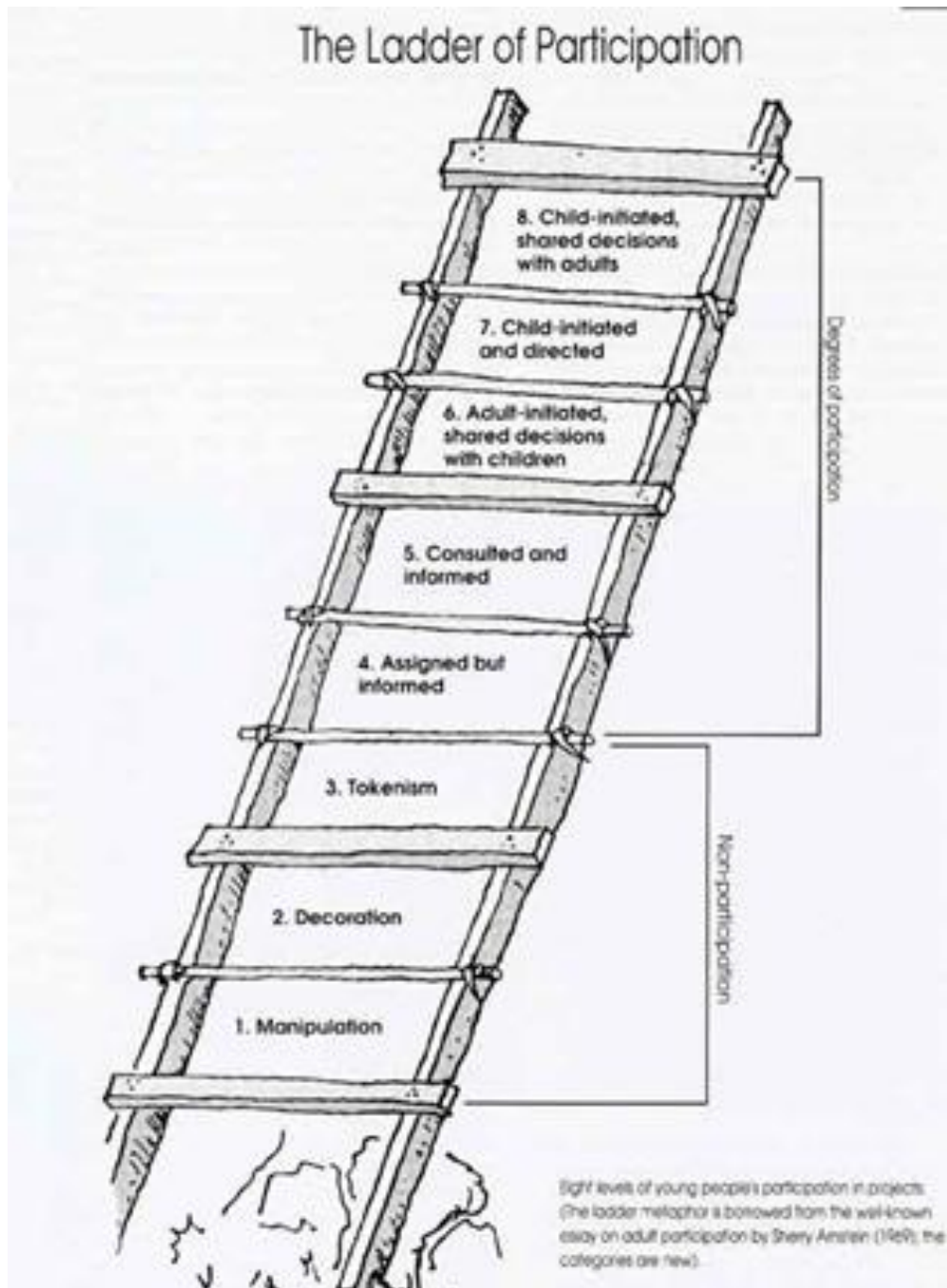


Figure 12. Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992)

The model is still commonly cited in educational discourse (Bragg, 2010; Fletcher, 2017; Flutter and Rudduck, 2004) and used, even as it is criticised as a

hierarchical model. At the time of its conception, Hart warned that *'it should not be considered as a simple measuring stick of the quality of any programme'* (Hart, 1992, p.11), assuring practitioners that *'it is not necessary that children always operate on the highest possible rungs of the ladder'* (op cit.), but rather to provide children with the choice and opportunity to participate at the highest level as fitting their motivation and ability. This notion seems to reflect my earlier assertion that ethical participation should be as much as possible, appropriate and desired.

When revisiting the model in 2008, Hart shared the belief that, although feeling the above to be true, participation levels were *not* equal: *'I think of the upper rungs of the ladder as expressions of different 'degrees' of agency or participatory engagement by young people.* (p.23). Hart also became interested in the alternative metaphors and models of participation being developed by other academics, and began to see the need for a 'measuring stick' of some sort, but one which could also be used (or created even), through participant/facilitator collaboration, to evaluate participation: *'there is clearly a need for more schemes that can help groups look systematically at their practice [and that it would be] most effective to involve children themselves in making more appropriate schemes for evaluating their participation.'* (op cit.) This is an inspiring point to which I shall return in Chapter 4 and beyond.

3.2.5.3 Shier (2001)

Inspired by the work of Hart (1992), Shier purposefully built his *Pathways to participation* model to be a tool to aid the planning of participatory projects. The

ladder was revised to resemble, as suggested by the name, a pathway, leading from (1) Children being listened to, to (5) Children sharing power and responsibility for decision-making (Shier, 2001). With this model, Shier attempted to guide practitioners through each level, using evaluative questions, such as '*Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decision-making processes?*' (p.107), as introduced in the previous section. Each 'level' contains three such questions, addressing the three '*stages of commitment*' (op cit.): openings, opportunities and obligations. The model seems to be less theoretical than Arnstein's or Hart's, offering more practical guidance; as previously discussed, it usefully indicates, for example, the point where the *minimum* obligations relating to the UNCRC would be met, as can be seen in Figure 13 below:

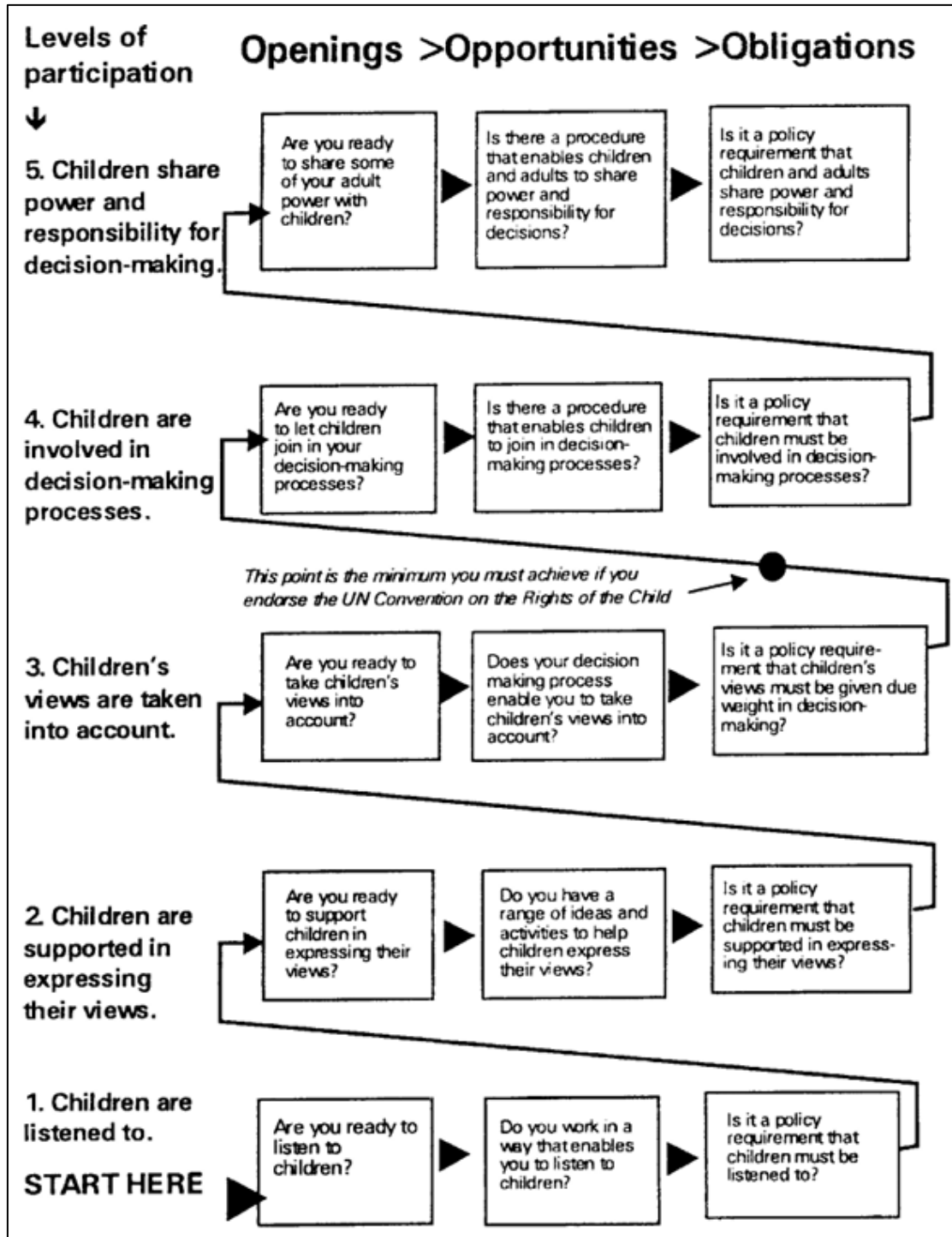


Figure 13. Shier's Pathways to participation (2001, p.111)

Shier felt it unnecessary to include a level which shows children's participation as fully independent from adults; although this is included in Hart's ladder (on the

penultimate rung), Hart, as already discussed was also not particularly attracted to this idea either.

3.2.5.4 Fielding (2001)

In the same year as Shier's model, and equally inspired by Hart's (1992) work, Fielding (2001) also created a model of participation, but this was specifically to be used within the school context. Wary of the precarious ways that Student Voice and involvement had become increasingly tokenistic and unmeaningful in practice, Fielding created a '*four-fold framework*' (2001, p.136) which outlined key features of four different modes of student involvement and gave a clear rationale for each, for the purposes of school review and improvement. Like Hart's ladder, the following modes (as seen in Figure 14 below) move incrementally through participation levels, taking the students from passive recipients to active initiators of knowledge, from *Students as data source* to *Students as Researchers*.

Levels of student (pupil) involvement in school self review & school improvement			
Students as DATA SOURCE	Students as ACTIVE RESPONDENTS	Students as CO- RESEARCHERS	Students as RESEARCHERS
(a) rationale & engagement			
Rationale Teachers need to know about students' prior learning / perceptions of their learning in order to teach effectively	Rationale Teachers need to engage students in order to fully enhance both teaching and learning	Rationale Teachers need to engage students as partners in learning in order to deepen understanding and learning	Rationale Students need to engage with their teachers and peers in order to deepen understanding and learning
What Kind of Knowledge is Used Knowing about student performance and attitudes towards learning	What Kind of Knowledge is Used Knowing how students learn	What Kind of Knowledge is Used Knowing what students might be able to contribute to deepen understanding	What Kind of Knowledge is Used Knowing what teachers and peers might be able to contribute to deepen understanding
How Teachers Engage with Students Acknowledging	How Teachers Engage with Students Hearing	How Teachers Engage with Students Listening in order to learn	How Teachers Engage with Students Listening in order to contribute
Student Role Recipients	Student Role Discussants	Student Role Co-Researchers	Student Role Initiators
How Meaning is Made Dissemination	How Meaning is Made Discussion	How Meaning is Made Dialogue (teacher led)	How Meaning is Made Dialogue (student led)

Figure 14. Rationale of four models of Student Voice through participation levels (Fielding, 2001, p.136)

Whilst conceding that '*different levels and modes will be appropriate at different times and in different contexts*' (2001, p.137), Fielding made his own view clear: that only the Students as Researchers (SaR) model was '*worthy of our energies and our support*'. (op cit.) Like Hart (1992) and Shier (2001), Fielding ensured that the pinnacle of practice was shown to necessitate collaboration between children and adults: '*Students need to engage with their teachers and peers in order to deepen understanding and learning*' (p.136). This also reflected his

interest in the development and promotion of ideas of '*radical collegiality*' (Fielding, 2006, p.308), mentioned in Chapter 2, and to be returned to in discussion at a later point.

3.2.5.5 Lundy (2007)

Lundy (introduced in the previous section) created a model of participation which conceptualised Article 12 of the UNCRC in conjunction with other key rights, for the purpose of supporting decision-makers to understand the full extent of their legal obligation, when embarking on any participatory initiative involving children.

In its layout, the model does not imply any hierarchy of its four key elements, but insists on *all* elements being covered:

'Space - Children must be given the opportunity to express a view

Voice - Children must be facilitated to express their views

Audience - The view must be listened to

Influence - The view must be acted upon, as appropriate'

(Lundy, 2007, p.933)

Lundy's model covers all levels of Shier's (2001) *Pathway to participation*, up to the point of the meeting of UNCRC obligations, but it does not prompt further voyage into the realms of decision-making and shared power. In fact, by requiring an external force (staff) to act upon their views, participating CYP would miss the opportunity to make a difference themselves and, in doing so, would lose any

experience their own agency – a point reflective of Bahou’s study into agency and participation, discussed in Chapter 2. However, this aspect was developed in Lundy’s later collaboration with Lansdown (2018) and team (including Shier).

3.2.5.6 Lansdown (2018)

Lansdown’s (2018) *Modes of Participation* focused on the participation of *adolescents* in relation to the UNCRC. The model maps participatory involvement across four stages of participation, beginning with *no participation*, and moving to recognised participation that falls within one of three, increasingly participatory options: *consultative*, *collaborative*, and *adolescent led*, as seen in Fig 15 below. Again, elevated value is shown in child/adult collaboration, with: ‘*adults serving as facilitators rather than leaders*’ (Lansdown, 2018, p.10), yet with CYP ‘*controlling the process and the outcomes*’ (op cit.), rather than collaborating, this works against the shared control reified by Hart and Fielding.

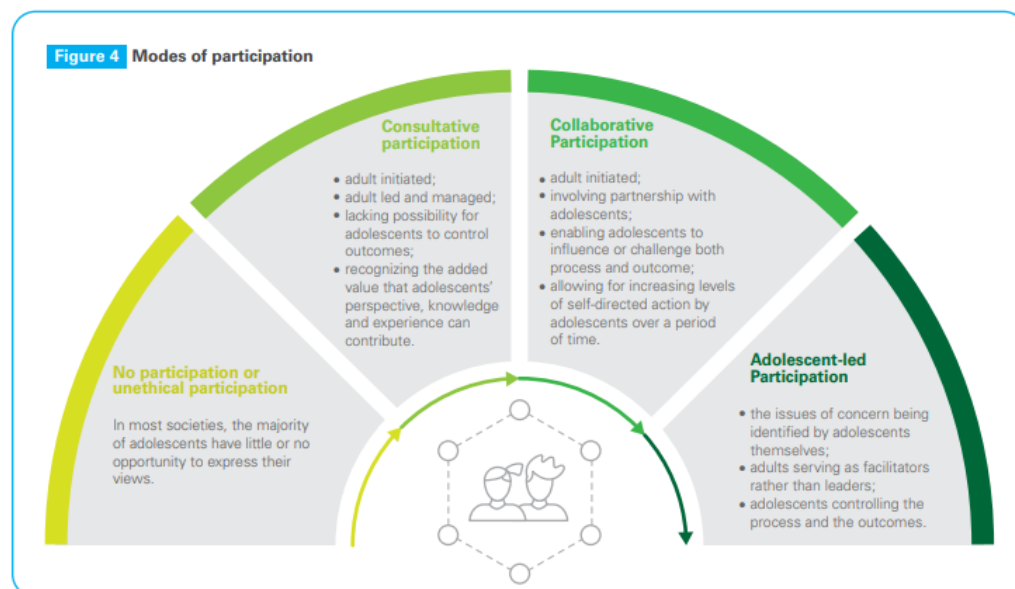


Figure 15. Lansdown’s *Modes of Participation* (2018, p.10)

3.2.5.7 Collins and Ison (2009)

Inclusion of Collins and Ison's (2009) model here – being out of chronology *and* returning to participation of *citizens* (like Arnstein), intentionally opens thoughts outwards, and into new spaces from which to reframe participation. With their model (depicted in Fig 16 below), Collins and Ison transcended the above *models of participation* to produce something responsive and so very simple. This model, as well as including (the usual) levels of *Information*, *Consultation* and *Participation*, does something new; it places *Social Learning* at its zenith. It was the sight of this model which triggered my curiosity into the extent to which the VCF was a model of participation, moving me to map out an adapted version of the framework, to meet my own needs (introduced and discussed in the next section).

The model was created in response to Collins and Ison's own criticisms of the continued (over)use of Arnstein's (1969) ladder in their field of natural resource management. They believed that it was ineffective, and even counterproductive to attempt to use power discourse or hierarchical models of participation to effectively support group participation in projects anticipating or facing complex issues. Situations where no *one* clear pathway was apparent, '*characterized by complexity, uncertainty and multiple stakeholding*' (2009, p.359) would require '*new forms of social learning for concerted action* [, being] *a process of social learning about the nature of the issue itself and how it might be progressed.*' (op cit).

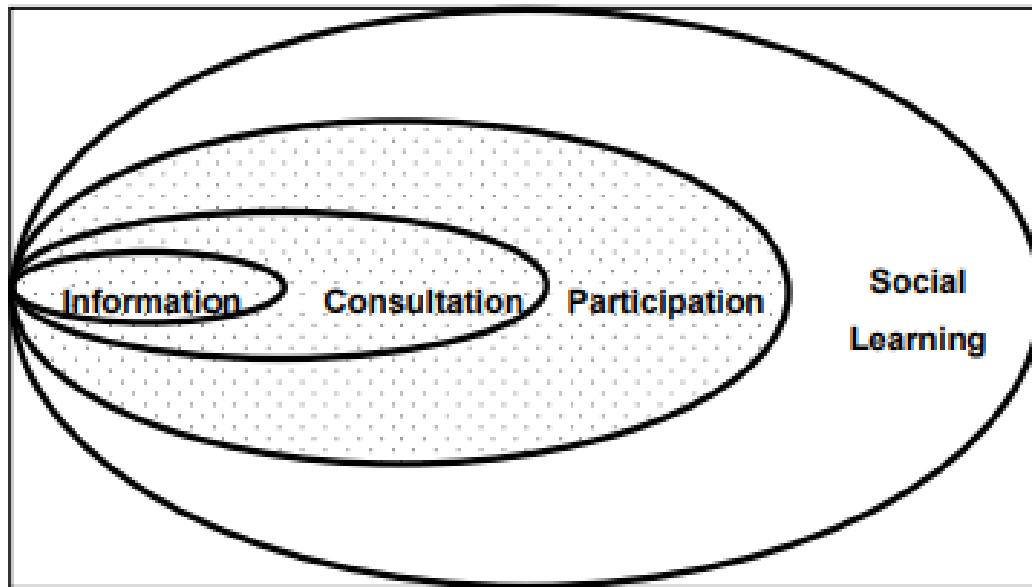


Figure 16. A conceptual framing of Social Learning (Collins and Ison, 2009, p.369)

The dotted areas in the above model indicate elements which are suited to only known and simplistic situations, and where there is already evidence-based knowledge built around the issue. The undotted area indicates issues which are situated in uncertainty and complexity (already mentioned); these issues, common in participatory ‘voice’ activity, require Social Learning to successfully confront and solve.

3.2.6 Social Learning Model of Inclusive Participatory ‘Voice’

Inspired by aspects of the above rights conventions and models of participation, and encouraged by Collins and Ison (2009) to explore combining these with Social Learning theory, I creatively reframed an existing Social Learning framework: Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner’s (2020) *Value Creation Framework* (VCF), which I have used extensively throughout my PhD study.

Through such adaptation and collation, I have mapped out a ‘*Social Learning Model of Inclusive Participatory ‘Voice’ in Educational Research*’ (as seen in Fig 17 below). Although, I can see how this model provides a novel interpretation of the VCF, I am reluctant to describe it as ‘new’, as it heavily draws on the form and contents of the original VCF framework.

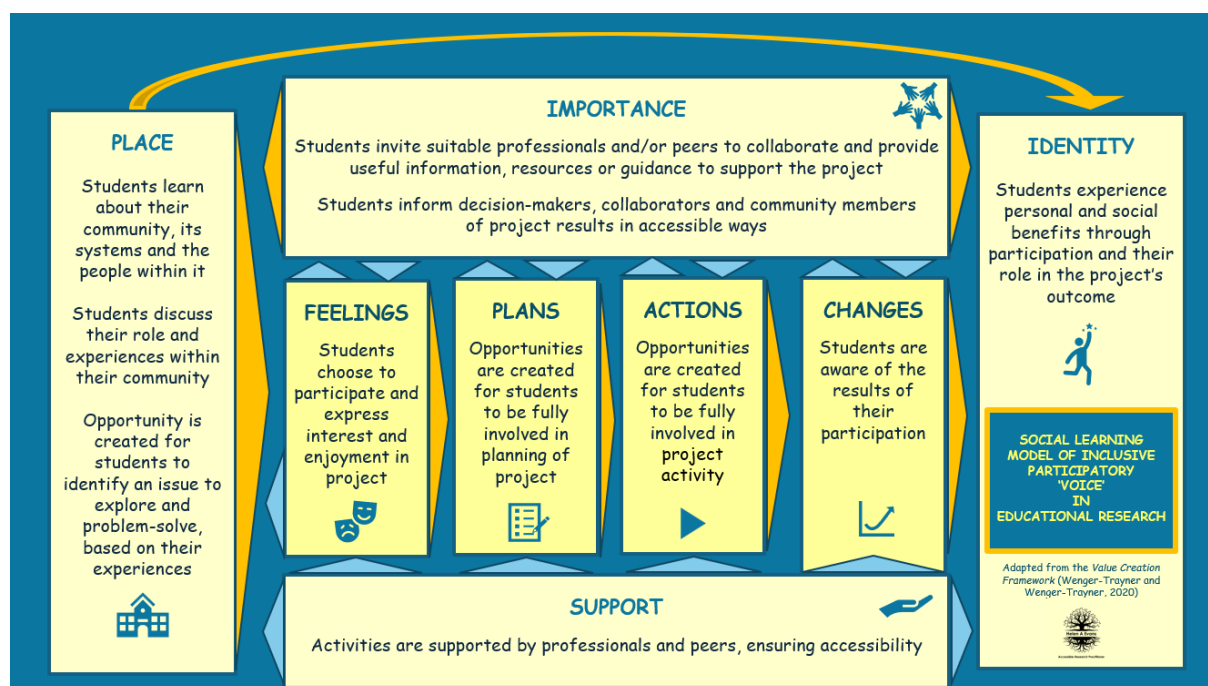


Figure 17. Social Learning Model of Inclusive Participatory ‘Voice’ in Educational Research – adapted from the *Value Creation Framework* (Wenger-Traner and Wenger-Tryner, 2020) by the author.

Utilising the form and organisational features of the VCF, this conceptual model of participatory ‘voice’ will function in what follows as an evaluative framework with which to review literature, specific to empirical studies which chose, as did I, to use participatory approaches to ‘voice’ with students who have learning disabilities. In doing so, I hope to locate examples of excellent practice of inclusive, participatory ‘voice’, evidenced using a robust, ethical and rights-based

framework. In what follows, I have borrowed some of the names of the Qualities of Participation (QoP) from the *'Talk-tiles'* work of Travis Tenneson (2025), a Social Learning leader who has adapted the VCF for undergraduate use. From here on in, I may also refer to the above model as the *QoP framework*, as it is a shorter, more accessible phrase.

I shall now introduce each QoP, describing how they correspond to the values of the VCF, through the context of participatory 'voice', and how they reflect the principles of participation and participatory rights, as previously discussed.

3.2.6.1 *Place*

This QoP takes the position of *Orienting* value in the VCF which refers to interactions both within the broader landscape (externally) and one's own landscape (internally). Through the lens of participatory 'voice', (externally) this broader landscape may involve interactions with other schools/colleges or the wider community in general, and (internally) it may involve interactions within one's own school/college group/community; there may be different contexts, experiences and histories within this group/community to explore together and learn from, through differences observed and issues shared.

Participatory research *'appeals to notions of community empowerment and of generating more valid data grounded in the lived experiences of communities'* (Southby, 2017, p.128) Therefore, participatory practice requires the focus of projects to originate from within the experience of its participants, from the 'ground up', in order to be meaningful to participants. This explains the third requirement of *Place*: *'Opportunity is created for students to identify an issue to*

explore and problem-solve, based on their experiences' (see Fig.17 above) and justifies why I chose to make this the first QoP.

Bringing in the lived experience of an issue will support the social learning process with deeper understanding of '*the nature of the issue itself*' (Collins and Ison, 2009, p.359). For participants to initiate the focus of a project is commonly seen as excellent practice in participatory studies, although it is not necessary for Inclusive Research studies, where '*the research problem must be one that is owned (not necessarily initiated) by disabled people*' (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003, p.64). I personally feel that if students are able to initiate the direction of their research, or be supported to do so, the result will be more meaningful. I do however fully concede that for some students, this level of self/group - determination is not realistic. I repeat my mantra of ethical participation here - that participation must be as much as possible, appropriate and desired.

3.2.6.2 *Feelings*

This QoP takes the position of *Immediate* value in the VCF, referring to the feelings experienced through just being with others in participation. Feelings usually include expressions of interest and enjoyment in a project; choosing to participate, and to continue to participate, are key indicators of this.

3.2.6.3 *Plans*

Potential value, depicted here as the QoP: *Plans*, denotes the curiosity, ideas and confidence that result from being and learning together. In examples of participatory 'voice', this would necessitate opportunities for participants to be involved in project decision-making processes. This requirement can be seen on

the top level of Shier's *Pathway to participation*: '*Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decision-making processes?*' (2001, p.107). As too in Hart's call for children to have more practice in democratic citizenship: '*opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy*' (Hart, 1992, p.4). It also fits with Fielding's idea of best practice, being students taking the role of '*initiators*' (Fielding, 2001, p.136). I have added the proviso 'if wished', in agreement with Hart's requirement to, in the least, provide participants with the *opportunity* to participate at the highest level, as fitting their motivation and ability. It also reflects my personal mantra regarding ethical participation.

3.2.6.4 Actions

This QoP relates to the processes involved in applying ideas in real situations and putting plans into action, hence it is positioned in place of *Applied* value in the VCF. As with, *Plans*, opportunities should be created for participants to engage as fully as possible, appropriate and desired. Both *Plans* and *Actions* would come under *Space* in Lundy's conceptual model: '*Children must be given the opportunity to express a view*' (2007, p.932).

3.2.6.5 Changes

Taking the position of *Realized* value in the VCF, *Changes* refers to not only the results of participants' actions, but the importance placed in ensuring participants are able to observe the results of their participation. If participants cannot see the result of their hard work, even if that is just knowing that their message was heard by the right people, they will be reluctant to participate in future projects or try make a difference in the future; they will not develop their agency.

3.2.6.6 Support

Support takes the position of *Enabling* value here, referring to the value gained from supportive people and activities that enhance participation. Accessible resources and activities should be co-created to ensure the accessibility of a project. Lundy addressed this in her requirement that '*Children must be facilitated to express their views*' (2007, p.932) and Lansdown stressed the importance of '*adults as facilitators rather than leaders*' (2018, p.10). There is a personal addition here that support can be given by *both* professionals and by fellow participants.

Clear dissemination of accessible activities and resources supports other researchers / practitioners working in this field, but according to the findings from a participatory research team, based in the UK, '*inclusive methods are under-reported, often consigned to supplementary material at best, or described in sparse detail*' (Fletcher-Watson *et al.*, 2025, p.3). I shall be paying attention to this element in Part 2, as I too am looking for methodological inspiration from the field.

3.2.6.7 Importance

In the VCF, *Strategic* value refers to the involvement of people from outside of the immediate group, such as decision-makers, who could help bring change through their power identity, skills, resources and/or influential contacts. It also refers to other members of the community who should be informed / consulted regarding proposed changes. This QoP has been coined *Importance*, within which, effective and participatory 'voice' practice requires strong collaboration, with participants inviting people outside of the group to share their expertise and

resources to better support the project. It also necessitates the accessible sharing of project results to inform the whole community, many of whom may have invested some effort if peer research was involved.

Although this QoP resonates with Lundy's (2007) assertion that views '*must be listened to*' (*Audience*) and that views '*must be acted upon, as appropriate*' (*Influence*), it shares more of an affinity with Fielding's view that collaboration between children and adults was the thing to aim for, in order to deepen participants '*understanding and learning*' (2007, p.136) through '*radical collegiality*' (Fielding, 2006, p.308).

3.2.6.8 Identity

This QoP could be seen as the effect of succeeding in facilitating *Place*, hence the connecting arrow (see Figure 17 above), and also as result of the entire participation process, with *all* arrows leading to *Identity* eventually. When one is immersed in a landscape, taking a lead role in processes of exploration and change from within, one's identity will naturally alter as result. Within the VCF, this position is entitled *Transformative* value, and refers to changes which result from participation - which were not perhaps specifically sought but happened nonetheless. For participants, this involves their experience of '*personal and social benefits through participation and their role in the project's outcome*' (see Figure 17). In the process of 'doing', they become the 'doer'; in the process of making a difference and witnessing the difference being made, they begin to view themselves as the change-maker. Their identity changes from the outside also, as, on *becoming* a 'doer', one is *viewed* as a 'doer' by others, and such a

perception of one's competence will naturally lead to more opportunities to be agentic and thus further develop agency.

Before continuing, and for full transparency, I feel compelled to openly explore the idea that, due to the late creation of this adapted framework with which to review the selected literature, its contents may have been unavoidably influenced by some of my PhD fieldwork and findings (although with due care not to do so).

In Part 3, selected literature, featuring empirical studies, will be reviewed using this evaluative, conceptual framework, but first, a brief look at how knowledge of inclusive participatory 'voice' has been or could be built.

3.3 Part 2 - Epistemological Analysis of Inclusive Participatory 'Voice'

Epistemology looks at how we may build upon existing knowledge or build new knowledge pertaining to a research object (Keating and della Porta, 2001). As discussed, the social object in this study is 'voice', inclusive participatory 'voice', to be specific, and so an epistemological analysis would query the possibility and the limitations of building knowledge of this object and would explore the different sources of knowledge and the types of knowledge which have been or could be built. Through these aspects, I now intend to justify the reasoning behind my decision to restrict the literature selected for review, to include only those participatory 'voice' studies which have engaged students with learning disabilities as co-researchers or researchers.

3.3.1 On possibilities of knowledge-creation

It is possible to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriacy of ‘voice’ mechanisms, such as surveys and interviews, and to do so with participants who have learning disabilities, as evidenced through my MEd and MASR dissertation studies (detailed earlier). More inclusive ‘voice’ mechanisms usually require some creative thinking, and the multi-disciplinary support of Speech and Language Therapists (SALT) or Occupational Therapists (OTs) to ensure students with significant communication challenges are included and ‘heard’. Suggestions of inclusive ‘voice’ activities within Natspec’s (2022) guidance document for ‘voice’ practitioners include Talking Mats®, photographs or creative art-based activities. These activities may need to integrate communication supports, such as alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) tools and signed/symbolled support. Anslow (2013), for example, commented on learning-disabled participants’ use of Makaton in their study, to support their responses.

It was my intention to utilise such accessible voice mechanisms, and for these to be co-developed with and evaluated by my participants, and so, in Part 3, I shall be looking for examples of inclusive participatory ‘voice’ studies which have achieved this.

Practical knowledge of inclusive participatory ‘voice’ could also be developed in ways relating to the ideal form and function of student ‘voice’ groups: Who do students want to talk to, what do they want to use their ‘voice’ to talk about and how do they want to communicate? It was my intention to focus my study, not only on the use of inclusive ‘voice’ *mechanisms*, but also on the form, function

and value of agentic, inclusive *groups* of student-researchers, and so shall be limiting the literature to examples of such groups.

3.3.2 On limitations of knowledge-creation

As discussed, the authenticity of 'voice' can never be measured, and the disconnect between what one says and what one means remains a given, no matter how articulate the speaker is. Although my recruitment criteria will ensure a certain level of communication and understanding from participants, those who they may seek to engage through peer research are likely to have more significant learning disabilities and more individualized modes of communication. I will therefore be looking for examples within the literature of accessible peer research approaches.

3.3.3 On sources and types of knowledge

The type of knowledge gained through theory alone is different from that which has been co-created with participants, through practice and lived experience. This difference was perfectly illustrated within Catala *et al.* (2021) whose paper juxtaposed the knowledges gained through autistic people's accounts of identifying as social beings alongside widely accepted, 'scientific' theories of autism, relating to the asocial nature of autistic people. In doing so, Catala *et al.* (2021) exposed an extreme disconnect between the two knowledges, and the evident privileging of this latter type of knowledge by society, due to the power identity of its source. Negative stereotypes are perpetuated by this type of

knowledge, and when people with lived experience are not consulted in a meaningful way, they are denied opportunity and testimonial credibility, suffering, as a result, from epistemic injustice. I intend to use my own study as a means to shine a light on the research capabilities and social learning capacities of students with learning disabilities, and so, the studies selected for review in Part 3 must *solely* originate from those who claim to have actively engaged the ‘voice’ and lived experience of students who have learning disabilities in a participatory manner, either as co-researchers or researchers. The opportunities to, therefore, promote epistemic justice, through building this type of knowledge should be observable in what follows.

3.4 Part 3 – Narrative review of literature

I began this search, for literature involving learning-disabled student-researchers, in 2017, when first deciding on the focus for my MEd in Special Education (Autism adults) dissertation study. The resulting *stockpile* of articles (digital and paper-based) and books has been collected over the subsequent years in a very natural way, with much use made of in-text citations and reference listings, and articles appearing on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and LinkedIn. Preparation for this chapter, and the literature found in other chapters, therefore mainly involved re/organisation of filing systems and the creation of spreadsheet matrices.

When I had decided that the focus of this chapter would solely rest on participatory studies which involved student-researchers who were learning-

disabled and still in education (any age group), I was able to select appropriate studies from my own extensive collection. On looking for further examples, I consulted the online educational database, EBSCO, using the following search terms:

Student voices in education or student perceptions or student perspectives of student voice [AND] learning disabilities or intellectual disabilities or special needs [AND] participatory action research

Of the fifteen EBSCO results, I was able to add an extra two studies to my collection.

The above search terms needed to be precise, for the specific purpose of informing the adaptation of a Students as Researchers (SaR) model of practice with a particular demographic group of people (learning-disabled students) to support the development of a new *inclusive* Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice'. In this way, the literature review, in Part 3, was instrumental in this new model's development; it allowed me to observe where the elements of good practice were and where the gaps were, to ensure my developing design was both fit for purpose and of benefit to practitioners and researchers within the field.

Literature featuring inclusive participatory 'voice' studies *outside* of education can be located within the realms of Inclusive Research, for example, in participatory studies focusing on bereavement support for people with learning disabilities (Mason-Angelow, 2017) or on the rights to, and barriers restricting, sexual citizenship experienced by learning-disabled research groups (Mannion, 2024).

The inclusion criteria for literature to be examined in this section, restricted the review to participatory studies within the field of education and involving students who have learning disabilities. Although one study proclaimed to involve learning disabled students as '*Participatory Researchers*' (Carpenter and Geier, 2025), on closer inspection, this did not turn out to be the case, although the study was fascinating and important in its own field. I have therefore not included this example, as the participants were neither co-researchers nor researchers. To clarify, the following participatory studies were exclusively those found to involve learning-disabled students as *co-researchers* or *researchers*, for reasons mentioned in the last section. There was also one illuminating magazine article from *Learning Disability Today* (Johnson, 2008) which, although featuring the first cohort of Trinity College Dublin's accredited course as they embarked on research looking at different experiences of university and interviewing undergraduates, it was, unfortunately, not sufficiently detailed to justify inclusion in the following review.

The resulting literature review featured eleven studies. These studies were critiqued in terms of their epistemological value and have been further evaluated using the afore mentioned (and discussed) conceptual framework, the *Social Learning Model of Inclusive Participatory 'Voice' in Educational Research*. The fact that there were so few examples to be found, and that those examples of inclusive participatory 'voice' have only been garnered from the last ten years of educational research is clear evidence of the historic and systemic denial of testimonial credibility of young people who have learning disabilities, and of rights being '*doubly denied by being disabled and by being a child [or young person]*'

(Goodall, 2020, p.28). These findings are certainly indicative of a society which has questioned the capacity of learning-disabled students as knowers, thinkers and *doers*. That only two studies (Goodall, 2020 and Bunn *et al*, 2017) were conducted with school-aged children gives weight to the idea that disabled *children* are being doubly denied participatory rights (see Table 2 below).

Study	Location	Student age group	Host provision/s
Bunn, Davis and Speed (2017)	UK	Pre-16	Inclusive mainstream schools (Primary + Secondary)
Edwards (2021)	UK	Post-16	Specialist FE provision
Evans (2021)	UK	Post-16	Specialist FE provision
Goodall (2020)	UK (N.Ireland)	Pre-16	Alternative Education Provision (Secondary)
Kubiak (2015)	EU (Ireland)	Post-16	Inclusive Higher Education
Kubiak <i>et al</i> (2021)	EU (Ireland)	Post-16	Inclusive Higher Education
Love and Mock (2019)	US	Post-16	Inclusive Higher Education
Rivero and Morina (2025)	EU (Spain)	Post-16	Inclusive Higher Education
Ryan <i>et al</i> (2015)	Canada	Post-16	Inclusive Higher Education
Smith Hill <i>et al</i> (2025)	US	Post-16	Inclusive Higher Education
Spassiani <i>et al</i> (2017)	EU (Ireland)	Post-16	Inclusive Higher Education

Table 2. An overview of location and student demographics of selected literature

Illustrated in the above table, seven of the eleven featured studies were conducted within the Inclusive Higher Education (IHE) institutions of Canada, US and Europe, whilst only two were conducted in UK specialist post-secondary college provisions. This brings important questions to the fore, outside the remit of this research, but still interesting to pose here:

- Are the competencies of students with learning disabilities understood better outside the UK?
- Are differences a result of differences in the academic calibre of practitioners hailing from specialist colleges (typically vocational experts by industry experience) and those within a university system (PhD candidates, doctors and professors), or are they a result of differing publication expectations, opportunities and time/resource allocation for the design, delivery and *academic* dissemination of inclusive participatory studies?

The selected studies have been mapped against the qualities of participation (QoP) in Table 3 below, in terms of how well each study meets each of the eight qualities. Of the eleven studies, only four articles featured evidence meeting all eight QoP within my conceptual model: Ryan *et al.* (2015), my own (Evans, 2021), Kubiak *et al.* (2021), and Rivero and Morina (2025) and hailing from Canada, UK, Ireland and Spain respectively. Although Ryan *et al.* (2015) only partially met the *Changes* QoP, and Rivero and Morina (2025) only partially met the *Feelings* quality, as can be seen in Table 3 below, they have still been included here.

I shall focus discussion on these four studies, in chronological order, using the eight QoP, bringing in epistemological insights, and specific elements from the other studies, which although falling slightly short on some QoP requirements, still hold much value.

Study	Qualities of Participation (QoP)							
	Place	Feelings	Plans	Actions	Changes	Support	Importance	Identity
Bunn, Davis and Speed (2017)								
Edwards (2021)								
Evans (2021)								
Goodall (2020)								
Kubiak (2015)								
Kubiak <i>et al</i> (2021)								
Love and Mock (2019)								
Rivero and Morina (2025)								
Ryan <i>et al</i> (2015)								
Smith Hill <i>et al</i> (2025)								
Spassiani <i>et al</i> (2017)								
Met well								
Partially met								
No mention made								

Table 3. Qualities of Participation (QoP) met in studies found.

3.4.1 Qualities of Participation (QoPs)

3.4.1.1 Place

As can be viewed in Table 3, *Place* was a QoP which was fully met by all but one study. This reflects the nature of participatory research, as being best when ‘grounded in the lived experiences of communities’ (Southby, 2017, p.128).

Ryan *et al.* (2015) described a fourteen-week, co-learning course on Participatory Action Research, delivered at the University of Vermont. The study featured the collaborative participation of three intellectually-disabled and seven non-disabled university students. These student-researchers self-organised into subgroups, based on their preference of research direction, and each group contained one student with intellectual disabilities. I found the facilitators’ method of supporting

the group to identify their own research foci interesting, albeit with no discernible visual support:

‘Each student received three yellow sticky notepads. On each sticky, the student was asked to put a word or a phrase that captured an area he / she would like to research related to the university experience.’ (p.73)

These ideas were then grouped into themes from which individuals in the group could vote. The chosen research themes and questions were:

‘(a) Health: How healthy is the food at University of Vermont; (b) Culture and diversity: How accepting is the UVM and (c) Culture: How does a student’s home culture differ from the university culture?’ (Ryan et al., 2015, p.73)

The QoP was very well met here, as the groups explored differences between non-disabled and disabled lived experiences of the university community, identified the issues to be researched, learning from each other through participation.

In Evans (2021), I described my participatory dissertation study which took place in a small, specialist college catering for twelve post-secondary students with learning disabilities. It featured several small-scale peer research activities, conducted by its specially formed Student Researcher Group (SRG). The group consisted of two autistic students with additional learning disabilities, aged eighteen and twenty years old. The research sought to (accessibly) address the questions found in the host provision’s Student Perception of Course (SPOC) questionnaires, such as ‘Do you feel safe at college?’ and ‘Do you know who to

talk to if you have a problem at college?’ The answering of such questions explored the SRG’s college community and its systems, and involved fellow students, from within the community. The question: ‘What would you like to change about the college?’ provided a discussion point for the SRG to explore and problem-solve shared student experience, using photography.

Although the students in the SRG began participating as co-researchers, they soon felt ready to take the lead, initiating the final research question: ‘*What should the theme of this year’s prom be?*’ (Evans, 2021, p.21) An activity which truly allowed the SRG to identify an issue they deemed most important, meeting the QoP well (internally). The research may have more fully met the external aspect of this QoP if, for example, the SRG had approached other learning-disabled students who were attending a *different* course on the adjacent, General Further Education (GFE) college site, to look more at *differences* of college experience, outside the host provision.

Kubiak *et al.* (2021) documents three separate participatory studies conducted by staff members of an (hybrid) Inclusive Higher Education (IHE) programme with students enrolled on that university programme, and taking the role of co-researchers in the studies. One of those studies was entitled: ‘*Co-Researching with University Librarians*’ and involved students actively co-researching the accessibility of university library environments and systems and sharing their valuable experiences.

The participatory project, depicted in Rivero and Morina (2025) involved seventeen student-researchers, aged between nineteen and twenty-six years

old, also enrolled on IHE programmes for students with intellectual disabilities, across three Spanish universities. Their research was fully positioned within the university communities, as it sought to use photography to understand '*the barriers and facilitators of social life inside and outside university*' (p.1). An opportunity was created for the student-researchers to identify issues and then democratically decide on the above research focus: '*Social life*' (p.5). The QoP was, therefore, well met in this study also, as it went beyond one provision and explored differences.

Although initiated by a member of secondary school staff, *Place* also featured heavily, and commendably, in Bunn *et al.* (2017) as two groups of young student-researchers, those in the final year of primary school and those in the first year of secondary school, engaged in supportive dialogue regarding the differences between experiences of the two landscapes, as they trialled a new model of transitional support.

Goodall's (2020) study also featured exploration of contrasting experiences of *Place*, as student co-researchers in the study's Children's Research Advisory Group (CRAG) shared their experiences moving from mainstream provisions to an Alternative Education Provision and discussed the supportive features of pedagogy, place and people associated with each.

Other studies utilised photography to explore different experiences of shared communities: Spassiani *et al* (2017) engaged student-researchers in a photovoice study interrogating student experiences of university, identifying their '*Likes, dislikes, supports and barriers*' (p.1); Edwards (2021) reflected on how

student-researchers were able to actively reflect and engage in dialogue on their shared community, using photography: *'I was struck by the fact that co-researchers commented on, and had insights about the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic not only on themselves, but also on others.'* (2021, p.154.); Love and Mock (2019) appreciated how photography supported the accessibility of their project for *'individuals that may require additional communication supports and modalities'* (p.43); and Smith Hill et al (2025), facilitated the creation and selection of images of student self-determination with a college environment.

Place in Edwards (2021) took on unusual meanings as result of the COVID epidemic. Their original idea of visually exploring the places of a Supported Internship Programme (SIP) through Photovoice was somewhat usurped by the shifting rules and environments of a very new landscape. Co-researchers naturally brought the pandemic into their research questions, for example: *'What do YP want their teachers to know about their experiences on a SIP during a pandemic?'* (p.2), and co-constructed themes around barriers to online learning, masks and lockdown. The author had *'identified little research into the role of video conferencing in research with and education for YP with SEND specifically.'* (p.69) and recognised the need to collaboratively explore the online environment and accessible use of video-conferencing in both research and learning.

Place featured only partially in Kubiak's (2015) paper focusing on students' experiences of the *learning systems* within an IHE programme. This paper was the only one not judged as fully meeting this QoP, as its focus was more conceptual than physical. I am aware of at least one other paper written by Kubiak (2017) which features this particular study, but I have chosen not to include this

paper for fear of repetition – as this study is also one of the three studies featured in Kubiak *et al.* (2021). I mention the paper here though as it provides more detail regarding the study's focus on '*The supportive learning environment*' (Kubiak, 2017, p.42), being the safe physical spaces and class cultures of learning which the co-researchers explored through peer research.

3.4.1.2 Feelings

This QoP, like *Place*, was at least minimally met by all studies. However, only four studies actively sought evidence of the enjoyment student-researchers found in participation.

In Ryan *et al* (2015), one student-researcher related strong feelings of pride in their participation: '*I was so proud of myself.*' (p.79), but nothing else was reported.

In Evans (2021), I obtained evidence of the SRG's perceptions and experiences of participating: '*Both SRG participants reported their enjoyment levels as being four out of five for the project overall. They enjoyed the social aspect and said that they had really enjoyed working with each other.*' (p.22). The experiences of those approached by the SRG, who participated in the peer research, was also sought and collated: '*Every one of the eight peers said they had understood and enjoyed the activities. The most popular CRM [creative research method] was the walking maps activity*', (p.19).

In Kubiak *et al* (2021), co-researchers of the featured study '*Co-researching the Learning Process*' used reflective journalling methods to express '*what they felt*

was good, what was difficult and what they'd change about a particular session and its content' (p.575). I decided to look further into this idea of journalling in preparation for my PhD study, and how it could be made more accessible for students for whom writing is tiring and difficult.

The student-researchers featured in Rivero and Morina (2025) were either not asked whether they had experienced enjoyment in participation, or the researchers just did not see it as important to report on their expressions of enjoyment or interest in the project. However, the reader is told that all participants chose to take part; the authors reported the (commendable) use of an '*easy-to-understand informed consent form*' (p.5), indicating an initial interest in participation at least, thus partially meeting this QoP. The article's inclusion of happy group photographs also suggest fun was had.

Only one other study included examples of expressions of interest or enjoyment in participation: in Edwards *et al* (2021), '*Co-researchers reported enjoying Photo-voice.*' (p.151)

As with Rivero and Morina (2025), the remaining studies did not report on participatory interest or enjoyment. All were judged to partially meet this QoP, in trust that, via mandatory ethics processes, informed consent would have been gained and indicative of participants' choice to participate, which is the other aspect of this QoP.

3.4.1.3 Plans

Levels of participant involvement in the planning stage of participatory research was variable within the selected literature.

Due to the small group nature of Ryan *et al.* (2015), student-researcher groups were able to choose their own topic (detailed in *Place*) and data collection methods:

‘Because each student chose his or her own topic and identified the various data collection methods, there was a high level of student engagement. For example, Alex was very excited about conducting interviews whereas Taylor felt more comfortable handing out surveys.’
(p.74)

What I appreciated within the reporting of this study, and what I have been encouraged by, was the honest inclusion of the idea of uncertainty and ‘messiness’ in the planning and execution of participatory research, and how, rather than dysregulating the participants, it allowed them to flourish (eventually):

‘This PAR course pushed the boundaries of undergraduate research and revealed to the co-instructors that though there were moments of confusion and messiness, there was also a growing sense of self-confidence and self-determination in all the students, particularly the students with intellectual disabilities.’ (p.79)

In Evans (2021), the SRG were involved in the trialling and revising of creative tools which they would then use during peer research activities, and they were fully involved in the planning of the final student-led research project: *‘They also*

designed and piloted the activity [to collaboratively decide on the year's prom theme] ' (p.21).

In 'Co-researching the Learning Process', (Kubiak *et al.*, 2021) participants are documented to have been involved in several planning considerations, specifically in: *'designing a consent form; designing an accessible PowerPoint of the project to present to participants; and examining the process of questioning and interviewing.'* (p.575) This is also mentioned in the other articles featuring other aspects of this study (Kubiak, 2015/2017).

Participants in Rivero and Morina (2025) were fully involved through refining research topics, and in the decision-making processes relating to dissemination of findings, as were Love and Mock (2019), Smith Hill *et al.* (2025) and Spassiani *et al* (2017): *'you make a list of factors that are important to you and related to the research questions.'* (p.7).

The two other studies, in which participants were engaged in the planning aspects, are examples of student-researchers taking a consultative role: Goodall (2020) set up and utilised a Children's Research Advisory Group (CRAG) to advise him on the best research methods to use in his research, and those participating in Edward's (2021) study were offered a choice of methods to use. The remaining study (Bunn, Davis and Speed, 2017) made no mention of participant involvement in research planning.

3.4.1.4 Actions

The extent to which student-researchers were actively involved in research activities varied, but this was the most well-met QoP with all studies fully meeting this quality (see Table 2).

Each student participating in Ryan *et al*'s (2015) study prepared consent forms for their participating peers, and '*used at least two methods to gather data [, and all students] led the data analysis of their own projects and project reports*'. (p.74).

To a lesser degree, in Evans (2021), the SRG was not only fully involved in various data collections, but they were also actively making sense of the resulting data: '*Their photographic responses were later printed out and arranged thematically by the SRG*'. (p.18).

Participants in the three featured studies within Kubiak *et al*. (2021) are recorded to be actively involved in a variety of research activity, including peer research, journaling, filming and presenting, and participation in focus groups. As note, Kubiak (2017) adds more detail regarding one of these studies, '*Co-researching the Learning Process*' and the peer research activities involved: '*Co-researchers used a visual stimulus (i.e., a drawing or concept map created by the interviewee) to elicit information from their peers*' (p.45). This use of visual interview techniques to support peer research was of particular interest to me.

Participants in Rivero and Morina (2025) co-curated an exhibition displaying the findings of their photovoice study, as did the student-researchers involved in Smith Hill *et al* (2025).

The notable actions of participants in the remaining studies involved co-leading focus groups (Bunn, Davis and Speed, 2017) and a community forum (Love and Mock, 2019), conducting and transcribing interviews (Bunn, Davis and Speed, 2017; Kubiak, 2015) , taking relevant photographs (Edwards, 2021; Spassiani *et al*; Love and Mock, 2019; Smith Hill *et al*, 2025), trialling methods and advising their suitability for future use (Goodall, 2020), and journal writing (Kubiak, 2015).

3.4.1.5 Changes

Within the selected studies, evidence of physical, practical *Changes* was limited but, in all studies, participants were able to observe at least *some* results from their efforts (I have judged these latter as partially meeting the QoP).

Ryan *et al* (2015) acknowledged that, due to the pan-university aspect of the project, it was harder for the student-participant groups to affect any concrete changes: *‘The fact that the students designed, implemented, and carried out the project without specific involvement from other UVM entities made it more difficult for meaningful action to result from any of the PAR projects’* (p.79). They did, however, leave the project with the feeling that they had furthered the understanding of others, through their comprehensive dissemination.

In Evans (2021), the SRG were able to see and experience the results of their student-led research, which sought a democratic, collaborative decision on the year’s prom theme, and they were able to put into action preparations towards a Comic-con themed prom, involving invites and poster.

Kubiak *et al.* (2021) features a section which details a focus group's exploration of the accessibility of the university library: '*Co-Researching with University Librarians*'. Although they did not instigate this study, the featured student-researcher group were able to be involved in its outputs which would directly affect change:

'The outcomes of this study are both a video—an accessible learning tool for and by students with intellectual disabilities—and a peer-reviewed journal article which offers greater staff insights into the lived experience of this student group.' (p.577)

In Rivero and Morina (2025), student-researchers were only able to make experientially informed suggestions towards the improvement of student experiences of social life and social inclusion, and through dissemination of their project reports.

Bunn, Davis and Speed's (2017) study investigated transitional supports into secondary school for SEND learners and, as a result of the study, a booklet was co-created by those in the first year of secondary school and co-evaluated by those in the final year of the primary school. The former group could therefore be witness to the effects of their research on the latter, admirably meeting this QoP. I appreciated the tangible output of this study and how the participants were not reliant on staff to make changes for them, but *with* them. This is something discussed later, and a point I took with me through my own research.

Inspired by the Community Forum, instigated by student-researchers in Love and Mock (2019), student-participants observed staff attendees' response to their

suggestions, in the subsequent creation of strategic plans addressing the group's recommendations around employment options, peer mentors and opportunities to socialize, perfectly meeting this QoP. In their caveat, the authors make a sound point regarding the timing of dissemination and the reporting of changes: *'Although all three recommendations were addressed, the planning and implementation of those changes is too early to report tangible outcomes'* (p.50). This should be kept in mind, as author of one of the papers, some of the changes arising from my study did not occur until after submission of the article.

The *Changes* evident in Edwards (2021), Smith Hill *et al* (2025) and Spassiani *et al.* (2017) were also focussed on feedback and the creation of experientially-informed suggestions, *'in the hope that future policies can be designed to make sure that they are actually meeting the needs of students with disabilities'* (Spassiani *et al.*, 2017, p.9).

Although the remaining two articles made no or minimal mention of how their study's results were observed by participating students, it can be confidently assumed that the inclusion of participants' views and suggestions in the book *'Understanding the voices and educational experiences of autistic young people'* (Goodall, 2020) would be clear indication to Goodall's participants that they had not only been listened to, but that their 'voice' had been amplified significantly through participation. Participants of Kubiak's study, being involved in the *'co-lecturing on both the Masters in Education and Professional Masters in Education programme'* (Kubiak *et al.*, 2021, p.575) would have also been aware of the effects of their participation in co-research as they were actively involved in its wider dissemination and output.

3.4.1.6 Support

In the literature, *Support* took many forms, from research training and easy-read materials to accessible research methods, and it was offered to differing degrees.

For student-researchers in Ryan *et al* (2015), *support* involved the provision of materials online, but the authors make no mention as to how accessible these materials were, or any other supportive features of the project: '*Course materials were available to students asynchronously online through the instructional web platform Blackboard*' (p.73). *Support* also involved additional facilitators to advise each of the three student research groups.

In Evans (2021), *support* aimed to aid the understanding of both the participants and those with whom they were conducting peer research, for example, during peer research activity: '*the author had to model effective communication using signing and to give prompts.*' (p.21). There was also significant adaptation of methods to increase cognitive accessibility, as in a co-created *Walking Maps* activity, where '*the act of physically walking into each space reinforced memory and provoked an emotional response, informing participants' colour choices.*' (p.16).

'*Co-Researching the Learning Process*', the main study featured in Kubiak *et al.* (2021) and also featured in Kubiak (2015/2017), details the delivery of research training over a period of eleven weeks, involving structured support to conduct peer interviews in the form of example prompting, sequential questions. Providing structure to support interviews was another aspect which I felt would be useful for the training aspect of my own study.

For student-researchers in Rivera and Morina's (2025) study, *support* involved easy-read resources, extra time to consider, and training in research and photovoice processes. The article also details careful facilitative support, which is commendable in its subtlety:

'When co- researchers proposed multiple research questions, some of which were repeated or similar, the researchers organised them by grouping the repeated ones together. Then, they handed a revised proposal to the co- researchers to validate the modifications. This approach ensured that the participants remained in control of the final decisions.' (p.5)

The use of photography and photovoice to elicit student experiences and views was very popular; it was used in six out of the eleven studies (Edwards. 2021; Evans, 2021; Rivero and Morina, 2025; Spassiani *et al*, 2017; Love and Mock, 2019; Smith Hill *et al.*, 2025). As previously mentioned, this is believed to be a more accessible '*research method solution to what many researchers cite as a significant challenge to exploring perspectives with a population of individuals that may require additional communication supports and modalities*' (Love and Mock, 2019, p.44). The method was also praised by Rivero and Morina (2025) for supporting the 'voice' of this population.

As with Ryan *et al* (2015), the study conducted by Spassiani *et al* (2017) was generously facilitated by three lecturers providing support for the twelve student-researchers: '*Each group had one lecturer in the group if any help was needed*'

(p.7). Support was also provided through practical training in the use of digital cameras within the featured Research Methods module.

In Goodall's (2020) research, it was the CRAG participants who provided *Goodall* with support and advice on his planned creative research activities, which was a refreshing twist. The methods they were trialling, however, were creative and supportively accessible, and so in this way the participants were well supported.

Due to Covid restrictions and the necessity for online participation, Edwards (2021) shared her frustrations at not being able to use many visual supports to aid communication. With her use of photovoice, however, this study is judged to have met the QoP.

Bunn, Davis and Speed (2017) did not meet the QoP, as they made no mention of accessible alterations nor supportive features, such as easy-read information sheets and consent forms.

3.4.1.7 Importance

This QoP is potentially (and ironically) the most important in terms of ensuring the success of any participatory project. It is promising therefore to see that eight studies fully met the requirements of this quality, two partially met it and only one made no mention of it.

Individual student-researcher teams, in Ryan *et al* (2015) chose different ways to engage decision-makers and the wider community. One team chose to present its project at the '*College of Education and Social Services Research Symposium*' (p.78) and another presented '*to a subgroup of the LGBTQ group on campus*'

(p.78). In addition, participating student-researchers co-authored the journal article. This last is of great interest to me, as it really does support aims of influencing positive public perceptions of learning-disabled students as agentic beings, capable of building and sharing knowledge.

In Evans (2021), the SRG chose to involve the provision's manager in a collaborative discussion around their photovoice findings, rather than a formal dissemination. The SRG were also '*excited about letting their peers know the results*' (p.21) of their final project and accessibly shared these results in the form of a poster advertising the prom (along with the winning theme).

The previously mentioned co-lecturing by participants of Kubiak's study into how students with intellectual disabilities learn best, reported as one of the three studies featured in Kubiak *et al.* (2021), also met this QoP.

Another study in Kubiak *et al.* (2021): '*Co-Researching with University Librarians*' was conducted in response to findings of low library usage amongst students enrolled on an inclusive HE programme at the university, and in attempt to increase student familiarity with library building and processes and encourage future, learning-disabled students of the featured provision to make use of the library. The research output therefore needed to be clear and accessible, and so, a video-format was chosen. The paper described an essential partnership between the student-participants and librarians to facilitate this and mentioned a collaboration with a professional videographer to enhance the quality of research output. I have been inspired by this idea of inviting collaborators into research projects who have technical, media skills, as I felt the quality of images and videos

in research outputs would somehow promote *perceptions* of quality to onlookers of the research, and encourage it to be taken more seriously.

In Rivero and Morina (2025), student-researchers decided to share the results of their photovoice project with '*university peers, professors, families and third-sector organisations*' (p.5), again through an accessible exhibition.

Like Ryan *et al* (2015), student-researchers in Spassiani *et al.* (2017) co-authored their article; they decided that it should be written in an accessible format, so it could be understood by more readers. They also decided who to invite to their presentation of findings, and the invitation list totalled seventy members of university staff.

As a goal of their project was to '*inform and educate local stakeholders of participant experiences*' (Smith Hill *et al.*, 2025), student-researchers were supported to co-curate a highly accessible, public exhibition in the university's College of Education museum space:

'Each photo description was also audio recorded. The recordings were accessible by touching buttons on tablets adjacent to each exhibit case and accompanying headphones allowed exhibit visitors the experience of hearing the photo descriptions read in the participant voices.' (p.870)

The exhibition was seen as an opportunity for participants to '*educate their community on their lived experiences in a way that is often not afforded this group of young adults.*' (p.871) The accessibility of this research dissemination is truly inspiring, and it certainly encouraged my thinking regarding ensuring that the

research outputs of the iSaR group would be accessible to their learning-disabled peers as well as college leaders.

The project within Bunn *et al.* (2017) involved several pre-organised partners including '*pupils with SEN, Special Educational Needs Coordinators, assistants and educational psychologists*' (p.232) and their findings influenced the replication of the project across the county. As the group themselves did not invite collaboration, I have (strictly) judged this project to have only partially met the QoP, but appreciate the act.

In Edwards (2021), results were solely shared amongst '*classmates and tutors*' (p.67). As collaboration did not reach beyond the research group, this was judged to only partially meet the QoP also. Goodall (2020) also reported no collaboration outside the research group and was judged accordingly.

3.4.1.8 Identity

I discussed earlier, how the development of students' skills and identity through participation in inclusive 'voice' research can have a truly transformative impact, and so it is concerning that only four studies met this QoP, and that the remaining studies made no mention of it. That is not to say that these transformations did not occur, just that it was not deemed important enough to disseminate or gain first-person perspective of. Journal word counts may also have played a role in these omissions.

In Ryan *et al* (2015), the participatory 'voice' of one participant is reported, exclaiming '*I never imagined that I could take a university course and be a*

researcher [...] We are all researchers!' (p.79). The shifting sense of identity, from student to researcher is significant here, as it was never imagined possible. In the same study, a non-disabled student-researcher participant spoke of how participation in this study increased his feelings of empathy, and how he *"worked as an equal partner" alongside his peer who had an intellectual disability and gained insights into how discrimination of the disenfranchised still exists on campus.'* (p.79), signalling an important, shifting recognition and respect of his learning-disabled co-researcher as equal. The non-disabled facilitator defined the experience of participation as *'transformational'* (op cit) for students and described *'a growing sense of self-confidence and self-determination in all the students, particularly the students with intellectual disabilities'* (p.79), but no other examples of this were offered the reader.

Through participation, members of the SRG (Evans, 2021) developed a self-awareness and an awareness of each other's developing skills and shifting identities:

'Jessica observed that Jason had become more patient [and] Jason said that Jessica had become more confident and was "good at explaining and putting up with certain people"' (p.22-23).

They also observed each other's increased levels of empathy as result of their participation: *'We're getting a bit better at understanding our friends'* (p.23).

The effect of participation on identity for learning-disabled students participating in the study 'Co-Researching the Learning Process' in Kubiak *et al.* (2021) is shared, where the developing identity is one of advocate:

“I’m a person with a mild (intellectual) disability but at the end of the day I am the only one that can say what’s inside my mind, and I can speak up for other people with disabilities”.’ (p.576)

Student-researchers in Rivero and Morina (2025) were also *observed* to have developed more self-awareness through participation: *‘They explored their skills and recognised their areas for improvement, which are essential for their personal development and identity-building’* (p.11) although this was not shared through first-person testimony, suggesting they were not asked.

No other study addressed the impact that participation had on its student-researchers, but Edwards (2021) did reflect on how *her own* identity was transformed: *‘I found that leading this project had a transformative impact on me as a professional.’* (p.155), and a co-instructor in Ryan *et al.* (2015) recalled their fluid identity: *‘We sometimes led, sometimes guided, and sometimes stayed out of the way, as students pursued their role as researchers’* (p.79). This last point, regarding the participatory experiences of facilitators, is one that I have been deliberating whether to make more of in this thesis but have resolved to stick with my determined effort to centre the ‘voice’ of participating students, and to just minimally insert facilitative perceptions when they can support the ‘voice’ of participant.

3.4.2 Strengths in literature found

The purpose of the above literature review was to inform and inspire my PhD study, which sought to develop an inclusive model of participatory ‘voice’ – iSaR,

with best practice from within the research found. In what follows, I identify and summarize many elements deemed worthy of further exploration, found within each QoP.

Place: Although it is important that the issues researched by students are well-embedded within their experiences of their school/college/university community, I felt it was excellent practice to create opportunities for student-researchers to identify the issues to explore, based on their different experiences within their communities. I was also inspired to think of how participants could be better supported to *identify* research issues from within their own experiences and resolved to design scaffolding activities to support iSaR activity.

Feelings: Kubiak *et al.*'s (2021) use of participant-journaling after each session to capture the immediate responses to and feelings towards participation was commendable, and being immediate, would not rely on participants' memory. I had used this method with the SRG in Evans (2021) in the form of '*diary sheets*' but had not reported on their use, just the data they captured. This paper inspired me to look further into the practice of journaling, in preparation for my PhD study, and how it could be made more accessible for students for whom writing is tiring and difficult.

Plans: My past study (Evans, 2021) and that of Goodall (2020) made good use of participants' judgement when planning and trialling the most effective research tools to use in research. I wished to continue to develop this strategy when conducting fieldwork.

I was also encouraged by Ryan *et al.*'s (2015) observation that high levels of participant involvement resulted in high levels of participant engagement, and their mention of the surprisingly positive influence of uncertainty and messy methods because of these high levels of participant involvement. This last was reassuring to me, as '*uncertainty provides an opening for agency*' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.57) and that was what I was hoping to achieve through high levels of participation in iSaR practice.

Actions: In three of the studies, students were actively involved in not only the data collection but also the data analysis (Evans, 2021; Kubiak, 2015; Ryan *et al*, 2015). I was motivated to ensure this happened again in my fieldwork. I also was interested in the facilitation of students conducting interviews (Bunn, Davis and Speed, 2017; Kubiak, 2015/2017) and took inspiration from the latter in my resolve to provide structured support for future peer interviews, and although I was unsure as to where to utilise the accessible features of photography in this, I felt that photographs could be effectively used to facilitate supportive interviews.

Changes: In the least, I wished my participants to be able to provide the host college with suggestions for improvements to the student experience. I found the physical output co-created by students participating in Bunn, Davis and Speed (2017) very inspiring. What was admirable was that it was *these students* who were actively making a difference through the production of this transitional resource; they were not just waiting for management to respond to suggestions in order for change to happen. I could see how this would have resulted in the development of participants' agency and thus took inspiration from the idea.

Support: Rivera and Morina's (2025) mention of easy-read documents justified my enrolment on a 10-week *Photosymbols* Easy-read course as I felt that this would be important to be able to support participants' understanding of research processes, and to enable me to support them to disseminate findings accessibly to their peers.

I also felt that Spassiani *et al* (2017) had the right idea of ensuring sufficient facilitators were available to provide (a range of) support; I therefore planned to recruit at least one other staff member to support the group in my fieldwork, whose skills complimented my own.

Importance: The literature that made use of strategic partnerships did seem to be rewarded with better results, especially those entering mutual dialogue with decision-makers (Evans, 2021; Rivero and Morina, 2025; Ryan *et al* (2015); Spassiani *et al*, 2017; Smith Hill; 2025); the effectiveness of the project in Bunn, Davis and Speed (2017) was significantly due to their engagement with decision-makers, to sign off for printing costs etc.

What I felt important to keep in mind with this QoP, was the need for the creation of public platforms to showcase the results of participation, and in doing so, influence positive public perceptions of learning-disabled students as developing beings, capable of building and sharing knowledge.

Identity: Only four papers addressed the transformative elements of participation for students. I appreciated how in Ryan *et al* (2015), facilitators were able to observe the developing identities of their participants, from student to researcher, for example, but felt that it was important to *intentionally* explore what is being

developed and how, through first-person accounts. I only touched on this in Evans (2021, but as my PhD study had a more longitudinal aspect, I hoped to be able to track and more fully articulate participants' shifting sense of identity through iSaR activity, using their own 'voice'.

3.4.3 Gaps in literature found

Within this very specific field of research, featuring only eleven papers arising within this past decade only, its literature has not had time or space to mature. It is easy to criticise with the gift of hindsight and multiple examples of exemplary practice as guide, but the authors of these papers were calling out into the void. As one of those authors, I remember how excited I was, after months of scouring the databases, to finally find the work of Kubiak (2015) and, later, when Goodall's (2020) book was published. There has since been more researchers venturing into this unmapped terrain, and hopefully this may result in the cross-pollination of ideas, necessary for the field's growth.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the gaps I have perceived, in what literature there is, have resulted from lack of space (due to journal word limits), lack of time (due to changes not occurring or being revealed prior to submission of journal articles) or lack of positive influence (due to limited examples in literature).

As I only designed the QoP framework for the purpose of this personal review, none of the authors would have been aware of the criteria they would be judged on and so were unlikely to report on QoPs with any shared sense of priority. That said, looking at the overview (Table 2), four papers managed to meet all eight

QoPs, and a further four managed to meet seven of the eight QoP, suggesting perhaps the presence of instinctive, as yet unarticulated, principles of practice.

The QoP most neglected in its reporting was *Identity*; only four papers evidenced or gave suggestion that they had *purposefully* sought and interrogated the student-researcher experience of self-development through participation. The other seven made no mention of the transformative qualities of participation. Similar could be said of the reporting of *Feelings* and student-researcher experiences of enjoyment and interest in participation. And so, ironically, the ‘voice’ of the participants, articulating their experiences of participation in studies aimed to promote ‘voice’, is rather unfortunately absent – granted for the probable reasons suggested above. It was my intention to rectify this.

3.4.4 Thesis statement

The above review illustrates the general dearth of research literature surrounding participatory ‘voice’ studies involving learning-disabled students as co-researchers or researchers. Of the minimal literature found, the only QoP to be fully met by all eleven studies was *Actions*. By centring the participatory experiences of *Actions*, the available literature is seen to identify, honour and showcase the competence and skill of students with learning disabilities, and rightly so. The reporting of learning-disabled participants’ active involvement in all aspects of research processes offers the research community, and the wider society, a glimpse of the competency of this group of CYP who have historically had their capacity as knowers, thinkers and *doers* questioned and who are rarely

afforded testimonial credibility. This should be seen as a successful *first* move for this field of research.

Research now needs to move forward and provide learning-disabled students with manifold opportunities to not only experience their own power as agentic beings, but to observe it, record it, identify with it and (hopefully) own it. As previously articulated in Chapter 1, when a person identifies as an agentic being, they are less likely to accept unsatisfactory life conditions; they believe that change *is* possible, and they believe they can do something about it. It is this reason why I feel the *Identity* QoP needs now to be prioritised, and that researchers should intentionally devise ways of overtly focusing on agency development as a valuable outcome of participation.

Once a person is aware of and confident in their own agency, they need practise 'wielding' it (with care for others) in a direction of their choosing - in a self-determined fashion. Using an analogy of a student as archer – their bow would be their agency (power), their arrow would be their self-determination (focus) and participatory research would be target-practice (choice). Thus, I needed to plan many opportunities for participants to practise initiating research focus, and directing activities in directions they found meaningful, prioritising the *Plans* QoP.

These two QoPs (*Identity* and *Plans*), being in most accordance with the fundamental aims of this research study, would be the focal point of what follows, but with careful attention paid to the other participatory qualities.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY



Figure 18. 'Journey to the Conference' - Part 4

Arriving just in time for 'The Lawnmowers' research group, coffee and cake.

4.1 Introduction

"Disabled people are experts in finding new ways to do things when the old ways don't work." (Lehrer, 2020, p.370)

4.1.1 Chapter overview

I begin this chapter with a reiteration of how the iSaR model has been developed through this study, followed by a detailed exploration into how the VCF has been used as a methodological lens to observe and understand data. In Part 1, I describe and justify my choices for the study's research philosophy, approach to theory development, methodological choices, strategy, and time horizon. Part 2 details the numerous techniques and procedures for data collection/generation, and Part 3 explains the methods used to analyse such data. I conclude, in Part 4, with a discussion on the methodological and ethical considerations which also shaped the research design.

4.1.2 Model development

In Chapter 1, I described how I used my MASR dissertation study to pilot accessible PAR training activities with a small group of learning-disabled students to inform the planning and preparation of the training aspect of iSaR activity. Through that study, I began to develop accessible, tangible research tools with which to elicit students' experiences of participation, asking the participants to evaluate them, in terms of their accessibility, enjoyability and effectiveness. Several of those participatory tools have been further developed within this doctoral study, and so the MASR study could be conceived as the first example of a group of students experiencing iSaR activity.

The form, processes and tools of iSaR, which began to be developed through my MASR study, were built upon through my review of literature featuring learning-

disabled student-participants in participatory studies, outlined in the previous chapter. The subsequent fieldwork of this doctoral study was designed with the purpose of refining the emergent model, over a period of five academic terms; the evaluation of which was sought through the ‘voice’ of student-participants and their articulations of value-experiences in iSaR participation, thus centring, trusting and honouring the testimony of learning-disabled students.

4.1.3 The *Value Creation Framework* (VCF) as methodological lens

I, personally, felt like the model had much value, which is why I was compelled to implement its development through PhD study, but I needed to go far beyond the student experience survey which asks: ‘*Did you enjoy doing this activity?*’ if the model was ever to be accepted and adopted by other ‘voice’ practitioners and researchers. Thus, the study drew heavily upon the works of Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, most notably the *Value Creation Framework* (VCF) (2020), utilising it in the development and operationalization of participant agency through collaborative, inclusive research practice. The VCF offered me the perfect methodological lens through which to explore, develop and evidence a breadth of value-experiences, as it is not just an evaluation tool – it can be used to support facilitators to build *more* value into group activities and learning experiences.

4.1.3.1 *Social learning spaces (SLS)*

The iSaR sessions of the study’s fieldwork were conceptualized as a Social Learning Space (SLS), supporting the theorizing of the concepts within the VCF outside of typical *Communities of Practice* structures of social learning. SLSs are

described by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) as '*a particular experience of engagement that takes place among people in pursuit of learning to make a difference*' (p.13). There are three fundamental characteristics which generate a SLS: '*Caring to make a difference, Engaging uncertainty and Paying attention*' (p.15). Discrete iSaR sessions which involved experiential PAR training and activity, and spanning a finite number of academic terms, were therefore perfectly placed within this definition.

4.1.3.2 Evidencing value-experiences

Data were sought and generated to evidence value-experiences of the iSaR model predominantly through the testimony of student-participants who had learning disabilities. It is not uncommon for researchers seeking to involve this population to cite the process as one of '*significant challenge*' (Love and Mock, 2019, p.44), especially when such expressions of perspectives are required. Somewhat dated now, Booth and Booth (1996) listed these challenges as '*inarticulateness, unresponsiveness, a concrete frame of reference and problems with time*' (p.55). Although one would hope these are no longer viewed as reasons not to engage learning-disabled participants in qualitative or participatory research, the minimal search results of such studies – albeit within education studies, revealed in Part 3 of the previous chapter, suggest a disturbing truth that these assumptions are still very much in existence. Within this chapter, I attempt to clearly describe and illustrate the accessible research methods and tools which I creatively adapted to support students in their expressions of experience, and even in their evaluations of these experiences, through supported utilization of the VCF.

As previously outlined, the current version of the VCF articulates eight value cycles: *Immediate, Potential, Applied, Realized, Enabling, Strategic, Orienting* and *Transformative*. These will be more fully described in Chapter 5, but a visual overview / recap may be helpful at this point (see Figure 19 below):



Figure 19. Easy read translation of the *Value Creation Framework* (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020)

The similarity between the above VCF and the ‘*Social Learning Model of Inclusive Participatory ‘Voice’ in Educational Research*’ or ‘*QoP framework*’, featured in Chapter 3, may be noted. The above figure is an Easy-read translation of the VCF, whereas the QoP framework is a contextualized re-working of the VCF.

4.1.3.3 Types of data

According to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, ‘*data relevant to evaluating social learning usually come from multiple sources and in multiple forms*’ (2020, p.239) with the VCF providing a means of integrating all data to form a rich and

detailed picture of the value created. These data can be viewed as being either '*effect data*' or '*contribution data*', with both supporting and corroborating each other. Data evidencing the achievement of any positive or negative experience *within* any of the above value-cycles, within a social learning space, is called '*effect data*' (p.190) whilst the '*role of that social learning space in achieving a given effect*' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.190) is established through the participant testimonials of '*contribution data*'.

Although *effect data* can be qualitative in nature, it is often quantitative and may already be in existence. As example, Forbes (2020) utilised documents such as attendance and assessment records as effect data in their study on the value of collaborative learning within music degrees, featured in Chapter 2. Attendance records could be effectively used to evidence experiences of *Immediate* value, as strong attendance data may indicate that participants are experiencing positive feelings when attending sessions, leading them to continued attendance. This claim, however, is mere speculation without the integration of participant testimony, or '*contribution data*' (ibid). It is called *contribution data* rather than *attribution data*, as causal factors are not sought as proof, rather, they are seen as factors which may have contributed to experiences of value. *Contribution data* may be most effectively created through the writing of *Value Creation Stories*, to be discussed later in this chapter, and illustrated in response to RQ.1b in Chapter 5. It is, however, the combination of both types of data which best evidences whether interventions have contributed to the full difference that was made.

4.1.3.4 Types of data collected / generated within this study

Within this study, and relating to the core iSaR student group, quantitative effect data solely consisted of *attendance records* and *Battery-level sheets*, as no other documents (formal or informal) were used to evidence value, nor were there any assessments conducted to capture learning or personal development. Effect data relating to student-participant value-experiences of iSaR *workshops* utilized a simple, (mostly) quantitative Likert scale and short, textual responses to closed and open-ended questions.

Participant testimonies were analysed as both effect data (through interviews and evidence of specific value indicators found within) and contribution data (through the construction of *Value Creation Stories*). Value Creation Stories were specifically helpful to analyse the movement of learning through value-cycles, and to isolate the factors creating flows and blockages within the journey of value.

I chose to focus on just one participant's Value Creation Story to answer RQ1b (*What were the enablers and disablers of the flow of learning between and across value-cycles, experienced by participating post-secondary students who have a learning disability?*) and decided to analyse the remaining stories alongside student datasets, treating them as effect data.

It was hoped that the combination of both types of data would best evidence whether iSaR activity contributed to student-participants' development of agency and self-determination, which was the key difference I cared to make through this study.

4.2 Part 1 - Research design

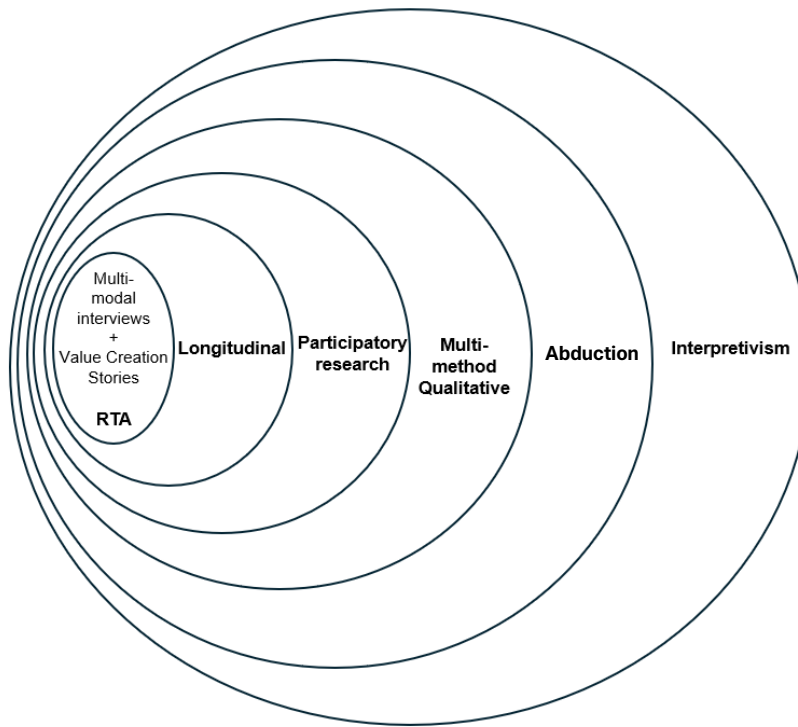


Figure 20. Diagram, based on Saunders *et al.* (2019) The 'research onion'.

In this section of the chapter, I look at each layer of the above '*research onion*' (Saunders *et al.*, 2019, p.130), explaining the study's research philosophy, approach to theory development, methodological choices, strategy and time horizon. Techniques and procedures are detailed in Parts 2 and 3. To enable the flow of what follows, however, I shall first reiterate the research questions.

4.2.1 Research questions

My primary research objective was to gauge the value of the iSaR model for participating students, and so I asked:

(RQ.1a) What was the value of an Inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice', as perceived and experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?

To explore the factors which got in the way of participation, and those which supported it, as perceived by participants, I also asked:

(RQ. 1b) What were the enablers and disablers of the flow of value between and across value-cycles, experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?

My secondary research objective was to gauge the value of the iSaR model experienced by students attending different specialist postsecondary provisions, and in a workshop format, and so I asked:

(RQ. 2a) What was the value, experienced by participating students from other postsecondary college provisions for students with learning disabilities, when the iSaR model of participatory 'voice' is replicated in a workshop format?

To explore if/how the iSaR model would be adopted by those 'voice' practitioners introduced to it, I asked:

(RQ 2b) How has the mindset and practice of college leaders from participating postsecondary college provisions, altered as result of their observation / experience of the iSaR model?

4.2.2 Research philosophy (Interpretivism)

'Research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge' (Saunders *et al.*, 2019, p.130).

Having already spoken about the two theories adopted by this study (Dis/human / Social theory of learning) it is time now to discuss how my research philosophy has oriented my attempts to develop knowledge and practice around inclusive participatory 'voice'.

I took an interpretivist stance with this study, as I believe that reality is created through perception and that this reality is in constant flux dependent on experience:

'We build concepts and models to make sense of our experience, continually testing and modifying these in the light of new experience.'

(Schwandt, 1998 in Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.53).

If knowledge can be created through the articulation of perceptions of experience, then it can also be co-created when reality is *'constructed intersubjectively'* (Saunders *et al.*, 2019, p.137) and when employing the phenomenological view that perceptions are the *'property of our relationships to the world and others, rather than to us as creatures in isolation'* (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022, p.17). This reflects a very Vygotskyian understanding of knowledge, as constructed by the learner, being the *'product of social interaction, interpretation and understanding'* (Vygotsky, 1962 in Adams, 2006, p.246). This is the position taken by social constructivism, the foundation of which understands constructions of reality *'as a never-ending process'* (Pfadenhauer and Knoblauch, 2019, p.2).

Epistemologically speaking, when knowledge is viewed to be constructed in collaboration with others and not isolation, i.e. when viewed through an (inter)subjective lens, then what is viewed as acceptable knowledge (and data), would include that which has been co-constructed through shared experience and opinion, and elicited via testimonial accounts, rather than positivist measuring tools seeking brute fact. In attempting to develop a model of participatory 'voice', it was important for me to collaborate with participants to build experiential knowledge around the value of the model and its principles for best practice; in this sense, the iSaR model could be seen as having been co-developed. My attempts to centre the participant 'voice' in the creation of such knowledge and practice surrounding participatory 'voice' therefore, gave due weight to using this 'voice' within its methods, using 'voice' to explore 'voice'. It should be noted here, though, that any knowledge produced this way cannot be generalized; it is specific only to the context the research was conducted in and the individuals it was conducted with. Hence, the need for the value of the model to be explored in different contexts (other inclusive/specialist post-secondary provisions and programmes) and in other formats (workshops) to gauge the transferability of its principles.

4.2.3 Approach to theory development (Abduction)

I adopted an abductive logic of inquiry with which to conduct this study. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), an abductive approach '*moves back and forth [...] combining deduction and induction*' (p.155). The study was *predominantly* inductive, in the way that data was collected every term over a

five-term period and used to hone and advance the model (and theory) iteratively with each new dataset, generating themes during analysis. The study was also slightly deductive, due to my previous pilot study having already formulated a tentative theory, which ended up being used in the process of theoretical integration, conducted within my data analysis for this study (discussed in more detail later in Part 3 of this chapter). However, as that pilot study looked solely at the training aspect of the model, this theory was only useful to a point. The study was also somewhat deductive as my cycles of analysis integrated value indicators from an established framework (VCF), adopting the value names as theme names.

4.2.4 Methodological choices (Multi-method qualitative)

4.2.4.1 Choices made in relation to core iSaR group data

Due to the number and variety of data collection methods used with the student-participants of the core iSaR group, to capture their value-experiences, I shall first clarify the *types* of data collected / generated, in terms of being effect or contribution data (see Table 4 below):

RQ 1a) What was the value of an Inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory ‘voice’, as perceived and experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?
<i>Effect data</i> collected (to capture student experiences <i>within</i> specific value-cycles): • Attendance records (quant) • Emotional check-in/out data during sessions (quant) • Ranking activity findings (quant) • Termly interview transcripts (qual) • Lego reflections activity (qual) • Unused Value Creation Story content from other participants (qual)
RQ 1b) What were the enablers and disablers of the flow of value between and across value-cycles, experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?
<i>Contribution data</i> generated (to evidence flows and blockages of value <i>across</i> all value-cycles): • One Value Creation Story (qual)

Table 4. Types of data collected / generated to evidence core iSaR group value-experience and answer RQ1a and b.

I would describe this as a multi-method qualitative study, as although some quantitative data were used, i.e. *attendance records*, I did not view it as mixed methods study as these data were not analysed to the degree of complexity that typical quantitative data analysis would warrant; they were used more to triangulate testimonial data, as intentional integration of effect data and contribution data.

Through attempts to centre the ‘voice’ of the student-participants in this study, data collection / generation was, otherwise, highly qualitative. From the core iSaR student group, data were collected and generated through multi-modal interviews - conducted at the end of each term of fieldwork, and featuring aspects of *photo-*

interviews, traditional interviews, Lego reflection activity and click 'n' drag activities. Outside of these termly interviews, student-participant data were also collected through *video diaries* and *Value Creation Stories* were generated with the support of *Photo-based Writing Scaffold* (detailed in Part 2). Data from students participating in the iSaR workshops took the form of *Reflections booklets* (also detailed later) and data collected from participating staff took a more traditional form (questionnaires and interviews).

Table 5 (below) presents the entirety of methods used across the whole study, outlining those used within different datasets, and in reference to specific research questions.

Core iSaR Group			
RQ. No.	Research Question	Datasets	Data collection / generation methods used
1a.	What was the value of an Inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice', as perceived and experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?	core iSaR student group	Attendance register Battery-level sheets Photo-interviews Traditional interviews Click n' drag activities Video-diaries Lego reflection activity
		Researcher	Reflexive journal
		Supporting staff	Interviews Entry / Exit questionnaire
Method/s and scope of dissemination: Chronological schematic, spanning the entirety of five-term fieldwork period with the core iSaR student group at host college.			
1b.	What were the enablers and disablers of flows of learning between and across value cycles, experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?	core iSaR student group	Photo-based Writing Scaffold
Method/s and scope of dissemination: Visual displays of learning loops and flow between values, illustrated within one <i>Value Creation Story</i> frame, covering the core iSaR student group's final participatory action research study.			
iSaR Workshops			
2a.	What was the value, experienced by participating students from other post-secondary college provisions for students with learning disabilities, when the iSaR model of Student Voice was replicated in a workshop format?	Student-participants	'Reflections' booklets
		Researcher	Reflexive journal
		College leaders	Interviews
Method/s of dissemination: Geographical schematic, exploring student-participant responses to iSaR workshops in other post-secondary college provision for students with learning disabilities.			
2b.	How has the mindset and practice of college leaders from participating post-secondary college provisions, altered as result of their experience of the iSaR model?	College leaders	Entry/exit questionnaires Exit interviews
Method/s of dissemination: Before and after comparisons of college leader responses to entry and exit questionnaire, and illustrative excerpts from college leader exit interviews.			

Table 5. Overview of data collection / generation methods used within PhD study

The use of multi-methods is commonly viewed as participatory in approach, using a variety of research tools to support the 'voice' of participants and allowing

'researchers to be as inclusive as possible and 'play to' [CYP's] strengths' (Coyne and Carter, 2018, p.18). Similarly to Clarke's *Mosaic approach* (2017), which is *'a multi-method, polyvocal approach that brings together different perspectives in order to create with children an image of their worlds'* (p.17), the multi-modal interviews of this study offer multiple, alternative avenues of expression, all working to build a picture of the value experienced through iSaR activity over an extended period. It was therefore important to design in regular points for reflection across this extended period, so as to build a bank of data to equal the level/volume/detail of data gained from a more normative (hour-long interview) approach.

4.2.4.2 Methods used to support iSaR training

The first term of fieldwork at the host college was designed as a training term for student participants, to gently introduce them to the processes and methods of research through accessible, experiential research activities. I devised a programme (see Figure 21 below) which began with exploration of simple voting methods, such as a *show of hands*, a *clap-o-meter*, *blind ballots* and *physical debate*. These voting methods would be used to inform the direction of later research training activity, which would introduce data collection methods such as *questionnaires* and *interviews*, along with more creative methods, such as Mapping and Sandboxing.



Figure 21. Training term overview

The group were to follow the above Easy-read training schedule, and would be further supported through the use of visual session overviews (see Figure 22 below). Having spent most of their education being led by staff, it was expected that students would need scaffolded, yet reducing, support to achieve an eventual level of (self/group) autonomy. This support was heavily planned into the first term and gradually reduced, with the idea that, by the time students were in the position to take a lead in research proceedings, they would be acclimatized and ready to face an unforeseeable challenge, as they would have done it successfully before; they would feel more comfortable to do it again, engaging their uncertainty through their decisions and actions.

16th January 2023

Induction

1. FIND OUT ABOUT – Informed consent

- Participant rights
- Researcher's expectations



2. TALK ABOUT – Research Training

- Look at the timetable
- Ask questions

3. HAVE A GO AT – Keeping a diary

- How will you record your thoughts?
- Where will we record group ideas?



4. PLAN – Richard Keagan-Bull's talk

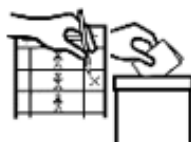
- Learn about Richard's research
- What questions could we ask him?
- Make plans to hear him talk

Figure 22. Easy-read session plan

Research diaries were only used in the training term, due to time constraints. They were not used as a data source; they were a facilitative tool to gain important feedback to support the smooth running of sessions (see Figure 23 below).



Research Diary



We have been looking at ways of **voting**.



We have been voting to decide our **research topic**.



Did you **enjoy** this session?

☐

Yes

☐

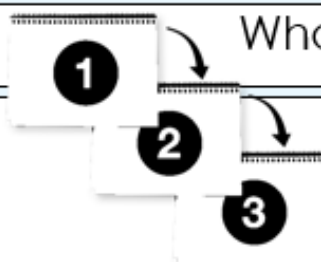
Not Sure

☐

No



What did **you** do this session?



What would you like to do **next**?

Figure 23. Research diary – training term

4.2.4.3 Methods used to support iSaR activity

i) Scaffolding activities

Activities, such as *Timeline mapping* (see Figure 24 below) were used to support the elicitation of student-participants' college experiences, stimulating discussion leading to democratic choice of project direction.

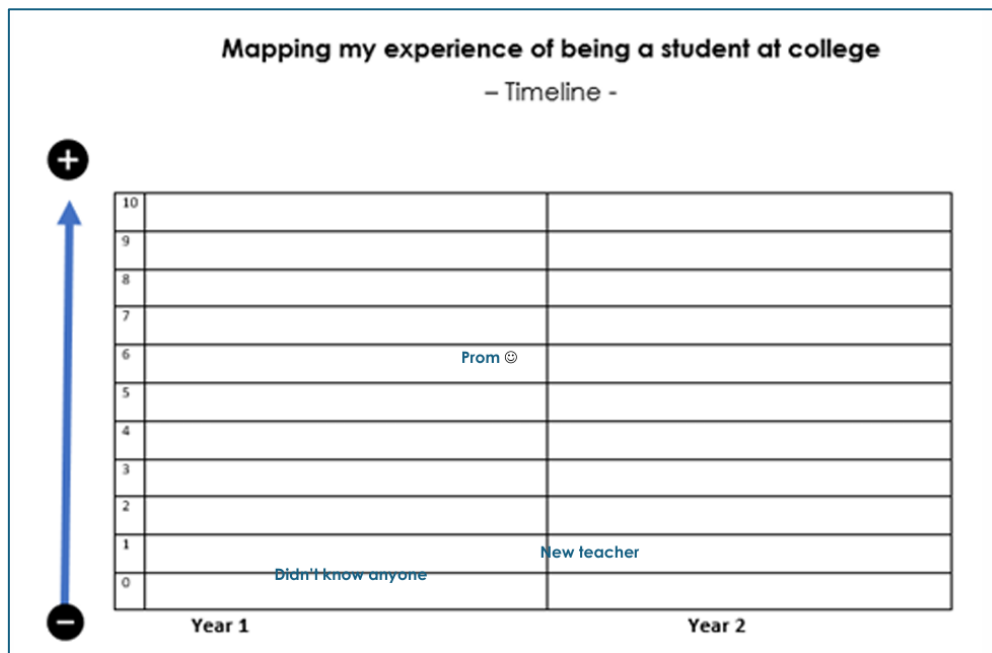


Figure 24. Example of 'Timeline mapping' scaffolding activity

For the group's second PAR study, a different scaffolding activity was used, for the same purpose - the *River journey mapping* (Moussa, 2009). This map took the form of a river, and the activity involved plotting negative experiences along the river, using a whirlpool symbol, and positive experiences, using a waves symbol, annotating as appropriate (see Figure 25 below).



Figure 25. Example of 'River journey mapping' scaffolding activity

As with *Timeline mapping*, group experiences were collated onto the whiteboard as potential research topics/issues. Once the students had reduced the potential topics through discussion and debate, they were supported to take a vote. This way, all the suggested topics came directly from student experience, rather than staff suggestion.

ii) *Peer research methods*

Methods trialled and chosen by the core iSaR group to conduct peer research will only briefly be outlined below, as these co-designed methods really belong in the group's findings in Chapter 5. They include:

Emoji sheets - designed to investigate how students had felt on their first day (see Figure 26 below) and will be detailed within findings from Term 2, as students' evaluation of peer research methods presented as experiences of *Applied* value.

On my first day at college, I felt ...

✓ 1 (Tick ONE or MORE feeling)

(DRAW or WRITE more)

Figure 26. Revised 'Emoji sheet' – peer research activity

Magic box - For the *magic box* activity (see Figure 27 below), participation involved thinking back to their first week at college and imagining that they were given a magic box filled with things that would make them feel welcome, safe and calm. They were then asked to write or draw what the contents of *their* box would be and post it in a sparkly box. Again, the method is detailed through student evaluations in findings from Term 2.



Figure 27. 'Magic box' – peer research activity

4.2.5 Strategy (Participatory research)

I needed to conceptualise the PhD study as two separate studies: mine and that of the iSaR group. I would investigate the value of iSaR as a model of participatory 'voice'- with student-participants occasionally taking on the role of co-researchers, and, in *their own* study, iSaR group members would conduct peer research to investigate whatever they felt meaningful and important, with careful facilitative assistance from myself and supporting staff.

I can only describe the strategic approach I used in my own study as Participatory Research (PR), as it i) involved student-participants' active engagement in elements of the research process (detailed in Table 6 below), ii) facilitated co-construction of knowledge of participatory 'voice' practice, iii) utilised participatory methods, such as *Photo-interviews* and *Lego Reflection activities* (detailed later), and was iv) '*closely aligned to social constructivism and critical theory*,

maintaining belief that all knowledge is socially created' (Wilkinson and Wilkinson, 2018, p.23) as discussed earlier.

The 'shape' of my research did not fit within the bounds of Participatory Action Research (PAR), as Action research is defined by its cyclical processes which, simplistically, involve '*planning a change, acting and then observing what happens following the change, reflecting on these processes and consequences and then planning further action and repeating the cycle*' (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p.201) and PAR is expected to follow those same cycles.

A Participatory Action Research (PAR) strategy was far more in keeping with the cycles of peer research within the study conducted by the iSaR group, with their preparation, and multiple revisions, of accessible research tools. The group's initiation of research focus and questions, along with their engagement in all stages of the research process of their study add further weight to my argument here.

My own PhD study was as participatory as possible within the confines of a PhD process which required the production of a thesis '*demonstrating individual research competence*' (Klocker, 2012, p.155) and detailed articulation of a research focus prior to funding and prior to the ethical approval to involve participants. This dilemma was well articulated by Southby (2017): '*The competing agendas and priorities of individualistic academic structures and participatory research create a dilemma for research students.*' (p.135) With the amount of time it takes to gain ethical approval, it was not possible for me to collaboratively direct the research focus of this PhD study. Looking at my own

(PhD) study as an example of PR in isolation, and mapping out the spread of participant involvement, it does not seem highly participatory (see Table 6 below); there were many stages of the study which were solely under my control, in fact all of them to a significant degree – for reasons mentioned above.

Research stage of PhD	Researcher involvement	Participant involvement
Project planning		
Literature review		
Formulation of RQs		
Research design		<i>Evaluation of research tools</i>
Data collection / generation		<i>Value Creation Stories</i>
Data analysis		
Dissemination of findings		<i>Co-presented at ICRMC</i>

Table 6. Mapping of participant involvement as co-researchers in PhD candidate's study

What this approach did achieve, however, was a reduced participatory load on student-researchers, leaving the iSaR group free to conduct cycles of their own Participatory (Action) Research around whatever issues were important and meaningful to them, with facilitative support and guidance from myself and colleagues.

4.2.6 Time horizon and plan (Longitudinal)

This study could be described as longitudinal in scope, as by generating data over a period of five academic terms (often with the same participants), the research was able to follow the development of participants' attitude, competency and identity over time.

Figure 28, below, was my initial visual plan for the study. As the study was rather iterative in approach, and 'messy' by nature, it was hard to plan with military precision (and inappropriate to attempt to do so). There were upcoming events which were more certain, such as the likely transitioning out of college for some student-participants at the end of summer 2023. As result of this, however, I was unable to predict if I would have any original participants left in the third term of fieldwork (autumn 2023), whether I would need to recruit and train a whole new group, and how this would look if there were still some original members participating. The visual plan was used as guide rather than rulebook, suggestive of the likely activities required.



Figure 28. Visual plan of Years One and Two

4.2.6.1 *Planned activity*

As can be seen in Figure 29 below, over the period of two years, planned activity was split into six academic terms (involving five terms of fieldwork at the host college).

Autumn 2022: Preparations to be made for an early recruitment of participants, including the creation of recruitment materials and 'have a go' taster activities.

Spring 2023: Research training - Participants to experience a variety of research methods and processes, and practise evaluating research tools in terms of enjoyability, accessibility and appropriacy.

Summer 2023: Participatory Action Research (PAR 1) – Participating students to be supported to identify issues to explore further and decide, through democratic voting, on the direction of their research. PAR 1 will then be conducted by iSaR group.

Autumn 2024: Potential recruitment, likely dissemination of PAR 1 and further PAR activity - The planning of any further PAR cycles or projects will be strictly dependent on the wishes of the new iSaR group and the time available.

Spring 2024: Further PAR activity, analysis of PAR data and co-research into accessibility of research tools used.

Summer 2024: Wider dissemination of PAR findings and PhD findings, and the forming / sharing of guiding principles of the iSaR model.

Figure 29. Textual overview of planned activity

Details of what actually happened are described at length in what follows, but it is interesting to reflect here on how disparities between plans and actions are crucial for Participatory Research, if it is to be student-led and instrumental in the development of student agency and self-determination.

4.2.6.2 *Plans for model development and wider adoption*

I planned to centre the main activities of the study around just one college, taking a practitioner-researcher approach to gain a deeper understanding of how a

timetabled iSaR session would work over a number of terms, to have time to build knowledge and practice around student-led research, and to closely follow the personal development of a core group of students over a notable period. I believed that duration and routine would be important to the study's success.

During the planning stage of this study, I also held the intention to eventually take the iSaR model into other provisions. The reasoning for this was predominantly because I wanted to see how the model would practically work within the processes and cultures of other settings. I was (too?) familiar with the host college, having worked there since 2011, and although my knowledge of its systems and staff proved incredibly useful when conducting the fieldwork, I wanted the developing model to transcend being something which would only be suitable for the host college and its student demographic.

These other settings were eventually approached in Term 3, when I felt the iSaR model had become more established through my work with the core iSaR student group at the host provision, and I was ready to share it with other student groups. Due to time constraints, I designed a series of four workshop sessions to offer other settings, and in this sense, the ensuing iSaR workshops were a research output. As I also wished to gather data around the further development of the iSaR model, however, this element of the study was used to address more secondary research objectives, exploring the appropriacy and value of iSaR within a workshop format and the potential for wider adoption of the model. Figure 30 (below) is a landscape map of iSaR development, featuring the location of core iSaR sessions and iSaR workshops and illustrating the spread of practice.

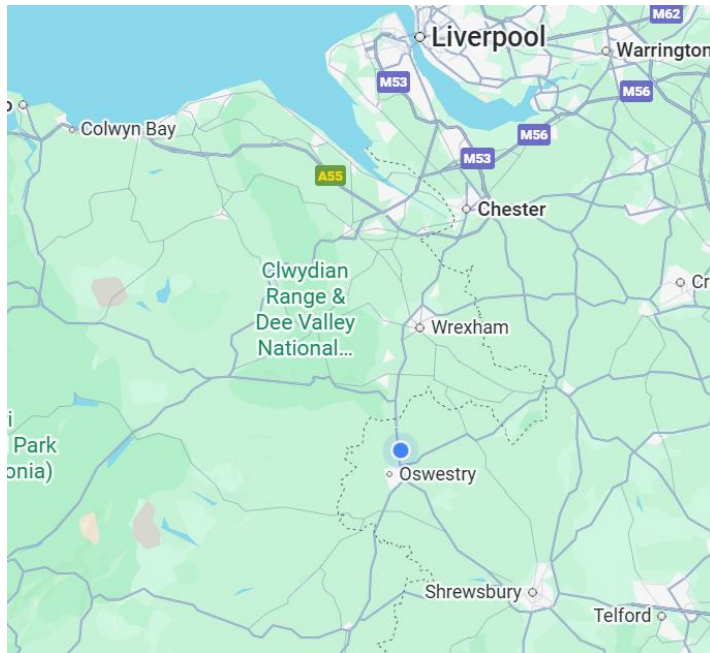


Figure 30. Landscape map of iSaR development

By Term 3, principles of practice, resulting from the iSaR group's findings, activities and cumulative testimonies, informed the creation of an '*iSaR Practitioner Guide*' (see Appendix 1), outlining the rationale and practices of the iSaR model. It was my intention to share these guiding principles of the iSaR model when offering facilitation in a workshop format. The principles document would be sent to interested provisions as introduction to the iSaR model, in attempt to support and gain institutional access for iSaR workshops.

4.3 Part 2- Data collection / generation methods (Multi-modal interviews and Value Creation Stories)

In this section, I describe, illustrate and justify my adaptation and use of multiple data collection / generation methods chosen to inform this study.

4.3.1 Data collection streams

As can be viewed in Table 7, below, there were five data collection streams in my study: the iSaR core student group, Researcher, Supporting staff member, Student-participants (workshops) and College leaders.

Core iSaR Group			
RQ. No.	Research Question	Datasets	Data collection / generation methods used
1a.	What was the value of an Inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice', as perceived and experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?	core iSaR student group	Attendance register Battery-level sheets Photo-interviews Traditional interviews Click n' drag activities Video-diaries Lego reflection activity
		Researcher	Reflexive journal
		Supporting staff	Interviews Entry / Exit questionnaire
Method/s and scope of dissemination: Chronological schematic, spanning the entirety of five-term fieldwork period with the core iSaR student group at host college.			
1b.	What were the enablers and disablers of flows of learning between and across value cycles, experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?	core iSaR student group	Photo-based Writing Scaffold
Method/s and scope of dissemination: Visual displays of learning loops and flow between values, illustrated within one <i>Value Creation Story</i> frame, covering the core iSaR student group's final participatory action research study.			
iSaR Workshops			
2a.	What was the value, experienced by participating students from other post-secondary college provisions for students with learning disabilities, when the iSaR model of Student Voice was replicated in a workshop format?	Student-participants	'Reflections' booklets
		Researcher	Reflexive journal
		College leaders	Interviews
Method/s of dissemination: Geographical schematic, exploring student-participant responses to iSaR workshops in other post-secondary college provision for students with learning disabilities.			
2b.	How has the mindset and practice of college leaders from participating post-secondary college provisions, altered as result of their experience of the iSaR model?	College leaders	Entry/exit questionnaires Exit interviews
Method/s of dissemination: Before and after comparisons of college leader responses to entry and exit questionnaire, and illustrative excerpts from college leader exit interviews.			

Table 7. Overview of data collection / generation methods used within PhD study

4.3.1.1 iSaR core group dataset

4.3.1.1.1 Attendance register

As college policy, attendance of every iSaR session was recorded digitally, along with the reasoning of absences coded. I kept my own records, as I knew I wouldn't be able to access college records after fieldwork was completed. These records were analysed as quantitative effect data.

4.3.1.1.2 Battery-level sheets

iSaR sessions were timetabled to be the last session, running from 4pm to 5pm, on a Monday. To alleviate my concerns about participatory fatigue and the students' capacity to participate effectively and joyfully after a full day of college work, I created *Battery-level sheets* (see Figure 31 below).

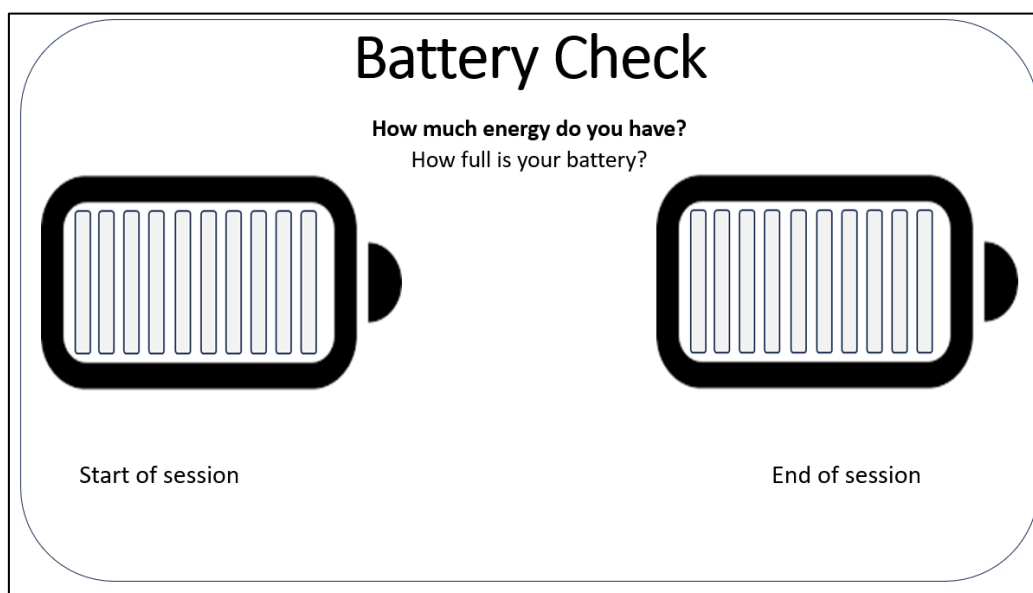


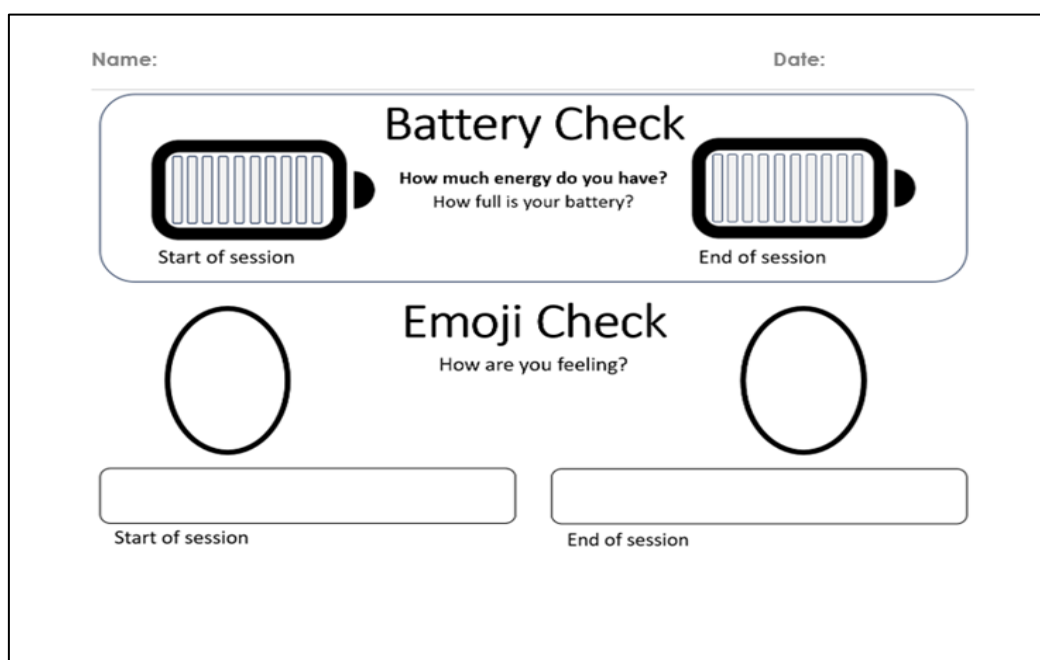
Figure 31. Battery-level sheet (Original version)

These sheets were designed to be a simple way of ‘checking-in’ and ‘checking-out’ with participants, at the start and end of iSaR sessions. ‘Checking in’ responses would offer me a glimpse into the immediate capacity of each participant, and ‘checking out’ responses would support me to gauge whether the session ‘drained’ or ‘energised’ them. The sheets were inspired by McGuinness (2021) and her use of a battery metaphor, featured in her tool to support autistic CYP to *‘become more aware of their emotions and their capacity to take steps to reduce the likelihood of burnout’* (p.59). Part of this tool asked CYP to colour a blank battery image to reflect their energy levels in different scenarios, supporting them to reflect on which activities charged their battery, and which drained them.

On using the *Battery-level sheets*, participants were asked to colour, on a scale of 0-10, the number of battery ‘bars’ reflecting how much energy they felt they had at the start and then again at the end of each session. In this way, completion of the *Battery-level sheets* would not only provide evidence of where energy levels had been charged or drained, it would also provide evidence of enthusiasm for participation. In this latter, responses would provide a form of ethics-in-practice, i.e. further indication of ongoing consent.

Heeding ‘spoon theory’ (Miserandino, 2003), if a participant responded by colouring one bar at the start of the session, I would be highly cautious as to not place many further demands on them or perhaps would look at individualized ways to ‘charge them up’ instead. Likewise, if a session had left a participant with one battery ‘bar’ of energy, I would need to rethink the level of demand for subsequent sessions. Monitoring responses over time would also allow me to see patterns and improve the overall participatory experience for student-participants.

As mentioned in section 4.2.4, it is good practice to use multiple methods, ‘*to be as inclusive as possible and ‘play to’ [CYP’s] strengths*’ (Coyne and Carter, 2018, p.18). It is equally important to offer a variety of ways for participants to ‘check in’ and ‘check out’ of a session. The Battery level sheets were later revised with co-researcher input (see Figure 32 below). This revision provided space for them to draw their own emoji, representing how they were feeling, with a space to write what their emoji meant – again, at the start and end of sessions.



The form is titled 'Battery Check' and 'Emoji Check'. It includes fields for 'Name:' and 'Date:'. The 'Battery Check' section has two battery icons, each with 10 segments, labeled 'Start of session' and 'End of session'. The 'Emoji Check' section has two empty circles, each with a text box below it, labeled 'Start of session' and 'End of session'.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Battery Check

How much energy do you have?
How full is your battery?

Start of session End of session

Emoji Check

How are you feeling?

Start of session End of session

Figure 32. Revised Battery level sheet

Findings from completed *Battery-level sheets* were analysed as quantitative effect data.

4.3.1.1.3 Photo-interviews

Photo-interviews were a method I designed to support research conversations with student-participants who had learning disabilities. In *photo-interviews*,

communication was supported through i) photographs, ii) choice, iii) visual instructions, iv) repetition, v) extra processing time and vi) accessible questions.

i) Photographs- Learning disabled participants can have differences with their working memory (Martínez-Brione *et al.*, 2020). For example, they may not be able to recall the required level/type of detail when talking about recent experiences. Providing visual prompts such as evidence of work or photographs may engage memory and stimulate a richer detail in their responses. I initially printed out piles of photographs for each participant, featuring them participating in iSaR activity, but on noticing one participant drawing the photographs closer to their eyes to see the images more clearly, I decided that future *photo-interviews* would utilise PowerPoint. After that, each participant was presented with slides in a presentation, to scroll through and zoom into, as wished.

ii) Choice - Photo-interviews gave participants free choice of which photograph / activity to focus interview questions on. This allowed them more ownership of the interview proceedings. Being asked to talk about lots of photographs would remove the element of choice and result in participation inertia, and so I decided that participants would initially be asked to choose just three photographs from the 'pile', then I would ask if they'd like to choose more.

iii) Visual instructions - To support understanding, participants were given interview directions and questions verbally *and* visually, using an accessible interview schedule (see Figure 33 below).

Photo interviews



1. Choose a photograph



2. What are you doing in the photograph?



3. What are you feeling in that photograph?



4. What are you thinking in that photograph?



5. What do you like in that photograph?

Figure 33. Photo-interview interview schedule

iv) *Accessible questions* - I collaborated with the host provision's Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) team in the finalization of the above interview schedule. They supported me to set the questions within the schedule at the

lower *Blanks levels of questioning* (Levels 1 and 2) and advised me on the correct usage of Makaton symbols. *Blanks levels of questioning*, organises types of questions by complexity (Blank, Rose and Berlin, 1978):

- Level 1 questions – naming - e.g. “*Who is in that picture?*”
- Level 2 questions – describing - e.g. “*What are you doing in that picture?*”
- Level 3 questions - retelling - e.g. “*How did you decide what to do?*”
- Level 4 questions - justifying - e.g. “*Why did you vote for that topic?*”

v) *Repetition* - In photo-interviews, the interview schedules follow and repeat the same set of directions and questions with each photograph chosen. This supports the participant’s anticipation of the next task and could reduce unnecessary participation anxiety.

vi) *Processing time* - Learning disabled participants may require longer processing time - to understand what is being asked of them, to formulate their response and then to respond. This process can often take up to ten seconds, and it is important that the interviewer ‘holds that time’ for the interviewee. Occasionally, this can take over twenty seconds (an observation from the recordings of my MASR interviews).

Photo-interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed, along with the other parts of the multi-modal interviews, as qualitative effect data.

4.3.1.1.4 Traditional interviews

Within the planned multi-modal interview process (see Appendix 2), to be conducted at the end of each of the five terms, the traditional interview would feature directly after the *photo-interviews*. In this way, I would have already gauged communication levels and likely supports and conduct the interview accordingly.

During the more traditional interview, I would be using more complex questions (Blanks Level 3 and 4) - asking participants about their decision to participate, their expectations and general perceptions of participation, their ideas for future research and articulation of continued consent in participation. In later interviews, I would also be asking participants about whether / how participation had changed them, and whether they felt like a researcher. Traditional interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed, along with the other parts of the multi-modal interviews, as qualitative effect data.

As a tool to collect testimonial effect data, the traditional interviews sought to evidence experiences of specific value-cycles. Table 8 below illustrates the interview schedule for the first multi-modal interview, and the value-cycles explored through direct questioning.

Value	Traditional interview questions
Immediate	What did you expect the Students as Researchers group to be like? <i>What would make it better?</i> After Easter, the Students as Researchers group will be deciding on a research question to ask other students at college. <i>Do you want to carry on and be a member of that group?</i>
Potential	What question would you like to ask other [Host college name] students? <i>How could you ask them? What method could you use?</i>
Applied	
Realized	
Enabling	What helped you decide to sign up for the Students as Researchers group? Who did you discuss it with?
Strategic	Do you think these experiences should be shared with other students?
Orienting	What did you find out about the group's experience of being a student? <i>How were they the same? How were they different? How did you find this out?</i>
Transformative	

Table 8. Evidence of value sought through traditional interview questions.

4.3.1.1.5 'Click 'n' drag' activities

Student-participants were asked to complete '*Click 'n' drag' activities* (see Figure 34 below) as part of their multi-modal interviews, in Term 2 and Term 4. These tangible activities were inserted into their individual PowerPoints, with one slide asking: 'Which activity was the most fun to do?', another asking: 'Which activity was the easiest to do?' and another asking: 'Which activity told you most?'.

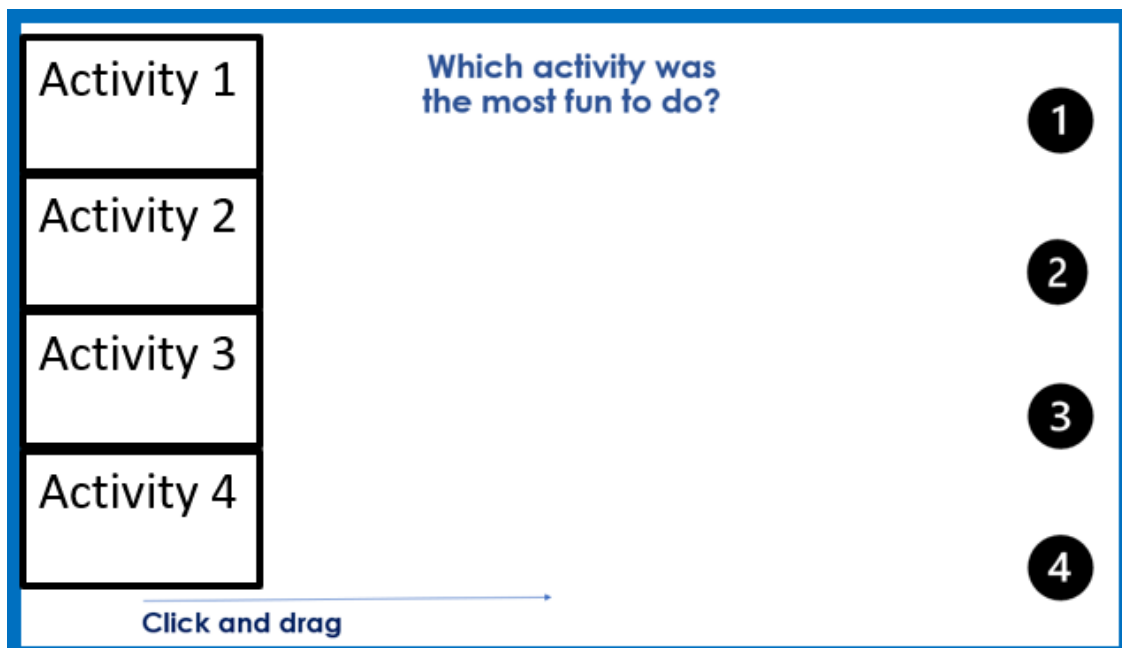


Figure 34. Example of 'Click 'n' drag' activity (photos removed)

Participants were asked to click on a photograph and drag it across to the relevant number, running from one, being their most favoured, to four, being their least. Thus, putting the activities in order, in terms of the questions on each of the three slides, via a simple ranking method. Any verbal responses from participants would also be captured through the full interview being audio recorded. This was then transcribed and analysed, along with the other parts of the multi-modal interviews, as quantitative effect data.

4.3.1.1.6 Video-diaries

Video-diaries became more of an option from Term 2, when I was joined by an additional facilitator, Eluned, who worked in the host college's Marketing Team. Because of her main role, she was both skilled in using photographic and film recording equipment, and able to borrow it for iSaR purposes. She was also,

helpfully, not a stranger to interviewing. Video-diaries were transcribed and used alongside termly student datasets, as qualitative effect data.

4.3.1.1.7 Lego reflection activity

Inspired by Sandboxing methods and examples I had seen of using Lego to create reflexive scenes (Kara *et al.*, 2021), I borrowed my son's Lego collection - separated out heads, bodies, legs, accessories and odd pieces into containers, and bought a few base-plates. The activity was used twice, in Term 2 and Term 4. Using the separated body parts, participants were first asked to create a Lego figure to represent themselves. They were then asked to think of an event or activity from their time during the past term in iSaR sessions and create that scene, placing their own figure on a base-plate of their choosing. They were also prompted to think about whether anyone else was with them, and what everyone in the scene would be doing. These scenes were photographed, and the participants were asked clarifying questions regarding the scene they had created. Again, this was recorded and transcribed, as part of the multi-modal interview, and analysed as qualitative effect data.

4.3.1.1.8 Value Creation Stories and the *Photo-based Writing Scaffold*

'In a value-creation story the recognizable elements of the genre are the cycles in the [VCF] framework. The story recounts the value that flows through them' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.130)

Value Creation Stories are an effective form of contribution data, traditionally utilising first-person testimony to corroborate or refute any speculations or conclusions arising from the findings of effect data (listed above). As previously discussed (4.1.3.4), much of the effect data collected / generated within this study was (unusually) qualitative and testimonial by nature, and analysed to evidence how *specific* value-cycles were experienced by student-participants; I even treated some of the unused *Value Creation Stories* as effect data and analysed them alongside other effect data (listed above).

The inclusion of *Value Creation Stories* as contribution data, however, was important, as such stories add plausibility to whether and/or how specific events, interactions or changes in practice, contributed to results. I have already expressed my intention to show if/how engagement in iSaR contributes to the development of agency and self-determination; it was my hope that *Value Creation Stories* would support this theory.

Traditionally, *Value Creation Stories* are constructed by the researcher and informed by interview data. These interviews are '*more a semistructured storytelling process, with enough prompting to guide the story toward the genre*' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.211), and so the researcher's questioning is more to specifically prompt participants to reflect on their experiences within and across as many value-cycles as possible, to reveal the narrative flow of value. To ascertain how an action contributed to an effect, for example, the researcher could prompt the participant to talk about any observable effects (*Realised* value) they noticed as the result of an activity (*Applied* value).

I initially attempted to construct the first set of *Value Creation Stories* (see Appendix 3) in the way described above, using interview data from Terms 1 and 2, along with further prompts for detail, but this process did not seem ethical to me. In a study which aimed to centre the ‘voice’ of participants, in emancipative response to a long history of researchers speaking for them, I felt that they should, and could, be better supported to write their own stories. For reasons implied in my earlier discussion around interviews and the benefits of visual, structured interview supports, I decided to design an accessible *Photo-based Writing Scaffold* activity to support participants to write their own *Value Creation Stories*, specifically around their final PAR study. In this way, story narrative could usefully follow the course of participant value-experience flowing into and across value-cycles, to support the answering of RQ1b. *What were the enablers and disablers of the flow of learning between and across value-cycles, experienced by participating post-secondary students who have a learning disability?*

Not all *Value Creation Stories* need to be success stories, so long as they reveal or encourage a progression in learning and make (positive and negative) value visible. In encouraging student-participants to write their own *Value Creation Stories*, it was my hope that they would begin to recognise value created, as well as the potentiality for value to be created. According to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020), *‘it is the recognition of the value created [...] that propels the team’s learning forward’* (p.75).

There have been a handful of researchers using the VCF who have successfully involved participants in the writing of *Value Creation Stories*. McCormack et al. (2016) outlined a three-phase approach to writing stories with participants, using

the original 5-value framework (discussed in Chapter 2), and used ‘trigger questions’ to scaffold story writing activity. Guldberg et al. (2021) also included participants writing *Value Creation Stories*. Their participatory approach involved co-research and co-authorship with autistic individuals (including autistic academics). Participant co-researchers similarly created their own *Value Creation Stories* using the original 5-value framework.

The process of supporting participants to engage with the VCF and write value creation stories meets the need identified by Hart (1992) for ‘*more schemes that can help groups look systematically at their [participatory] practice*’ (p.23), supporting co-evaluation of participation.

4.3.1.1.8.1 The Photo-based Writing Scaffold process

The *Photo-based Writing Scaffold* would be a six-stage process, using photographs and digital manipulation (‘click n’ drag’ sorting activities), conducted mostly in a 1:1 capacity:

Stage One –



Figure 35. Easy read adaptation of the *Value Creation Framework* (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020)

Using my easy-read summary of the eight VCF values (duplicated above for clarity as Figure 35), I devised a simple ‘click n’ drag’ activity on PowerPoint for participants to match each value with an illustrative photograph from their final PAR project (see Figure 36 below).

Match the photo with the value experienced

Click and drag →

Immediate Value
The feelings that come from being with each other and learning together.

Potential Value
The ideas and confidence that come from learning together.

Applied Value
Using those ideas in real situations.

Realized Value
Making a difference to something that matters to you.

Match the photo with the value experienced

Click and drag →

Enabling Value
The people and activities that help you to learn together and from each other.

Strategic Value
Meeting the people who can help you make a difference or who you hope to help by making that difference.

Orienting Value
Sharing your work with people who also want to make a difference and finding out about their work.

Transformative Value
Other changes your 'making a difference' has caused.

Figure 36. Click n’ drag’ matching activity (Part 1).

Stage Two – On observing participants’ ability to do this activity with minimal support, I would place their photographic responses into a standard *Value Creation Story* writing scaffold (traditionally used by VCF researchers), created

online in *Mural*, and, in the margins, add a collection of additional photographs, taken throughout the group's final research project (see Figure 37 below).

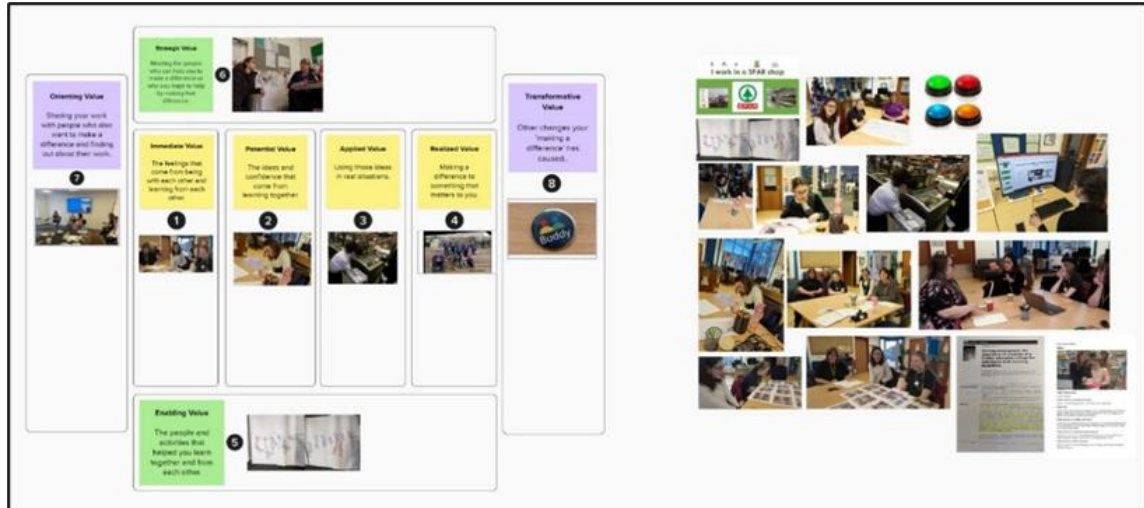


Figure 37. 'Click n' drag' matching activity (Part.2).

Stage Three - The students would then be asked to 'click n' drag' the remaining photographs into the VCF writing scaffold to indicate and illustrate values experienced within those photographs (See Figure 38 below):

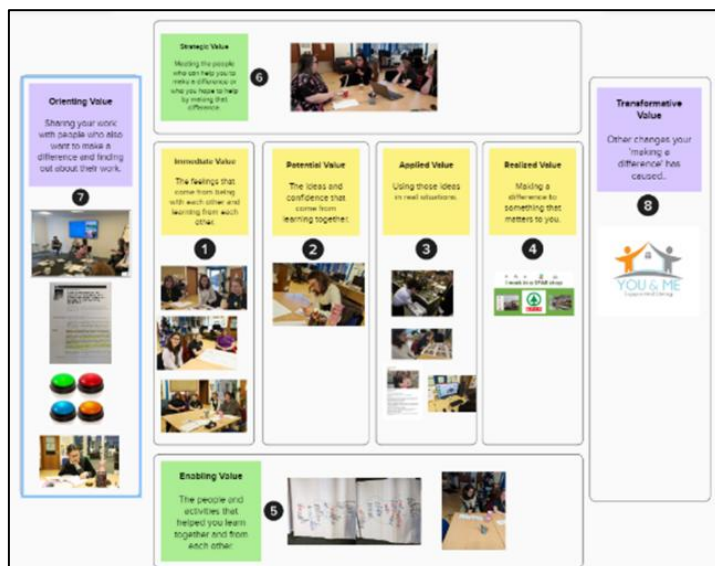


Figure 38. A completed *Photo-based Writing Scaffold*

Stage Four – The completed *Photo-based Writing Scaffold* would then clearly reveal which values had been experienced less often by the group. If these gaps in value experienced could be addressed with further, appropriate action, then photographs evidencing this could be added to the scaffold for the participants to sort. Hence, this method provides an effective way of building more value into a participatory study.

Stage Five - The completed *Photo-based Writing Scaffold* would provide a visual aide-memoir to support the writing of *Value Creation Stories*. To provide further support, I would transfer the contents of each *Photo-based Writing Scaffold* to a PowerPoint presentation for each student, organised into 8 ‘value’-sections, with each slide featuring one photograph and a blank text box (See Figure 39 below) Participants could then choose to write or talk about some or all the photographs within each value. Any verbal narrations would be captured with the use of a voice-recording device.



Figure 39. Example of initial writing activity, using the *Photo-based Writing Scaffold*.

Stage Six - The final stage would involve placing slides into chronological order in the PowerPoint presentation. This would support a cohesive narrative, and,

through further questioning and prompting, student-participants could be guided to elaborate further on ideas and experiences.

The completion of the above *Photo-based Writing Scaffold* method would be in addition to my study's final multi-modal interview schedule.

4.3.1.2 Researcher dataset

4.3.1.2.1 Reflexive journal

In many professions, a journal is kept by practitioners as record of events, ideas and reflections. Some journals make use of templates, prompting detailed noting of critical events with prompts such as: '*Explain what your intentions were or what you hoped would happen*' (Brown, 2021, p.70). As I did not intend for my journal to provide any significant data to the study's analysis phases, I did not feel it necessary to give the structure of my entries any particular form. What I did feel important to do was to take time to reflect and write after each iSaR session, as I knew from experience of doing other studies, that this would act as a valuable 'sounding-board', helping me with problem-solving and planning, and to just let off steam.

I chose to keep a digital journal, a Reflective Research Journal (RRJ) as in this way, I would be able to store photographs, to remind myself of what had been achieved in the previous sessions, which would also help with session planning. In addition, I kept the journal up to date with the idea that, if I wished to write about my own perceptions and experiences of the value of the iSaR model, at a later date, the data would be there. It was for the above reasons, and that I wished

to centre student-participant experiences, that I did not spend time analysing my RRJ data, but, as mentioned, I do occasionally use extracts to corroborate or enrich student testimony – taking care not to overpower this epistemic space.

4.3.1.3 Supporting staff dataset

4.3.1.3.1 Entry / Exit questionnaire

I devised an *Entry / Exit questionnaire* system which could reveal any changes in the opinion and viewpoint of Supporting staff, as result of their observations of iSaR practice. In the *Entry questionnaire*, they were asked to make predictions of what may happen as a result of iSaR practice, and then, in the *Exit questionnaire*, they were asked to make observations of what did happen. Questions altering only in their use of tense, provided comparable data, as the same scales were used in each, thus aiding analysis of any shifting viewpoints. The same questionnaires were used for both Supporting staff and College leaders of iSaR workshops (illustrated in Table 9 below).

Again, as the study centred the ‘voice’ of learning-disabled participants, these data were used only to further illustrate points already revealed through student datasets in answering RQ1a+b, and used alongside those of college leaders, in RQ2b, to explore shifting viewpoints.

Semi-structured Entry Questionnaires and Exit Questionnaires			
Data type	Method	#	Question/s
Qualitative data	Open questioning	1	What do you foresee/ what did you observe as the main limitations of research activities carried out by the workshop attendees ?
Qualitative data	Open questioning	2	What do you foresee/ what did you observe as the main strengths of research activities carried out by the workshop attendees ?
Qualitative data	Open questioning	3	What autism-specific or disability-specific challenges or strengths do you foresee/ did you observe the group experiencing?
Quantitative data	Likert scale (1-10)	4	How much support do you feel the workshop attendees will <u>require?</u> / did you observe the workshop attendees requiring?
Qualitative data	Open questioning	5	What <i>kind</i> of support do you foresee / did you observe the group needing?
Quantitative data	Closed question (5 options)	5b	Which research stage do you think the group will need most support with / did the group need most support with?
Quantitative data	Likert scale (1-10)	6	How relevant to the needs of the college do you predict their research will be? / was their research?
Qualitative data	Open questioning	6b	Why?
Quantitative data	Likert scale (1-10)	7	How relevant to the needs of the student participants do you predict their research will be, / was their research in terms of Preparing for Adulthood?
Qualitative data	Open questioning	7b	Why?
Qualitative data	Open questioning	8	What skills do you predict attendees of the workshops will develop through participation / did you observe attendees of the workshops developing through participation?

Table 9. Types of questioning methods within Entry and Exit questionnaires for College leaders

4.3.1.3.2 Interviews

The Supporting staff member was interviewed twice. The first interview used the same *Lego reflections* activity as the students were asked to complete (see details in earlier section) and would be recorded and later transcribed.

The second interviewing of the supporting staff member, which was planned to follow the completion of the exit questionnaire was ‘hijacked’ (in a fantastic way – explained later) by the iSaR group, as they asked if they could interview Eluned during her ‘farewell party’. Their interview involved open, impromptu questions such as: ‘*Did you enjoy being with us?*’ and ‘*What will you take from here into your new job?*’. I believed the students did such a good job of Eluned’s interview, that, along with the exit-questionnaire, no other data would be necessary.

4.3.1.4 Student-participants (workshops) dataset

4.3.1.4.1 *Reflections booklets* (See Appendix 4)

I wished to gain some indication of how the iSaR model could be developed in other provisions via a workshop model, and so I designed a series of four, one and a half hour workshops. For those student groups who met the recruitment criteria, I followed the same recruitment processes as with my core iSaR group (as detailed in 4.2.11). I wished to gain participating students’ perceptions of the workshops, at the end of the four-sessions, and so devised *Reflections booklets* for participants to complete.

Being of a limited timescale, I felt that the values most potentially experienced by participants of the workshops would be the key four: *Immediate, Potential,*

Applied and *Realized* Value, and so I constructed my questions around potential experiences of those (as can be viewed in Table 10 below)

Value investigated	Question	Response-type
Immediate Value (Experiences of enjoyment)	Did you enjoy the Student-led Research workshops?	Likert scale 1-5
	What was fun?	Open
	What was boring (Provision 1) / What would make the workshops better (Provision 2)	Open
	Do you want to continue being involved in Student-led research?	Likert scale 1-5
Potential Value (Experiences of increased confidence)	What are you proud of?	Open
	Did the workshops change you in any way?	Likert scale 1-5
	Did you develop more skills?	Open
	Do you have any other ideas for future research in terms of what changes you'd like to see at college?	Open
Applied Value (Experiences of accessible participation)	How easy were the Student-led Research workshops?	Likert scale 1-5
	What was easy?	Open
	What was difficult?	Open
	Do you feel like you fully participated?	Likert scale 1-5
	What made participation difficult?	Open
Realized Value (Experiences of making a difference)	Has your research made any difference to college?	Likert scale 1-5
	What has been done?	Open
	What hasn't been done yet?	Open

Table 10. Questioning in the Reflections booklets relative to potential values experienced.

4.3.1.5 College leaders dataset

4.3.1.5.1 Entry / Exit Questionnaires

College leaders were given the same *Entry / Exit questionnaires* as Supporting staff (see 4.3.1.3.1).

4.3.1.5.2 Interviews

Having returned their completed *Entry / Exit questionnaires*, College leaders from participating provisions would be required to participate in a semi-structured interview a few weeks after the last workshop session to discuss any continuation of the model and to look at their *Entry / Exit questionnaire* responses in more detail (see *Interview Schedule – College leaders* in Appendix 5). They would be asked, for example, whether having observed iSaR sessions, they wished or planned to continue using the iSaR model.

4.4 Part 3- Data analysis methods (RTA)

In this section, I describe, illustrate and justify the data analysis methods chosen to make sense of the findings from each dataset within this study, beginning with data collected from / generated with iSaR core group; the predominant method being Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA).

4.4.1 iSaR core group

4.4.1.1 Attendance data

Spring 24	08.01.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	15.01.24	2	No Sarah
	29.01.24	2	No Laura
	05.02.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	19.02.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	26.02.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	04.03.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	11.03.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	18.03.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	15.04.24	2	No Gabrielle
Gabrielle	9/10	Family holiday	
Laura	9/10	Illness	
Sarah	9/10	Illness	

Table 11. Example of how Attendance data was simply analysed.

By collating the records of attendance in a simple table (see Table 11 above), and including reasoning for absences, I was able to comprehensively analyse patterns of attendance.

4.4.1.2 Battery-level sheets

	Sophie	5/10	Smiley	Happy	3/10	Smiley	Happy	Drained by 2
11/03/24 Interviewing Sophie	Lauren	5/10	Smiley	Happy, but tired	5/10	Smiley	Happy, but tired	Same
	Arielle	4/10	Smiley	Smiley	4/10	Smiley	Smiley	Same
	Sophie	4/10	Smiley	Happy	4/10	Smiley	Happy	Same
04/03/24 Interviewing Lauren	Lauren	5/10	Smiley	Happy	5/10	Smiley	Happy	Same
	Arielle	4/10	Smiley	Smiley	4/10	Smiley	Smiley	Same
	Sophie	6/10	Smiley	Happy	6/10	Smiley	Happy	Same
26/02/24 Interviewing Arielle	Lauren	5/10	Smiley	Happy, but tired	5/10	Smiley	Happy, but tired	Same
	Arielle	3/10	Sad face	Tired	4/10	Smiley	Happy	Energised by 1
	Sophie	7/10	Smiley	Happy	4/10	Smiley	Happy	Drained by 3

Table 12. Example of simple analysis method used for identifying where energy-levels had drained or charged as result of specific activity.

By collating the responses from *Battery-level sheets* in a simple table, I was able to compare the measure of energy, expressed by each participant, at the beginning of a session with that expressed at the end. For example, if a student gave a response of 3/10 at the start of the session and 4/10 at the end, then I described that they had been ‘Energized by 1’ and coloured it green to indicate an increase in energy. In instances where energy levels dropped, if the drop was a difference of one or two battery ‘bars’, then I coloured it amber, but a drop of over two battery ‘bars’ was coloured red. By collating the responses in a table (see Table 12 above), the activities of a particular session could be used in potential explanation for the response scores, and battery-levels could also be

triangulated with emoji expression responses and textual description relating to participant feelings.

4.4.1.3 *Photo-interviews, Traditional interviews, Video-diaries and Value Creation Stories*

Having used *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA) in my MASR study, I knew that I needed to take a different analytical approach with this study, especially as I would be needing to analyse a wide range of qualitative datasets, captured through longitudinal study spanning five academic terms, and that these would also include visual data, generated from the *Lego Reflections activity*. To support my observation of patterns across these datasets, I decided on using *Reflexive Thematic Analysis* (RTA), but would need to deviate slightly from the suggested ‘*six phases of reflexive thematic analysis*’ (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p.35) due to the integrative approach to analysis which I was also intending. Before I explain this last remark, I shall outline the expected phases of RTA below:

Phase	Activity
1	Familiarising yourself with the dataset
2	Coding
3	Generating initial themes
4	Developing and reviewing themes
5	Refining, defining and naming themes
6	Writing up

Table 13. Six phases of RTA (adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2022, p.35-36)

Another difference between IPA and RTA is that, when coding, IPA requires the researcher to identify '*Experiential statements*' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022, p.86) directly from the transcript. With the more reflexive nature of RTA, I must '*situate myself in relation to these data*' (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p.38-39) and use my own interpretation of participant 'voice' in the wording of codes, based on my observations and feelings as researcher and facilitator.

What follows is a more detailed description of the process of analysis I followed:

4.4.1.4 Process of theoretical integration

Interview and diary transcripts were all transcribed verbatim, and manually – as, due to the speech impediments of some students, voice-to-text software proved ineffective in its transcriptions of their voices.

Data generated from interviews, diaries and *Value Creation Stories* were all subjected to a process of analysis which utilised and integrated previously constructed themes - those developed through the pilot study, with those constructed through the processes of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). These themes and subthemes were then further integrated using the *Value Creation Framework*. Therefore, the cycles of coding began deductively, proceeded inductively, and were then finalised deductively, in a six-step process detailed below.

Cycles of coding – a six-step process

1 - (Deductive) Create a deductive codebook (see Table 14 below) using pilot study's themes and subthemes, which were originally inductively analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

The experience of enjoyment, meaning and purpose through research participation		
Focus	Themes (and summary of findings)	Subthemes / codes
Identity (learning as becoming)	1. Accessing memories Participants experience: a) <u>Enjoyment</u> through the happiness of memories accessed b) <u>Meaning</u> by having opportunity, support and tools to reflect on past experiences c) <u>Purpose</u> in having the direction of future research inspired by their memories	• Finding happiness in memories
		• A chance to express hurt feelings and loss
		• Memories increasing anxiety
		• Motivation to [move through loss] and help others
Meaning (learning as experience)	2. Sharing stories, feelings and achievements Participants experience: a) <u>Enjoyment</u> through getting to know each other better b) <u>Meaning</u> through being heard and feeling	• Being heard
		• Concerns regarding who experiences and views are shared with
		• Sharing experience and views could improve

Table 14. Extract from pilot study's *Summary of Findings* (MASR dissertation)

2 - (Inductive) Conduct an inductive analysis of PhD qualitative data working through the steps of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA).

(see Figure 40 below – and example included in Appendix 6 ‘*Laura. Coding.Term 5*’),

Laura. Coding. PAR2.sum 24

- What have you enjoyed about being in the group?**
How well we work as a team. It was nice to see like how we come from a bigger group to a smaller group. It was nice to see the difference.
- What was your favourite moment?**
The conference last week
What the board of governors, what did you like about that?
Just how interested they were.
Yeah, they asked you what skills you felt you'd **developed** and you said **team work**.
- What was a frustrating or difficult moment?**
The journey to Manchester because it took **forever** and we were late.
- Why do you think you kept coming to the group?**
I wanted to see how it progressed. Friendships and it's changed because we lead it, it's different because we lead it. It's different from the SU board.
- Was there ever a day where you didn't want to come to the session?**
No, I've always really enjoyed it.
- What skills have you developed by being in the group?**
Team work, erm, co-operation, erm, I'm trying to think, erm, turn taking.
- How else have you changed by being in the group?**
I've stopped wanting to be interviewed all the time. I think it's because it's changed. It's not about **us**, it's about work experience as a whole. **It's about something bigger than us three**. I've really enjoyed interviewing Abbie.
Yeah, you too couldn't stop, could you, you were both chatting happily away you and Abbie.
It was terrible [laughs]
- Do you feel you've made a difference to anything at college?**
Yes
- What to?**
I've made a difference to work experience because of the booklets. We created them ourselves, me, Arielle and Sophie. We wrote them and run them by Julie the speech therapist to make sure the Makaton symbols were correct. Then showing them off to people. And going to

Reply

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT) Joy of 'being with' group

Reply

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT) Sharing work int/ext

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT) Feeling important

Reply

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT) Skill development - team work

Reply

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT) Accessibility - college based issues

Reply

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT) Views group as friends

Reply

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT) Taking ownership

Reply

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT)

Figure 40. Extract from Laura's final coded interview transcript

3 – Integrate the themes and codes constructed using RTA (cycle 2) with the original themes constructed using IPA (cycle 1): reducing, merging and expanding as appropriate (as shown in Table 15 below and included as Appendix 7 – ‘Deductive codebook integrated’ and Appendix 8 – ‘Matrix showing developing themes and codes. Cycle 3’).

Deductive codebook – data from pilot study (MASR dissertation)			Inductive codes from iSaR interviews	
The experience of enjoyment, meaning and purpose through research participation			The value of iSaR model	
Focus	Themes (and summary of findings)	Subthemes / codes		
Identity (learning as becoming)	1. Accessing memories Participants experience: a) <u>Enjoyment</u> through the happiness of memories accessed b) <u>Meaning</u> by having opportunity, support and tools to reflect on past experiences c) <u>Purpose</u> in having the direction of future research inspired by their memories	Finding happiness in memories	- Appreciates chance to look back and remember - Appreciates opportunity to talk about memories / experiences	Joy in reflection
		A chance to express hurt feelings and loss		
		Memories increasing anxiety		
		Motivation to [move through loss] and help others	- Sense of unfairness - Motivated by own past experiences to help others	
Meaning (learning as experience)	2. Sharing stories, feelings and achievements Participants experience: a) <u>Enjoyment</u> through getting to know each other better b) <u>Meaning</u> through being heard and feeling important c) <u>Purpose</u> through improving the college by sharing their experience and views	Being heard	- Sharing own experience - Feeling listened to - Being taken seriously	Being heard
		Concerns regarding who experiences and views are shared with	- Feeling important - Feeling interesting - Power to choose - Having my say	Feeling important
		Sharing experience and views could improve college	Making a difference!	

Table 15. Initial integration of themes and codes from both analyses – reducing, merging and expanding, as appropriate.

4 - (Deductive) Using a process of theoretical integration, previously constructed themes and codes are integrated with the theoretical concepts of the *Value Creation Framework* (VCF), where themes become cycles of value and codes become dimensions of value (see Table 16 below)

Type of value	Value dimensions (that could be + or -)
Immediate value	What is the experience like? Value lies in the experience of being in the space, regardless of whether it leads to anything Joy in reflection; Sharing experiences + views; Importance of fun + novelty; Sparked interest; Joy of 'being with'; Meeting new people; View group as friends; Feelings of acceptance + belonging; Joy of researching together; Feelings of pride and success
Potential value	What comes out of it? Value lies in what participants can take away – something that has the potential to make a difference Teamwork, Shared aspirations + purpose, Support from ~~Sa~~ team, Feeling interesting and important, Feeling listened to, Choice, Finding out, Making comparisons, Skill development, Feelings of ease and confidence
Applied value	What are you learning in the doing? Value lies in the application... Trialling + evaluating research methods; Adapting research methods, Taking responsibility (equip/tasks), Accessibility issues, Engaging uncertainty; Support from wider college team
Realized value	What difference does it make? Value lies in the difference that participation makes. Demonstrating capability; Making a difference to peer college experience; Production of resources;
Enabling value	What makes it all possible? Values that result from enabling factors and barriers Internal Taking ownership – planning; Designing for future; group size External Scaffolding activities; 'You're a good teacher'; Support; Eluned interviewing Laura
Strategic value	What is the value of engagement with strategic stakeholders? Value lies in the perspective of those who have a stake in making a difference Internal Awareness of group support needs, Prioritizing of concerns and aspirations - voting External Awareness of stakeholders and their influence – Abi, Helen O; Utilising alliances – Marketing team + <u>SALT</u> ; Awareness of peer support needs
Orienting value	Finding yourself in a broader landscape Value lies in locating oneself in a broader historical, cultural and political landscape Internal Understanding each other better; Boundaries (College-based restrictions); Sharing work (int) Booklets + (ext) Conference audiences, Borrowing ideas; Identity as researcher External Wider importance + significance of work, Landscape literature + Landscape presentations
Transformative value	Does the difference you make have broader effects? Value lies in the transformational difference of a social learning experience Internal Interviewing Eluned, Transferable skills – Buddies; Identify as researcher; from peers to housemates External Changes in identity beyond the social learning space

Table 16. Example of how themes and code were integrated within the theoretical concepts of the VCF

5 - Map out occurrences of each theme (value) / code (dimension of value), for each participant, over the entire (qualitative) student datasets. During writing up, remove codes deemed inconsequential or weak and merge those which appear to represent the same idea (see Table 17 below, and also included as Appendix 9 – 'VCF code matrix'.

Value Cycle	Codes	Spr23	Sum23	Aut23	Spr24	Sum24	V-C story 1+2	Video (Aut 23)
		B F G K L Z	B E F G K L Z	G L S	G L S	G L S	G L S	G L S
Immediate	Joy in reflection;							
	Show and tell;							
	Importance of fun + novelty;							
	Sparked interest;							
	Joy of 'being with';							
	Meeting new people;							
	View group as friends;							
	Acceptance + belonging;							
	Joy of researching together;							

Table 17. Example from theme/code mapping matrix, featuring developing themes and codes (22 student interviews)

6 – Plot out occurrences of fully integrated themes and subthemes, experienced by the group within each term (see Table 18 below). Highlight the most experienced values (themes) and dimensions of value (subthemes).

Values (themes)		Codes (subthemes)	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Term 5
Immediate		Importance of fun					
		Joy of 'being with'					
		View group as friends					
		Sparked interest					
Potential		Confidence, pride + success					
		Paying attention to detail					
		Skill development					
		Emerging researchers					
Applied		Accessibility issues					
		Engaging uncertainty					
Realized		Making a difference					
Enabling	Internal	Taking ownership					
		Making research accessible					
	External	Peer support					
		Participatory choices					
Strategic	Internal	Facilitative Support					
		Scaffolding activities					
		Prioritizing group aspirations					
Orienting	Internal	Utilising stakeholder alliances					
		Understanding each other					
		Landscape immersion					
Transformative	Internal	Wider importance					
		Identifying as researchers					
		Transferable skills					
		Transition to adulthood					
		Peers to housemates					

Table 18. Fully integrated themes and subthemes experienced by the group within each term

With the above six-step process of analysis, I believe I followed a highly iterative procedure which honoured the work done previously (pilot study) but was not dictated by it, and one which utilised the *Value Creation Framework* but was not governed by it.

4.4.1.5 Click 'n' drag activities

(Viewed as iSaR's PAR findings, but placed in here as my method also, due to it being an example of co-research informing research processes within both studies)

Responses to the Click 'n' drag activities were collated using a simple table (see Table 19 below), revealing the qualities of the activities as perceived by the iSaR group.

	Fun	Easy	Most info	Overall
Interviews				
Drawing				
Emojis				
Magic box				

Table 19. Table template used to collate and rank iSaR perceptions of the qualities of different methods.

These data were illustrated with interview excerpts relating to the reasonings behind students' perceptions.

4.4.1.6 Lego reflection activity

Alongside other qualitative data from the student datasets, findings from the *Lego Reflection activity* were analysed using RTA, within the iterative six-step coding process mentioned earlier (see Figure 41 below).

13. Lego memories



Gabrielle has positioned herself at the left side, back edge of a base board. From left to right she is first in a line of 5 characters. All characters are lined against the back and facing the front, with a different trophy-like object placed in front of them.

She presented herself as a winged Robin Hood character, tooled up for action with a bow. She has placed the flag from a flagpole on the ground in front of her.

I absolutely love this scene! There is such a sense of shared group purpose – we look like the ninja turtles or something – a coherent group of people, skilled in and tooled up for research!!! Ready to pounce 🐾 There should be a soundtrack!!!

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT)
Sense of belonging - all group represented this time

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT)
Teamwork

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT)
Feeling confident

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT)
Feeling successful

Helen Evans (PhD Education - FT)
shared group purpose

Figure 41. Example of (beginnings of) RTA analysis of Gabriell's final *Lego reflection activity*

4.4.1.7 Photo-based Writing Scaffold

I wanted to be able to reveal and analyse the flow and loops of learning between and across value-cycles, present within the story created by Laura, which would support my answering of RQ1b. *'What were the enablers and disablers of flows of learning between and across value-cycles, experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?'*

As well as a source of contribution data, the data captured within the remaining *Value Creation Stories*, constructed using the *Photo-based Writing Scaffold*, were

4.4.2 Student-participants (workshops)

- *Reflections booklets* (See Appendix 4)

The analysis of data generated by the student-participants of workshops was simplistic, following the same broad process for RTA but as I just wanted to gain a general sense of the value experienced, themes were less interpretative. Responses of a quantitative nature were described more than analysed and used to triangulate responses of a more qualitative nature (see Table 20 below).

Value investigated	Question	Response-type
Immediate Value (Experiences of enjoyment)	Did you enjoy the Student-led Research workshops?	Likert scale 1-5
	What was fun?	Open
	What was boring (Provision 1) / What would make the workshops better (Provision 2)	Open
	Do you want to continue being involved in Student-led research?	Likert scale 1-5
Potential Value (Experiences of increased confidence)	What are you proud of?	Open
	Did the workshops change you in any way?	Likert scale 1-5
	Did you develop more skills?	Open
	Do you have any other ideas for future research in terms of what changes you'd like to see at college?	Open
Applied Value (Experiences of accessible participation)	How easy were the Student-led Research workshops?	Likert scale 1-5
	What was easy?	Open
	What was difficult?	Open
	Do you feel like you fully participated?	Likert scale 1-5
	What made participation difficult?	Open
Realized Value (Experiences of making a difference)	Has your research made any difference to college?	Likert scale 1-5
	What has been done?	Open
	What hasn't been done yet?	Open

Table 20. Questions asked in relation to value investigated.

4.4.3 College leaders

4.4.3.1 Entry / Exit Questionnaires and Interviews

Entry / Exit questionnaires completed by college leaders from provisions hosting iSaR workshops were analysed alongside interview transcripts, mainly to gauge shifting viewpoints or altered practice resulting from workshop participation/ observation. Data were analysed using a more simplistic process of RTA than previously conducted, with which I was able to construct four key themes. I repeat here my determination to centre the ‘voice’ of participants as reason for not dwelling as long on the analysis of staff data as I did on the student datasets.

4.5 Part 4- Other methodological considerations

In this section of the chapter, I detail the practical and ethical considerations required of this study; this includes aspects of access and sampling, recruitment, safeguarding and ethical practice.

4.5.1 Access

I had worked for the host provision since 2011, and so it was relatively easy for me to gain institutional permissions to conduct this research. I had also previously conducted a few small-scale research studies there, which had benefited students from the provision. I was required to send an outline proposal to the senior leadership team, and this was accepted (see Appendix 10).

As mentioned, my familiarity with the institution proved beneficial, but it did not cause any ethical concerns regarding teacher-student power dynamics, because I had not taught any of the students prior to the research.

I also had to seek formal institutional permissions from the leadership teams of the provisions which were going to be hosting the iSaR workshops. As mentioned, this request was aided by the creation and distribution of a guidance document outlining the rationale and principles of iSaR practice. In addition, I had already secured some contacts within these provisions through my work and presentations for Natspec's Learner Voice Practitioner Network, which also aided the process.

4.5.2 Sampling

I did not need to generalise or make '*statistical inferences about the characteristics of the population*' (Saunders *et al.*, 2019, p.296), the population being learning-disabled students who attended a specialist postsecondary college provision, and so I was able to select my participants from within this relatively homogeneous group using purposive, non-probability sampling.

4.5.3 Recruitment criteria

It is a necessary ethical consideration that those approached and invited to participate in research, should be capable of understanding their participatory rights and give informed consent. Having been wrongfully challenged in the past for attempting to include learning-disabled participants in academic research, I

was extremely conscious that ethics committees may need absolute clarity on how I intended to ensure the mental capacity of potential participants. I began by setting measurable parameters within my recruitment criteria, which would clearly signal, to those unaccustomed to learning-disability, a ‘safe’ level of ability and, therefore capacity to give informed consent. Firstly, potential participants would need to be working at Entry 3 or above in Communication (Functional Skills English), as this would prove that they could, for example, *‘Identify and extract relevant information and detail in straightforward explanations [,] Follow and understand the main points of discussions [and] Communicate information and opinions clearly on a range of topics* (Department for Education, online, 2025).

As the host college also conducted assessments of students’ *‘Blanks levels of understanding’* (Blank, Rose and Berlin, 1978), which is discussed later in this chapter, I was also able to require participants to have been assessed within the two higher levels of understanding (3 or 4). This would clearly indicate to ethics committees that participants would be able to understand and initiate ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions, and combined with their Functional Skills levels, this would prove their ability to understand their participatory rights and give informed consent.

Only students who fitted the following criteria in Table 21 were approached:

Participating students must:	
1	be over 18 years old
2	be a student at a specialist postsecondary provision
3	have a diagnosis of an intellectual disability
4	be working at Entry 3 or above in Communication (Functional Skills)
5	be assessed as having ability to answer questions involving “why” and “how”. (Blanks level of understanding assessed at 3 or 4 by Speech and Language Therapist team)

Table 21. Recruitment criteria checklist

4.5.4 Recruitment process

4.5.4.1 Core iSaR group recruitment

Recruitment event– Having first consulted the Functional Skills Co-ordinator, twelve students were identified as meeting recruitment criteria for participation in the study, using the college's progress and assessment records. These students were invited to a lunchtime recruitment event by email (see Figure 43 below), and by flyers delivered by hand, as not all students accessed their emails regularly. I purposefully used images from the pilot study in the flyer, as these captured the sorts of activities the students would be participating in, and the images were of students just like them. The timing of the event was chosen to allow interested students to eat lunch prior to attending, whilst also to not miss or arrive late to any afternoon sessions.



Figure 43. Recruitment event invite flyer

Of the twelve students invited, eight attended the recruitment event which, despite my attempts to engage other staff, was facilitated solely by me. During the event, students experienced the kind of activities they would be doing once participating in my research and conducting their own research. These activities are described in more detail in the upcoming section: '*Experientially-informed consent*' (4.2.12).

The activities were embedded in an informative and easy-read presentation, outlining the details of participation including venue, scheduling, facilitator details, participant rights and researcher expectations. I issued a printed booklet of this presentation (see Appendix 11) to those attendees who remained interested in further participation, and were willing to forego their future, timetabled Monday enrichment sessions to participate in iSaR enrichment sessions. They were able to keep hold of the booklet and take it home with them to consult with their family / carers, if they wished. It was important to give them plenty of time to decide and to allow this to include parental / carer guidance, as many of the invitees were residential students who only returned home for holidays.

Term 1 - At the beginning of this term, interested students completed an easy-read *consent booklet* (see Appendix 12) and completed a *research profile* (see Appendix 13), detailing any support needs I would need to be aware of. At the end of this first term, iSaR group members were asked individually, during their termly multi-modal interview, if they wished to participate the following (Summer) term.

Subsequent terms - At the end of each term, iSaR group members were asked individually if they wished to participate in iSaR sessions the following term.

4.5.4.2 Supporting staff member recruitment

I produced an e-poster which was distributed to all college staff. The supporting staff member was then issued with project information, a *consent form* (see Appendix 14) to sign, and an *entry questionnaire* (see Appendix 5) to complete.

4.5.4.3 iSaR workshops (participating staff and students) recruitment

Two out of the four provisions (P1 and P2) hosting iSaR workshops selected class groups who were eligible to be recruited as research participants according to my criteria. The other two provisions recruited a college leader as participant, as the selected groups were of mixed ability levels and therefore not eligible to be recruited as participants according to my criteria. Table 22 below gives an overview of the provisions hosting iSaR workshops; those shaded yellow indicate the provisions where students were recruited as participants.

Provision #	Provision type	Group type	# students in group	Eligibility as research participants?	# Workshop sessions
One (P1)	Small satellite, specialist provision run by host college	Selected individuals	Six	Y	Four
P1 research focus: <i>Food budget issues + need for another quiet area</i>					
Two (P2)	General Further Education college (Supported Learning programme)	Selected class group	Eight	Y	Four
P2 research focus: <i>Improvement of enrichment sessions</i>					
Three (P3)	Specialist college provision in Wales	Student council group	Four	N (none would be eligible)	Four
P3 research focus: <i>Areas for sensory regulation</i>					
Four (P4)	Specialist college provision - Host	Student council group	Twelve	N (only five would be eligible)	Eight
P4 research focus: <i>Improvement of break-time activities</i>					

Table 22. Details of host provisions and student group participation in workshops.

What follows is the recruitment process involved in delivering iSaR workshops at four different provisions:

Provisions 1 (P1) and 2 (P2)

- Students and staff approached and invited to participate
- Provision leaders emailed and sent *iSaR Practitioner Guide* (see Appendix 1) along with *iSaR Workshop consent forms* (see Appendix 15)
- Participating students were pre-selected by provision leaders, using recruitment criteria (Table 22 above)
- First session used as recruitment event with activities to ensure experientially-informed consent (see 4.2.12)
- Students issued with *Easy-read consent form* and *Research profile* (see Appendix 16)

Provisions 3 (P3) and 4 (P4):

- Staff approached to participate (student group not meeting recruitment criteria)
- Workshops delivered with provisions' Student Council groups.
- Provision leaders emailed and sent *iSaR Practitioner Guide* (see Appendix 1) along with *iSaR Workshop consent forms* (see Appendix 15)

4.5.5 (Experientially) informed consent

'Informed consent must be more than a one-off signing of a piece of paper worded in jargonistic language.' (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003, p.158)

I coined the phrase '*experientially informed consent*' as I felt that this was what was needed to ensure students gained a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of research prior to consenting, as research is an abstract concept until linked with concrete experience/s.

It was for this purpose that I developed some fun research 'taster' activities for recruitment events:

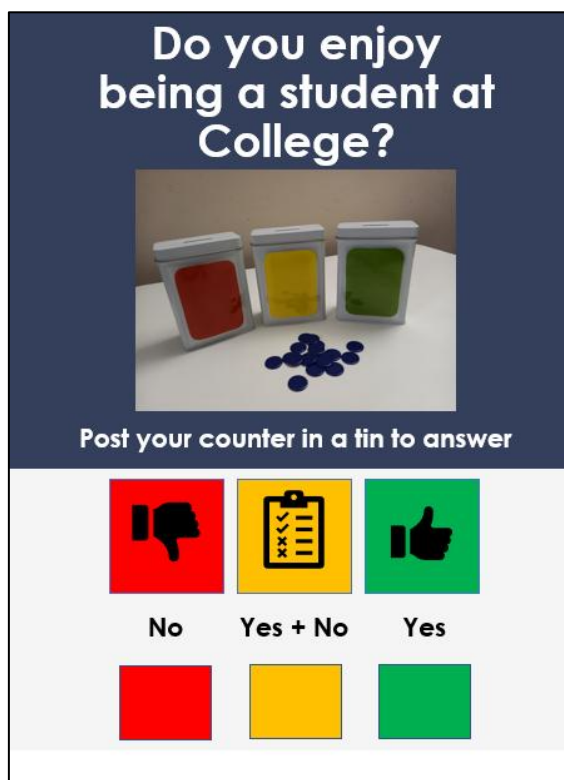


Figure 44. *Taster activity 1*

The research question chosen for *Taster activity 1* (see Figure 44 above) kept to a familiar context for the students: 'Do you enjoy being a student at college?'. The Activity involved three (openable) money-box tins placed on a table. The tins were colour-coded to provide three responses: 'No', 'Yes + No' and 'Yes'. Students were given a counter each to 'post' into a tin. (The counter was a different colour

to avoid confusion with sorting activities). They could then, as a group, count the total responses and record them. The activity was designed to be accessible, tangible and fun, so as not to provoke participation anxiety.

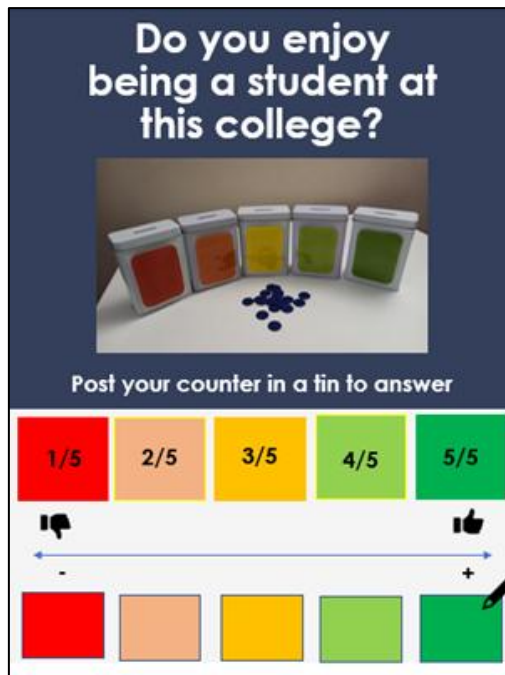


Fig 45. *Taster activity 2*

The activity was then repeated in *Taster activity 2* (see Figure 45 above), but this time there were five tins, providing slightly more nuanced responses: 1/5, 2/5, 3/5, 4/5, 5/5 and adding a level of difficulty.

Students were then asked:

- if/how their responses had changed with more response options
- what results told them /didn't tell them about experiences of being at college
- if they could think of better ways of asking the same question

These questions supported participants' understanding of what the term 'research' might mean as it reflected the type of research work they would be doing as iSaR researchers – when thinking of different ways to ask a question and evaluating the accessibility and appropriacy of research methods.

4.5.6 Ethical considerations

The ethics involved in ensuring participant understanding of participatory implications and rights within the consent process has already been addressed, but what I wish to add, as a further ethical consideration here, regarding cognition, is the risk associated with using a theoretical frame, to analyse and disseminate findings, which participants cannot understand, thus excluding them from understanding the findings; there seems little value in going to great effort in creating accessible research processes, when excluding participants from this important process. When I first decided to utilize the VCF as a lens through which I would make sense of student testimonial data, I was unwilling to exclude participants from engaging in *high-brow* theory or confuse them with what would seem jargonistic to them. As result, I created an easy-read version of the VCF, and introduced participants to the theory incrementally and then experientially, through the *Photo-based Writing Scaffold*. In this way, when I shared my findings with them, they would understand and feel included as co-researchers.

4.5.6.1 Ethical approval

Ethical approval was gained from Humanities and Social Sciences Committee-ERN_2023-0513 - 27/02/23.

The document is available in Appendix (17), but listed below, I detail included features as well as other ethical considerations regarding participatory overwhelm, safeguarding and participatory rights.

4.5.6.2 Safeguarding participants

4.5.6.2.1 Participatory overwhelm

As noted within the study's ethics application (see Appendix 17), the risk of overwhelm for participants was limited due to college systems already in place. These systems included the allocation of a tutor (education) and key worker (care) for each student attending college, providing individualised and monitored care and support. These staff members were made aware of their allocated student's participation in the study and prompted to make enquiries into how the sessions were going for them (and to notify me of concerns). There was also the option to signpost a participating student to a team of trained counsellors employed by the provision, should the need arise.

Within the PAR process, there was much uncertainty around what issue the group would choose to research, and this created a risk of emotional overwhelm, as addressed in my Ethics application:

'The risks involved depend on the issues participants 'bring to the table'.

Some of these may trigger past, negative memories or current emotive

issues yet resolved. Any significant impact observed will be forwarded to relevant key people, such as personal tutors, key workers or counsellors using the college 'Nourish' IT system. In addition, I will work closely under the guidance of my supervisors through any such occurrence.'
(ERN_2023-0513, p.16)

Another risk with potential to create participatory overwhelm relates to the demands of Participatory Research, whereby participants are expected to participate fully in every aspect of the research process. Throughout this study, participation has been understood to only be as 'full' as possible, appropriate and desired, thus reducing such risk.

4.5.6.2.2 Provision safeguarding procedures and processes

As session leader for a timetabled activity, I was required to follow a strict safeguarding procedure at the start of any session, reporting any absent student within the first five minutes of each session start, alerting a dedicated team to ascertain the whereabouts of the missing student thereafter. This was due to the campus being open to the public and it being of a large size. Other procedures were more standard in terms of safeguarding, adherence to which involved my familiarization with the college's numerous policies, including anti-bullying, online safety and Prevent and the completion of regular safeguarding training.

I was also required to familiarize myself with the more specific risks relating to individual students; each student had an individualised risk assessment attached to their care plan, and I had access to these to better inform me of potential issues

and best practice when working with each individual. I also had access to a digital reporting system (Nourish) to share information regarding students between areas across the campus (residential, curriculum, care etc) throughout the day.

4.5.6.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

It is seen as best practice for research dissemination involving participants with learning disabilities to make the participant demographics as detailed as possible, given that *‘the term “intellectual disabilities” can include people with varying intellectual and functional abilities’* (Scanlon, 2013 in Rose *et al.*, 2019, p.1008). This practice also gives readers a clearer idea of the diagnoses and communication levels of participants, to support replication in the future by other practitioners, if wished.

Although all participants gave me permission to use their name and image for dissemination of the project in my reporting, I was advised to use pseudonyms. This I have done, but when it came to the publishing of participants’ easy-read booklets, I insisted on their real names being used, as the rightful owners of the work. This was also something the participants wanted. Laura, in particular, had future aspirations to become an author, and so by removing her name from these booklets would signal to her that her deepest wish was unachievable and be ethically wrong –an act of epistemic injustice. I shall discuss in Chapter 6 the opportunity which later arose for Laura to co-author a book chapter with me, around our experiences of inclusive participatory research. With this opportunity,

I was glad that Laura could receive some recognition for her efforts – as she would be able to use her real name, if wished.

I decided to use student-participant images within this report, for which they also gave permissions, as I felt that these images reveal the competence of the students more effectively than textual description could and give a more accurate picture of activities, so they could be replicated in the future by other practitioners, if wished. I anonymized the photographs showing other students though, using digital sticker-coverage, as I did not request or receive consent to use these photographs. Students wanted to be seen as competent and were proud of all their work, therefore they were more than happy for me to share their images in presentations and reports. I saw it as my ethical responsibility, as researcher, to disrupt common assumptions in promoting learning-disabled students' ability and competence in completing research, which is commonly viewed as a complex and intellectual pursuit.

4.5.6.4 Right to withdraw

Participants' right to withdraw from the research was communicated within the easy-read Consent form (see Appendix 12), which stated:

'If you do not want to carry on doing the project, you can stop doing it (withdraw from it).

You have two weeks to ask me to delete or change anything you have shared with me or the research group.'

This latter statement protected myself and the participants, so I would not be working on data that was about to be removed, and students' details and data would not be quoted if they did not want them to be, having left the group.

On a practical and informal level, I ensured I would be visibly un-affected if a student declared they did not want to participate any more. This would signal to other members that it is indeed ok to withdraw if they wished.

4.5.6.5 Participatory relationships

The relationships built between researcher and participants can be strong and transcend the roles originally allocated, especially over a prolonged amount of time. It was therefore important to mark the end of the study and celebrate successes, and this was achieved with an in-session, end-of-study party, a tea-and-cake celebration in the college café, and the formal distribution of participatory certificates (see Chapter 5). I chose to keep in email contact with participants so that I could potentially share updates regarding the further distribution and use of their research outputs after the students transitioned out of college, and so that I could share an easy-read summary of my findings with them.

4.5.6.6 Epistemic justice

Viewing this thesis of doctoral research as public platform, I felt it was my ethical duty to include, and cite, as many authors who were '*experts by experience*' as possible, to promote epistemic justice for this, often overlooked, group. By

‘experts by experience’, I mean learning-disabled authors (Keagan-Bull, 2022), their family members (Unwin, 2025) and other disabled authors (Lehrer, 2020 and Oliver, 2004).

4.5.6.7 Closure

I felt that it was ethically important to ensure participants felt a sense of closure to the study. For this purpose, I planned and actioned the following proceedings:

Presentation – The opportunity to present the summative results of their research efforts to members of college leadership, and gain recognition for the work achieved.

Certification – presentation of a Certificate of Participation (Appendix 18) which itemised the specific research skills developed, which came with a £20 Amazon ‘thank-you’ voucher.

Celebration – a marker signalling the end of the project: tea and cake at the Café, and a last session ‘party’.

Continued dialogue – to ensure an avenue for continued dialogue (email) through which to share output updates and future research/dissemination opportunities.

4.6 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to describe and justify a rather complex research design; one which collects data from several sources in a multitude of ways. All the above methods of data collection / generation feature

in the next chapter, as I tell the story of the research chronologically and share its findings and insights.

CHAPTER 5. THE VALUE-EXPERIENCES OF THE CORE ISAR GROUP

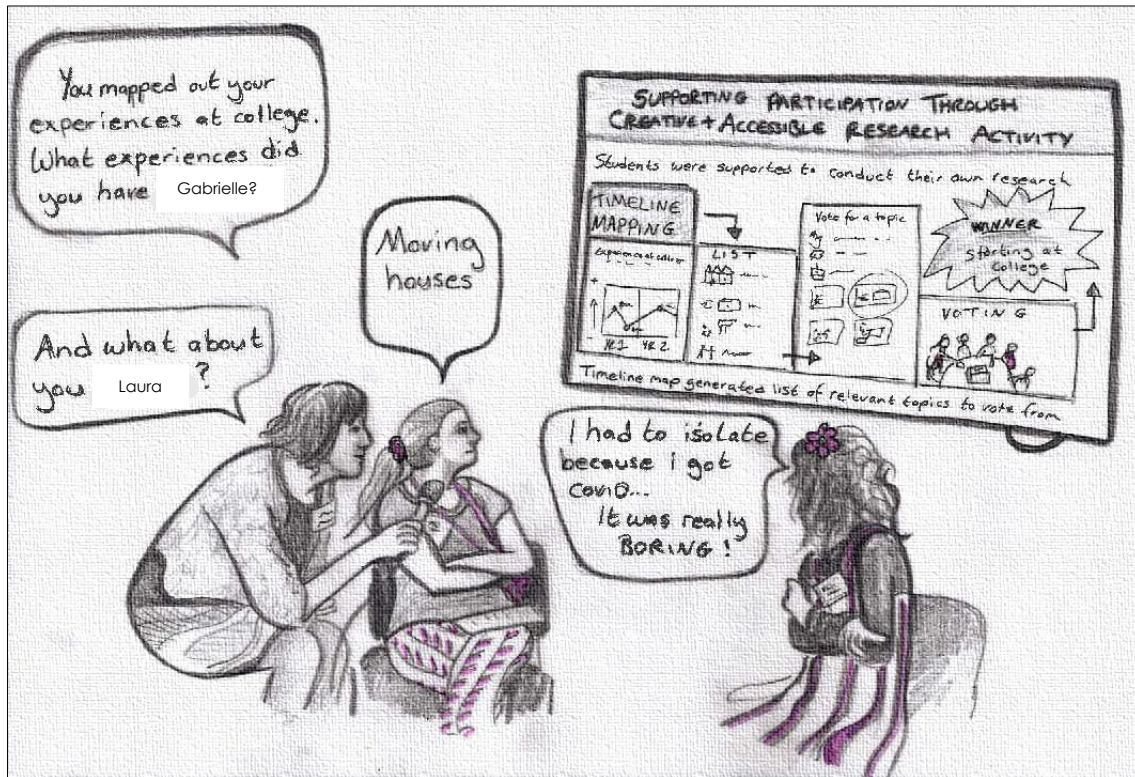


Figure 46. 'Journey to the Conference' Part 5

Explaining 'Timeline mapping' to conference delegates.

5.1 Introduction

'Everything is infused in possibility, and the curious are looking for that'
(Pullman, 2025, 20:17-20:22)

This chapter has been organised into two parts, in attempt to answer the two research questions relating to the value-experiences of the core iSaR group.

Part 1 - follows the research story of a group of (initially) seven learning-disabled students, who were supported to engage in iSaR activity over a period of five

academic terms. Within this section, I attempt to clearly disseminate findings pertaining to research question 1a: *What was the value of an Inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory ‘voice’, as perceived and experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?* These findings were analysed using the study’s (mostly qualitative) effect data, with which student-participant experiences of individual value-cycles could be postulated.

Part 2 – follows the flow of learning, across value-cycles, experienced by one core iSaR group participant during the group’s final PAR study. By focussing on one *Value Creation Story* here, it is hoped to depict a coherent picture of the journey of value creation. Within this section, I attempt to disseminate these findings and answer the research question 1b: *‘What were the enablers and disablers of flows of learning between and across value-cycles, experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?’*. These findings were analysed using the study’s (fully qualitative) contribution data, in attempt to also reveal how iSaR activity might contribute to the development of agency and self-determination.

5.2 Part 1 – RQ.1a

‘What was the value of an Inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory ‘voice’, as perceived and experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?’

5.2.1 Section Overview

The section's focus rests on the research activities of the core iSaR group. To enable the coherence and flow of the story of this research, I followed a chronological schematic, taking each of the five academic terms in turn, telling the research story and addressing the key values presented within student datasets from each. Given the research's longitudinal approach, as the chapter unfolds, its participants' development can be observed clearly.

Although I have included excerpts from non-student participants (researcher and supporting staff) to corroborate student testimonies, the focus remains upon the students' voices, and therefore the value-cycles discussed are *only* those articulated by participating students from the core iSaR student group.

The table below provides overview of datasets and methods used within this section of the chapter:

RQ. No.	Research Question	Datasets	Data collection / generation methods used
1a.	What was the value of an Inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice', as perceived and experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?	core iSaR student group	Attendance register Battery-level sheets Photo-interviews Traditional interviews Click n' drag activities Video-diaries Lego reflection activity
		Researcher	Reflexive journal
		Supporting staff	Interviews Entry / Exit questionnaire
Method/s and scope of dissemination: Chronological schematic, spanning the entirety of five-term fieldwork period with the core iSaR student group at host college.			

Table.23. Table detailing order and methods of dissemination, relating to RQ1a.

5.2.2 Participants

Of the eight students who attended the recruitment event, one dropped out after the first two sessions (so their details have been removed), and seven went on to participate in the first two terms of fieldwork. Two participants from this initial group continued throughout the final three terms of fieldwork and were joined by one other participant for these. Their anonymized profiles are shared in Table 24 below (in alphabetical order, according to their pseudonym).

Name	Gender	Age (Term 1)	Disability (according to Admissions data)	Terms of participation
Barry	M	20	Moderate learning disability. Autism. Dyspraxia.	2
Emma	F	18	Moderate learning disability. Cerebral palsy.	2
Fran	F	20	Autism. Moderate learning disability. Visual impairment.	2
Gabriela	F	20	Autism. Learning disability.	5
Kelly	F	21	Developmental language disorder. Learning disability. ADHD. Epilepsy. Visual impairment.	2
Laura	F	19	Learning disability. Chronic lung disease. Heart disease. Visual impairment.	5
Lizzy	F	18	Turner syndrome. Learning disability. Anxiety.	2
Sarah	F	22	Autism. Epilepsy. Hydrocephalus. Moderate learning disability.	3

Table 24. Summary of core iSaR group participants

The profile of participants, in relation to their multiple diagnoses of cognitive, physical and sensory impairments, was typical of attendees of specialist postsecondary provisions. Of the total eight participants, all were recorded as having a learning disability, four were diagnosed as autistic, three had visual impairment, two had epilepsy and at least one had significant health conditions. The mean age of participants in their first term of participation was nineteen and three-quarters, with the youngest participants being eighteen and the oldest being twenty-two years old.

As stipulated by recruitment criteria, all participants were working at Entry level three in Functional English (communication), and all had been assessed by the SALT team as to having a Blanks level of understating at Levels 3 or 4.

The male: female ratio of 1:7 is interesting as it (almost) mirrors the all-female participation of my MASR study.

5.2.3 Overview of themes and subthemes constructed

Table 25 below gives an overview of findings from student datasets spanning five academic terms of fieldwork with the core iSaR student group. Codes and values were constructed iteratively through detailed analysis of the complete collection of core iSaR student group datasets. Codes emboldened within the table below indicate where a code was significantly present in *every* term's dataset.

To avoid repetition and maintain flow of the research story, I will not detail *every* instance where a code was present. The absence of value / codes in any term only indicates they were not present within the student datasets of that term, not that they were not experienced by the students or others involved; they were just not articulated.

Values (themes)		Codes (subthemes)	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Term 5
Immediate		Importance of fun					
		Joy of 'being with'					
		View group as friends					
		Sparked interest					
Potential		Confidence, pride + success					
		Paying attention to detail					
		Skill development					
		Emerging researchers					
Applied		Accessibility issues					
		Engaging uncertainty					
Realized		Making a difference					
Enabling	Internal	Taking ownership					
		Making research accessible					
		Peer support					
	External	Participatory choices					
		Facilitative Support					
		Scaffolding activities					
Strategic	Internal	Prioritizing group aspirations					
	External	Utilising stakeholder alliances					
Orienting	Internal	Understanding each other					
	External	Landscape immersion					
		Wider importance					
Transformative	Internal	Identifying as researchers					
		Transferable skills					
		Transition to adulthood					
		Peers to housemates					

Table 25. Table mapping values and codes present in core iSaR student group datasets from each academic term .

From here on in, values will also be treated as themes, and codes will be referred to as subthemes, and dissemination will run chronologically from values experienced in Term 1 through to those experienced in Term 5.

5.2.4 Term 1

5.2.4.1 Pre-recruitment information sessions

As can be seen in Table 26 below, the lunchtime information session was attended by eight of the thirteen invited students matching the recruitment criteria. They all engaged in the activities, described in the previous chapter, and took an information booklet about the research away with them, so that they could discuss the opportunity with family and/or care staff.

5.2.4.2 Overview of Term 1 – the research training term

The plan for the term was to cover an assortment of creative methods, but as the students were keen to *each* have a go at leading a guided tour of their own residence, there was no time left in the term to explore other methods. There were, however, two additional opportunities to engage in ‘Research experience’ this term, namely experience of the Inclusive Research landscape: a book launch talk held at the host college, and an online Inclusive Research group meeting: the *Yellow Tulip Group* meeting, hosted by Kingston University, London (See Table 26 below).

At the end of this term, I conducted multi-modal interviews with participants; students were interviewed using a novel *photo-interview* method as well as a more *traditional interview* method.

Phase	Date	Duration	Attendance	Activity	Notes
Recruitment	21.11.22	½ hr	8/13 invited	Lunchtime info+taster session	
Training	09.01.23	1hr	7	1. Taster session	No Lizzy
	16.01.23	1hr	8	2. Intro to sessions / research etc	FULL HOUSE
Research experience	17.01.23	1hr	1	Talk by Richard Keegan-Bull re. researcher role at Kingston	Laura asked lots of great questions
	23.01.23	1hr	6	3. Methods of voting (Show of hands/ Clap-o-meter)	No Lizzy. Member left group
	30.01.23	1hr	6	4. Method of voting cont. (Physical debate) – ‘Trips’ won vote	No Lizzy
	06.02.23	1hr	6	5. Questionnaire – RQ: ‘What is the experience of college trips?’	No Emma
	13.02.23	1hr	7	6. Interviews - Trips	FULL HOUSE
SPRING HALF TERM					
	27.02.23	1hr	6	7. Planning of Day student walking interview – RQ: ‘What is the experience of day students at college?’	Fran- made president of SUB Barry – Corner House rep No Barry (ill)
	06.03.23	1hr	7	8. Day student walking interview	FULL HOUSE
	13.03.23	1hr	7	9. Planning of Bungalows walking interview – RQ: ‘What is the experience of residential students at college?’	FULL HOUSE
	20.03.23	1hr	6	10. Bungalow 10/11 walking interview	No Lizzy
	27.03.23	1hr	6	11. Bungalow 1 walking interview	No Gabrielle (Family holiday)
Research experience	28.03.23	1hr	1	‘Yellow Tulip Group’ with Laura	Inclusive research interest group
1 st term interviews – Barry wished to leave group and Kelly not sure					
EASTER BREAK – Advertised for role of Co-researcher staff member – recruited Eluned from Marketing					

Table 26. Table showing overview of core iSaR group participation during Term 1 with notes.

As can be seen from Table 27 below, the students' participatory experiences and perceptions, articulated within Term 1's datasets, featured five of the eight values: *Immediate*, *Potential*, *Applied*, *Enabling* and *Orienting*. These values will now be explored, as themes, in turn through data from student datasets, punctuated by excerpts from my *reflexive research journal* (RRJ). *Immediate* value will also be explored through additional effect data: attendance data (every term) and check-in/out data from *Battery-level sheets* (Term 1 and Term 5).

Values (themes)		Codes (subthemes)	Term 1
Immediate		Importance of fun	
		Joy of 'being with'	
		View group as friends	
		Sparked interest	
Potential		Confidence, pride + success	
		Paying attention to detail	
		Emerging researchers	
Applied		Accessibility issues	
		Engaging uncertainty	
Enabling	Internal	Taking ownership	
		Making research accessible	
	External	Participatory choices	
Orienting	Internal	Understanding each other	
	External	Landscape immersion	

Table 27. Overview of themes and subthemes present in Term 1 datasets

5.2.4.3 *Immediate* value

5.2.4.3.1. Theme overview

Immediate value can be simply described as '*the feelings that come from being with each other and learning together*' (Appendix 19). If a student were to experience positive *Immediate* value, they would be getting something out of just

being there, '*regardless of whether or not it leads to something else*' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.80).

5.2.4.3.2. Attendance data

Given that motivation to attend should (theoretically) increase when positive *Immediate* value is experienced, attendance data will be used here as a form of 'voice', and as indication (not proof) of the levels of *Immediate* value experienced.

Eight students were recruited onto the study and timetabled to attend iSaR group sessions, but one student did not attend after the first two sessions. I received a message from their house staff to say they would not be coming. As I was unable to gain a clear understanding of the student's refusal to attend, I presumed an experience of *negative Immediate* value, and took them off my register.

Table 28 below contains the attendance records from Term 1. In my journal, I recorded that Barry had missed one session due to illness and Gabrielle had missed one session for a family holiday. Unfortunately, Lizzy had missed four sessions due to experiencing social, emotional and/or mental health (SEMH) issues, but I ensured that a safe space was held for her and that she was greeted positively on her return. Kelly, Fran, Laura and Emma had attended every session. This effect data does suggest the positive *Immediate* value experienced by those who chose to stay in the group.

Spring 23	09.01.23	7	No Lizzy
	16.01.23	8	FULL HOUSE
	23.01.23	6	No Lizzy
	30.01.23	6	No Lizzy
	06.02.23	6	No Emma
	13.02.23	7	FULL HOUSE
	27.02.23	6	No Barry
	06.03.23	7	FULL HOUSE
	13.03.23	7	FULL HOUSE
	20.03.23	6	No Lizzy
	27.03.23	6	No Gabrielle

Table 28. Register of attendance for Term 1

5.2.4.3.3. Check-in/ Check-out data from *Battery-level sheets*

Experiences of positive *Immediate* value could cause one's energy levels to increase and the completed *battery-levels sheets* cast a positive picture of how students' energy levels had (mostly) been 'charged' within a given session. Table 29 below reveals that, for the majority of sessions, students' energy levels had increased throughout the session (indicated in green). 23 sheets indicated raised energy levels, 9 indicate no change in energy levels (white), and only 5 sheets indicate a (slight) drop in energy levels (amber). This gives a good indication of the positive *Immediate* value experienced within sessions.

Date and activity	Student	Check-in battery level	Check-out battery level	Diff.
09.01.23 – Taster activity session	-	-	-	-
16.01.23 – Consent and overview	Emma	2.5	4	+1.5
	Lizzy	1	6	+5
23.01.23 – Trialling show of hands and clap-o-meter	Laura	6	9	+3
30.01.23 – Trialling physical debate and blind ballot voting	Laura	3	5.5	+2.5
06.02.23 – Trialling questionnaires – college trips	Fran	4.5	9	+4.5
	Gabrielle	4	4	0
	Kelly	2	3.5	+1.5
	Laura	3	2	-1
	Lizzy	6	10	+4
13.02.23 – Conducting interviews – college trips	Emma	6.5	10	+3.5
	Fran	2.5	9	+6.5
	Gabrielle	2	8	+6
	Kelly	9	9	0
	Laura	2	4	+2
	Lizzy	7	10	+3
27.02.23 – Planning of Day student building guided-tour interview	Emma	5	9	+4
	Fran	2	9	+7
	Gabrielle	2	2	0
	Kelly	10	9	-1
	Laura	2	4	+2
	Lizzy	5	8	+3
06.03.23 – Guided tour of day student building	Emma	6.5	5	-1.5
	Fran	2.5	10	+7.5
	Gabrielle	2	2	0
	Kelly	9	10	+1
	Laura	4	5	+1
	Lizzy	10	10	0
13.03.23 – Planning of bungalow guided tour interview	Barry	9	10	+1
	Emma	4	6	+2
	Fran	9	9	0
	Gabrielle	2.5	8	+5.5
	Kelly	9	9	0

Table 29. Findings from fully completed Battery-level sheets.

5.2.4.3.4. Overview of *Immediate* value subthemes

The subthemes constructed within the *Immediate* value theme which were present in student datasets for this first term were: ‘The importance of fun’, ‘Joy of ‘being with’, ‘View group as friends’ and ‘Sparked interest’. I shall now explore each of these in turn.

5.2.4.3.5. The importance of fun

To many core iSaR student group members, fun was a major influential factor in their initial *and* continued participation in the project, and therefore in their experiences of positive *Immediate* value. The theme was present throughout every term's dataset, a fact which emphasizes its import. During this first term, the theme can be found in Laura's expectations for participation:

I: What did you expect the research group to be like before you came?

L: I don't know. Just like fun and debates. (L1, p.2)

These expectations were informed somewhat by the (fun) taster sessions delivered as part of the recruitment process.

Photographs that captured a sense of fun were often picked by students to talk about during termly photo-interviews:

I: Describe what's happening in that photo?

B: Looks like we were all having fun in that! (B1, p.1)

The element of fun was of particular importance to Gabrielle, who makes mention or allusion to it in every single interview over her five terms of participation. In this first interview, she shared an idea for future research, based on fun:

I: What else do you want to know about trips?

A: Fun.

I: What, if they're having fun on trips? Like: 'Do you have fun on trips?'

A: Yes.' (G1, p.2)

5.2.4.3.6 Joy of 'being with'

The joy that iSaR group members felt by purely being in each other's company, regardless of task, is worthy of a theme of its own. The subtheme directly appears in the student datasets from four out of the five terms. That participants felt joy in being together as a group was evident from the first round of photo-interviews, where four participants chose a photograph featuring the whole group to talk about. Lizzy shared her appreciation of the group photograph, captured by a passing member of staff:

'I: And what made you choose that photo?

Z: I just really like it because it's got all of us in the group, the whole group together and that's why I like it.' (Z1, p.7)

For Barry, the group was, in this first term at least, the strongest incentive for participation:

'I: What was the best thing about the sessions?

B: Spending time with all the guys and you.' (B1, p.2)

Although, for Fran, it was the continuing participation of one specific group member (her best friend, Gabrielle) which may have influenced her own decision to continue in the group for a second term:

I: Do you want to carry on and be part of that group?

F: Yeah... Does Gabrielle? (F1, p.2)

5.2.4.3.7. View group as friends

Some group members, such as Fran and Gabrielle, started out as already-established friends but more came to view each other as friends by the end of the first term. Kelly, for example, began to *refer* to the group as her friends:

I: How are you feeling in that photograph?

K: Happy to be with my friends. (K1, p.1)

I believe a fondness was nurtured within group sessions, and developed further into friendship as a direct result of ‘being with’ each other and sharing experiences:

‘I was happy because I could talk to my friends about what it’s like to live as a residential student’ (L1, p.2)

This theme is also present in student datasets from all five terms, evidencing the strength of the connections built and maintained within the group over time. It also reveals the importance, to participants, of being with a group of people they can see as friends, and this potentially ensures their experiences of positive *Immediate* value and continued participation.

5.2.4.3.8. Sparked interest

The project certainly ignited the curiosity of its participants; they were curious about each other and were interested in finding out about each other’s views, choices and experiences. This theme appears in the student datasets from four

out of the five terms, signalling a strong impact on their experience of positive *Immediate* value.

That the sessions would be interesting, was an expectation influenced by the introductory taster sessions delivered as part of the recruitment process. Fran decided to join the group because it *'looked very interesting – researching other things'* (F1, p.2), and Kelly felt that *'it would be interesting to see who voted on, like, what topic'* (K1, p.2). For Lizzy, however, it was the fact that her friends had participated in my MASR project the previous year which had influenced her decision to join: *'And they were saying how – and I just heard, like, how interesting it is – doing it and stuff, so that's why.'* (Z1, p.2). Lizzy had not been recruited for the MASR study, as she was not at that point 18 years old.

From my reflexive journals, I am reminded of the students' initial curiosity about the project and how I was asked *'lots of impromptu questions [...] by students regarding how the idea for the project began'* (RRJ, p.3) and how, after the first session, I was *'relieved that I was able to connect with students and 'pricked' their interest.'* (RRJ, p.3).

The research activity which seemed to spark the most interest, for all members, were the *'guided tour interviews'*, where Day Students planned and facilitated a guided tour of their area of college, whilst Residential Students planned a schedule of questions to ask as they were guided around; they were also encouraged to ask questions ad hoc. The groups then swapped, and the focus was on the Residential Students. These two groups had previously no idea how

the other experienced college life. Barry, a day student, reported how interesting the activity was: *'It's been a good time with different people. It was interesting finding out what they did.'* (p.1). And Kelly, a residential student (who had spent several years in a residential special school before starting college), found her interest captured on visiting the college's day provision area:

I: Can you just describe what's happening in that photograph?

K: Erm, we're in [name of day provision], and Emma and Barry are taking us on a guided tour, erm, and we asked them lots of questions about what was it's like to be a day student. And I found it interesting (K1, p.1)

Lizzy also commented on how interesting it was *'learning about what it's like for the day students'* (Z1, p.1).

Laura shared that *'going around the houses'* (L1, p.3) was the highlight of the training term. In my journal that week, I noted that Laura was *'the only student who asked additional questions to clarify things'* (RRJ, p.19) demonstrating her sparked interest, and also perhaps, her innate curiosity. The fact that Laura was more confident in Day Student areas than the other residential students in the group, could also provide an explanation of this difference, as Laura would often visit friends there, so was used to the building and people within it.

The final *guided tour interview* was rather an impromptu one. I had noticed that Kelly was keen to show students around her bungalow, to show them how independent she was. So I managed to fit this activity into the term's final session. There was no pre-prepared interview schedule this time, but natural curiosity took

over the entire group: *'They were keen to know about having no staff and who did what re. cooking and washing etc.'* (RRJ, p.22) This time, students, other than Laura, got involved in asking impromptu questions. This could have been due to the group having completed similar interviews before and were now more confident in the process, or perhaps, they felt less constrained due to the lack of an interview schedule. It could equally be the result of intrigue; the final bungalow was the least supported by staff in the whole college, with its residents living most independently, and therefore what was being shown to the student group by Kellie was a glimpse into a possible future of supported living.

5.2.4.3.9. Ongoing consent data

At the end of the first term, all participants were asked if they wanted to continue being in the group the following term. As well as providing proof of ongoing consent, their responses to this direct question provided additional data reflecting their experiences of *Immediate* value.

Barry chose not to keep the iSaR sessions on his timetable: *'I've enjoyed this, but I don't want to do it again'*. (B1, p.1) I made him feel comfortable in his choice and informed him that I would contact his tutor and the staff member who was responsible for adjusting student timetables. In my journal, I had already noted my concerns regarding Barry and his motivation: *'I need to know if he really wants to continue or if he's just doing what is on his timetable.'* (RRJ, p.19) So, I was not surprised by his response. Barry's choice was experientially informed, suggesting that this first training term had worked more like a continuation of the

taster session, providing longer exposure to experiences which involve research, to better inform consent to continuing participation.

Kelly's response to this question was a more confused one. Students had been shown option sheets by their personal tutors, listing enrichment choices for the following term. She had made choices but was unsure what days these would be timetabled for and so didn't know whether they would clash with iSaR sessions: *'Well I put down a couple of things. Erm, and I can't remember what I chose.'* (K1, p.3) We opted to wait to see what her timetable looked like next term, and to change it then, if she wished.

5.2.4.4 *Potential* value

5.2.4.4.1 Theme overview

Potential value can be simply described as *'the ideas and confidence that come from learning together'* (Appendix 19). *Potential* value is often what comes out of experiences of positive *Immediate* value, when, filled with positivity, inspiration and confidence, groups of people may personally or collectively start initiating ideas, making plans to do things together and perhaps making decisions about future directions of activity:

'By engaging their uncertainty and paying attention, participants can take away something that goes beyond their direct experience – something that has the potential to make a difference' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.84)

The *Potential* value experienced by the core student group in Term 1 will now be explored through the student datasets, again supported by excerpts from my reflexive research journal (RRJ).

5.2.4.4.2 Overview of subthemes

The subthemes constructed within the *Potential* value theme which were present in student datasets for this first term were: 'Confidence, pride and success', 'Paying attention to detail' and 'Emerging researchers'. I shall now explore each of these, as subthemes, in turn.

5.2.4.4.3 Confidence, pride and success

This sub-theme captures the idea that confidence and pride can both lead to success *and* be a result of it. The sub-theme was referred to in every term's student dataset, signalling its import in students' experience of participation.

Laura was evidently proud of joining the group and had told her dad on the phone: '*I told my dad [...] I think he's really interested*' (L1, p.2). For Barry, sustained attendance was something to be proud of: '*I'm happy I've been there every lesson*' (B1, p.1).

Confidence in participants was fuelled by them feeling interesting, important and listened to, as Laura's choice of photographs reveal: '*They're looking at me, and I'm telling them what sort of thing is in the bungalows and what we do and stuff. I'm answering their questions [...] They're all concentrating. They're all listening to me.*' (L1, p.1).

Lizzy reported feeling confident in group activities because she could understand their purpose and direction: *'I was so happy because I understood – I knew what I was going to be doing'*. (Z1, p.1).

5.2.4.4.4 Paying attention to detail

This sub-theme was present in the student datasets for three out of the five terms. It captures the idea that in paying attention to detail and getting curious, the students were developing their potential as emerging researchers and change-makers.

The first research topic the group chose, to base interviews and questionnaires on, was college trips. Lizzy found it interesting to learn how some students in the group had been on many college trips whilst others had barely been on one. She correctly surmised that this was: *'because some of them were day students'*. (Z1, p.1). Laura was also unsettled by this revelation: *'I found out how different being residential is to being a day student. How they don't get to go on trips'* (L1, p.2).

The findings from their trip questionnaire presumably influenced their next research topic choice: college residences. To investigate this topic, the group was split in two: day students and residential students, and each planned tours and interview schedules, as detailed earlier. Through these guided tour interviews, students began to compare their own experience with that of their peers.

Laura was an occasional visitor to the day provision, so was already familiar with the set-up, but what she shared during our interview was rather astute:

*'I know about it from my experience, but I don't know about it from others.
I didn't know about it from others until that day. (p.1).*

By paying attention to detail, she had learned the value of alternative perspectives, and of research in glimpsing the lives and perceptions of others.

Sometimes, observed *differences* were reassuring, as they highlighted the fulfilment of more personal preferences and needs. Barry, for example, was a day student by choice, and he did not like the idea of living at college: *'I go home because I'm happy at home because I don't have the stress of this place' (B1, p.2)*. On observing the busy, staffed bungalow in which Laura lived, Kelly, a fellow residential student seemed almost relieved that she was able to live more independently, in an unstaffed bungalow:

'Laura, she lives in like a bungalow with erm staff there and I live with another student, and we do our own, like be more independent than Laura is. Like, she's got more staff and I, kind of don't. (K1, p.2)'

At other times, perceived *similarities* in experience were found to be reassuring. Lizzy felt that finding someone who shared the same experiences as her, reduced feelings of isolation:

'You might find someone who is having the same experience as you are, like the same experiences in college as you. Then you can be, you can, like not feel like so alone- It's nice to know like if you meet someone who has the same experiences as you in college' (L1, p.2).

5.2.4.4.5 Emerging researchers

By the end of the first term, although student-participants were not yet identifying as researchers, they could be observed as being busy in the act of *becoming* researchers. As students began to observe the possibilities and outcomes of research, they were full of ideas for future research. When asked if they had any ideas for what the group should research next term, Fran's ideas were very heavily linked to her special interest in Harry Potter: '*Doing more research on other things... like movies and stuff [...] If someone likes Harry Potter or not.*' (F1, p.2)

Laura's ideas involved greater participation from staff members, possibly inspired by her enjoyment of staff company and conversation but also revealing an aptitude for research and an awareness of the potentially different perspectives of given situations:

I: And what would make it better?

L: I don't know. Maybe having someone from [name of day student building] and someone from a residence to come and sit in the group?

I: Oh right, in what way, you mean a student?

L: No, a staff member. They could give their opinion on it. They could explain what it's like for them, maybe? (L1, p.2)

Laura's other research idea was driven by a personal experience of injustice at college:

I: What question/s would you like to ask other students at college?

L: Do you think that prize-giving should be done differently? [...] I've got mine on Friday with Performing Arts. I've been to four prize-givings now where I haven't got anything.

I: You haven't got anything?

L: No, but I'm not the only one. It is a bit unfair because at my school I used to always get something. (L1, p.3)

As previously mentioned, Gabrielle's ideas for future research were based on investigating the fun factor of trips. She was, however, initially compelled towards this topic through a perceived injustice, revealed by the group's earlier research, which found that day students did not go on trips. Gabrielle thought it would be good to investigate: *'If they would like to do the trips?'* (G1, p.2) In doing so, Gabrielle also revealed her aptitude for research, through her curiosity and critical thinking.

Lizzy thought it would be interesting to investigate what students from other pathways experienced at college:

'Maybe, like, if they, like, ask them if they're enjoying pathways? What pathways they're doing? Because I think that would be interesting. Because lots of people – well, there's lots of students in college but they all do different pathways. So, it'd be cool – interesting to find out.' (Z1, p.2)

Again, we find an aptitude for research, through a keen awareness and appreciation of the similarities and differences found in student experience.

5.2.4.5. *Applied* value

5.2.4.5.1. Theme overview

Applied value is the experience of the ‘doing’, the carrying out of plans. In the VCF Easy-Read sheet, I defined *Applied* value as ‘*using those ideas in real situations*’ (Appendix 19). Indicators of positive *Applied* value might involve success in the execution of plans or successful adaptation of methods into new situations, and negative *Applied* value might be experienced in, for example, the unforeseen environmental factors of a new context, creating a barrier to success there. To avoid repetition, the more positive articulations of this value-experience are addressed within *Enabling* value (taking ownership), detailed later.

5.2.4.5.2. Overview of subthemes

The subthemes constructed within the *Applied* value theme which were present in student datasets for this first term were: ‘Accessibility issues’ and ‘Engaging uncertainty’. I shall explore each of these, as subthemes, in turn.

5.2.4.5.3. Accessibility issues

Accessibility issues were present in the student datasets from every term of participation and so should be given full attention here. Student-participants faced several accessibility issues whilst participating in research activities in this first term.

Laura reported that the only thing she had found difficult about the sessions was the walking, specifically when we were conducting guided tour interviews, as the

campus is rather large. When asked for a potential solution we could adopt, Laura suggested her wheelchair: *'Probably my wheelchair? But I don't want to use it all the time. I don't want to overuse it'* (L1, p.3). This came a surprise to me. In my journal, I recorded: *'Laura had mentioned bringing her chair – and had forgotten it (I've never seen her using one)'* (RRJ, p.18). She had not written about any mobility issues in her Research Profile, apart from the restricted use of one arm, and this was not made clear within the college records I had viewed. This scenario could be defined as an unforeseen barrier, creating a more negative *Applied* value experience for Laura.

Barry's participation was also affected by mobility issues. He would come to the sessions in an accessibility scooter and self-transfer to classroom seats without a problem, but he had to use different paths during the guided tour interviews, causing him to separate from the group several times (due to kerbs and inaccessible doorways). Pain also affected Barry's participation: *'that was when I was in pain with my leg [...] How I was feeling was a little bit fed up. I wanted to just go home.'* (B1, p.1).

Environmental sensory triggers were also mentioned by Barry during the guided tour interviews: *'It was quite hard to be in the other room because it was a bit loud with TV on.'* (B1, p.1) As visitors, we had no control over some of the environments we visited, so this was an unforeseen barrier as we took our research into a new and different context.

During the photo-interviews, Barry also struggled to remember much detail of the events of the past term, even with the photographs as visual prompts. Barry

admitted that the photographs he chose to talk about were the only ones he could remember: *'I don't think I could remember all of these ones'* (B1, p.1) He'd remember roughly what he'd been doing in the photograph, but not the finer detail: *'Well, I'm talking to Lizzy and... I can't remember what we were talking about, but it was something about [name of day provision building]'*. (B1, p.1) My journal entries also captured Barry's difficulty with remembering, during a peer interview: *'Barry said he'd never been on a College trip, but Emma told him he'd been with her to London [with the Student Council!]'* (RRJ, p.11). I saw Emma's action here as an example of positive *Enabling* value - as peer support, but as this was articulated solely by me, it was not included in the main analysis activity.

5.2.4.5.4. Engaging uncertainty

I had previously wondered how the lack of certainty within the project would impact on the student-participants who were autistic as well as learning disabled but, unwilling to provoke a negative stereotype (that autistic people can't cope with uncertainty), I didn't want to assume they all couldn't. I address it now, though, because the issue did present itself in one autistic student's reflections twice during his first term with the group. It appeared in no other participant's account of the term, which suggests the other participants felt supported. Barry, who is autistic, reported struggling a bit with not knowing what to expect, especially in *'the days when I was starting out.'* (B1, p.2) and despite participating in a taster session with other members of the group, he reported: *'I didn't know who was going to be there.'* (B1, p.1) During the first iSaR session, I recorded in my journal that I was *'straight away asked what they'd be doing in the session'*

(RRJ, p.3) and noted that the question had come from Barry, keen to be led, and made comfortable through certainty.

5.2.4.6. *Enabling* value

5.2.4.6.1. Theme overview

Enabling value can be described as ‘*The people and activities that help you learn together and from each other*’ (Appendix 19). *Enabling* value can be created externally, through the efforts of a facilitator for example, or it can be created internally, where participants take the lead and/or support each other.

5.2.4.6.2. Overview of subthemes

The subthemes constructed within the *Enabling* value theme which were present in student datasets for this first term were: ‘Taking ownership’, Making research accessible’ and ‘Participatory choices’. In what follows however, I shall just comment on ‘Taking ownership’.

5.2.4.6.3. Taking ownership

When participants take ownership of a social learning space, it ‘*reflects a sense of agency [...] When they take control of process, their learning is more likely to be relevant to the difference they want to make.*’ (Wenger-Tranger and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.106) This subtheme is an example of internal *Enabling* value as the learning process is driven by participants.

In Fran's first interview, she described the student-led activities going on in a photograph: '*We're doing, organizing, research what we want to do.*' (F1, p.1), showing the student group to be taking ownership and being excited by this responsibility. They also used their diaries to write plans for future sessions, steering the process:

I: Can you describe what's happening in that photograph?

K: We're in the classroom and we're doing our diaries. Erm, so we know what to do for next time. (K1, p.1)

5.2.4.7 Orienting value

5.2.4.7.1. Theme overview

Orienting value can be simplistically defined as '*Sharing your work with people who also want to make a difference and finding out about their work.*' (Appendix 19). *External Orienting* value refers to an immersion into a different practice landscape, and in this study, that meant a research practice landscape, and more specifically, the *Inclusive* Research practice landscape. An experience of *internal Orienting* value would be that experienced through finding out about the different contexts, experiences and histories of group members within the community which the students already inhabit, by exploring these together and gaining perspective of their own position within their immediate community, thus *orienting* themselves.

5.2.4.7.2. Overview of subthemes

The subthemes constructed within the *Orienting* value theme which were present in student datasets for this first term were: ‘Understanding each other’ and ‘Landscape immersion’. I shall explore each of these, as subthemes, in turn.

5.2.4.7.3. Understanding each other

Positive *internal Orienting* value can be experiences which enrich the social learning space through participants’ deeper understanding of each other: their different contexts and histories. This experience was clearly articulated by Laura:

‘I found out how different being residential is to being a day student. How they don’t get to go on trips. They come back a day later when term starts again.’ (L1, p.2)

Students loved finding out about each other. When asked what the best bit about the term was, Lizzy shared: *‘probably when we got to look at everyone’s residences, and like asking the questions.’ (Z1, p.3)*

This subtheme appeared in the student datasets from four out of the five terms. As well as having the opportunity to find out more about each other, participants were excited by the opportunity to share their *own* experiences with others, and in ways that didn’t always rely on verbal communication skills; the *showing* often supported the *telling*. This was especially true for Barry during the guided tour

interviews: *'Showing them where I get off from home and go into [name of day provision building] (B1, p.1).* Being able to show the group his morning routine, where he got dropped off by a taxi and entered the day provision building, supported the group to visualise his experience of the day, as well as supporting Barry to articulate his experience.

Laura, on the other hand, being highly verbose, appreciated the chance to talk about her experience as a residential student in a supported bungalow:

'That was me talking to the group about what it's like living in the bungalows [...] I'm telling them what sort of thing is in the bungalows and what we do and stuff [...] I was explaining what I do in the bungalows'(L1, p.1).

What the group experienced, by being in situ, was the reality of Laura's living area being shared with some rather loud, anxious students and a large support staff presence.

Sharing experiences engaged all participants and supported their understanding of each other and of the wider college community. I noted the effect of their increased engagement in my journal: *'It was uplifting to see how some learners (who had coloured only 2.5 sections of their batteries), how their batteries were a lot fuller by the end of the session. The activity – talking about something relevant to their experience – engaged all!'* (RRJ, p.13)

5.2.4.7.4. Landscape immersion

The training term introduced students to the concept and practice of research and explored how research could be made more accessible. On participating, they entered the Inclusive Research practice landscape, but they had no prior knowledge of it; even college staff were unaware of research career pathways for people with learning disabilities.

As luck would have it, Richard Keagan-Bull, a learning-disabled alumnus of the host college, was visiting the college on a book launching tour, within the first term. He would be giving a talk on his time as a student and his trajectory towards becoming a Research Assistant (RA) at Kings College London. I realised that this would be a perfect start to participants' immersion into the Inclusive Research landscape. During the second iSaR session, I played the group a youtube video featuring Richard talking about the research training course he went on, prior to getting the RA job. After a good discussion, I encouraged the group to attend the talk.

Laura was very excited by the idea of meeting Richard and ended up being the only student from the group attending the talk. During the following week's session, she told the group about Richard and *'how he spoke about how care staff wore uniforms and how staff were called Mr.. and Mrs.. not by their first names.'* (RRJ, p.8). This enriched the group's knowledge of their college community's history. Barry showed an interest in Laura's talk and asked what research Richard does. I told the group about the *Growing Older* study Richard was involved in, and the group could not believe that people over forty would still

be living at home. This discussion, therefore, deepened the group's understanding of, and curiosity towards, a wider, 'learning-disabled community'.

In our interview, Laura cited the talk as one of the most enjoyable things about the term: '*I enjoyed Richard's talk. That was really interesting.*' (L1, p.3) After Laura's interview with me, we attended one of the *Yellow Tulip Group's* online sessions together. I had explained how it was co-led by Richard Keagan-Bull and was for people interested in Inclusive Research. Unfortunately, future Yellow Tulip Group sessions clashed with participants' timetables, but I was happy that we had managed it that time. It really instilled in Laura an understanding of the practice landscape, rather than just the theory.

5.2.5 Term 2

5.2.5.1 Overview of Term 2

The second term was designed to support iSaR group members to initiate the direction of their own Participatory Action Research (PAR) project, design and trial accessible research methods before conducting peer research, analyse findings and share findings accessibly with peers. As can be seen in Table 30 below, the group first completed a time-line mapping scaffolding activity through which they each explored their various college experiences. They then collated a list of experiences and, treating these as potential research topics, they discussed and then voted for the topic 'Starting at College'. The group explored this topic through peer-to-peer interviews and drawing activities, before trialling and adapting prototype research tools: the *emoji sheet* and the *magic box* activity

(detailed in Chapter 4) with which to conduct peer research in the wider college. The final session involved the group making sense of their findings through simple quantitative and qualitative analysis. Unfortunately, due to lack of time, the group could not share their findings with peers or staff before the term ended. I reassured them that I would share their findings and recommendations with key staff over the summer break, so that any suggested changes could be made before the next cohort of new students started at college.

PAR 1	24.04.23	1hr	7	1. Initiation - Mapping activity	FULL HOUSE + Eluned
	15.05.23	1hr	7	2. Initiation - Collating and discussing research topic choices	FULL HOUSE
SUMMER HALF TERM					
PAR 1	22.05.23	1hr	6	3. Initiation - Vote for Research topic – ‘Starting at college’ won vote + informal interview practise	No Laura (ill)
	05.06.23	1hr	6	4. Trialling research tools Interview schedule – 1 st peer-to-peer interview + Drawing activity	No Lizzy (SEMH)
	12.06.23	1hr	5	5. Trialling research tools Emoji activity prototype no. 1	No Fran (DoE) and no Lizzy (SEMH)
	19.06.23	1hr	7	6. Trialling research tools Emoji activity prototype no. 2 and 2 nd peer-to-peer interview	FULL HOUSE
	26.06.23	1hr	7	7. Trialling research tools - Magic box activity Data collection - 1 st external peer research data collection (Corner House and Yoga group)	FULL HOUSE
	03.07.23	1hr	7	8. Data collection - 2 nd external peer research data collection (AR, DoE + History club)	FULL HOUSE
	18.07.23	1hr	7	9. Data analysis (Emoji – quant: tally / Magic box – qual: thematic)	FULL HOUSE
2 nd term interviews – Fran decides not to continue and Emma wants to continue but her funding as a Supported Intern does not cover enrichment sessions and she is not allowed to participate. This leaves Gabrielle and Laura in the group for Autumn term)					
SUMMER BREAK					

Table 30. Table showing overview of participation during Term 2 with notes.

At the end of this term, I conducted multi-modal interviews with participants; students were interviewed using a novel *photo-interview* method as well as a more *traditional interview* method, a *click ‘n’ drag* ranking activity and a *Lego reflections* activity.

As can be seen from Table 31 below, the values present within student responses this term featured all eight of the values.

Values (themes)		Codes (subthemes)	Term 2
Immediate		Importance of fun	
		Joy of 'being with'	
		View group as friends	
		Sparked interest	
Potential		Confidence, pride + success	
		Paying attention to detail	
		Skill development	
		Emerging researchers	
Applied		Accessibility issues	
		Engaging uncertainty	
Realized		Making a difference	
Enabling	Internal	Taking ownership	
		Making research accessible	
	External	Peer support	
		Participatory choices	
Strategic	Internal	Facilitative Support	
		Scaffolding activities	
		Prioritizing group aspirations	
Orienting	Internal	Understanding each other	
Transformative	Internal	Identifying as researchers	
		Transferable skills	

Table 31. Overview of themes and subthemes present in Term 2 datasets

5.2.5.2 Immediate value

The feelings that come from being with each other and learning together

5.2.5.2.1 Attendance data

In my journal, I recorded that Fran missed one session due to a college-organised Duke of Edinburgh expedition, Laura missed one session due to illness and Lizzy missed two sessions due to SEMH issues. Kelly, Barry, Gabrielle and Emma attended every session.

Despite Barry's request to leave the group at the end of Term 1, he attended every session of Term 2. He informed me that he was told the alternative session would be [day provision building], so he had chosen to stay in the group. Similarly, Kelly's continued participation meant she had decided to stay in the group, having learned the alternative option (see Table 32 below).

Summer 23	24.04.23	7	FULL HOUSE
	15.05.23	7	FULL HOUSE
	22.05.23	6	No Laura
	05.06.23	6	No Lizzy
	12.06.23	5	No Lizzy + No Fran
	19.06.23	7	FULL HOUSE
	26.06.23	7	FULL HOUSE
	03.07.23	7	FULL HOUSE
	18.07.23	7	FULL HOUSE

Table 32. Register of attendance for Term 2.

5.2.5.2.2 Overview of subthemes

All the codes constructed within the *Immediate* value theme were present in student datasets for this term. These were: 'The importance of fun and novelty', 'Joy of 'being with'', 'View group as friends' and 'Sparked interest'. As all these subthemes were present in Term 1, and have already been touched upon, only the key points will be discussed in what follows, as further illustration:

5.2.5.2.3 The importance of fun

It was in this second term where the theme of fun became most significant. Six out of seven participants either alluded to or directly stated how much fun they had had:

I: What made you choose that photo?

G: Because me and Barry seems to be having a good time. I don't know what he was laughing at, but he was giggling at something [...] by the way his face looks, he was giggling at something'. (G1, p.5)

The above quote is a perfect illustration of the amount of fun experienced by Gabrielle, as she describes the contents of a photograph, taken of her and Barry, sat outside on a bench, practising interview techniques.

Although asked to pick three photographs, Barry himself chose *seven* photographs to talk about during his second photo-interview – a sign that he had experienced lots of fun things he wished to talk about.

5.2.5.2.4 Joy of 'being with'

Offering students the opportunity and support to talk to each other about things that mattered to them, made the group more of a social entity, as Laura articulated:

I: What did you enjoy most about being in the research group?

L: I enjoyed how social it was. I'm a really sociable person, so I like sociable things, like talking and sharing experiences. (L2, p.3)

Kelly, who had, in her first interview, solely talked about photographs highlighting her own actions, chose a group photograph in her second interview: *'Erm, I chose this photo because it's a photo of everyone of the group.'* (K2, p.4) This felt like a shift towards a more developed sense of non-self, and appreciation of group.

The pure sense of joy at just 'being with' others was simply shared by Gabrielle:

'I: What do you like about that photo?

G: That everyone's... walking together... and everyone seems to be happy ...' (G2, p.3)

5.2.5.2.5 View group as friends

By the end of the second term, Barry, Emma and Lizzy were also referring to others as their friends. Emma sweepingly included all group members in her reference to friends: *'And having a 4-5 [session] with all my friends in'* (E2, p.7).

Friendship was also portrayed in Barry's *Lego Reflection* scene, completed as part of the term's multi-modal interview (see Figure 47 below). In his scene construction, Barry placed his character is facing away from the group, but he did identify Gabrielle within the scene, as an acknowledgement of their friendship maybe:

I: So when you're doing research, is there anyone else around you?

H: Gabrielle (B2, p.8)



Figure 47. Barry's Lego reflection response

Gabrielle also appeared in Fran's *Lego Reflection* scene (see Figure 48 below). Fran had placed the figure representing herself standing in front of an archway holding a sword. In the scene, she is approached by Gabrielle on a horse. As the scene depicts only Fran and Gabrielle, it potentially reveals what was important to Fran – Gabrielle's attendance. According to Fran, however, there was no research happening in the scene, '*just talking...*' (F2, p.7).



Figure 48. Fran's Lego Reflection response

5.2.5.2.6 Sparked interest

Emma found the activities of this term particularly interesting: *'Finding out about people's different experiences of their first day was really interesting.'* (E2, p.5)

Laura: *'It was interesting to see what people put in [the magic box], because anyone can draw, but that's really unusual – thinking 'what would I add to the box?'* (L2, p.5)

As this would be the last term at the college for several members of the group, I asked them what they would say to any student thinking about joining the iSaR group. Lizzy's suggestion was: *'I would say "please join the group because it's like really fun and it's really interesting as well."'* (L2, p.5) and Fran confirmed, stating: *'it's very interesting.'* (F2, p.6).

5.2.5.2.7 Ongoing consent

When it got to the end of the second term, both Laura and Gabrielle said they'd like to stay in the group. Fran was the member who chose not to continue being in the iSaR group:

I: Do you want to carry on being a member of this group?

F: Maybe try something different?

I: OK. So, I'll let Sian know that you want to try a different enrichment activity next year.

F: And let some other students do it.

I: But you enjoyed it though?

F: Yes. (F2, p.5)

For others in the group, there was no choice, as they were leaving college altogether. Emma was offered a Supported Internship programme at the college for the next year, but although she wanted to stay in the group, we were told that she wouldn't be allowed to, due to funding restrictions: *'I would love to, but I just don't know if we can'*. (E2, p.7)

5.2.5.3 *Potential* value

The ideas and confidence that come from learning together

5.2.5.3.1 Overview of subthemes

All the codes constructed within the *Potential* value theme were present in student datasets for this term. These were: 'Confidence, pride and success', 'Paying attention to detail', 'Skill development' and 'Emerging researchers', with the subtheme of 'Skill development' making its first appearance in this term's datasets.

5.2.5.3.2 Confidence, pride and success

Both Emma and Lizzy reporting feelings of significant pride in their actions within the second term. Emma volunteered to redraft the emoji sheet after its first trial proved that, although it had potential, it failed to be fit for purpose in its initial form. In her *photo interview*, she chose the photograph of her at the computer working on the new draft:

'I was happy because I did this mostly by myself. But also because I said to myself – I did this. So it was something I did by myself, something I'm proud of' (E2, p.4).

Lizzy chose the photograph of her using Makaton signs to support her peers with the verbal and written instructions of our research activity during peer research:

Z: I was proud of myself of how well I could remember the signs.

I: Do you think they helped the other students in that room?

Z: Yeah. (Z2, p.3)

5.2.5.3.3 Paying attention to detail

With the research topic being 'starting at college', and with peer participation broadening out into other college student groups, the iSaR group were in a key position to hear about many different experiences of students' first days at college. Emma reported the excitement of the group as they approached their peers, asking them to participate in their research:

'Everyone was wanting to know how everybody else felt. It was the main bit of the project - the 'go out and do it' bit of the project, so I was looking

forward to that one. Getting a bit of data and of finding out what everyone else was thinking.' (E2, p.3).

What struck the group was the differences between experiences, as Emma details: *'Some people found the activities they did for their first week lovely, they had barbecues, and some people were making their friendships with people. (E2, p.5)'*, by the omission of a comparison here, and the fact that she was a day student, I presumed that this was not Emma's *'lovely'* experience, and that she was not *'some people'*.

Both Kelly and Laura noticed that experiences of starting at college varied between day students and residential students. Laura learned this through interviewing Barry about his first day: *'His experience was different because he's a day student here. So, he goes home at five o'clock. (L2, p.4).*

Lizzy, however, reflected on experiences that matched her own: *'That they all felt the exact same, how they felt scared and anxious' (Z2, p.4).* This reflects her previous musings about how finding that you share experiences (and emotions) with others reduces feelings of isolation:

I: What did you think of 'starting at college' as our research topic?

Z: Good because other people won't feel alone— other people will think 'oh I felt that. I felt the same.'

I: Why is that important, do you think?

Z: So, no one is – they don't feel alone or anything. Or feel like it's just them feeling like that. (Z2, p.3)

5.2.5.3.4 Skill development

In gaining new skills, especially through joint work, participants began to equip themselves with the tools necessary to succeed when they put their plans into practice, and so it could be viewed as an experience of *Potential* value.

Being a relatively large group of seven students, turn-taking was the ‘soft skill’ often being naturally developed through mere participation, as Kelly’s description of practice interviews suggests: *‘I was interviewed by Emma. And I said that like how I felt on my first day and then she asked me questions and then I asked her some questions and then we took it in turns to – erm - like turn taking.’* (K2, p.1)

Laura reported that turn-taking was the most difficult thing for her: *‘I just want to talk all the time – I know! [laughs]’* (L2, p.7). Conducting interviews and being interviewed were Laura’s favourite research activities, and she preferred to be developing her skills in these areas: *‘I wasn’t happy just sitting in between people with the recording device.’* (L2, p.1).

Another skill being developed by all members of the group, through participation, was teamworking skills. Working as a team was what Kelly found most enjoyable about being in the research group. Emma also talked about the fun of teamwork: *‘Everyone got involved and worked hard. So, it was a very fun experience.’* (E2, p.4)

5.2.5.3.5 Emerging researchers

Kellie’s *Lego Reflection* scene (Figure 49) suggests a flavour of success, with its raised flag, but the lone figure also suggests that the success felt by Kellie was a

personal one. Kellie stated: *'I'm sitting on a chair and I'm thinking about what ideas I have and just me by myself and just thinking about what good ideas and bad ideas I have'* (K2, p.8), revealing herself as an emerging researcher, coming up with ideas for future projects and developing critical thinking skills.



Figure 49. Kellie's *Lego Reflections* response

5.2.5.4 *Applied* value

Using those ideas in real situations

5.2.5.4.2 Overview of subthemes

The subthemes constructed within the *Applied* value theme which were present in student datasets for this second term were: 'Accessibility issues' and 'Engaging uncertainty'.

5.2.5.4.1 Accessibility issues

The group's chosen research topic looked at students' experiences of starting at college and necessitated participants try to remember back to their first day at college. As I had placed a requirement on recruited participants to be *at least* in their second year of college, some students were having to think back a significant length of time, and struggled to do so, as Emma reported:

'At the beginning I thought it was very difficult, thinking how are we meant to remember from two or three years ago. One had been here longer – you need a very good memory for that.' (E2, p.5)

Even remembering back to midway through that second term proved challenging for Fran: *'I'm trying to think that far back now... no I can't.'* (p.4), and Kelly's response, when asked if she could remember what topic she voted for was equally vague: *'I don't actually remember, it's been a long term'*. (K2, p.1)

Gabrielle also admitted to not remembering what she had found out from interviewing Barry earlier that term. We had talked about memory issues on the day of those interviews, as few pairs could remember much detail of their partner's interview responses. The group decided that having the use of a recording device would be the best way forward in future interviews for this reason.

During this term, the group grew more aware of the physical barriers faced by Barry. Looking at a photograph of the group, setting out ready to do peer research with other student groups, prompts Gabrielle to notice how Barry was *'way over*

there' (G2, p.3). Observing how Harry *was* able to navigate various environments in a wheelchair, however, inspired Laura to use her own wheelchair more often.

5.2.5.4.2 Engaging uncertainty

In this second term, students were expected to work with more autonomy, and I slowly removed some of the supports, like *session overview sheets*. In their interviews, I directly asked participants how they felt being in a classroom situation with a teacher who did not tell them what to do or talk about, and whether they felt comfortable. Emma reported it getting easier over time:

'It got easier with time. Knowing that – ok, now I know that Monday 4-5 will be a different thing each day but carrying on with that is what makes it surprising, and I wanted a bit of a nice surprise at the end of my Monday' (E2, p.7).

Lizzy also seemed to enjoy the surprise:

'I felt it was, it was, it was, it was like fun because it was like very exciting. You're like – oh I wonder what's going to happen.' (Z2, p.5)

These students, however, did not have an autism diagnosis. Gabrielle, an autistic group member, found it easier when *'everyone knew what we were doing'* (G2, p.6), referring to the point at which the group had finally decided what they wanted to research.

5.2.5.5 *Realized* value

5.2.5.5.1 Theme overview

Realized value can be defined as: '*Making a difference that matters to you*' (Appendix 19), yet, to a lesser extent, it could also refer to the creation of suggestions for improvement within a community, which may have arisen from research. Ideally, as discussed in Chapter 3, participants need to see that any such suggestions are given due consideration by decision makers.

5.2.5.5.2 Overview of subtheme

There is only one subtheme constructed under the theme of *Realized* value: 'Making a difference' and this was present for the first time in student datasets from Term 2.

5.2.5.5.3 Making a difference

During the final session of the term, the group analysed peer responses from the '*Emoji sheets*' and '*Magic box*' activity, and compiled a list of items that the college could provide new starters, as a kind of 'welcome pack' (see Figure 50 below), to make them feel more welcomed, calm and safe.

The group would like to share some of the Magic Box responses with the residential teams, as they felt their first day would have been a lot better if they had been given some of these things:

- Map of site
- A teddy bear
- A cake
- A 'Welcome to college' card
- A message from a current student about how they felt (so they didn't feel they were the only one) with advice.

Nothing too expensive, and it could make all the difference to our new students... Please, if you do choose to trial a 'welcome gift', could you let the group know? They would love to hear that their research has made a difference.

Figure 50. List of suggestions sent to college leaders

This being their final session, they were unable to see this through to further action, so I reassured them that I would share their findings and suggestions with the appropriate leaders before the new student intake arrived - and so they were able to leave college for their summer break (or planned transition) in the belief that they would (hopefully) make a difference to the experiences of the next cohort of students. Emma revealed her confidence in the process, reporting: *'We found out what everybody thought would help [new starters] and this will help them for next year.'* (E2, p.6)

5.2.5.6 *Enabling* value

The people and activities that help you learn together and from each other

5.2.5.6.1 Overview of subthemes

All of the subthemes constructed within the *Enabling* value theme were present in student datasets for this second term: 'Taking ownership', 'Making research accessible', 'Peer support', 'Participatory choices', 'Facilitative support' and

‘Scaffolding activities’. I have chosen not to discuss ‘Participatory choices’ in what follows, to avoid repetition.

5.2.2.6.2 Taking ownership

In her *Lego Reflections* scene, Lizzy placed herself in the centre of the Lego base-plate (see Figure 51 below). She is depicted on her own, working at a computer, but speaks collectively: ‘*We were on the computer when we were doing the tally.*’ (L2, p.6)



Figure 51. Lizzy's Lego Reflections response

The scene created suggests the importance Lizzy placed on having a responsibility to complete an analytical task, and that, being the one doing it, she felt important and useful.

5.2.5.6.3 Making research accessible

As part of the multi-modal interview schedule for this second term, students were asked to evaluate the different methods they had used during their first PAR study, in terms of how fun and easy it was to participate, as well as how much information could be gained from the use of each method.

‘Drag and drop activities’ (detailed in Chapter 4) were used in which participants digitally manipulated responses via a simple ranking method, running from one, being their most favoured, to four, being their least. Scores were calculated whereby the most favoured methods received four points, the second most favoured received three points, the next received two points and the least favoured received one point. The scores are represented in the table below, where the methods scoring highest were the most favoured for that particular aspect (and emboldened for clarity):

	Qualities			
Methods	Fun	Easy	Most detail	General
Interviews	18	15	23	56
Drawings	10	19	13	42
Emoji sheet	19	21	21	61
Magic box	23	15	13	51

Table 33. How different methods were ranked by core student group.

This activity not only provided me with an idea of the value participants experienced through these iSaR activities, it also supported the group to think critically about future research method choices.

5.2.5.6.3.1 Interviews

Members of the iSaR group ranked *Interviews* as the activity providing the most information about students' experiences of starting at college. As Emma commented: *'[interviews] told us deeply what somebody experienced and did'* (E2, p.6) However, alongside the *Magic Box* activity, *Interviews* were jointly rated the most difficult in terms of participation. Gabrielle explained this as due to their unscripted, unpredictable nature: *'Because then you're just trying to think... and you get tongue-twister and just go – uooer uwoooer'* (G2, p.8)

Interviews were also ranked as one of the least fun activities. Fran did not want to be interviewed by the group at all, although she was more comfortable with interviews on a one-to-one basis:

I: Did you get interviewed by the group?

F: No, I didn't want to.

I: Why was that do you think, were you shy...

F: I think it's easier talking to one person than the whole group (F2, p.4)

Gabrielle also managed to avoid being interviewed by the group: *'I think I managed to skip that [laughs]'* (G2, p.5). Due to the group's reticence in being interviewed by people they were familiar with, they were supported to imagine how potentially unsuitable it would be to approach their peers outside the group using this method.

5.2.5.6.3.2 Drawing

'Draw a scene from your first day at college'

The drawing activity was rated the least fun activity. For Gabrielle, this was due to her perceived lack of talent: *'Partly because I cannot draw. I can only draw stick men' (G2, p.8)*

Along with the 'Magic box', students felt that the drawing activity offered the least information about students' experiences of starting at college, perhaps because *'it was a bit hard to understand everybody's drawings' (E2, p.6)*. However, participants did rank it the second easiest activity to participate in: *'It was easy in the way that we could just draw what happened and what we did' (E2, p.6)*. Either way, overall, the drawing activity gained the least positive combined ratings (42) from this group.

5.2.5.6.3.3 Emoji sheet –

'On my first day at college, I felt ...'

The Emoji activity was rated as the easiest activity to participate in. It also generally gained the most positive combined ratings (61) *'because everyone could just tick or circle' (G2, p.8)*. However, Laura felt that *'you can't really know much just from an emoji – they might be making it up [...] Because you don't know whether they were happy or not because you are not interviewing them or talking to them.'* (L2, p.6)

The group also found that the text and images on the sheet were too small for one student, not in the iSaR group, who was visually impaired. The sheet would have had to be enlarged up to A3 size for it to be accessible for that student:

I: And we asked Arty to come in and do it. What was his problem with it?

E: It was too small. He needed it bigger.

(E2, p.3)

Emma later reflected perceptively on the difficulty of making research accessible for everyone:

'I found that making it fair for everybody [...] So that everybody can do the research thing [...] I found that difficult to know what everybody needs, and I felt, not mean, but it was a bit hard to put every single need into one project. So, I'd say that was the hard bit.' (E2, p.7)

5.2.5.6.3.4 'Magic Box' –

'Imagine you were given a Magic box on your first day at college. In the box are things to help new students feel welcome, safe and calm. What's in the box?'

The 'Magic box' was rated as the most fun activity: *'Just because it's unusual and I remember thinking – I wish it was true! I would've really liked a box.'* (L2, p.5) yet participants also felt that it was one of the most difficult. The difficulty was due, perhaps, to students' issues with memory, as Emma implied: *'You had to think back to what you could've used. So, it was more thinking'* (E2, p.6)

Along with the drawing activity, participant responses revealed views that the 'Magic box' activity gave the least information about students' experiences of starting at college.

Although the group found the 'Magic box' activity a good one during initial trials, they soon noticed its flaws when they approached other students, asking *them* to

complete the activity: *'I think it was a bit confusing having a postcard instead of a [blank] card. (L2, p.6)* Indeed, one of their peers began to write a postcard to their deceased mother and put that in the box. Gabrielle expressed a frustration in failing to make their research accessible for all their peers: *'You can try to explain to them as much as you can and then they're still confused.'* (G2, p.6)

5.2.5.6.4 Peer support

This subtheme reflects how participants bonded, and how they supported and accepted each other. Such support from peers was vital for effective group action, and essential for members' self-belief and confidence – a clear indication of positive, *internal Enabling* value.

At least two members of the group experienced a speech impediment. Emma was diagnosed with verbal dyspraxia and shared a rather traumatic history of being bullied for getting her words jumbled. In her interview, she expressed the relief of being in a supportive, accepting group: *'And no one cared if we said it wrong or if there was stuff we didn't know.'* (E2, p.5).

5.2.5.6.5 Facilitative support

This subtheme of *external Enabling* value focuses on the supportive activities and resources created or used by the staff (researcher and supporting staff) facilitating the sessions.

The necessity for student ownership has been illustrated, but to operationalize this, it was important that the teacher / researcher becomes facilitator and rejects ownership themselves. For Laura, the ability to facilitate *was* the sign of a good teacher: *'We get to talk about something which is [impacting?] our learning. It's really good and you're a really good teacher.'* (L2, p.7)

Laura's appreciation of the practice of facilitation is illustrated perfectly in her *Lego Reflection* scene (see Figure 52 below). The scene she constructed attempted to replicate a scene of a research activity conducted by the group. The students are all active and engaged, each with a specific role: *'Now Kellie, [...] She will stand facing us to take photos with the tablet.'* (L2, p.8) The staff including myself, are present, but far enough away to encourage independent activity.



Figure 52. Laura's Lego Reflection response

5.2.5.6.6 Scaffolding activities

Although a type of facilitative support, scaffolding activities appear as a sub-theme in their own right. I felt they deserved their own space to promote their effectiveness in achieving, often difficult, outcomes. *Timeline mapping* was one such scaffolding activity, introduced to support students in initiating their own research focus (detailed in Methodology chapter). It was a way of helping participants to explore the breadth of their college experiences with each other and supporting their communication when sharing their map with others. Having completed his timeline map, Barry seemed more able to talk about his experiences: '*We were talking about the [timeline] sheet*' (B2, p.2). It is important as a finding here, as Barry chose to talk about the photograph featuring himself completing the map.

5.2.5.7 Strategic value

5.2.5.7.1 Theme overview

Strategic value can be defined as: '*Meeting the people who can help you make a difference or who you hope to help by making the difference*' (Appendix 19). I wrote in Chapter 3 about the value of working strategically with external (to the group) collaborators, such as decision-makers and peers, but this value may also manifest internally, through the group's own strategic actions.

5.2.5.7.2 Overview of subthemes

Only one of the constructed codes within the *Strategic value* theme was present in student datasets for this term, and this was: 'Prioritizing group aspirations'.

5.2.5.7.3 Prioritizing group aspirations

As a subtheme of *internal Strategic* value, 'Prioritizing group aspirations' is very similar to 'Taking ownership', a subtheme of internal *Enabling* value. So, to differentiate here, I shall just be referring to events which reveal the student group to take a strategic lead in the *direction* of their research, with focus on the difference they wish to make.

Emma appreciated the group having ownership of the research direction: '*I am glad we got to choose [the topic]*' (E2, p.5), the chance to make adjustments and to see the project to its end: '*It was something we did from the beginning to the end.*' (E2, p.2) Fran chose to talk about a photograph of the group deciding on their research priority: '*[We're] deciding on which research topic we want to talk about. We're deciding which one we want to do.*' (F2, p.1) Indicating how this was important to her also.

5.2.5.8 Orienting value

'Sharing your work with people who also want to make a difference and finding out about their work.'

5.2.5.8.1 Overview of subthemes

The only subtheme constructed within the *Orienting* value theme which was present in student datasets for this second term was: 'Understanding each other'

5.2.5.8.2 Understanding each other

Students participating in this study came to inhabit two practice landscapes: that of a student and that of a researcher. Successful participation required they orient themselves in both. 'Understanding each other' is the *Orienting* value through which participants could get to know their own college landscape. As they grew to understand each other better, their research became more meaningful and significant within their context. With greater understanding, came greater comfort in research practices, especially interviewing:

I: How did you find being interviewed?

E: Because it was someone that I really knew well, it was completely fine.

It would have been different if I didn't know them well. So, I can easily say that having someone you really know well was a massive help. (E2, p.3)

They came to understand each other through their research and the opportunity to orient themselves in alignment or contrast with each other. Laura came to a deeper understanding of Barry, through listening to his experiences:

‘Barry was at [previous college name]. He was settled there and was there for three years. He came to [host college name] . It was different and he became confused... he didn’t know why [...] But he knew [previous college name] so well, it was weird coming here. And there was the pandemic as well.’ (L2, p.4)

In my journal, I recorded an instance where one student was able to better articulate the response of the student being interviewed:

‘The interview was interesting. How did you feel on the first day? Barry said he felt confused. I prompted them to be curious before moving onto the next question – Why? But he said he didn’t know. What was interesting, at the end, after the interview, Emma said that she knew what he meant when he said he felt confused. I asked her to continue. She said that there is just so much going on and so many feelings that it is confusing. She was able to articulate what Barry had not, in a way I (a non-student) could understand. I asked Barry whether Emma had correctly interpreted what he had said and he said ‘yes’ (RRJ, p.30)

5.2.5.9 Transformative value

5.2.5.9.1 Theme overview

Transformative value can be defined as: *‘Other changes your ‘making a difference’ has caused’* (Appendix 19). This value speaks of how one’s very

identity may be changed through acts of learning and participation. In Chapter 3, I also explained this transformation of identity as the result of immersion in a landscape and taking an active role in exploration and the processes of change within that community.

5.2.5.9.2 Overview of subthemes

Two subthemes constructed within the *Transformative* value theme were present in student datasets for this second term. These being: 'Identifying as researchers' and 'Transferable skills'.

5.2.5.9.3 Identifying as researchers

Through coming together to make a difference they cared to make, and through their agentic actions, some members of the iSaR group began not only to reveal themselves as emerging researchers, but they began to identify as researchers. This was not the difference they cared to make, but a result of their activity.

By Term 2, Laura was already identifying as researcher: '*I really like how we are, like, researchers. It's not staff, it's students.*' (L2, p.3) and although she did not identify overtly as a researcher, Emma's responses showed that she was beginning to think like one: '*Getting a bit of data*' (E2, p.3).

At the end of Term 2, Emma not only revealed her own sense of identity as a researcher through her *Lego Reflections* scene, but she also managed to portray the entire group as researchers, similarly to Laura's scene shown earlier. What is

most noticeable within Emma's scene is the absence of staff, including myself (which I loved!), adding to the importance placed upon the group's ownership of the work and their capability to lead. The constructed scene (Figure 53 below) shows the group all sitting around 'a researcher table' (E2, p.8) and working on a data analysis activity: 'here's some postcards – like the activity we did.' (E2, p.8).



Figure 53. Emma's *Lego Reflections* response

5.2.5.9.4 Transferable skills

As another consequence of participation in iSaR sessions, group members developed transferable skills. For example, Laura was offered the opportunity to use her developing interview skills to support the college's staff recruitment process:

'Like, I did an interview earlier in the year to help choose the new PSHE teacher. I was only meant to do it for a half day but I did it for a whole day in the end, you know, because I found it really interesting.' (L2, p.3)

What this offered (and extended) opportunity revealed was how Laura's identity was beginning to be viewed differently from those outside the group, by other members of staff, as a result of her participation in iSaR activities and evident, growing research competence.

5.2.6 Term 3

5.2.6.1 Overview of Term 3

Term 3 began with the International Creative Research Methods Conference, held in Manchester, for which the group's oral presentation had been accepted. As this was directly after the group's first iSaR session of the new academic year, the remaining group members, Gabrielle and Laura, spent the first session of the term preparing for our co-presentation. I had drafted a *Value Creation Story* for each of them to read out, using quotes from their interview responses from the previous term. There were also areas of the presentation which were designed to be more like a chat, with me asking the group some questions about the accessibility of the creative research methods they had trialled, adapted and evaluated.

The following two iSaR sessions (see Table 34 below) were organised in an attempt to understand the impact of the group's first PAR study, as to what difference the group's work had made for the new cohort of students. On enquiring, they were informed that their suggestion sheet had apparently been circulated and discussed in a leadership team meeting, but were disappointed that none of the group's (simple and cheap) suggestions were actioned. The group were a little happier, however, with the Student Voice Co-ordinator's efforts to action one of their suggestions – the 'Welcome card'.

After the necessary recruitment processes were actioned, and consents were gained, Sarah joined the group in planning the next cycle of their PAR study which would involve approaching new starters to participate in their research. The group trialled a research activity involving coloured sticky notes which new starters were asked to place around their residence to 'voice' their feelings towards areas of the buildings (red sticky notes would indicate areas they didn't like, and green sticky notes would indicate their favourite areas). The group wrote emails organising the research activity to happen on a Saturday, so as not to interfere with student timetables. Unfortunately, when we arrived at both residences on the Saturday, the weekend care staff had over-ruled the request and taken the new starters off-site, leaving us with very few students. Nevertheless, the group attempted to analyse the few findings we did collect and wrote a summary to send to the heads of residences (along with an email articulating their frustration with the staff concerned). These events were not captured during the end of term interview, hence the longer description here.

The group was so disappointed by these events that they decided to start a completely new PAR study and set about deciding what that focus should be, using the '*River journey mapping*' activity, detailed in Chapter 4.

PAR 1	11.09.23	1hr	2	1. Dissemination - Conference preparation	FULL HOUSE
Wider dissemination	12.09.23	½ hr	2	Dissemination – presentation at International Creative Research Methods conference	Gabrielle and Laura co-presenters
PAR 1	18.09.23	1hr	2	2. Impact evaluation - Interview with Head of Care to ask if suggestions had inspired practice for this year's freshers = no	FULL HOUSE
	25.09.23	1hr	2	3. Impact evaluation Interviewed Student Voice co-ordinator to ask if suggestions had inspired practice for this year's freshers - yes	FULL HOUSE Laura + Gabrielle made 'Buddies'
	02.10.23	1hr	3	4. Trialling research tools Red/green post-it activity in Bungalows for Freshers research	FULL HOUSE + Sarah joined group! No Eluned
	09.10.23	1hr	3	5. Trialling research tools Eluned led group. Group showed Eluned post-it activity and emailed lead practitioners re. Freshers activity for Saturday	FULL HOUSE
Additional session	14.10.23	4hr	3	Data collection – (Saturday) Freshers research activity – Two residences	Issues with staff
PAR 1	16.10.23	1hr	2	6. Data analysis – photos from post-it activity. Wrote email to lead practitioners re. staff issues	No Sarah (ill)
	23.10.23	1hr	3	7. Dissemination – Group emailed lead practitioners with findings Laura interviewed for MA study weekend co-presentation	FULL HOUSE
Recruitment	26.10.23	½ hr	2/3 invited	Lunchtime info + taster session no.2	
Wider dissemination	04.11.23	1hr	1	Dissemination - Co-presentation of group's work at MA study weekend	Laura was video recorded
AUTUMN HALF TERM					
PAR 1	06.11.23	1hr	3	8. Dissemination Went through co-presentation PowerPoint with group + Eluned	FULL HOUSE Laura and Gabrielle made care reps.
PAR 2	13.11.23	1hr	3	Initiation – River Journeys activity	New member No Sarah (DofE)
	20.11.23	1hr	3	Presentation of River Journeys	No new member
	27.11.23	1hr	3	Group discussion + collating ideas for voting list	New member left group
	04.12.23	1hr	3	Voting for research focus– ' Work Experience '	FULL HOUSE
3rd term interviews – All three participants wish to continue – Short interviews this term with no multi-modal activities.					
XMAS BREAK					

Table 34. Overview of participation during Term 3 with notes.

At the end of this term, I conducted interviews with participants; students were again interviewed using a novel *photo-interview* method as well as a more *traditional interview* method. In addition, Eluned interviewed the participants in

my absence and captured their responses in the style of a *video diary*. As can be seen from Table 35 below, the values present within student responses this term featured seven of the eight values, but I have chosen not to discuss Strategic value, to avoid repetition.

Values (themes)		Codes (subthemes)	Term 3
Immediate		Importance of fun	
		Joy of 'being with'	
		View group as friends	
		Sparked interest	
Potential		Confidence, pride + success	
		Skill development	
Applied		Accessibility issues	
		Engaging uncertainty	
Realized		Making a difference	
Enabling	Internal	Taking ownership	
		Making research accessible	
		Peer support	
	External	Participatory choices	
		Facilitative Support	
		Scaffolding activities	
Strategic	Internal	Prioritizing group aspirations	
Orienting	External	Landscape immersion	
Transformative	Internal	Identifying as researchers	
		Transition to adulthood	

Table 35. Overview of themes and subthemes present in Term 3 datasets

5.2.6.2 Immediate value

'The feelings that come from being with each other and learning together'

5.2.6.2.1 Attendance data

As can be seen in Table 36 below, attendance was very strong this term. In my journal, I noted that Sarah missed one session due to illness. These figures suggest that a positive *Immediate* value was experienced by participants,

especially as, by this point, students had observed how easy it was for their peer (Fran) to withdraw from the group.

Autumn 23	11.09.23	2	FULL HOUSE
	18.09.23	2	FULL HOUSE
	25.09.23	2	FULL HOUSE
	02.10.23	3	FULL HOUSE
	09.10.23	3	FULL HOUSE
	16.10.23	2	No Sarah
	23.10.23	3	FULL HOUSE
	06.11.23	3	FULL HOUSE
	13.11.23	3	FULL HOUSE
	20.11.23	3	FULL HOUSE
	27.11.23	3	FULL HOUSE
	04.12.23	3	FULL HOUSE

Table 36. Register of attendance for Term 3.

5.2.6.2.2 Overview of subthemes

All the codes constructed within the *Immediate* value theme were present in student datasets for this term. These were: 'The importance of fun', 'Joy of 'being with'', 'View group as friends' and 'Sparked interest'. As all these subthemes were present in Term 1 and 2, only the key points will be discussed in what follows.

5.2.6.2.3 The importance of fun

Interviews and video-diaries, were peppered with mentions of fun: '*lots of good fun*' (G+L.VD, p.1), and enjoyment in doing '*different things*' (S3, p.1). Gabrielle articulated that it had been even more fun this term:

I: Are you glad you stayed in the group this term?

G: Yes

I: Why?

G: Because it was fun last term and this time was more fun.

I: Why do you think that was?

G: Because it was slightly different.

I: What, the people or activities...

G: The activities. (G3, p.1)

The activities referred to were those involving the conference, which, she later shared, was the highlight of her term.

5.2.6.2.4 View group as friends

With the reduction of group size after Term 2, the quality of friendships seemed to strengthen and, for Laura especially, these became the most enjoyable aspect of participation: *'I've enjoyed the friendship side of it. (L.VD, p.2)*

The group's newcomer, Sarah, also soon came to view the group as her friends:

I: What has helped you feel part of the group?

S: The other students that are in it - my friends. (S3, p.1)

5.2.6.2.5 Ongoing consent

All three participants wished to stay in the group for Term 4, signalling experiences of positive *Immediate* value.

5.2.6.3 *Potential* value

The ideas and confidence that come from learning together

5.2.6.3.1 Overview of subthemes

Two subthemes constructed within the *Potential* value theme were present in student datasets for this term. These were: 'Confidence, pride and success' and 'Skill development'.

5.2.6.3.2 Confidence, pride and success

In the third term, Laura participated in a filmed interview about the iSaR group. The film was used as an alternative means of co-presentation for an MA study weekend seminar at the University of Birmingham; Laura was unable to co-present in-person. She enjoyed the process and reported: '*I have become more confident during filmed interviews*' (L3, p.2). Laura was so confident and at ease when being interviewed, she exclaimed: '*I just like how relaxed it is and how people pay attention to you and want to listen*' (L.CS1, p.1)

Gabrielle described her own increased confidence as '*going out and about*' (G3, p.2). This phrase relates to her attendance and presentation at an International Research Conference that term. In a *video diary interview*, Laura also shared her pride in their presentation at the conference: '*and at the conference we talked in front of lots of people and it was really good.*' (L.VD, p.1) The confidence was fuelled by the positive feedback received: '*They were saying like "Oh well done!" and "Very good presentation. Didn't you work hard."*' (L.VD, p.4)

5.2.6.3.3 Skill development

Despite struggling with turn-taking in the previous term, Laura reported here that she had been developing this skill:

'I think I have changed since joining the iSaR group - I have become [...] more patient by letting everyone have a chance to speak.' (L3, p.2)

This could be due to an increased interest in what others had to say, as friendships developed. It could equally be that she began to be more aware of the importance of listening as a research skill, and willing to develop this skill:

'I am good at interviewing people too. In the walking interviews, I asked lots of good follow-up questions to get more information from group members. It's a good skill to have.' (L.VCS1, p.1).

Sarah seemed more interested in developing her teamwork skills: *'We need to think as a team and as a group to do things.'* (S.VD, p.1). Laura also reported developing skills in this area: *'We learned lots about people and about how to work as a community'* (L.VD, p.1). She came to enjoy working as a team: *'I've enjoyed, like, working as a team to do it. It's really rewarding to work as a team.'* (L.VD, p.2)

5.2.6.4 Applied value

'Using those ideas in real situations'

5.2.6.4.1 Overview of subthemes

The subthemes constructed within the *Applied* value theme which were present in student datasets for this third term were: 'Accessibility issues' and 'Engaging uncertainty', but I shall only discuss 'Accessibility issues' in what follows.

5.2.3.4.2 Accessibility issues

Accessibility issues surrounding Gabrielle and Laura's attendance at the inaugural International Creative Research Methods Conference (ICRMC) were rather significant; one of the students needed to take multiple medications at specific times of the day but was unable to self-administer these medications. To ensure this student could access the event, one of the two staff members attending the event needed to be 'signed off' for administering medication – neither of us were. And so, I completed the training sessions on administering medication and then, over the course of two weeks prior to the event, I was to observe the procedures involved, including writing in the MAR charts and the counting/recounting of medication. I was then observed in administering her medication during different points of the day, before finally being 'signed off' as competent. This may sound 'above and beyond' the call of duty, but the implications of me not doing it, or not passing the assessment, were that the student would not be able to access the event.

Although Laura enjoyed the conference very much, she admitted struggling to understand it all, which was an accessibility issue in its own right. The use of jargonistic language by some overly verbose presenters made their talks difficult

to understand: *'The hardest part of this term has been not understanding what some of the other professional researchers were talking about with their research at the conference - it was so confusing!'* (L3, p.1) The conference was not advertised as 'accessible', but after their own presentations, the group were able to participate in several creative workshops and enjoy at least one other presentation, by *The Lawnmowers* – a group of inclusive researchers, most of whom had learning disabilities.

5.2.6.5 *Realized* value

Making a difference that matters to you

5.2.6.5.1 Overview of subthemes

The subtheme constructed under the theme of *Realized* value: 'Making a difference' was again present in student datasets in Term 3.

5.2.6.5.2 Making a difference

When presenting to ICRM conference delegates, Gabrielle talked about the group's first PAR study, stating:

'I want to help make a difference for future students through our research, so that starting college is easier for everyone – showing them where everything is and helping them get used to the place'. (G.VCS1, p.1)

When asked if she felt she had made a difference yet to college life for other students, Laura commented: *'Yes, I do feel like I have made a difference to other*

students' lives with the research I have done in the group.' (L3, p.2) Referring, perhaps, to the 'Welcome cards' the group's research had encouraged. For Sarah, however, due to her not being involved in the previous PAR study, this difference was still to be seen: *'Not yet.'* (S3, p.2).

5.2.6.6 *Enabling* value

'The people and activities that help you learn together and from each other'

5.2.6.6.1 Overview of subthemes

All of the subthemes constructed within the *Enabling* value theme were present in student datasets for this third term: 'Taking ownership', 'Making research accessible', 'Peer support', 'Participatory Choices', 'Facilitative support' and 'Scaffolding activities'. As these subthemes have already been articulated, only the key points will be discussed.

5.2.6.6.2 Taking ownership

By the third term, students felt a strong sense of ownership towards their work and learning. As a new starter to the group, Sarah was surprised to experience a session in which students had ownership: *'It feels different for us saying what we want to do instead of staff saying this is what you're going to be doing today'* (S3, p.1)

Laura expanded on this idea of difference: *'[iSaR sessions] are different because we're in charge and teachers aren't telling us what to do all the time.'* (L.VD, p.2).

When asked if this level of ownership felt like a big responsibility, Laura answered:

'It does, yeah definitely because it's all on us, like if something goes wrong, it's up to us to fix it.' (L.VD, p.2) This did not come across as a complaint, more a point of pride in the group's capability to address challenge.

5.2.6.6.3 Making research accessible

Laura's part of the conference presentation talked about the inaccessibility of interviews and her ideas to adapt them to become more accessible:

'From working in the group, I have realised that interviews are not the most popular research activity. They are not easy or fun for some of my peers, but I like how they can tell us lots of detail about other students' experiences. I think maybe we could combine activities – like, do an interview with fun activities in it'. (L.VCS1, p.1)

5.2.6.6.4 Peer support

During her video diary interview, Laura showed an awareness of the support received from fellow students within the group. When asked whether taking ownership was difficult, Laura responded:

'It can be, obviously, but I've got the support of Gabrielle and Sarah [...] I enjoy having two people being a support – I think it's a really good thing'.
(L.VD, p.2)

This resonates with the other values perceived by students, around friendships and groupwork.

By the end of her first term in the group (Term 3), Sarah shared that she felt part of the group. When asked what had helped, she replied: *'The other students that are in it.'* (S3, p.1) The support and acceptance of the other participants allowed her to feel welcomed and like she belonged in the group.

5.2.6.6.5 Facilitative support

Participants became, by this third term, more comfortable with the student-facilitator dynamic. Laura understood the facilitator role as a supportive not instructive one:

'And Helen is there to, like, be with us and help us, somehow, but not, like, teach us or tell us what to do, nothing like that.' (L.VD, p.2)

To an onlooker, especially one expecting lesson-plans and a more structured approach, the sessions would appear weak and to lack authority and therefore value. Value, however, was experienced and the facilitation-style was appreciated by all student-participants:

Laura: It's not Helen as the researcher; it's students as the researchers.

Gabrielle: Helen just lets us get on with it, doesn't she.

Eluned: And why do you think that's important?

Laura: Because it's helping us for the future. (G+L. VD, p.1)

5.2.6.7 *Orienting* value

Sharing your work with people who also want to make a difference and finding out about their work.

5.2.6.7.1 Overview of subthemes

The only subtheme constructed within the *Orienting* value theme which was present in student datasets for this third term was: 'Landscape immersion'.

5.2.3.8.2 Landscape immersion

As discussed earlier, both Laura and Gabrielle attended the ICRM conference. It was a perfect chance to engage in research practices and truly immerse themselves in the research landscape. On asking, Gabrielle shared that it had been the highlight of her term (G3, p1) and for Laura too:

'It was so lovely to share my experience of being a student researcher with other grown-up researchers, and I loved the feedback we got given too!'
(L3, p.1)

5.2.6.8 *Transformative* value

'Other changes your 'making a difference' has caused'

5.2.6.8.1 Overview of subthemes

Two subthemes constructed within the *Transformative* value theme were present in student datasets for this third term. These being: 'Identifying as researchers' and 'Transition to adulthood'.

5.2.6.8.2 Identifying as researchers

It was clear the conference supported Laura's identity as researcher. On asking, if she still felt like a researcher, she responded: *'I would say that I would describe myself as a researcher, because I have been doing research tasks, collecting data and sharing my experience with others at the conference in Manchester.'* (L3, p.2) Whereas Gabrielle gave this question a tentative response of: *'50/50'*. (G3, p.2)

During the video diary interview, Laura was asked what qualities she had that made her a good researcher:

'I'm very inquisitive. I'm very curious. I like to know things about people. I'll ask many questions, like 'Why? Why is that like that?' I'll ask questions. I'm very interested. I'm very confident. I'm very willing to be interviewed and interview others'. (L.VD, p.2)

Revealing her developing understanding of the researcher role and predisposition to such a role.

5.2.6.8.3 Transition to adulthood

Some students were aware that their 'future' may be filled with experiences in which they would have to act with autonomy, as adults. They felt that the student-led activities in iSaR sessions were good practice for them:

'It shows we are growing up and take care of what we're doing. It's the next step to the bigger world of work because when I leave here, I'll be

needing a job and I will be in charge, basically [...] It's a good starting point'. (L.VD, p.2)

5.2.7 Term 4

5.2.7.1 Overview of Term 4

During Term 4, the iSaR group began the execution of their second and final PAR study (see Table 37 below). They were first supported to seek inspiration for their study by reviewing an article which focused on disabled students' experiences of work experience. After attempting traditional style interviews again, the group trialled and adapted the *photo interview* method used by myself during end of term interviews. This involved me and Eluned going to their placements with them and taking photographs of them at work. The group then conducted peer interviews using these photographs.

PAR 2	08.01.24	1hr	3	1. Literature review – ‘ <i>Gaining employment: the experience of students at a further education college for individuals with learning disabilities.</i> ’ (Skellern + Astbury, 2012)	FULL HOUSE
	15.01.24	1hr	2	2. Interview schedules and planning – Group wrote list of interview questions about ‘work experience’. Possible plan: to create visual student story sheets about each placement, and then get input from peers?	Sarah poorly
	~~22.01.24~~	CANCELLED DUE TO ME BEING POORLY			
	29.01.24	1hr	2	3. Trialling research tools - Peer-to-peer interviews within group using interview schedule created in previous session	Laura poorly
	05.02.24	1hr	3	4. Trialling research tools – Use of photographs to support interviews.	FULL HOUSE
SPRING HALF-TERM					
PAR 2	19.02.24	1hr	3	5. Scheduling data gathering w/exp visits	FULL HOUSE
Fieldwork	23.02.24	1hr	1	W/exp visit collecting data with Gabrielle at her work placement	Helen and Eluned's photos
	26.02.24	1hr	3	6. Group interview Gabrielle using photographs	FULL HOUSE
Fieldwork	27.02.24	1hr	1	W/exp visit collecting data with Laura at her work placement	Helen and Eluned's photos
	04.03.24	1hr	3	7. Group interview Laura using photographs	FULL HOUSE
Fieldwork	08.03.24	1hr	1	W/exp visit collecting data with Sarah at her work placement	Eluned's photos
	11.03.24	1hr	3	8. Group interview Sarah using photographs	FULL HOUSE
	18.03.24	1hr	3	9. Eluned's leaving event – Group interview Eluned	FULL HOUSE
4 th term interviews – Multi modal interviews – 5 part (inc. new value matching activity...)					
EASTER BREAK					

Table 37. Overview of participation during Term 4 with notes.

At the end of this term, I conducted multi-modal interviews with participants; students were interviewed using the *photo-interview* method as well as the more *traditional interview* method, two *click ‘n’ drag* ranking activities (one to evaluate interview methods and the other to gauge readiness for introduction to the *Value Creation Framework*) and a second *Lego reflections* activity. As can be seen from Table 38 below, the values present within student responses this term featured six of the eight values. The following section will detail these findings, but to avoid

repetition, I shall not be disseminating on the *Orienting* value theme (as this is discussed in more detail in RQ1b).

Values (themes)		Codes (subthemes)	Term 4
Immediate		Importance of fun	
		View group as friends	
		Sparked interest	
Potential		Confidence, pride + success	
		Paying attention to detail	
		Skill development	
		Emerging researchers	
Applied		Accessibility issues	
Enabling	Internal	Taking ownership	
		Making research accessible	
	External	Participatory choices	
Orienting	Internal	Understanding each other	
	External	Landscape immersion	
Transformative	Internal	Identifying as researchers	

Table 38. Overview of themes and subthemes present in Term 4 datasets

5.2.7.2 *Immediate* value

The feelings that come from being with each other and learning together

5.2.7.2.1 Attendance data

I noted in my journal that Gabrielle missed one session due to a pre-arranged family holiday, and both Sarah and Laura had each missed one session due to illness. These figures continue to suggest that a positive *Immediate* value was experienced by participants, for reasons previously postulated.

Spring 24	08.01.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	15.01.24	2	No Sarah
	29.01.24	2	No Laura
	05.02.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	19.02.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	26.02.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	04.03.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	11.03.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	18.03.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	15.04.24	2	No Gabrielle

Figure 39. Register of attendance for Term 4.

5.2.7.2.2 Overview of subthemes

Three codes constructed within the *Immediate* value theme were present in student datasets for this term: ‘The importance of fun and novelty’, ‘View group as friends’ and ‘Sparked interest’. I shall just discuss the first subtheme in what follows.

5.2.7.2.3 The importance of fun

Gabrielle found fun in many activities during Term 4, especially using the ‘jargon buzzers’ and the jolly chaos they incited whilst the group attempted to understand a complicated research article:

I: Why did you choose the photo?

G: I dunno. That there seemed to be fun in it, because everyone’s just going ‘duunnn’ [bangs the table, making buzzer sound]

I: Oh, the buzzers! And Sarah kept on doing it because you were yawning – every time you yawned, wasn’t it?

G: Yeah [laughs]. (G4, p.3)

She enjoyed '*the laugh*' (G4, p.6) of the term. Whereas Laura was mostly excited about the group's Work Experience topic; she found the activities fun and enjoyed '*how much of a variety there is.*' (L4, p.3). Laura especially enjoyed being given the chance to interview Eluned, as she was leaving the college for another job.

5.2.7.2.4 Ongoing consent

All three participants wished to stay in the group for Term 5, suggesting experiences of positive *Immediate* value.

5.2.7.3 *Potential* value

'The ideas and confidence that come from learning together'

5.2.7.3.1 Overview of subthemes

All four subthemes constructed within the *Potential* value theme were present in student datasets for this term. These were: 'Confidence, pride and success', 'Paying attention to detail', 'Skill development' and 'Emerging researchers'. In what follows, I have chosen not to discuss the first theme, to avoid repetition.

5.2.7.3.2 Paying attention to detail

Having conducted peer-to-peer *photo-interviews*, participants were able to investigate and compare their different experiences of work placements with relative ease. What struck iSaR group members, was that the experiences of the interviewee had not matched the assumptions of the interviewers. Gabrielle had

not envisaged Laura doing personal orders of shopping for customers: '*Laura went shopping for people.*' (G4, p.5), and Laura had not expected Gabrielle to be using a coffee machine: '*I like how they've got a coffee machine there.*' (L4, p.5).

The interview activity influenced Sarah's future aspirations, and she felt it was a good thing to find out more about other people's work placements:

S: That we get to know what different work experiences there are out there for us to do.

I: Yeah, I mean you found out that you'd quite like to work in that station café, didn't you?

S: Yeah (S4, p.4)

5.2.7.3.3 Skill development

With the adoption of the *photo-interview* technique for peer-to-peer interviews during this term, the skills and confidence of the group, in interviewing, advanced considerably; I could sit back and watch the research conversation develop, independent of my prompting. Gabrielle, who chose to opt out of group interviews for the 'starting at college' project (PAR 1) admitted finding being the interviewer interesting in PAR 2 and stated: '*I got better at interviewing*' (G4, p.6).

5.2.7.3.4 Emerging researchers

Laura wanted to expand the work experience research into new areas and was particularly keen to visit a horticulture student, as this work would be very different from what she did: '*I think it would be so interesting to do a hort student.*' (L4, p.4)

Sarah had the idea to approach a student who worked at a restaurant next, perhaps to satisfy her personal career curiosities about work of this sort. She also had decided which research method to use:

I: Which method would you use?

S: The pictures, so they can say, why is that one different to that one.

(S4, p.5)

Unfortunately, it was decided that there would not be enough time in the final term to action these ideas, as the group needed to focus on accessible dissemination of their own findings.

5.2.7.4 Applied value

Using those ideas in real situations

5.2.7.4.1 Overview of subthemes

Only one subtheme constructed within the *Applied* value theme was present in student datasets for this fourth term, and this was: 'Accessibility issues'.

5.2.7.4.2 Accessibility issues

Sometimes, Gabrielle's memory needed verbal prompting as well as visual:

I: OK, so what were you doing in that photograph?

G: Writing, or were we talking to you? I can't remember.

I: What is that in front of you?

G: Paper with writing on. It's hard to see.

I: Was it this? [Shows the photograph of the river map close up]

G: Maybe yeah. I think we were just talking.

I: Maybe you'd just presented it to each other?

G: Yeah. We'd done that. (G4, p.1)

Gabrielle appreciated the ease of researching work experience; no one had to remember too much detail as the main research activity did not rely on memory but on being observed and photographed whilst at work: '*Because you can just go out with work experience.*' (G4, p.5)

5.2.7.5 *Enabling* value

The people and activities that help you learn together and from each other

5.2.7.5.1 Overview of subthemes

The four subthemes constructed within the *Enabling* value theme were present in student datasets for this fourth term: 'Taking ownership', 'Making research accessible' and 'Participatory Choices', but discussion will be limited to 'Making research accessible' in what follows.

5.2.7.5.2 Making research accessible

The methods explored in preparation for the group's second PAR project were also evaluated by the group via a '*drag 'n' drop*' ranking activity. The methods

were evaluated, as they had been in Term 2, and scores were calculated whereby the most favoured methods received three points, the second most favoured received two points, and the least favoured received one point. The scores are represented in Table 40 below, where the methods scoring highest were the most favoured for that particular aspect (and emboldened for clarity). As a note here, the drawing interview was not experienced by Laura, but in her interview, Laura revealed that she would have given the method a low score anyway, so the results wouldn't be hugely different.

	Qualities			
Methods	Fun	Easy	Most detail	General
Traditional Interview	5	5	5	15
Drawing Interview	4	5	3	12*
Photo Interview	8	7	9	24

Table 40. Table showing how different methods were ranked by core student group.

5.2.7.5.3.1 Traditional Interview

Both Gabrielle and Sarah felt that traditional interviews were the least easy method they had trialled: *'Because we had to write our questions, and you might have forgotten what it is you were doing on that day at work experience.'* (S4, p.3)

Although Laura felt that traditional interviews could be seen as easier than photo-interviews: *'Because you don't have to take or find photos for it.'* (L4, p.3), she did

concede that it was better *'having photos to see what people are talking about'*.
(L4, p.3)

5.2.7.5.3.2. Drawing interview

Opinion was, again, very much divided on drawing interviews. Whilst Sarah found this activity the most fun to trial: *'Because we got to draw about what we got to do at work experience'* (S4, p.3) Gabrielle found it (for a second time) the least fun: *'Because I can only draw stick men.'* (G4,p.4)

In her *Value Creation Story*, Sarah talks highly of the drawing method she trialled with Gabrielle: *'We could show what different experiences we'd done. Not just talk about it – show it!'* (S.VCS1, p1) To Sarah, having something visual to support her communication was really appreciated.

5.2.7.5.3.3 Photo-Interview

Photo-interviews were the most popular method trialled by the group as the process allowed participants to reflect on activities and events which were the most meaningful to them. That photo-interviews provided the most detail was conclusive: *'Because you got to see what people do at their work experience.'* (S4, p.3); *'Because you can visualise it.'* (L4, p.3) and *'People can see what you're doing there'*. (G4, p.4)

All participants completed this fourth term stating that they would choose photo-interviews for future peer-to-peer research and Laura stated that she would have liked to *'have done that for the 'starting at college' project.'* (L4, p.3).

5.2.7.6 *Transformative value*

Other changes your 'making a difference' has caused

5.2.7.6.1 Overview of subthemes

Only one subtheme constructed within the *Transformative value* theme was present in student datasets for this fourth term: 'Identifying as researchers'.

5.2.7.6.2 Identifying as researchers

By the end of the penultimate term, all participants reported feeling like a researcher. Again, Laura responded as if I'd asked a stupid question. In her mind, there was no doubt whatsoever of her identity as researcher: *'I do, Yes. Of course I do, I've been doing it for a year – a year and two months!'* (L4, p.6), suggesting the significance of long-term immersion.

As part of this term's multi-modal interview process, students were again asked to create a *Lego Reflections* scene. The scene constructed by Gabrielle reveals how she had come to identify as a researcher, and like Laura before her, she portrayed the entire group as researchers. All characters are lined up, facing front, with different props, signifying research tools, and a different trophy-like object placed in front of them, perhaps signifying success or data (see Figure 54 below).

Gabrielle herself is presented as a winged, Robin Hood character, holding a bow and arrow.

There is such a sense of shared group purpose in this scene; it conjures up the essence of a team of Superheroes – all with different superpowers and ready for action. It feels like there should be a soundtrack. When asked if she felt like a researcher now, Gabrielle responded, with a definite ‘yes’ (G4, p.6).



Figure 54. Gabrielle's second *Lego Reflections* response

Indeed, notes from my Reflexive journal observed a significant shift in students' approach to research this term, taking much more of a lead and ownership of proceedings:

'Straight away – AGAIN – today, Gabrielle told me what the group was doing today 'Interviewing Sarah!' I then pushed her further and asked – 'Right well what do we need?' "The recorder thing", then Laura said the photographs and Gabrielle said the question sheets. This proves the value of routine when trialling something.' (RRJ, 11.03.2024)

5.2.8 Term 5

5.2.8.1 Overview of Term 5

Having had their peer interviews transcribed, the group wanted to understand more about work experience and so decided to interview the work experience co-ordinator at the start of the final term. The remaining sessions of the term were focused on the creation of accessible easy-read booklets to share their findings with their peers around the college and new students (see Table 41 below). Due to a printing issue, the group were only able to see the prototype before leaving college but have since been sent the final booklets.

PAR 2	15.04.24	1hr	2	1. Group plan interview w/ work experience co-ordinator	No Gabrielle (holiday)
	22.04.24	1hr	3	2. Group interview work experience co-ordinator	FULL HOUSE
	29.04.24	1hr	2	3. Group review transcript and begin resource activity	No Sarah (interview)
	13.05.24	1hr	2	4. Group worked on booklet resource	No Sarah (ill)
	20.05.24	1hr	3	5. Group worked on booklet resource	FULL HOUSE
SUMMER HALF-TERM					
PAR 2	03.06.24	1hr	3	6. Group worked on booklet resource	FULL HOUSE
	10.06.24	1hr	3	7. Group send booklets to SALT to check Makaton	FULL HOUSE
	17.06.24	1hr	3	8. Group send booklets to Marketing for printing	FULL HOUSE
	24.06.24	1hr	3	9. Group check up on printing progress	FULL HOUSE
	01.07.24	1hr	3	10. Group take prototype to student for feedback	FULL HOUSE
	08.07.24 11.07.24	1hr	3	NO SESSION DUE TO END OF YEAR EVENTS BUT Group presented work to board of governors on 11.07.24	FULL HOUSE
	15.07.24	1hr	3	11. Final session / Bloopers vids / celebration with Eluned and cake!!!	FULL HOUSE
5 th term multimodal interviews (inc. VC story writing activities)					
SUMMER BREAK					

Table 41. Overview of participation during Term 5 with notes.

At the end of this final term, I conducted multi-modal interviews with participants; students were interviewed using the *photo-interview* method as well as the more *traditional interview* method. They also completed their own *Photo-based Writing Scaffold* to support the creation of an individual *Value Creation Story*. This latter will be treated as contribution data and discussed in Part 2, as response to Research Question 1b. As already mentioned, I only chose to use Laura's *Value Creation Story* for Part 2, and so the remaining stories will be drawn from as effect data in what follows.

As can be seen from Table 42 below, the values present within student responses this term featured all eight values from the *Value Creation Framework*, but to avoid repetition, I shall not be disseminating on every theme or subtheme.

Values (themes)		Codes (subthemes)	Term 5
Immediate		Importance of fun	
		Joy of 'being with'	
		View group as friends	
Potential		Confidence, pride + success	
		Skill development	
		Emerging researchers	
Applied		Accessibility issues	
Realized		Making a difference	
Enabling	Internal	Taking ownership	
		Making research accessible	
	External	Participatory choices	
		Facilitative Support	
Strategic	External	Utilising alliances	
Orienting	Internal	Understanding each other	
	External	Landscape immersion	
		Wider importance	
Transformative	Internal	Identifying as researchers	
		Peers to housemates	

Table 42. Overview of themes and subthemes present in Term 5 datasets

5.2.8.2 *Immediate* value

The feelings that come from being with each other and learning together

5.2.8.2.1 Attendance data

I noted in my journal that Sarah had missed one session due to illness and another due to an official Supported Internship interview. Laura and Gabrielle attended every session. Again, attendance figures suggest that a positive *Immediate* value was experienced by participants.

Summer 24	22.04.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	29.04.24	2	No Sarah
	13.05.24	2	No Sarah
	20.05.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	03.06.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	10.06.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	17.06.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	24.06.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	01.07.24	3	FULL HOUSE
	15.07.24	3	FULL HOUSE

Table 43. Register of attendance for Term 5

5.2.8.2.2 Check in/out data – *Battery-check sheets*

I only managed to use the revised '*battery-check sheet*' resource (see Chapter 4) for eight sessions across the final two terms of the fieldwork. Students liked the sheets and would often reprimand me when I hadn't printed them out for a session. This response suggests that participants valued the resource, but I began to view it as more of a facilitative resource to support sessions, rather than a purposeful, revealing data source. The resource had been revised to include a space for participants to draw an emoji and a space to write a text response, but I began to find that low energy did not necessarily equate to negative experiences. Students consistently drew a happy face even when their energy had dropped during the session, or they wrote something like 'Happy but tired' alongside their low energy levels, and although this was useful for me as facilitator, it did not really reveal clear data regarding value-experiences.

5.2.8.2.3 Overview of subthemes

Three codes constructed within the *Immediate* value theme were present in student datasets for this term. These were: 'The importance of fun and novelty', 'Joy of 'being with'', and 'View group as friends', but I shall just discuss 'The importance of fun'.

5.2.8.2.4 The importance of fun

On nearing the end of Term 5, Gabrielle asked me if I could collate all the videos of her yawning and other bloopers for part of our end of project celebration:

I: What have you enjoyed about being in the group?

G: The bloopers, because they're funny.

I: What was in the bloopers?

G: Mostly me yawning. (p.1)

This 'blooper' video really appealed to Gabrielle's voracious appetite and capacity for fun. I was often reminded about it and asked of its progress.

When I asked Gabrielle why she had kept coming to the group over the past five terms, she told me it was '*because it was fun*'. (G5, p.1). I believe this stands as testimony to the importance and value of fun for the continued participation of young people in research, and education in general.

5.2.8.3 *Potential* value

‘The ideas and confidence that come from learning together’

5.2.8.3.1 Overview of subthemes

Three subthemes constructed within the *Potential* value theme were present in student datasets for this final term. These were: ‘Confidence, pride and success’, ‘Skill development’ and ‘Emerging researchers’, but I shall just discuss the first two subthemes.

5.2.8.3.2 Confidence, pride and success

By the final term’s closure, Laura was proving to be a voracious and curious interviewer herself. Her confidence was evident when she took the lead to ask ‘ad hoc’ questions when the group had finished interviewing the Work Experience Co-ordinator:

L: I’ve really enjoyed interviewing Abbie.

I: Yeah, you two couldn’t stop, could you, you were both chatting happily away - you and Abbie.

L: It was terrible [laughs]. (L5, p.1)

5.2.8.3.3 Skill development

In their final interview, both Sarah and Laura gave teamworking skills as those most developed through their involvement in the project:

'[I enjoyed] how well we work as a team. It was nice to see like how we come from a bigger group to a smaller group. It was nice to see the difference'. (L5, p.1)

For Gabrielle, it was her public speaking skills that she felt she had developed most:

I: What skills have you developed by being in the group?

G: Talking to the governors. (G5, p.1)

Gabrielle was proud of the fact that she had, alongside Sarah and Laura, co-presented to the College CEO and Board of Governors.

5.2.8.4 *Realized* value

Making a difference that matters to you

5.2.8.4.1 Overview of subthemes

The subtheme constructed under the theme of *Realized* value: 'Making a difference' was again present in student datasets in final term.

5.2.8.4.2 Making a difference

The group's second attempt at Participatory Action Research was far more successful in producing *Realised* value. The group had learned what works, in terms of strategic actions, and were all certain that their research had affected change this time. As Gabrielle explained:

‘We hope new students will feel more comfortable when starting their work experience with these booklets to help them.’ (G.VCS2, p.1)

All members of the core iSaR group would have left college by the time other students would get to use their booklets, so they were intent on finding a student who was timetabled to work at one of the featured work placements the following academic year. On finding a student who would be working, for the first time, at the café Gabrielle’s booklet featured, they showed him the booklet and asked him some questions. Laura came away from this meeting, not hoping, but *‘knowing he’s going to be OK’* (L5, p.1) and that they had made a difference to at least one other student.

5.2.8.5 *Enabling* value

The people and activities that help you learn together and from each other.

5.2.8.5.1 Overview of subthemes

Four subthemes constructed within the *Enabling* value theme were also present in student datasets for this fourth term: ‘Taking ownership’, ‘Making research accessible’, ‘Participatory Choices’ and ‘Facilitative Support’, but I shall just discuss the first subtheme.

5.2.8.5.2 Taking ownership

Laura and Gabrielle had been attending the sessions over a period of five terms. In the final interview, I asked Laura why she had kept coming to the group:

'because we lead it, it's different because we lead it. It's different from the SU board'. (L5, p.1) The 'SU board' was the Student Council, on which Laura and Gabrielle had been elected student representatives that final year. Those sessions were highly staff-led, allowing for minimal student ownership. Interestingly, when I delivered the workshop model to the Student Council, the confidence of these two iSaR students, as leaders, was remarked upon:

'The only change I would say I saw was in students Gabrielle and Laura, who had done work previously on your project, on your PhD work. They took a little bit more of a lead. Even Gabrielle, who would normally let other people step forward, she began to talk with more authority, and she was more confident, so – yeah, that was good. That was really good. Surprising, but in a really good way. Not that I doubted them, but I just hadn't thought about that as an opportunity.' (P4, p.2)

5.2.8.6 *Strategic* value

Meeting the people who can help you make a difference or who you hope to help by making the difference.

5.2.8.6.1 Overview of subthemes

Only one of the constructed codes within the *Strategic* value theme was present in student datasets for this term, and this was: 'Utilising alliances'.

5.2.8.6.2 Utilising alliances

During the final term, students began to collaborate with staff from outside the group, who could strategically help their project and make it more successful. To help them with the content of their booklets, including the Makaton symbols, the group needed to approach the Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) team, and were encouraged to email them:

‘With [therapist name]’s help, we were able to use the correct Makaton symbols to make the story easier for certain students to read, so no-one feels left out.’ (L.VCS2, p.1)

Once the booklets were designed, they showed them to the Marketing team, who allocated a graphic designer to work on the booklet designs and, once this was completed, they organised the printing of the booklets. Unfortunately, there was a significant delay in sorting out the printing of the booklets, which ended up having to be printed elsewhere. When asked, Gabrielle felt that this was the most frustrating moment of the term: *‘Sorting out the booklets. Waiting for two weeks for Telford.’ (G5, p.1)*

Although the group didn’t get to see a finished booklet before the end of term, due to the above delays, they were able to test out the booklet’s potential impact using one of the prototypes we had printed ourselves. Firstly, however, they needed to collaborate with the work experience co-ordinator, to find out the name of a student to approach who would most benefit:

'We were talking to the person who sorts work experience out. We were talking about the next person that will go to our placements.' (S.VCS, p.1)

5.2.8.7 *Orienting* value

Sharing your work with people who also want to make a difference and finding out about their work.

5.2.8.7.1 Overview of subthemes

The three subthemes constructed within the *Orienting* value theme which were present in student datasets for this fourth term were: 'Understanding each other', 'Landscape immersion' and 'Wider importance', but I shall just discuss the final subtheme.

5.2.8.7.2 Wider importance

Orientation into the research landscape took on more weight when participants realised that they *do* indeed have a place in that landscape, and that their work held significance for more than their immediate vicinity.

By the end of the final PAR project, the group were aware of at least some of the significance of the work they had done. They all thought people would find it interesting in hearing about their research and the difference they had made. I asked them what they thought people would be most interested in. Gabrielle's response was simply: *'the booklets, the Governors and the conference'* (G5, p.2). The group had just presented the story of their final project to the college governors and were pleased with their response and encouraged by their interest.

Sarah felt that people would be most interested in hearing *'about different work experiences we'd done, and that we don't just go on the computer to do our research, we talk about it.'* (S5, p.2) Laura also felt that people would be interested in the process of their research, like the governors were: *'The process of how it all came about.'* (L5, p.2)

Laura certainly saw the universality of their work:

'It's not about us, it's about work experience as a whole. It's about something bigger than us three.' (L5, p.1)

5.2.8.8 *Transformative value*

Other changes your 'making a difference' has caused

5.2.8.8.1 Overview of subthemes

The two subthemes constructed within the *Transformative value* theme which were present in student datasets for this final term were: 'Identifying as researchers' and 'Peers to housemates', but I will just discuss the final subtheme.

5.2.8.8.2 Peers to housemates

Participation also brought out transformation of relationships within the group; participation in the group transformed Gabrielle and Laura from fellow students, who didn't really socialize with each other, to friends, although this friendship may have been strengthened once Fran had left the group and through the reduction of group size.

In my journal, I noted that Gabrielle had started being more aware of Laura and her physical needs; she would support her to put her coat on and push her wheelchair back to the bungalows sometimes. The friendship was an unexpected consequence of being in the group for Laura, and although the friendship did not *cause* the two to end up in the same supported living bungalow once graduated, the friendship certainly eased this transition out of college for the pair:

‘Laura is going to be my housemate when I leave college and being in the group has helped me get to know her better.’ (G.VCS, p.1)

5.2.9 Section Summary

Findings suggest that the iSaR model was perceived, by participants from the core iSaR student group, to have created experiences of increasingly positive value over the five terms of fieldwork. These value-experiences, which motivated them to lead their own PAR studies, and supported them as they began to transition out of college, are summarized below:

5.2.9.1 *Immediate* value

Participating students experienced consistently positive *Immediate* value throughout all five terms of participation. Their articulation of experiences of fun, joy, friendship and interest were strong indicators that they had found the work meaningful on their own terms, with particular emphasis on the import of the ‘fun factor’ of sessions.

5.2.9.2 *Potential* value

Participating students experienced increasingly positive *Potential* value over the five terms of participation, with confidence growing through opportunities to experience their own competency, through planning, actions and wider dissemination of work.

5.2.9.3 *Applied* value

Experiences of *Applied* value became incrementally more positive over time, with the research growing more accessible, as individual needs were articulated and addressed, as more suitable research methods were chosen by the group and as students became more accustomed to engaging their uncertainty.

5.2.9.4 *Realized* value

These value-experiences increased gradually over the duration of the fieldwork, as the group grew better at learning how to make a difference through their own PAR studies, specifically through opportunities to evaluate impact.

5.2.9.5 *Enabling* value

Participating students experienced increasingly positive *Enabling* value throughout all five terms of participation. As the group grew to know each other better, they were seen to provide progressively more support for each other, thus slowly reducing their reliance on the support and direction from facilitators.

5.2.9.6 *Strategic* value

Strategic value was only intermittently articulated throughout the student datasets across the five terms of fieldwork. Positive *Strategic* value was only experienced *externally* in the final term, through the group's collaboration with staff members

outside the iSaR group who could strategically enhance their project, increasing the quality and usability of its outputs.

5.2.9.7 Orienting value

Participating students experienced predominantly positive *Orienting* value throughout the five terms of participation, through investigation of different peer experiences within their college community and through their immersion into the landscape of inclusive research. More negative experiences resulted from the inaccessibility of some of the research outputs the participants were exposed to within this landscape.

5.2.9.8 Transformative value

The most notable indicator of positive *Transformative* value, articulated by participants, was their increasing identification as researchers, and their awareness of their development of the skills that being researchers entailed – planning, trialling, questioning, observing, sense-making, presenting and leading. That participants claimed that, through having the opportunity to practise taking the lead and taking responsibility for their own learning, they felt supported for their future life was perhaps the most significant articulation of positive *Transformative* value.

5.3 Part 2 - RQ.1b

What were the enablers and disablers of flows of learning between and across value-cycles, experienced by participating postsecondary students who have a learning disability?

In Part 1, I discussed value-experiences in relation to specific value-cycles. The activity clearly demonstrated the value of iSaR activity, as experienced and perceived by student-participants from the core iSaR group. Although, I encountered, through these findings, some instances whereby experiences of specific value-cycles had either been helped or hindered by various, probable factors, it did not reveal the journey of the learning, or values, clearly enough across the value-cycles.

There are many barriers which commonly create difficulty for, or even prevent, learning-disabled student-groups from taking the lead in meaningful activity. I created the above research question to interrogate the barriers experienced by the iSaR group, who were otherwise well-supported and encouraged to succeed.

In this section, and to support a fuller answer to the above research question, I chose to focus solely on the events of the final PAR project, through the value creation story (VCS) written by one student, Laura. I believed this narrowed focus would best illustrate the flow of learning between and across value cycles, and reveal the story of how iSaR activity may have contributed to development of agency and self-determination.

5.3.1 Value Creation Story (VCS) frames

To explore the value of the group's final PAR study, each participant was supported to create their own VCS during the final term, using a novel '*visual story-creation method*' (described in Chapter 4). I chose to use the VCS created by Laura in this section as an illustrative example of contribution data.

Excerpts from the remaining stories have already been included as effect data within student datasets disseminated in Part 1 of this chapter. The group's completed stories were also combined to support their co-presentation of the final project to college governors, and the creation of a co-authored, accessible booklet to support and encourage other student groups to do student-led research (See Appendix 20).

When presented visually, within a story frame, such as Figure 55 below, the flow of learning between and across value-cycles becomes more visible, and can be observed and analysed, indicated by arrows. Each value-cycle is attributed a specific colour and number, and when the learning flows from one value, the arrow retains the original value cycle's colour. Note here that this colour-coding is to support the researcher's own learning style and not required to understand the story frame.

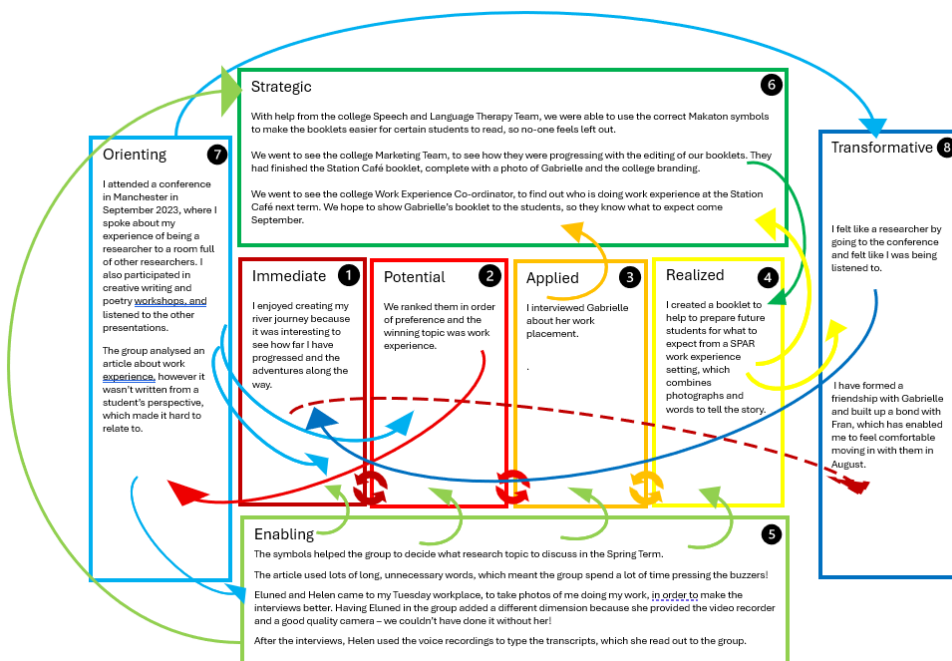


Figure 55. Laura's Value Creation Story frame

5.3.2 Laura's Value Creation Story

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) suggest using '*simple notation for encoding flows, [assigning] a number to each value*' (p.246), i.e. *Immediate* value=1, *Potential* value = 2, and so forth. Using this notation method, Laura's VCS could be read (chronologically) as a long flow like this: 7-8-1-5-2-7-5-3-5-6-4-6-4-8. The story follows the chronology of events, which Laura ordered through manipulation of her PowerPoint slides (see Chapter 4). It starts with *Orienting* value (7), beginning with Laura's attendance and presentation, at the International Creative Research Methods Conference, prior to the beginning of the group's second PAR study: '*I spoke about my experience of being a researcher to a room full of other researchers*' (7).

This *Orienting* value experienced by Laura as she immersed herself in the world of research at the conference, participating in workshops and listening to other presentations, led the flow of learning into *Transformative* value: '*I felt like a researcher by going to the conference and felt like I was being listened to*' (8).

Her strengthened identity as a researcher influenced her motivation and interest when starting the second PAR study, as the learning flowed into *Immediate* value: '*I enjoyed creating my river journey because it was interesting to see how far I have progressed and the adventures along the way*' (1).

Laura then reveals her awareness of the *Enabling* value of having the research topic options represented symbolically on *options cards*: '*The symbols helped the group to decide what research topic to discuss in the Spring Term*' (5). The

emboldened number here denotes the researcher's confidence that this value-cycle was an important one within this story – as will be revealed.

With the process of ranking the cards and voting, the learning flowed into *Potential* value, as the group decided on what they cared to make a difference about: '*We ranked them in order of preference, and the winning topic was work experience.*' (2) Having decided on the direction of their research, Laura and the group, again, immersed themselves in the research landscape, as they searched for inspiration for their second PAR study, looking at disabled students' experiences of work placements.

Unfortunately, the activity of consulting the literature acted, in many respects, as a disabling force to the flow of learning in Laura's story: '*The group analysed an article about work experience, however it wasn't written from a student's perspective, which made it hard to relate to.*' (7) This activity created an experience of negative *Orienting* value (represented by the underscoring of the number); what was hard for Laura to relate to, did not nurture a sense of belonging within the practice landscape she was attempting to engage with, as a researcher. These accessibility issues also prevented the direct flow of learning from *Potential* value into *Applied* value, via *Orienting* value, and the group were 'stuck' in the *Potential* value for a while, as they hadn't found inspiration for continued research activity.

Even though, as facilitator, I picked a research article with an 'accessible summary', Laura criticized it: '*The article used lots of long, unnecessary words, which meant the group spent a lot of time pressing the buzzers!*' (5). The 'buzzers'

Laura mentioned, were an idea picked up from an Inclusive Research group presenting at the conference; the idea being that as soon as the group heard a word that they didn't understand, they would press a loud buzzer, and the word would then need to be rearticulated.

For learning to flow into *Applied* value, I was required to step in more significantly, as facilitator. As indicated earlier, I suggested that, as the group seemed to appreciate the *Photo-Interview* method, they could utilise this to support interviews about work experience. The group decided to action this idea, and the subsequent activity was experienced as positive *Enabling* value: '*Eluned and Helen came to my Tuesday workplace, to take photos of me doing my work, in order to make the interviews better.*' (5) The activity was also presented as a good example of *Enabling* value through Laura's appreciation of the supporting staff: '*Having Eluned in the group added a different dimension because she provided the video recorder and a good quality camera – we couldn't have done it without her!*' (5).

On each having a collection of quality photographs taken at their respective work placements, the learning could then move into *Applied* value, as the group used the images to support their interviewing of each other: '*I interviewed Gabrielle about her work placement.*' (3). Then, learning looped back to *Enabling* value: '*After the interviews, Helen used the voice recordings to type the transcripts, which she read out to the group.*' (5)

Through asking the group to think back to the article they had tried to read, and asking whether they felt their peers would be able to read the interview

transcripts, I supported them to think of different forms of dissemination for their research. I digitally provided each participant with the transcripts and photographs from their interviews, and created a prototype template of a booklet, using a programme they were familiar with (PowerPoint). The idea was to create an accessible booklet which their peers at college could 'read'.

Once students had each drafted their booklets, the learning flowed from *Applied* value and *Enabling* value into *Strategic* value, as the students utilized alliances around the college: *'With help from the college Speech and Language Therapy Team, we were able to use the correct Makaton symbols to make the booklets easier for certain students to read, so no-one feels left out.'* (6) Having finalized their drafts, the group asked the college Marketing Team to tidy them up and get them printed: *'We went to see the college Marketing Team, to see how they were progressing with the editing of our booklets. They had finished the Station Café booklet, complete with a photo of Gabrielle and the college branding.'* (6)

Laura experienced *Realized* value (4) when she saw the completed booklets, and here the learning flows back into *Strategic* value as the group are supported to identify a student to show one of the booklets to, to gauge its impact: *'We went to see the college Work Experience Co-ordinator, to find out who is doing work experience at the Station Café next term. We hope to show Gabrielle's booklet to the students, so they know what to expect come September.'* (6). The positive response to Gabrielle's booklet solidified the experience of *Realized* value for Laura: *'I created a booklet to help to prepare future students for what to expect from a SPAR work experience setting, which combines photographs and words to tell the story.'* (4) Although she did not articulate it through the *Value Creation*

Story, the idea that the flow of learning evidently moved across, at this point, into experiences of positive *Transformative* value, increasing her sense of identity as a researcher (8) was certainly articulated in later interviews.

5.3.3 Section summary

Findings from Laura's *Value Creation Story* reveal the participant experienced and articulated several enablers and only one disabler of the flow of learning between and across value-cycles in the group's final PAR study. Enablers of flow occurred through the welcome and reception received as the participant navigated the research landscape, leading to feelings of belonging and strengthened identity. Other enablers of flow occurred through the practical support received from facilitative support and external sources, supporting the production and dissemination of the research output. The main disabler of flow articulated within the VCS was the inaccessibility of research articles, dealing a blow to confidence and not inspiring new ideas to action, as was hoped for.

5.4 Conclusion

5.4.1. On the value of the iSaR model

Findings suggest that the iSaR model was perceived by the core iSaR student group to have created experiences of increasingly positive value over the five terms of fieldwork. There were many factors which supported these positive experiences, and these will be explored in great detail in Chapter 7.

5.4.2 On the flow of value and learning

Findings from Laura's *Value Creation Story* reveal some of the enablers of flow towards *Transformative* value to have resulted from prolonged immersion in the research landscape, although the inaccessibility of outputs from this same landscape also acted as barriers preventing smooth flow of value. Regardless, the flow of learning and value traversed the full scope of values in Laura's story, indicating an extremely positive participatory experience.

5.4.3 On the development of agency through iSaR activity

If we return to the assumptions, outlined in Chapter 1, that agency and self-determination may be developed through a) students practising making meaningful changes, b) students being able to observe the impact of their change-making efforts, and c) students provided with a platform to articulate the results of their change-making efforts, a conclusion could be drawn that iSaR activity has indeed been shown to support the development of participants' agency and self-determination.

In the next chapter, I shall present the findings from fieldwork which centred around the facilitation of iSaR *workshops*: the value-experiences resulting from these and the potential for wider adoption of the iSaR model.

CHAPTER 6. THE VALUE-EXPERIENCES OF ISAR WORKSHOPS



Figure 56. 'Journey to the Conference' Part 6

Explaining the 'Magic Box' method to conference delegates.

6.1 Introduction

Having disseminated findings pertaining to the value of the iSaR model of participatory 'voice' perceived by the core iSaR student group, I now focus on the transferability of the model and the potential for its wider adoption. The chapter follows my attempt to replicate the iSaR model in the form of a series of workshops, delivered to four other student groups from post-secondary college provisions and programmes for students with learning disabilities, with the purpose of further developing the model.

This chapter has been organised into two parts, in attempt to answer the two research questions relating to these iSaR workshops.

Part 1 – looks specifically at the transferability of the iSaR model. It draws into focus the value-experiences of participants from the two student groups who met my recruitment criteria and attended the series of four iSaR workshop sessions. Within this section, I attempt to clearly disseminate findings pertaining to research question 2a: *‘What is the value, experienced by participating students, from other postsecondary college provisions for students with learning disabilities, when the iSaR model of participatory ‘voice’ is replicated in a workshop format?’* These findings were garnered from the *Reflections booklets*, completed by participating students at the end of the workshop series.

Part 2 - looks specifically at the potential for wider adoption of the iSaR model. It draws into focus the real and assumed barriers affecting ‘voice’ practitioners (college leaders) uptake of iSaR activity. Within this final findings section, I attempt to address research question 2a: *“How has the mindset and practice of college leaders from participating postsecondary college provisions, altered as result of their experience of the iSaR model?”* The findings were drawn from completed entry/exit questionnaires and interviews.

6.2 Part 1 – RQ.2a

What is the value, experienced by participating students, from other postsecondary college provisions for students with learning disabilities, when the iSaR model of participatory ‘voice’ is replicated in a workshop format?

6.2.1 Section Overview

This section looks specifically at the transferability of the iSaR model through the design and facilitation of iSaR workshops. By foregrounding the value-experiences of participants from the two student groups who met my recruitment criteria and attended the series of four iSaR workshop sessions, the focus remains upon the students' voices, as in Chapter 5. The value-cycles discussed are again, *only* those articulated by participating students.

Table 44 below provides overview of datasets and methods used within this section of the chapter. As can be viewed, data was collected through having participating students complete a simple 'Reflections' booklet at the end of the workshop series (see Methodology chapter).

iSaR Workshops			
RQ#	Research Question	Datasets	Data collection / generation methods used
2a.	What was the value, experienced by participating students from other post-secondary college provisions for students with learning disabilities, when the iSaR model of participatory 'voice' was replicated in a workshop format?	Student-participants	'Reflections' booklets
		Researcher	Reflexive journal
		College leaders	Interviews
Method/s of dissemination: Geographical schematic, exploring student-participant responses to iSaR workshops in other post-secondary college provision for students with learning disabilities.			

Table.44. Overview of datasets, methods of data collection and dissemination relating to iSaR workshops.

Analysis of data took a deductive approach, for reasons previously explained, with focus on the four central value-cycles of the VCF as organisational structure: *Immediate*, *Potential*, *Applied* and *Realized*. These will each be addressed in turn, and although attempting to centre the voice of participating students,

findings will also be supported by extracts from interviews conducted with the leaders from P1 and P2, and excerpts from my reflexive journal (RRJ).

6.2.2 Recruitment

In the last few terms of my fieldwork with the core iSaR student group, I managed to secure institutional consent from four specialist provisions willing to host my series of iSaR workshops. These workshops were designed to explore the transferability of the iSaR model across different student cohorts, groups and provisions.

As discussed in Chapter 4, these student groups were pre-selected by college leaders, using my recruitment criteria, and it was an act of faith on my part as to whether these were followed accurately. I did not have access to the personal details of the student participants engaging in the iSaR workshop series.

As can be seen in Table 45 below, six students from Provision One (P1) participated and eight from Provision Two (P2). The male to female ratio of the group attending P1 was 4:2, and 6:2 for those attending P2. As P2 was a class group, their male to female ratio was a direct result of their ordinary, gendered demographic. I can only speculate why the ratio was as it was in P1 but find it interesting how this did not reflect the heavy female-weighted ratios of the core iSaR group and the MASR study.

Provision #	Provision type	Group type	# students in group	Eligibility as research participants?	# Workshop sessions
One (P1)	Small satellite, specialist provision run by host college	Selected individuals	Six	Y	Four
P1 research focus: <i>Food budget issues + need for another quiet area</i>					
Two (P2)	General Further Education college (Supported Learning programme)	Selected class group	Eight	Y	Four
P2 research focus: <i>Improvement of enrichment sessions</i>					
Three (P3)	Specialist college provision in Wales	Student council group	Four	N (none would be eligible)	Four
P3 research focus: <i>Areas for sensory regulation</i>					
Four (P4)	Specialist college provision - Host	Student council group	Twelve	N (only five would be eligible)	Eight
P4 research focus: <i>Improvement of break-time activities</i>					

Table 45. Details of host provisions and student group participation in workshops.

Those groups not eligible to formally participate in my research (P3 and P4) were still able to attend the workshops; instead, I collected data solely from the participating leaders from those provisions. All student groups were invited to participate in a one hour 'taster session', supporting, and gaining, the experientially-informed consent of fourteen students: six from P1 and eight from P2, and generally supporting the participatory expectations of students from P3 and P4, as good practice.

6.2.3 Immediate value

One significant aspect of *Immediate* value is enjoyment, and so participating students from both P1 and P2 were asked whether they had enjoyed the

workshops. As indicated in Table 46 below, when asked if they enjoyed iSaR (simplified to 'Student-led research') workshops, half of the total student participants (seven out of fourteen) responded most favourably, giving the workshops a five out of five score. Three students responded by giving the workshops a four out of five score and another three responded with a three out of five score. One student responded with a one out of five score.

Question	Did you enjoy the Student-led Research workshops?				
Rating	1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
# of students	1		3	3	7

Table 46. Results indicating participant enjoyment levels (Using Likert Scale – one to five)

On investigation of *what* was found to be fun, responses from P1 centred on problem solving and planning, as their research focus was around the planning for a potential new outdoors quiet space: '*I found problem solving and finding ways to improve the college fun*' (AJ). P2's chosen research focus was around the planning of student-led enrichment sessions, and one student identified their own enrichment session, with its focus on art, as fun. However, as a whole, P2 tended to prefer the more heavily facilitated aspects of the workshops with '*interactive and engaging*' (GJ) activities, such as '*the money-tins with counters*' (WF).

When asked what *specifically* was boring, one student from P1, who gave the one-out-of-five response, wrote: '*All of it*' (WC). This negative response could be received in a variety of ways. Throughout the iSaR workshop series, I had been reassured that the participants had all been positive about the sessions, and if it hadn't been for the feedback from the College Leader, I would have suggested

that WC withdrew from the group, as they were evidently struggling with motivation to pursue the research. I am now led to surmise that perhaps the College Leader saw more value in iSaR practice for WC than WC himself did:

'WC just goes around saying everything's 'crap', but being able to guide him and say Ok, you've been through this [research] process – you know what the process is now. So let's do it that way. It's given him a focus, so sometimes he'll just stop talking about it because he doesn't want to do the process, but sometimes he'll want to do the process. It just means we can guide him towards something.' (P1, Interview, p.2)

This idea does bring informed consent into question; it prompts me to question whether WC's comment was his 'voice' striking against coerced compliance. The situation definitely seemed more complex away from the host provision, where I had more control over selection processes.

There may be another reading with which to understand WC's response, suggested by my research journal entries: *'WC was being rather emotional and 'silly' and proceeded to write negative things on the sheet, possibly to get a 'rise' from me.'* (RRJ, p.53) At the time, I wondered whether his actions may have been centred around attachment issues, and the result of the non-permanence of short-term, workshop participant-facilitator relationships. To reduce the risk of such provocation with P2 responses, I arranged for their booklets to be completed in my absence.

Participants from P2 were asked a different question here. They were asked: 'What would make the workshops better?' The responses were mixed. One

student responded: *'Less pressure. More time to plan'* (RF) and one called for *'More structure for each session'* (GJ).

To get a better sense of whether students enjoyed the sessions, I also asked them whether they would like to continue being involved in Student-led research. As revealed within Table 47 below, out of the total fourteen participants from P1 and P2, only twelve responded to this question. Seven out of the twelve participants responded most favourably, giving a five out of five response. One participant gave a four out of five response, two gave a three out of five response and two gave a one out of five response. From P1, five out of the six participants indicated that they wanted to carry on with their research project. In P2, each student was already scheduled to lead an enrichment session, so I did not specifically ask them whether they wanted to carry on with that research project.

Question	Do you want to continue being involved in Student-led research?				
Rating	1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
# of students	2		2	1	7

Table 47. Results indicating participants' desire to continue being involved in Student-led research (Using Likert Scale – one to five)

From data collected through an interview with P1's leader, I found out that participants discussed the workshops favourably outside the sessions: *'So they've been coming up saying they've enjoyed it. They want to be part of it and carry on, and they're looking forward to what they can do next.'* (P1, Interview, p.2) Indeed, participation in Student-led research did continue beyond the four-week workshop period in that provision: *'It is [now] timetabled on a weekly basis'* (P1, p.1) which is a great indication of the positive *Immediate* value experienced by participants.

Data collected through an interview with P2's leader, reveal that even the group's learning support assistant (LSA) wanted to join in the fun: *'[LSA's name]. Well, he's running a Comedy club enrichment, that's his chosen one'* (P2, Interview, p.2).

6.2.4 *Potential* value

Experiences which created positive *Potential* value included those that increased students' confidence and supported the development of their skills. In the *Reflections booklet*, participants were directly asked what they were proud of, and the responses revealed the breadth of difference of learner within the groups. For some participants, the 'win' was around '*attendance*' (FJ) and the '*stay[ing] in the room*' (WC) or it was as seemingly as simple as '*coming up with my idea*' (BL), whereas for one student, the workshops were the catalyst of a shift in confidence and attitude, resulting in them putting themselves forward in the Student elections for Student Council and the pride of '*being voted in as Student Rep*' (YJ). Out of the nine students who responded to this question, only one wrote '*Nothing*' (RF), suggesting that their perception of *Potential* Value was negative or neutral.

Students were then asked if they felt that their participation in the workshops had changed them in any way. As can be seen in Table 48 below, responses to this question were mixed, ranging from four participants giving a five out of five score, to three participants responding with one out of five. These findings did not reveal much, but participants were then asked how *specifically* they felt they had

changed in terms of the strengths and skills developed. Positive responses centred around confidence and communication: *'I feel more able to use my voice and share my opinion'* (AJ) and included *'friendship'* (TA).

Question	Did the workshops change you in any way?				
Rating	1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
# of students	3	1	1	4	4

Table 48. Results indicating whether participants felt changed by their involvement in the workshops(Using Likert Scale – one to five)

Another element of a positive experience of *Potential* value lies in the students' potential as researchers, something that was covered by the subtheme 'emerging researchers' in RQ1a. When workshop participants were asked if they had any other ideas for future research in terms of what changes they would like to see at their college, there was a weighty collection of ideas from both provisions. Three students indicated that they wished to see changes around the food and drink options available at college, with two from P1 wanting to change the food menu: *'Foods on the menu – I'd like to see more variety i.e. bacon and sausage sandwich and soup'* (AJ), and a participant from P2 wanting to look at the vending machines (HN). Three participants highlighted sensory aspects of their provision, with one participant, from P1, wishing to look at air conditioning issues in the summer and another wanting a *'wellbeing sensory choice'* (FJ). A participant from P2 wrote: *'I would like a quiet place to go when things get too much for me'* (RF).

The data collected through an interview with P1's leader, confirmed the effect of the workshops on one student's skill development:

‘One learner, HR has really taken it on board and I know he kind of looked reluctant in the sessions but actually he’s really enjoyed it and it’s really developed his leadership skills.’ (P1, Interview, p.1)

The participant in question was one I understood straight away as someone who would participate, just on their own terms, and I had no problems with their peripheral participation, which, in fact, evolved into highly active participation: *‘he did the activities from the periphery, but maintained engagement. I think he was worried I’d tell him to turn his tablet off’* (RRJ, p.43) On completing the workshop series, HR even applied to join the Autism Education Trust (AET)’s Young Experts Panel, revealing his levels of engagement and interest in this area.

6.2.5 *Applied* value

A good indicator of an experience of positive *Applied* value is in the accessibility of the experience. As revealed within Table 49, when asked how easy they felt the iSaR workshops were, three out of fourteen participants responded most favourably, giving five out of five as a response, and a further six participants gave four out of five. The lack of responses within the lower rates indicates that the work was generally set accessibly, and no one found it too difficult.

Question	How easy were the Student-led Research workshops?				
Rating	1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
# of students			5	6	3

Table 49. Results indicating how easy participants found Student-led research (Using Likert Scale – one to five)

When asked what specifically was found to be easy, ten participants responded across both provisions. Three participants responded by writing: ‘*everything*’ (TA, FJ and DO), whilst others specified ‘*working in a team*’ (AJ) and ‘*coming up with ideas*’ (RF and BL).

When asked *what* was difficult, WC, who had made the most negative responses, shared honestly: ‘*Staying in the room long enough*’. This was a long-standing need of his, hence his request for an additional quiet space. Another student revealed the difficulty they had found in ‘*working in a group*’ (NI), and others reported difficulties around taking ownership: ‘*coming up with ideas*’ (BL), ‘*choosing the topic*’ (YJ) and ‘*making a final decision*’ (RF).

Students were then asked if they felt they had fully participated in the sessions, to find out whether they felt they had taken responsibility for tasks. As can be seen in Table 50 below, of the twelve students who responded to this question, half responded most favourably, giving a score of five out of five. Three participants gave a four out of five response, whilst one student responded with three out of five, one gave a two out of five and another gave a one out of five.

Question	Do you feel like you fully participated?				
Rating	1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
# of students	1	1	1	3	6

Table 50. Results indicating participation levels perceived by student participants (Using Likert Scale – one to five)

When asked what specifically made participation difficult, the student who gave the lowest score shared: ‘*Choosing an idea due to me being indecisive.*’ (RF) Two participants indicated communication difficulties got in the way of their

participation, when *'Speaking out loud'* (HN) and *'Talking'* (HR). Two participants shared difficulties with their understanding: *'I feel certain topics were difficult to understand'* (AJ).

In terms of accessibility, the leader from P2 could not think of any difficulties she'd observed: *'I don't think there's been any struggles [...] The LSAs haven't mentioned anything. No.'* (P2, Interview, p.4)

The subtheme of taking responsibility appeared in the interview with P1's leader, revealing that, as a result of the workshops, students were now taking responsibility for other research problems: *'deciding on where to go for their end-of-year Christmas trip. And it was absolutely – it was HR who led it, and it was absolutely student-led and they just did it all last week.'* (P1, Interview, p.1) From this response, it seems that the workshops propelled the P1 student group into further participative action and leadership.

6.2.6 *Realized* value

The workshops were designed to support students to identify a problem and then make a difference they cared to make to their college, and so a strong indicator of positive *Realized* value was whether the students felt that they had made a difference to their college. They were asked this question directly (see Table 51 below), and it was interesting to see that five participants gave a one out of five response.

Question	Has your research made any difference to college?				
Rating	1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
# of students	5		3	3	3

Table 51. Results indicating participants' perceptions of the difference they made (Using Likert Scale – one to five)

When asked specifically what they felt had been achieved, participants from P1 wrote about how they had finished the plans for their quiet area: *'Preparation for the quiet area outside'* (HR), and participants from P2 wrote about the enrichment sessions that had already been delivered by some members of their group: *'I have presented my PowerPoint'* (DO).

When asked what specifically had not yet been done in order to make the difference they were hoping for, participants from P1 identified the fact that, although they had planned it, they had not yet created an additional quiet area: *'I feel like I haven't seen any changes since our research'* (AJ), and a participant from P2 who hadn't yet delivered their own enrichment session, identified this: *'I have to present my presentation'* (NI).

Data from P2 leader's interview confirm that several enrichment sessions had already taken place and that they were a valuable alteration to the timetable; they had made a difference:

'the enrichment session that they have is on a Wednesday afternoon, and it's near enough all sport-based, and [the group] are not part of that. They're with me, and I think it should be inclusive [...] but it should be what they want to do [...] I think they've delved into that and gone 'well, actually, I like this and I want to share it with you'' (P2, Interview, p.5)

The group at P1 had been left waiting for strategic input from the main college site, for permission to start fundraising for the outdoors quiet area they had been designing. Unfortunately, P1's leader revealed that, even though a student from the group had presented the project plans to the CEO and board of governors, there had still been no communication back from college decision-makers at the time of our interview.

6.2.7 Section summary

Findings suggest that the iSaR model was perceived, by students participating in its workshop format, to have created some positive value-experiences over the series of four workshops, but also some negative or neutral. These value-experiences are summarized below:

6.2.7.1 *Immediate* value

Findings reveal that iSaR, in a four-session workshop format created mixed, but predominantly positive experiences of *Immediate* value for attendees, with expressed enjoyment of scaffolded activities. Workshops were experienced less positively by attendees who relied on the certainty of staff-led learning, expressing a dislike of the pressure and lack of structure involved in student-led activities.

6.2.7.2 *Potential* value

Findings reveal that participants' perceptions of iSaR workshops were also mixed, in terms of experiences of *Potential* value. The positive *Potential* value

experienced by participants was most evident through the articulation of their ideas for the research conducted and for future research.

6.2.3.3 *Applied* value

Findings reveal that the iSaR workshop format created many experiences of positive *Applied* value, and that they were generally perceived by participants to be accessible and motivating. Where participants did articulate struggling with accessibility, it was mostly due to their being required to engage their uncertainty and do things ‘out of their comfort zone’, such as speaking aloud in class or taking ownership of an activity.

6.2.3.4 *Realized* value

It could be summarised that students experienced varying levels of positive *Realized* value, with some participants feeling they had made a difference – whether through facilitating their own enrichment session or through presenting their plans and suggestions to college leaders. Where the *Realized* value experienced was more negative or neutral, it was due to lack of time or leadership engagement, not student effort.

6.3 Part 2 – RQ.2b

How has the mindset and practice of college leaders from participating postsecondary college provisions, altered as result of their experience of the iSaR model?

6.3.1 Section overview

This final section explores if / how college leaders perception of iSaR practice, as observed through iSaR workshops, resulted in any shift in viewpoints or practice, and looks at the potential for wider adoption of the iSaR model.

Table 52 below provides overview of datasets and methods used to answer the above research question. As can be viewed, college leaders from all four provisions hosting iSaR workshops completed an entry questionnaire (EntQ) and exit questionnaire (ExQ) , and a few weeks after the last workshop session, they also participated in a semi-structured interview to further reflect on iSaR workshop activity and discuss continuation of the iSaR model at their provision.

2b.	How has the mindset and practice of college leaders from participating post-secondary college provisions, altered as result of their experience of the iSaR model?	College leaders	Entry/exit questionnaires Exit interviews
Method/s of dissemination: Before and after comparisons of college leader responses to entry and exit questionnaire, and illustrative excerpts from college leader exit interviews.			

Table 52. Overview of datasets, methods of data collection and dissemination for iSaR workshops (college leaders)

Data from the above datasets was analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), and the following themes were constructed: Scope and relevance, Agency, Accessibility and Model adoption. Each of these will now be discussed in turn.

6.3.2 Scope and relevance

Entry questionnaires revealed the pre-workshop expectations of provision leaders. When asked what they foresaw as the main limitation of research

activities carried out by the workshop attendees, P1's leader predicted that the scope of the group's research activities would be narrow, and *'focused on the small college site, not taking into account the wider student body'* (P1, EntQ). This concern continued in their responses when asked what autism-specific or disability-specific strengths and challenges they foresaw, with strengths predicted to be around students *'being able to focus on a research question which is directly relevant to themselves'* (P1, EntQ) and challenges predicted to be around students *'being able to relate their research question to the wider college, particularly other sites'* (P1, EntQ). When asked what type of support they foresaw the group needing, P1's leader predicted the group would need help with maintaining relevance: *'identifying a relevant research question – require prompting to think about the relevance of the question.'* (P1, EntQ) Moving from predictions to experiences, the leader of P1 was asked to rate (using a Likert scale of 1-10) how relevant to the needs of the college they predicted, and later, in the exit questionnaire, experienced the students' research to be. P1's leader gave a cautious predictive response of seven out of ten, but this score jumped up to nine out of ten in the exit questionnaire, with the comment:

'The research demonstrated the needs of the cohort of learners for this particular year and identified how the college could improve to meet the needs of the learners, rather than impose the views of Management Team in regards to what the college needs.' (P1, ExQ)

This rise in score reveals that the student group's research was observed to be highly relevant to the needs of the college. These responses also highlighted a

shift in the leader's thinking, in terms of whether research could or should attempt to be relevant to the wider student body of a college which spans four sites.

The questionnaires completed by P2's leader also exposed an increase in the score relating to relevance, again from seven to nine. When asked what autism-specific or disability-specific challenges they foresaw, concerns were raised around relevance. P2's leader wrote: *'Certain students may focus on their own particular topics of interest'* (P2, EntQ). Having witnessed the group's research, however, P2's leader was highly impressed with how relevant the research conducted by the group was:

'We have previously discussed as a group how we can make enrichment more appealing and engage students more. The group coming up with this as a topic to focus on was fantastic.' (P2, ExQ).

They described their expectations in the interview when asked why they had scored the way they did:

'I feel really bad about myself, looking back at it. I generally don't feel like I gave them enough credit. I think my expectations were [...] were low' (P2, Interview, p.6).

The two other provisions, those which involved Student Council Groups, were supported by college leaders who were predominantly involved in Student Voice as part of their role. These leaders were more positive in their expectations around the potential relevance of student research, both giving the highest score (ten out of ten) to indicate their expectations.

6.3.3 Agency

P2's leader also admitted having low expectations of the group's ability to work with agency and self-determination:

'I was very apprehensive when you said 'it's going to be all up to them. It's going to be about them and they're going to come up with it all' And sometimes I think, as I'm their teacher, [...] I have to constantly encourage and, you know, I thought 'will they, won't they?' I thought one person might, you know, who's usually the leader for the group and will speak up, but the rest won't.' (P2, Interview, p.1)

They went on to share their surprise and pride in the student group's actions:

'[I was surprised] by the way that they interacted, really. I was very sure of myself, that I thought the ones that I knew would speak out and be very vocal were, but the others did join in and they did come up with all their own ideas as well. I thought it'd be just a few of them. And they might dominate the conversation, but no, I thought it was good – that did surprise me.' (P2, Interview, p.1)

P4's leader also shared her surprise at the levels of student agency witnessed through workshop participation:

'I was surprised how accessible it was for students, because I think with SEND students, I'm really conscious about whether we get their voice, really. You know, is it authentic or is a staff member driving them, to tick a box or answer something. Because there are so many limitations in all different research methods, you know, surveys etc, and I was surprised at

how they responded to it. Very positive and it emerged as the project emerged. You know, to the end results and 'Games Friday', it was all them!

(P4, Interview, p.1)

'Games Friday' was the research output of P4's student group, who had been able to engage in eight iSaR workshops in total. They had decided to focus their research on break-time activities, and took it upon themselves to run a games session every Friday lunchtime, as ongoing Student Council activity.

6.3.4 Accessibility

The student-led nature of the workshops created some initial concerns for P3's leader due to *'what cognitive level [students] are. I did worry that maybe we hadn't given you the right group for the task.'* (P3, Interview, p.2) Participating students were known to have fluctuating engagement levels, with one learner requiring *'significant prompting to get any particle of an answer from him'* (P3, Interview, p.4) However, in their post-workshop interview, P3's leader reflected positively: *'It was just a pleasant surprise to see that the goal was met at the end. They understood the brief and they've got something out of it.'* (P3, Interview, p.5)

I had approached P3 specifically because I wanted to see how the model would need to be adapted to suit the cognitive levels and communication needs of their learners. Having only four sessions with these students, all of whom were diagnosed with moderate to severe learning disabilities, did not provide me with much time to build strong relationships necessary to gain good communication flow and build trust. In hindsight, the college leader suggested that *'if maybe [the*

workshop series] was a bit longer, and [student's name] maybe had 6 to 8 weeks to build that relationship with you, you may have seen a different person towards the end of it. So. Yeah, I think that's possibly a barrier as well.' (P3, Interview, p.4)

I came to appreciate the input from P3's LSAs, providing one-to-one support with three of the four individual students in the group. They had clearly built good relationships with the learners, and whenever a student struggled to remember or respond, they would helpfully support them to feel comfortable and respond, taking care to not over-support.

In slight contrast, responses from P4's leader spoke of the ease in which their range of learners' needs were accommodated: *'I thought [the sessions] were very, very, very good. Suitable for our students. Very accessible. The methods you used were definitely appropriate. You were able to engage the more higher-level students to the students who struggle verbally. Where each were able to participate, and I liked the speed of them. I think they were well-paced and just right.'* (P4, Interview, p.1) It should be reiterated here that this student group engaged in an extended series of eight workshops.

6.3.5 Model adoption

From their responses to other questions, it was clear that P1 had fully embraced the approach and were continuing with it through weekly timetabled sessions; prior to the workshops there had been no timetabled student voice sessions, although, two student representatives from this satellite provision did have the opportunity to participate remotely in termly whole-college Student Council

meetings. So, this was a significant shift in practice resulting from participation in the workshops.

When asked if they would require any more support to ensure future sessions remained student-led and meaningful, P1's leader replied that, having been introduced to the concept, they were confident in continuing with it:

*'I think it's rolling. The learners in it have got a really good idea. I've got a youth work background as well, so it's very much young person led [...]
Yeah, I think we're alright.'* (P1, Interview, p.1)

Similarly to P1, P2's class groups did not have timetabled student voice sessions until inspired to do so by the workshops. I asked P2 's leader whether they had made any arrangements to continue with the model: *'Yes, definitely. So, it's going to continue with this group, and then I'm going to do it from the beginning, if that's ok with you, with my other group.'* (P2, Interview, p.3)

I asked P2's leader directly, if they felt their general teaching approach had been changed by their experience of the workshops, they responded affirmatively:

'When you came in and the whole, you know, the river, the visual, and the tins, you know, something so simple about their opinion on something. Instead of saying 'what do you think – is this good or bad', I would never have thought, right let's expand on it, how can we expand on it with that type of learner? And just the way you made them move around the room and then choose the counters to put in the box, it's just, it refreshes you a little bit, you think 'I could do that. What else could I use that for? What

other session could I perhaps use that for?' So, yeah, definitely, I would say.' (P2, Interview, p.4)

When asked if they would require any more support to ensure future sessions remained student-led and meaningful, P2's leader asked for my digital materials to replicate the initial sessions, and for links to purchase the required resources, such as the money tins. They had already printed out my *'iSaR Practitioner Guide'* (Appendix 1) and shared it with their LSAs. They also asked if they could keep in touch for *'any advice if we get something [like a research focus voted for] where I think 'mm, how do I approach that?'* (P2, Interview, p.4)

P3's leader already ran weekly student voice sessions at their provision, with the Student Council group, but reflected that the iSaR workshop sessions were *'delivered in a way that we hadn't actually explored before'* (P3, Interview, P.1) They commented that the way the workshop sessions were spread out over a period of a few weeks, keeping the same focus, seemed to suit their learners better: *'I think because it was spread out it, it just, it hit home a little bit more with the students. So that's something I've taken from that.'* (P3, Interview, p.1)

I asked P3's leader whether they planned to use any other elements of the workshops in their future student voice practice: *'Yeah, I think, I'm going to model your whole workshop at the start of every term with my main tutor group.'* (P3, Interview, p.3) They shared their ideas of keeping with the initial focus on managing emotions and self-regulation around college but expanding it into the wider community, like the library. We talked then about the model needing to be seen more like a continuum, rather than a binary concept, especially when

adapted for P3's level of student, where being as student-led as possible was the key.

P4's leader also ran weekly student voice sessions with their Student Council group, as part of their role. When asked whether they would be continuing with any aspects of the iSaR model, P4's leader spoke positively: *'Definitely, I'm 100% going to be using and planning activities in the next academic year that rely on those approaches that you've introduced us to. I think it'll be good.'* (P4, Interview, p.4) Although incredibly positive, their response of 'planning activities' does not suggest any significant adoption of a more student-led approach, rather more a plan to adopt some of the activities: *'So I can use some of those methods and adapt them.'* (P4, Interview, p.1).

It could be supposed that the institutional demands placed on that Student Council, which involve them getting regular and numerous requests from the college Senior Leadership Team, act as significant barriers to a more student-led approach: *'I think the barriers for that kind of thing is always time to plan and organize it, but stick to it as well. [... We] get thrown stuff left, right and centre: 'Can you look at this and that?''* (P4, Interview, p.3). This was reiterated through their responses of *'time constraints'* (P4, EntQ and ExQ) to the question of limitations asked in both the entry and exit questionnaire.

P4's leader did, however, envisage September as being a time more suited towards some more student-led planning: *'I'd really like to use something like that in the very first meeting of the new student board – and find out what it is they want to work on'* (P4, Interview, p.3)

6.3.6 Section summary

Findings suggest that the mindset and practice college leaders from participating post-secondary college provisions or programmes did alter as a result of their engagement with the iSaR model, but to varying degrees, and that the potential for wider adoption of the iSaR model ranged from complete adoption to tentative plans to use iSaR activities.

6.3.6.1 Scope and relevance

Findings from college leaders revealed a significant shift in their perceptions of students' capability to initiate and conduct research of relevance. Their initial negative expectations were altered through their observations of students participating collaboratively in iSaR activity, which proved relevant to student group needs.

6.3.6.2 Agency

Findings from college leaders also revealed a significant shift in their perceptions of students' capability to work with agency and self-determination. Their initial negative expectations and doubt as to whether all students would 'step up' were altered as they observed most students responding, coming up with ideas and joining in.

6.3.6.3 Accessibility

Findings revealed that college leaders were surprised by the accessibility of the methods used in iSaR workshop sessions, and how these were able to engage all students, regardless of academic level.

6.3.6.4 Model adoption

As well as a shift in college leaders' mindsets, findings revealed a significant professed change in practice resulting from their observations of the iSaR model in action. These changes involved the actual timetabling of 'voice' sessions, planned replication of iSaR workshop sessions and the intended use of iSaR activities and resources. College leaders predicted time restraints and institutional demands to be the main barriers to significant model adoption.

6.4 Conclusion

6.4.1 On the transferability of the iSaR model

Findings revealed that, although the workshops were seen as accessible and enjoyable by the majority of student-participants, the workshop format of the iSaR model had several design flaws, mostly involving the inadequate amount of participatory time. This limitation is the main reason why I decided to not continue offering or promoting short-term iSaR workshops after the fieldwork ceased - to be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

6.4.2 On the potential for the wider adoption of iSaR model

Engagement with the iSaR model was impactful upon the mindset and practice of college leaders from participating post-secondary college provisions / programmes. Participants' consequent adoption of the iSaR model ranged from complete adoption to tentative plans to use iSaR activities, and the main barriers

to wider adoption involved institutional demands for student time. This limitation will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION

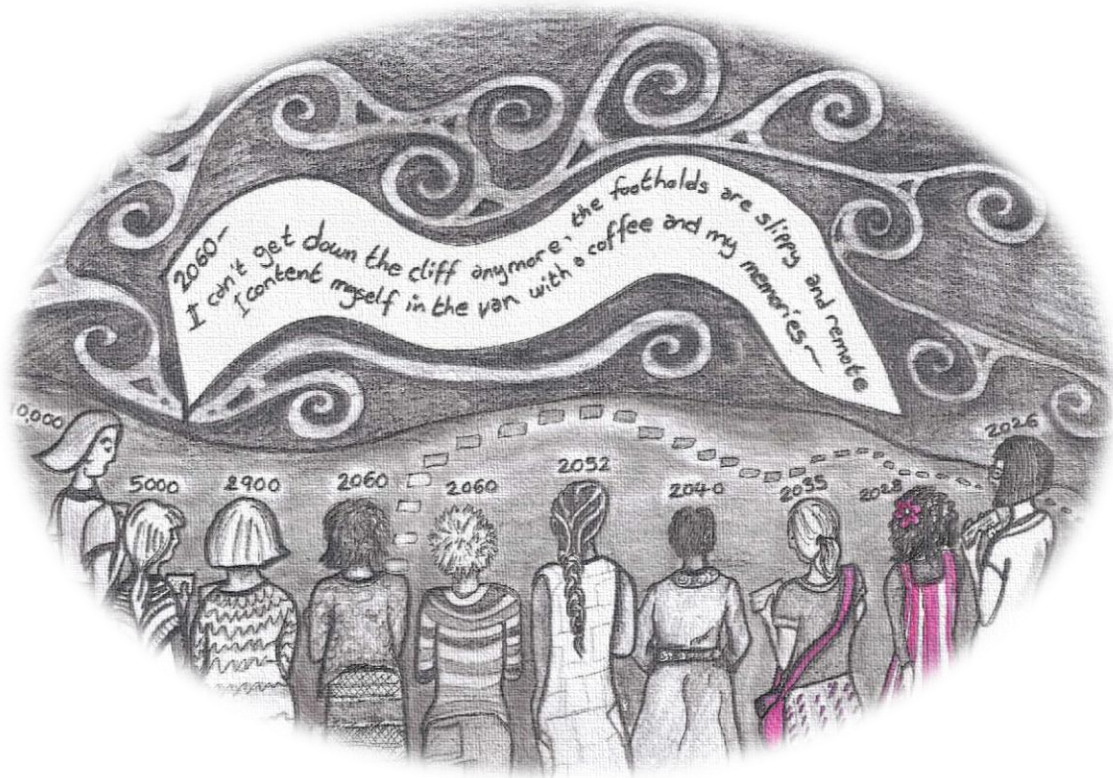


Figure 57. 'Journey to the Conference' Part 7

Joining delegates in 'The sea is a time-machine' creative workshop, where we were first asked for a memory of us by the sea, and then asked to project that image a set number of years into the future and describe the future scene.

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to develop knowledge around facilitating inclusive participation in PAR projects with learning-disabled student co-researchers, specifically through the development and trialling of an inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice'. I wanted this study to specifically address the lack of opportunities for students with learning disabilities

to experience, practise and develop agency and self-determination within normative 'voice' practice, or education in general.

I begin this chapter with an interpretation of the study's key findings through my chosen theories: the *Social theory of learning* and Dis/human, belonging to Critical Disability Studies (CDS) - both introduced in Chapter 2, and through insights gained from the literature, reviewed in Chapter 3.

It is my intention to build a discussion around the extent to which the findings of my study reveal insights into how, with careful support, learning disability manifests as an effectively disruptive (and therefore creative) force against normative research and Student Voice practice. I have, again, merged and mapped my ideas and findings onto the VCF. This provided structure for my thinking and discussion into how participation in research and Student Voice can be made more accessible and meaningful for young adults with learning disabilities. In what follows, I shall approach each value-cycle in turn.

In the second half of this chapter, I promote iSaR as an evidence-based model of participatory research and detail several other research outputs. Then, after sharing my observations of the limitations of my study, I share recommendations for practice and research.

7.2 Interpretations and implications

7.2.1 *Immediate* value

Feelings, a Quality of Participation (QoP) which reflected *Immediate* value within this study's literature review, was the second most underreported QoP. With the

exception of Kubiak *et al.* (2021) and Evans (2021), in articles which featured participatory studies with learning-disabled student co/researchers, student-researchers' participatory experiences were rarely sought, explored or evidenced. I believe that this was an oversight, as my own doctoral study has found that experiences of the indicators of positive *Immediate* value (i.e. joy, fun, interest and 'being with') ensured that research activity remained meaningful on student-participants' own terms, and in doing so, inspired motivated, and continued, participation; I found that it was only through this continued participation that the full benefits of participation followed, such as the development of agency.

Conducting research is a higher-level skill, and PAR, in particular is certainly not easy, as there is an additional demand - for it to be as accessible as possible, in order to enable and support peer understanding and participation. It is therefore highly important that participants find it meaningful, fun and rewarding.

Although feedback regarding the *Immediate* value experienced by iSaR workshop participants was mostly positive, there was a definite sense that participants had not had the time to build enough familiarity with myself, each other or the iSaR process, with a few expressing more negative feelings around the lack of structure involved in student-led activities. I believe these negative feelings were the result of the limited time available for participants to share personal experiences and histories, and thus build deeper relationships within the group, and there was insufficient time for students to become more comfortable with student-led activity.

7.2.2 *Potential* value

We no longer, as a society, question whether (some) individuals with learning disabilities are capable of following instructions and acting accordingly; learning-disabled workers can now be seen serving coffee to (paying) customers and even co-presenting programmes on television. This is obviously a step in the right direction (away from the supported workshops of the past and occasional appearances on charity adverts) but what occurred to me, during this study, in relation to the *Plans* QoP and *Potential* value, and in line with earlier-cited thoughts from Lundy (2007), was that even as learning-disabled people become viewed as more capable in their actions, their ability to act with autonomy is still not trusted; their capacity for self-determination is frequently questioned or discouraged from developing.

Nowhere in the study were these negative perceptions more apparent than within college leaders predictions with regard to the potential relevance of student-led research activity within iSaR workshops. One particular respondent admitted feeling bad afterwards for not giving her group enough credit when assuming their self-centred motivations; this reflects a wider societal assumption, and is a clear example of identity-prejudicial credibility deficit (Fricker, 2007).

If there are such strong societal assumptions reducing opportunities for people with learning disabilities to take the lead in their own lives, how can they be expected to effectively take the lead in research activity? Within the literature, I found only one study which articulated the importance of increasing opportunities

for participants to choose their own research topic. Ryan *et al.* (2015) observed that when participants were given opportunities to practise making decisions and taking the lead, levels of participatory engagement and confidence increased. To facilitate this, participants of the study were asked to write down three ideas of areas of university experience around which to research. Although I found the facilitators' use of stick notepads interesting, I felt that they hadn't supported ideation sufficiently.

My own predictions, inspired by years of teaching and facilitating previous research with this student demographic, were that students *would* be able to take the lead, but that they would benefit from scaffolded support. Scaffolded activities, such as '*Timeline maps*' and '*River journey mapping*', supported ideation and the extraction of personal experiences, and discussion around these experiences ultimately helped the group reach a democratic decision on the direction of their study. I found this to be a supportive process for participants to follow – engaging their curiosity about their own experiences and each other's, and inspiring them to lead their own research, into something they found interesting and meaningful.

The most significant findings from my study's fieldwork, in terms of *Potential* value, were those revealing students' steady emergence as researchers, strengthening the idea that in following such a supportive process, the students developed their potential as researchers and difference-makers. Only one study reviewed, mentioned above, had observed a similar transformation, describing 'a

growing sense of self-confidence and self-determination in all the students, particularly the students with intellectual disabilities' (Ryan et al, 2015, p.79).

I would like to bring back the idea of normative autonomy into the discussion before moving on. Through introducing a process and tools with which to support the autonomy of participants as they each, and collectively, took the lead in proceedings, I am called to mind the concept of 'dis/autonomy'. The group were autonomous in leading their research, but their learning disability, through a culture of restriction and prejudice, has disrupted the normative, and created a non-normative manifestation of autonomy – a dis/autonomy. In this way, my study shows its participants as autonomous – society may just have to adjust its definition somewhat.

7.2.3 *Applied* value

The theme of *Applied* value (*Actions* QoP) became the vehicle through which students could identify beneficial supports, address the practical limitations and barriers affecting their participation in terms of accessibility, and suggest inclusive measures.

To engage and support learning-disabled students in research, especially that involving students as co-researchers or students as researchers, requires consideration of both cognitive *and* physical accessibility issues which might affect participation, and as the students became involved in their own PAR studies, they were required to engage with the individual needs of their peers, inside and outside the group, and faced various additional accessibility issues

when designing tools for peer research. Their lived experience of inclusive measures - either their own or those required by friends (past or present), gave credence to the term 'experts by experience', and the group proved themselves highly skilled in predicting support needs and in adapting accessible tools.

Within the literature reviewed, I discovered that, with few exceptions, the research method chosen for its perceived general quality of accessibility was *Photovoice*, or the use of photographs to provide visual support (Edwards. 2021; Evans, 2021; Rivero and Morina, 2025; Spassiani *et al*, 2017; Love and Mock, 2019; Smith Hill *et al.*, 2025) and '*additional communication supports and modalities*' (Love and Mock, 2019, p.44). My own findings in this PhD study also revealed photographs to be highly effective in supporting communication, evidenced through the group's choice of *photo-interviews* to conduct their own final PAR study. My findings also revealed a benefit of using photographs which had not been articulated within any of the literature found: that photographs significantly supported memory, which was another accessibility issue experienced by some group members and peers.

Throughout my study, student-participants encountered situations which supported their participation in research activities and those which acted as a barrier preventing or restricting action. These situations fell into one or more of three categories: time, familiarity and uncertainty, to be addressed in turn now:

7.2.3.1 Time

Time is often a significant factor when attempting to accommodate and support disabled people, and only one article I reviewed made mention of this: Rivera and Morina (2025) when describing how they provided potential participants with extra time to consider consenting to participate. I succeeded in offering the same within this PhD study's recruitment process, as detailed in Chapter Four, but I hadn't expected how significantly time would impact on this study. My reflexive journal was peppered with exclamations of needing more time, and a situation that works well as example here, due to factors emerging through disability-specific needs, centres on my frustrations at how day student travel arrangements, mobility issues and medication schedules had repeatedly reduced iSaR sessions down from one hour to almost 40 minutes.

Conversely, as the core iSaR group had a maximum of five academic terms of participation, this felt like an abundance of time when compared to the four sessions offered to workshop participants. Five terms allowed students sufficient time to share their stories, get to know each other and build trust – all important factors when forming, nurturing and cementing meaningful relationships . It also meant that there was more time to build a responsive facilitator/participant relationship.

7.2.3.2 Familiarity

An important finding of this study, relating to *Applied* value, was how instrumental repetition proved to be, in instances where the iSaR group were able to take

responsibility for research activities, such as peer interviews. As their familiarity with interview processes increased, they were enabled to work with more competence and less reliance on facilitators.

7.2.3.3 *Uncertainty*

My reflexive journal regales how I was initially continuously asked by participants what they'd be doing in iSaR sessions, out of curiosity maybe, but more likely out of habit; they were so used to being told what to do, when to do it and how to do it, that the absence of certainty in my responses to them was (initially) met with confusion and discomfort. One participant, who was autistic, reported struggling with not knowing what to expect. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner themselves conceded that '*uncertainty can be problematic for people on the autistic spectrum*' (2020, p. 22), but I refused to use this as a 'get out clause' for inclusion. To remove experiences of uncertainty, would pander to a negative stereotype suggesting that all autistic people are unable to cope with uncertainty, and as already discussed, engaging uncertainty is a key element of agency development, and so to create certainty would negate the effects of my other efforts towards this goal. Luckily, the student in question later conceded that this discomfort was only felt in '*the days when I was starting out.*' (B1, p.2).

Another student said that the student-led approach got easier with time (when they had decided and planned what they were going to be doing), and so it seemed that uncertainty could be made more accessible when engaging in processes that support dis/autonomous planning and leadership. That the subtheme of 'Engaging uncertainty' did not appear after the third term, indicated

the length of time required for some participants to feel at ease with a student-led approach and suggested that it is better to make uncertainty accessible, rather than remove it by offering certainty.

The above suggestion was not appropriate to the context of iSaR workshops due to time limitations, and it for this, and previously stated reason why I would not attempt to repeat the workshops in their current format (as discussed later).

It would seem then that participatory research is an effective instrument for activating agency due to its uncertain nature, after all: 'engaging uncertainty is a key act of agency' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.60). Within the literature discussed in Chapter 3, Ryan *et al.* (2015) also celebrated how participants were seen to flourish in the messiness of PAR; this was also apparent in my study.

7.2.4 *Realized* value

Returning to the more positive qualities of time here, participant experiences of positive *Realized* value increased gradually over the duration of the fieldwork, as the group grew better at learning how to make a difference through their own PAR studies. This was another opportunity less experienced by iSaR workshop participants due to insufficient time to make any significant difference to their experiences of college.

The core iSaR group's first PAR study resulted in the construction of a list of experientially-informed suggestions, sent to college leaders, including the idea of providing a 'welcome pack' to better support new starters in their college

transition. This reflects the type of research output detailed within four of the studies reviewed in Chapter 3 (Edwards, 2021; Rivero and Morina, 2025; Smith Hill *et al.*, 2025 and Spassiani *et al.*, 2017), and like the participants of these studies, iSaR group members could only hope that their suggestions would be given due weight, and at least be discussed through the right channels. On evaluating the impact of this first study, the following term, the group found that only one of their suggestions had been actioned.

As Bahou (2012) concluded, PAR projects which were most successful in developing student agency were those that enabled students to observe and *'accept the responsibility for effecting changes themselves'* (Bahou, 2012, p.233). My own findings reflected this phenomenon as the student group conducted their second and final PAR study, and students were able to physically observe the difference they had made to the college experiences of their peers through their research outputs. Their success also mirrors that of Bunn, Davis and Speed (2017); where Bunn's students co-created a booklet supporting the transitioning from Primary to Secondary schools, iSaR students had each co-created a booklet supporting transitions into work placements. Through observing the difference they made to their peers, they had directly experienced their agency.

With this mention of agency, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss how my findings may have unsettled the normative, individualised meaning of agency. By bringing into discussion the concepts of 'relational agency' and 'distributed competency', I shall now view the group's success through a dis/human lens. The final formation of the iSaR group was populated by three learning-disabled students, with observable impairments ranging from speech impediment, poor

memory, dyslexia to reduced mobility. Although, they each created a successful output, they did not do that on their own; it was a collaborative, group effort. This fact does not render them less agentic just because they didn't make the difference by themselves, individually. Just as in a sports match, with a winning team, the whole team are viewed at that moment as being successful, so too does the concept of distributed competency offer each member of the iSaR group a sense of being successful and agentic— because the group was; I shall return to this idea of distributed competency in the next section when I discuss peer support.

7.2.5 Enabling value

Participating students experienced increasingly positive *Enabling* value throughout all five terms of participation.

7.2.5.1 Facilitative support

The reviewed literature included many examples of facilitative support, in the form of additional facilitators (Ryan et al., 2015; Spassiani et al., 2017), training (Rivera and Morina, 2025), structured interview supports (Kubiak et al., 2021) and more general facilitative support, which included modelling (Evans, 2021) and pre-analysis data organisation (Rivera and Morina, 2025). All the above supports were reflected in those provided to the core iSaR student group, including the move to bring an additional supporting staff member into the group, but my study proved to be rather unique in gaining student perspectives regarding supportive measures, evident throughout the featured student testimonials.

My findings revealed that increased group ownership of the research slowly reduced the reliance on the support and direction from facilitators. iSaR practice necessitated highly perceptive facilitation, with the facilitator required to know when to provide support and to what extent, and when to step back and encourage participants to take the lead more. Too much 'failure' would not be conducive to students' continued enjoyment, motivation or, ultimately, participation – nor their development of agency. The facilitator's role can be conceived as a responsive dance: stepping in to guide participants whilst remaining mindful to step back out again as soon as the participants gain certainty and the power dynamic is felt to shift. Only one study within the literature reviewed made mention of this facilitator-participant dynamic, albeit from their own perspective: *'We sometimes led, sometimes guided, and sometimes stayed out of the way, as students pursued their role as researchers'* (Ryan *et al.*, 2015, p.79). This strongly echoes my own reflections as a facilitator, and that participants appreciated these opportunities to practise acting with autonomy, in preparation for the future, was evident throughout the student testimonials featured in my findings.

As the group were able to support each other better, this nurtured the group's growing sense of ownership and pride in their capability to address challenge with increasing levels of dis/autonomy. Taking ownership was perceived by participants as a big, but exciting responsibility, and as participants were able to steer the design of the research, tools and processes it became more accessible, and supportive, reducing reliance on facilitators. Students were also aware of the

support received from fellow students and reasoned that peer support helped them in the task of taking ownership of the project.

7.2.5.2 Peer support

As group relationships strengthened, the iSaR group provided increasingly more support for each other. Peer support is not mentioned in any of the literature on participatory 'voice' reviewed, which is surprising, as it made several appearances within this study's findings. Within dis/human literature, however, there was a wonderful example of '*distributed competence*' (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2016, p.10) where a friend articulated the (likely) desire of a non-speaking learning-disabled person to want a drink of tea (Greenstein, 2016). My findings recorded similar events, where peers were able to explain each other's actions, clarify each other's meanings or remember details another had forgot.

I began to view peer support as a naturally forming, responsive mode of support which helped reduce barriers to participation experienced by group members as and when they occurred. This important insight disrupts normative ideals of what participation is and what it should look like, and what facilitation is and who should facilitate.

7.2.5.3 Facilitative enablers and barriers

The enablers and barriers for effective facilitation will now be discussed, but first I wish to muse on an important point, related to facilitation and my positionality: I came to this study having working for over 25 years with disabled people, and in that time I have built up a unique skill set which is so subtly responsive to need, that I am often not aware that I am acting instinctively, and tend to 'sell myself

short' as result. For this reason, I am not sure how many more barriers participating students would have been exposed to if I had not developed these facilitative skills, and so my results should not be seen as exhaustive of the potential barriers those conducting PAR with students may experience.

Amongst the features of this study which supported effective facilitation was the organisation of regular, multi-modal reflection points, rather than one large, final summative interview attempting to capture all the memories and reflections of group members. From experience, I had learned the value of immediacy and visual prompts when it came to seeking rich reflections and accessing memory for participants who are learning disabled. Through such methods (detailed in Chapters 4 to 6), it could be seen that normative research practices were disrupted through the study's attempt to better support the responses of the learning-disabled participants. This is not a novel initiative, in that it utilises commonly known inclusive practices, but it remains uncommon or at least underreported, specifically within the participatory studies featuring learning-disabled students detailed in Chapter 3.

As it disrupts traditional research processes, disability offers new and exciting alternatives, but this takes facilitative time, skill, confidence and a particular determination to include participants with complicated profiles in research activity. The time it takes to understand and support learning-disabled participants' individual needs acts as a barrier, dissuading some researchers from widening participation in their studies. My study required significant, and additional facilitative effort to be effectively responsive to participant need. This involved, but was not limited to: the reading of EHCPs and other reports to gain a clear

picture of participant support needs and any associated risks; enrolment in a 10-week programme of Easy-read training and the subsequent creation of easy-read materials and visual supports; personalised collations of photographs (featuring individual students engaging in research activity) to support individual photo-interviews, the manual transcription of individual termly interviews (due to the software's inability to accurately transcribe those with speech impediments), and the gaining of formal certification allowing me to administer medications whilst off-site - not to mention the week-long shadowing of staff administering medication before the (theoretical *and* practical) assessment itself. To reiterate, the need for this level of facilitative responsivity requires an effort which not every researcher is willing or able to make, and so it remains a significant facilitative barrier. In sharing the above, I do not wish to negate the significant efforts of the participants nor present the idea that the participation of people with learning disabilities present a burden to researchers.

7.2.6 *Strategic value*

7.2.6.1 *Collaborative partnerships*

It was not until the final term of fieldwork that participants began to articulate experiences of external Strategic Value. These experiences involved collaborations with staff members, from outside the iSaR group, who helped enhance the quality and usability of the project's outputs. My findings in this respect mirrored the collaboration with a professional videographer, to enhance the quality of research output, featured in Kubiak *et al.* (2021).

Although the iSaR group did attempt to disseminate their findings with strategic partners, they could only gain audience with a few college governors, whereas Ryan *et al* (2015), Spassiani *et al.* (2017) and Smith Hill *et al.*, (2025) were able to engage a good number of decision-makers *and* the wider community. This situation could well have been the result of my positionality and status within the host college, and/or my personal limitations around marketing and promotion.

The iSaR group concentrated its efforts instead on sharing their final PAR study findings with fellow students, through accessible research outputs. This reflects the efforts of a few of the other studies reviewed, including accessible exhibitions (Rivero and Morina, 2025), co-authored articles (Spassiani *et al.*, 2017), videos (Kubiak *et al.*, 2021), and posters (Evans, 2021).

7.2.6.2 Uncollaborative encounters

As already detailed, the recommendations resulting from the iSaR group's first PAR study were shared with the college's Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Unfortunately, apart from the actions of one particular staff member, who was already allied to the 'cause', the remaining SLT members collectively decided not to action even the simplest of recommendations. The student group's recommendations were not responded to directly, so the group ended up having to approach individual members of the SLT to ask them what their response had been. This uncollaborative encounter presented as a threat to student agency development, in which learners learned that could not rely on management to make the difference they cared to make, and that they would have to do it themselves next time. The group was assured that their suggestions *had* been discussed, as stipulated by policy, but there was a sense that the students had

presented a moral challenge to the SLT, accusing them of not providing sufficiently for new starters, perhaps? Some staff claimed to be already providing such items, although there was no evidence of this and the students were not aware of receiving these. The group decided to see it as a lesson: lesson #1. Lesson #2 came swiftly after these revelations, when the group decided to organise some peer research but the staff members on shift that day (knowingly or unknowingly) sabotaged events by leaving the campus with the planned participants. The group learned from both of these situations, as result, they got increasingly better at knowing how research, and desired changes, can be best actioned.

I bring discussion now back to societal assumptions and projections of worth, and how students with learning disabilities are not globally trusted with ideas, decisions and plans. What the two events above highlight is the unreadiness of college staff to respond to such agentic student 'voice', due to the infancy of this field. Just as students required time to get used to taking the lead, staff and leaders need to be supported to let students take strategic lead sometimes and trust the motivations behind their suggestions or actions. Unpractised as they were in the etiquette and processes of PAR, perhaps staff did not consider how their actions created barriers, blocking opportunity for important student transformation. I imagine the individuals concerned would be mortified if they were moved to consider the consequences of their actions, and in hindsight, I should have devoted much more time to considering how staff and leaders could be supported to best support students in their PAR ventures; college staff

required PAR training also, and a better understanding of what I was attempting to do with iSaR activity, and this was an oversight on my part.

7.2.7 *Orienting* value

Participating students experienced predominantly positive *Orienting* value throughout the five terms of participation. *Internally*, this manifested through investigation of different peer histories, experiences and contexts within their college community, for example, how the experiences of day and residential students differed. This perfectly mirrored participants' contrasting experiences of place featured in many studies within the review of literature. Participants in Ryan *et al.* (2015), for example, found value in exploring how experiences within their own learning community contrasted depending on dis/ability. Other studies explored differences from one provision to another (Rivero and Morina, 2025; Bunn *et al.*, 2017; and Goodall, 2020). This doctoral study, however, was unlike the others reviewed, in that it intentionally oriented participants within a new (for them) landscape of practice – the Inclusive Research landscape. The group's prolonged immersion in this landscape was a significant factor in their developing identity as researchers (discussed in the next section). Findings revealed many positive orienting experiences, including attendance at an international research conference- an important public platform offering participants the opportunity to be taken seriously as effective researchers. As such, my study illustrated a strong flow of value travelling between *Orienting* and *Transformative* value, to be discussed next.

7.2.8 Transformative value

My findings revealed eventual experiences of *Transformative* value, illustrated well through the increasing self-identification of participants as researchers. As previously quoted, one participant - Laura, responded to the question of whether she felt like a researcher yet, exclaimed: *'I do, Yes. Of course I do, I've been doing it for a year – a year and two months!'* (L4, p.6). This wasn't a sweeping statement; having immersed herself in the Inclusive Research landscape for the above duration, Laura was distinctly aware of the qualities of a good researcher, and how she now possessed them. In recognising her new identity, with its potential to make a difference, Laura became aware of her own agency; she became an agentic being, capable of wielding power in a practised, self-determined fashion. This example mirrored the study by Ryan et al (2015), which was the only other study reviewed to explore the shift of participants' identity from student to researcher through student testimony: *'We are all researchers!'* (p.79). Indeed, all three remaining iSaR members identified as researchers at the end of my study.

Transformation was not only experienced from the inside; that iSaR group members had developed leadership skills was observed by Gabrielle's personal tutor: *'she began to talk with more authority, and she was more confident'* (P4, p.2). This is only one example of how the reputational capital of the group was observed to increase through participatory activity.

7.3 Contributions

7.3.1 Research outputs

7.3.1.1 iSaR – an evidence-based model of participatory ‘voice’

I view the key output of this study to be an evidence-based model of participatory ‘voice’: iSaR. This model has been developed over a period of five academic terms, with significant participant input through testimonial feedback. As has been shown, iSaR practice can develop students into effective, competent researchers, through following the processes of PAR, utilising accessible supports, and it has been observed to result in meaningful learning and to develop agency and self-determination in participants. The model is now fully formed, and ready to be adopted by ‘voice’ practitioners.

7.3.1.2 Practitioner guide

Wider adoption of the iSaR model has been encouraged and enabled through the distribution of the *‘iSaR Practitioner Guide’* (see Appendix 1). Through designing, developing and delivering the iSaR model, I was able to bring together my emerging understandings of effective iSaR practice and disseminate these within this guide. The current draft brings together the experiences and learning accumulated from (over) 100 iSaR sessions facilitated through this study’s fieldwork, and within the guide, I share illustrated examples of scaffolding activities, to support other practitioners to facilitate student-led initiation of projects; I kept this as initial focus, as I was aware of how this aspect presented a major barrier for facilitators of ‘voice’. The resource is downloadable through a

'Padlet' platform, shared with a growing membership of iSaR Community of Practice (iSaR CoP) members, to be detailed at the end of this section.

7.3.1.3 Teaching materials

Through my fieldwork activities and learning, I was able to create two teaching resources for an upcoming MA level module in Inclusive Research at the University of Sheffield: one detailing accessible methods to support informed consent and one detailing how to support interviews. I also co-created a further resource detailing my use of the battery-level metaphor in research.

My fieldwork also informed the materials I created to support my weekly lecture topic, '*Voices and participation in disability research*' which was a component of the University of Birmingham's MA Inclusion module, '*Developing scholarly practice and becoming an agent of change*' and delivered through the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) via self-guided reading and a lecture comprising of three videos (*Agency and ownership*; *Being involved in research*; and *Making research accessible*).

7.3.1.4 Presentations and conference papers

I was able to share the theory, methods and findings developed through fieldwork within many oral and poster presentations, and I felt these were a fantastic opportunity to re/frame my thoughts and approach my work from a different angle. I first shared my theory of how agency could be operationalised through student-led research in a presentation designed for the University of Birmingham's School

of Education PGR Conference, and this presentation was developed into a conference paper entitled: '*Using Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2020) 'Value Creation Framework' to articulate intent, guide implementation and plan impact in doctoral research.*' (Evans, 2024)

I delivered several presentations which focused on the accessibility of the research methods I had developed, one of which was presented at the University of Birmingham's School of Education Research Conference, entitled: 'Increasing the accessibility of Wenger-Trayner's *Value Creation Framework* through inclusive methods.' Within this presentation, I detailed the *Photo-based Writing Scaffold* method used to create *Value Creation Stories* with learning-disabled participants.

As previously mentioned, I was also able to co-deliver a presentation disseminating early findings with two student-participants, to an audience at the inaugural International Creative Research Methods Conference. The presentation was entitled: '*Increasing creativity = increasing accessibility = increasing participation?*' and it shared participant reflections of the methods they had been trialling and using in their peer research. Another co-delivered presentation was entitled: '*Participatory approaches and SEN*' which featured video clips of Laura reflecting on the iSaR model in practice.

The findings from this PhD study were disseminated in an oral presentation entitled: '*Developing agency through student-led research*' given at the Autism Europe Congress in Dublin. This presentation had an additional function, in that it utilised easy-read features and was accessible to share with the featured

participants via a Teams call. I shared the presentation prior to the main event, to allow participants to give feedback on my interpretations of their testimonies.

I was also able to share overviews of my PhD study to university teams when on placement, with the iHuman team at the University of Sheffield, and with staff at the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities (TCPID) in Dublin, and with the research team I belong to at the University of Birmingham: Autism Centre for Educational Research (ACER).

7.3.1.5 iSaR Community of Practice and community Padlet space

The idea of creating an iSaR Community of Practice emerged during my participation in a *Design Clinic* activity, at Beverley and Etienne Wenger-Trayner's three-day workshop: *'Beyond evaluation'* in Sesimbra, Portugal. During this activity, I presented an overview of the iSaR model, my fieldwork and data collected so far, and asked the group: *"How can I share my model of Student Voice more widely and effectively?"* The group asked me clarifying questions and I was asked by Etienne: *"Do you want to develop the model or do you want to broaden its reach through wider dissemination?"*. My response of *'Both'* inspired an idea to attempt to co-develop the iSaR model through a Community of Practice (CoP), to which I could invite the 'voice' practitioners I knew from delivering iSaR workshops and those I had met through my work with Natspec and their Learner Voice Practitioner Network. I approached Natspec and, out of courtesy, asked them for permission to advertise the iSaR CoP at one of their network meetings, which I attend.

Once gathered, the iSaR CoP co-created a document outlining their shared aspirations for participation (see Figure 58 below) and engaged in other social learning activities, including *Design Clinics* (as introduced above). There are currently twenty-two members, mostly from the UK, but also hailing from Inclusive Higher Education Institutes (IHEs) in Ireland, the US and Europe.

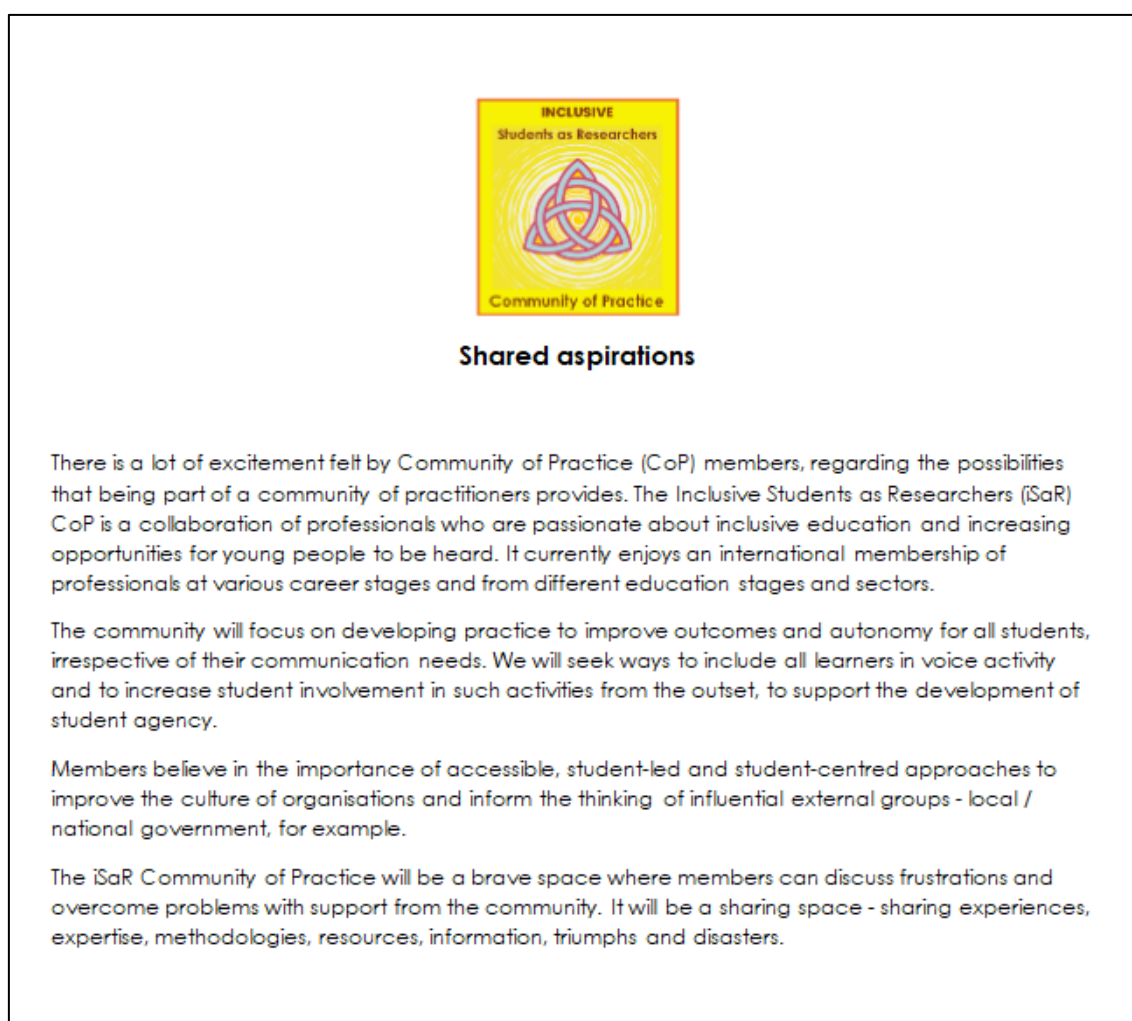


Figure 58. The iSaR CoP's co-written 'Shared aspirations'

This document, along with the *Practitioner Guide* and various other videos, links and texts of interest, is freely available to iSaR CoP members through a

dedicated, virtual Padlet space. The space is also somewhere members can upload and share their own links.

The iSaR CoP is now one-year old, and although members have (slowly) grown comfortable enough to begin sharing problems and questions with the group, within a *Design Clinic* format, it is disconcerting that none of the members have yet shared an example of delivering student-led projects or a plan to facilitate one. As I write, I am planning a 'Birthday party' along with reflexive, social learning activities to investigate this issue, and wonder whether / why it is just me who is motivated to fully action iSaR principles. Perhaps, like with everything else in this study, people may just require more time to engage uncertainty and detach from comfortable, expected, normative processes.

7.3.1.6 Student PAR outputs – Work experience booklets

The research outputs from the final PAR study should be included here, with the caveat that they are technically classed as iSaR group outputs. Although, I didn't initially believe that these had been circulated enough, I have recently been informed that these sets of easy-read booklets, which detail and illustrate the types of task involved in particular work placements, have been distributed not only around the host college and placement sites, but also extensively during transition events and autism-specific info/trade shows. Three sets have also been ordered by a special school in Oxfordshire. I bring these updates in here to evidence the true meaningfulness and appropriacy of student-led projects, and

the potential for impact – even transcending their immediate college environments. As Laura remarked:

‘It’s not about us, it’s about work experience as a whole. It’s about something bigger than us three.’ (L5, p.1)

7.4 Limitations

7.4.1 Participatory PhDs

I believe a limitation affecting my study was how fully Participatory Research (PR) runs at odds with the requirements of a PhD, as previously mentioned in the Methodology chapter.

Looking towards the future of research, in terms of public engagement, Steven Hill, Director of Research, Research England, expects more participatory and collaborative research:

‘Collaboration will be the key metric by which universities judge themselves: collaboration with all sorts of people and communities to deliver the research that they need.’ (NCCPE, 2024, online)

More specifically revealing, as to future direction of collaborative research, is the fact that REF 2029 will, for the first time, focus on the contribution of engagement to impact: *‘The Impact element will be renamed as ‘Engagement and Impact’ to recognise and reward a wider range of impact-enabling activities.’ (NCCPE, 2025, Online)*

Yet, however excited Academia appears to be about engaged, collaborative research, such as PR, as an ESRC-funded PhD student, there were no Advanced Training Modules on engaging with the public or on PR approaches; I had to make it up as I went along. This experience has been shared, and well-articulated by several other PhD students, including Klocker (2021) and Southby (2017). Southby's doctoral research into social inclusion for people with learning disabilities was somewhat restricted by the '*challenges [they] faced in developing a participatory methodology as a research-degree student – or, to put it another way, the reasons [their] research did not fall further along the participatory continuum*' (2017, p.129). This reflection matches the point I made in Chapter 4: that my doctoral research did not seem incredibly participatory when viewed against given criteria for Participatory Research.

7.4.2 Recruitment issues

It is my opinion that the most significant limitation of this study resulted from its exclusive recruitment criteria '*confining research only to those who can give truly informed consent*' (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003, p.159). By only including student-participants who were working at Entry Level Three in Communication skills, findings could only reveal the competency of this demographic of student, and in doing so, overlooked the competency of the majority of their peers who were working below this level. Although I believe it is incredibly important to celebrate and promote the successes of iSaR participants, I feel the restrictions of the ethics process which challenged me to prove even *this* cohort's capacity to give informed consent, along with my lack of experience and confidence as a

researcher, led me to excluding those who, perhaps were most needing of agency development.

In attempt to atone for this lack of courage and experience, I dedicated lots of energy to doing what I was confident and experienced in doing: encouraging the iSaR group to accessibly include their peers in their own research through creative means. I also used the iSaR workshops which involved mixed ability Student Council groups (P3 and P4) to explore how I could adapt iSaR processes to be more accessible to a broader range of students. Although I could not collect evidence of this, due to only including the staff as research participants, the process enhanced my own practice as facilitator and has strengthened my resolve to open out recruitment further in the future to be more inclusive.

7.4.3 Demographical issues

Due to the extremely low numbers of students at the host provisions who were from a global majority background, all of the participants within the core iSaR group were White British, and all but one participant from iSaR workshops were also White British. This reflects the demographic of the rural areas in which these provisions are situated. The issue this brings up is that the study's findings are coloured by the privileges afforded to those of a dominant social group (disability aside), and as a result the findings cannot explore any nuance or differences of perception between different ethnicities.

7.4.4 Methodological issues

7.4.4.1 *Familiarity*

The interviews may have been limited by the fact that interviewer and interviewee were both present during discussed events, and this may have lessened the researcher's curiosity to prompt for more detail or the participants' motivation to share in more detail. This issue was somewhat rectified through the interviews conducted in my absence, for the *video diaries*; this did also seem to reduce likelihood of researcher bias.

7.4.4.2 *Capturing non-events*

Although the use of photography was highly prevalent and purposeful throughout the entire study, the limitation it posed was that – unless an event was captured on film, it could not be chosen to be discussed during photo-interviews. Most of the photographs taken featured activity, and not, as example, the time where the group were left standing, watching the group of Freshers disappear on a bus before they could engage in the peer research they had prepared. In hindsight, I should have captured this event on film, but inactivity is not usually something people think to record. As the image did not feature as a choice in the photo-interview, it was not discussed.

7.4.4.3 *Time constraints*

I believe the timing of the iSaR sessions posed an issue for participants, especially during their final term of college when they had so many other demands on their energies (to sit exams, complete coursework and attend transition meetings – not to mention Summer Show preparations and Duke of

Edinburgh expeditions). The sessions at the end of the day, whilst in one way being a good idea, as iSaR sessions would not collide with curriculum sessions, did mean that participants were often tired (as evidenced in the completed *Battery-level sheets*).

The timing constraints of the workshops also proved limiting, lasting only four weeks. This did not leave sufficient time for the group to bond with itself or me, and it did not support any increased familiarity with the student-led approach nor growing comfort in the engagement of uncertainty. P4 asked for (and received) another set of four weeks, which, tellingly, helped enormously in terms of the group being able to see some results of their research efforts.

7.4.4.4 Data collection methods (workshops)

I believe the findings from the iSaR *workshops*, when eliciting student-participant experiences, were limited due to my choice of data collection method. Although I believed the *Reflection booklets* were accessible and relatively easy to analyse, I felt the survey response-type method contradicted everything I had been trying to show students about accessible research – how research doesn't have to just involve easy-read surveys.

P1 student-participants were guided through the completion of the booklets as a group, but I was aware of how my presence may have affected results – towards more positive *and* negative responses. For P2's booklet completion, I organised to not be present but then suspected some of the responses may have been over-supported by bored support staff. Either way, the evaluation of workshops proved

limiting, but they did inform my decision to not attempt short-term iSaR workshops again.

7.5 Recommendations

This study has been ambitiously extensive in scope and highly successful, contributing a significant amount of new knowledge and practice to the emerging field of inclusive ‘voice’, as detailed earlier in the chapter. In this final section, I aim to delve deeper into the possibilities this study has conjured, and the potential ways I could use the findings to incite researchers and practitioners to action. First, I look to my own practice, followed by recommendations for the general practice landscape, with focus remaining on post-secondary provisions attended by students with learning disabilities, and finally, I turn to recommendations for the larger research landscape which aims to widen participation and promote inclusion.

7.5.1 Recommendations for self

I begin with my own practice, which I have been developing throughout and since this study, as iSaR facilitator. The writing up of this study has convinced me to continue developing the iSaR, and to specifically a) develop an easy-read ‘*Student guide to iSaR Participation*’, which would detail the role of an *iSaR Peer Researcher* and clarify the expectations, opportunities and risks of iSaR activity; b) trial an accessible adaptation of a *Design Clinic* (as featured in 7.4.1.4) to support iSaR Peer Researchers in creating a well-honed research question; c)

trial an accessible and participatory construction of a *Theory of Change (ToC)*, to support iSaR Peer Researchers when planning to make the difference they care to make; d) explore an online version of an iSaR programme, using screenshots (rather than photographs) to evidence online experience and visually support interviews / co-evaluation; e) widen recruitment onto iSaR programmes so that groups are inclusively mixed in terms of communication styles and needs. This latter would test my findings regarding the potential value of 'distributed competence' within a strong, supportive group.

7.5.2 Recommendations for sector

Although I originally framed iSaR as a model of 'Student Voice', I have recently come to view it as something almost entirely different, and that is a result of developing a different ontological construction of 'voice' as participatory and transformative.

Through workshops, I tried to merge iSaR practices alongside the requirements of Student Councils, and attempted to encourage 'voice' practitioners in the uptake of iSaR. I see now that Student Councils have a very different kind of work to do, in terms of quality assurance. Competing against management forces for precious student time in this particular arena will never be successful, as these forces believe that this traditional type of student engagement sufficiently ticks all the necessary and legally required boxes to evidence 'voice'. There is an unspoken belief that there is no need to invest more time and resources into something already achieved through surveys and Student Council meetings. I

therefore recommend that iSaR be viewed as a separate practice – perhaps as a participatory model of personal development, or transformation; a conclusion I arrived at through fieldwork observations and through writing up this thesis.

7.5.2.1 Ideal format of iSaR sessions

Having facilitated iSaR sessions over various periods of time, I would recommend one academic year to be the perfect duration of programme, so as to provide enough time for students to immerse themselves in the research landscape and gain familiarity with each other and the facilitator. In this time, they would gain confidence in taking the lead and have time to not only conduct their own peer research and create outputs, but also to evaluate their participation and the impact their efforts have made on the college and its students.

I include here a visual of what that year could look like:

Academic term	Focus	Activities
Autumn term	Research training	Experiential methods ‘tasters’ Discovering inclusive research landscape Exploration of ethics
Spring term	PAR	Initiation (scaffolding activities) Trialling of methods Peer research Data analysis
Summer term	Impact	Easy read training Dissemination of findings Creation of outputs Evaluation of impact

Table 53. Example of recommended year of iSaR activity

7.5.2.2 Ideal facilitator skillsets

Facilitators and/or supporting staff members of iSaR programmes would benefit from established / establishing skills in alternative modes of communication and easy read practices. This will support them to best support a wider range of iSaR peer researchers' needs and (vicariously) those of their peer participants.

iSaR facilitators and/or supporting staff members would also benefit from experience or talent in design, as they would be required to be design partners of research tools and outputs, alongside iSaR peer researchers.

My final recommendation for facilitators is for there to be more than one of them, to broaden the potential facilitative skills available to support participatory success.

7.5.2.3 Participatory rights

To ensure that iSaR activities are in alignment with participatory rights, as set out in the previously detailed United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). I would very much recommend iSaR groups to utilise the QoP framework, featured in Chapter 3, as a measuring tool to co-evaluate the levels of student participation in iSaR activity, and as a planning tool to increase participatory success.

To this end, I would suggest that any group engaging in iSaR activity take responsibility for the recording of positive and negative participatory value-experiences, as they are experienced, as an embedded formative evaluation process, where they are also supported to build in value where they notice it most

lacking. '*Learning to make a difference means getting better at spotting opportunities to generate a range of different types of value*' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p.63). Practically speaking, this suggestion refers to the same process as used in the *Photo-based Writing Scaffold*, manipulating and organising photographs, with click n' drag actions, into appropriate value groups, but with more immediacy -so it could be conducted as group reflection at the end of each session.

7.5.2.4 iSaR as career preparation

I believe there should be, within this sector, a greater understanding and knowledge of the new and emerging career possibilities for people with learning disabilities in which research training and experience would be a significant advantage. These (paid) opportunities include, but are not limited to: Oliver McGowen 'Experts by Experience' trainers, NHS consultants, People First advocates, AET Young Expert Panellists, and Co-researchers. These are aspirational roles and careers, not work experience, and so should be universally viewed as valid potential transitional goals for this demographic of learner, and engagement on an iSaR programme should be seen as preparation for such a career.

7.5.2.5 Policy change for Institutional change

Having mused upon my findings and their implications, I have come to understand that students' opportunities may be greatly limited by staff

assumptions and beliefs, and that this is not necessarily a fault on the side of staff, but a fault in policy. I shall introduce this idea anecdotally below:

When completing my Master's Degree in Social Research (MASR), I enrolled on a module which explored historical and cultural perspectives of disability. Given that I had then been working for almost 25 years with learning-disabled people, I had never been required to consider their disability in any historical or rights-based way – even through teacher training. Through the module, I found out more about institutionalisation and society's historic and contemporary treatment of learning-disabled people, the Disability Movements of the US and UK, and about the power of Disability Arts in providing multiple images to combat negative stereotyping. These sessions inspired me to think more critically about the concept of inclusion and disability rights, and to understand the incredible importance of developing self-determination and agency as preparation for adulthood for this group of people.

In what follows, I am not speaking from any evidence base. The impact of the above module on my own practice inspired a belief that, if those members of staff (ranging in experience and career stage) whose actions created barriers during iSaR activity, had a broader knowledge of disability history and rights, they may have been more enthusiastic in their responses. They may have understood the importance of 'little wins' for providing positive experiences of *Realized* value, and not seen suggestions for improvement as professional or personal challenge.

To change the culture of the sector, we need to raise the awareness of all staff members in the above, and in doing so, they may extend their expectations of students and prove allies to iSaR activity, helping to increase its impact and value.

7.5.3 Recommendations for researchers

My recommendations for researchers fall into two areas:

7.5.3.1 Time

If/when planning to invite participants with learning disabilities into participatory research it is of great importance to understand that many features of normative research processes will be extended and take more time to complete.

To add to ideas already introduced earlier in this chapter, additional time may be required to:

- Co-create and trial research tools and resources, including tangible activities, easy-read documents and responsive use of alternative communications, subject to individualised needs
- Facilitate regular interviews to elicit more immediate responses
- Allow for considered responses to interview questioning (over 10 seconds may potentially be required)
- Manually transcribe interview audio due to speech impediment

7.5.3.2 Repetition, routine and practise

Any research methods to be used to collect or generate data would benefit from being practised to the point where they become routine-like before peer data collection commences. This reduces reliance on facilitators and encourages autonomous actions and feelings of competency.

7.5.3.3 Increasing cognitive accessibility of research

Research can no longer be something inaccessible to those who participate in it, not just in how it is conducted, but how it is understood.

I detailed in Chapter 4 how I gradually introduced participants to my chosen theoretical framework (the VCF), so that they could engage with and understand it to create their own *Value Creation Stories*. It is also important to share findings with participants in an accessible way, in honour and respect for their participatory efforts. The findings of this study, for example, were later adapted into a simple presentation, again utilising an easy-read format, so that participants could understand how I had interpreted and conveyed what they had said, through the lens of the VCF. My interpretations of the findings were condensed into a simple, easy-read conceptual model, illustrating the flow of value and learning through participation in research (see Figure 59 below).

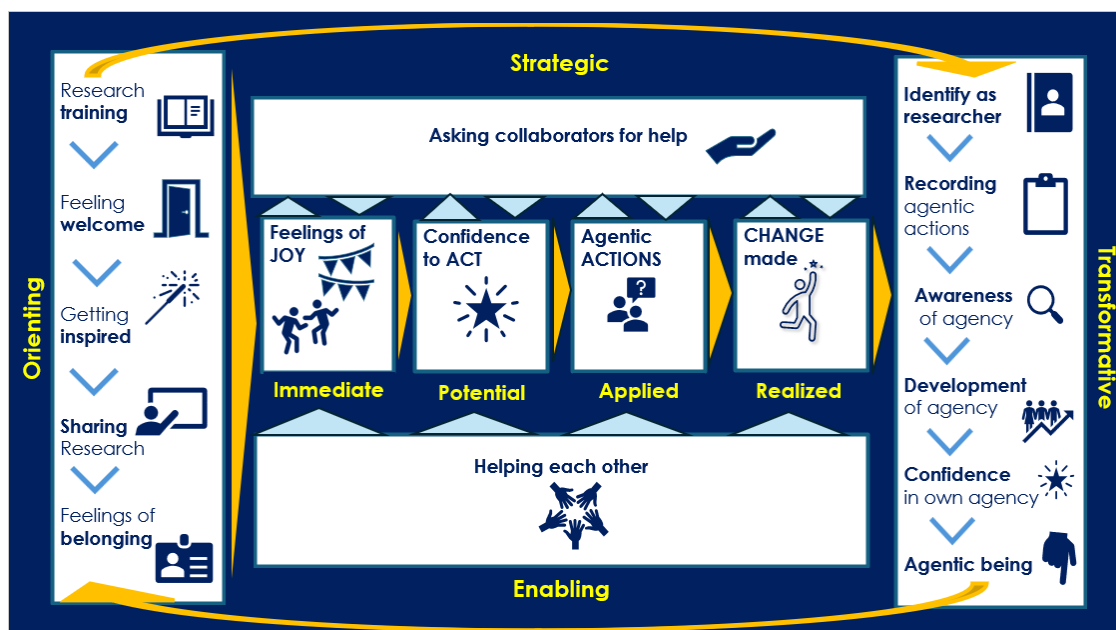


Figure 59. Conceptual model of the flow of learning through participation in research

7.5.4 Recommendations for funders

Finally, as intimated within my earlier discussion on the limitations of the study, there is a need for research funding bodies, such as ESRC, to develop more training in Participatory Research methods and researching inclusively, and to explore co-presentation opportunities for Post Graduate Researchers (PGRs). Doctoral training needs to be brought in line with REF aspirations (detailed earlier) and to support those PhD candidates better who are attempting to be more inclusive and collaborative in their research efforts. Until then, this will continue as a limitation.

All of the above recommendations are of significant importance. Research has proved such a powerful tool for developing agency, that the development of research skills for (interested) learning-disabled students is the only ethical way

forward. It was assumptions that disabled participants most in my study, so we need to expand our expectations of what students with learning disabilities are capable of, so they can then dream bigger for themselves.

7.6 Conclusion

Within this chapter, I have interpreted the key findings of my study, in relation to each of the eight values within the *Value Creation Framework* and bringing in findings from the student datasets of the core iSaR group and iSaR workshop sessions. I have attempted to view my findings through the lens of Dis/human, musing on how normative research or 'voice' practices may have been or could be effectively disrupted through the participation of people with learning disabilities.

I offered the model of iSaR up as fundamental output of the study - as an evidence-based model of participatory 'voice', detailing the many and various other research outputs resulting from the study.

After sharing my observations of the limitations of my study, I spent considerable time sharing my insights and recommendations for practice and research, gained from the experience of conducting this study in such an extensive and participatory way.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION



Figure 60. *'Journey to the Conference' Part 8*

Celebratory Italian meal on the way home from the conference.

8.1 Introduction

On finding no inclusive examples of Fielding's (2001) *Students as Researchers* (SaR) model of student voice, this study sought to develop, and investigate the value of, a novel and accessible adaptation of SaR – the inclusive Students as Researchers (iSaR) model of participatory 'voice', and to explore its potential for wider adoption.

It was the intention of this study to shine a light on the research capabilities and social learning capacities of students with learning disabilities. To the best of my knowledge this is the first time that any form of Critical Disability Studies has been used in conjunction with the Social theory of learning and its *Value Creation Framework*, and I believe that this can only enhance the latter. Through introducing disabled participants to its theory and processes, the VCF has been accessibly and successfully adapted, potentially broadening general participation in research involving the Social theory of learning to include those from outside Communities of Practice and the professions.

In this final chapter, I reiterate the key points made, in summary of all that has been detailed.

8.2 Summary of key findings

That the iSaR model of participatory 'voice' holds value has been effectively and abundantly evidenced by this study. Focusing on the value perceived and experienced by participating post-secondary students who had learning disabilities, findings revealed numerous articulations of positive value-experiences, which only increased over time, nurturing students' confidence and personal development, specifically in terms of agency and self-determination.

Through having the opportunity to practise taking the lead and taking responsibility for their own learning, student-participants also felt supported for their future lives.

Participants' direct involvement in the dissemination of their research, through presentations to peers, college staff and to international conference audiences, expanded their identities from student to researcher. Increasingly, participants identified as researchers, and not only did they make a difference, but they learned that they *could* make a difference, they learned *how* to make a difference and then they learned how to *better* make a difference. This evidences how iSaR practice contributed to the development of agency and self-direction. This development is incredibly important as preparation for adulthood for students with learning disabilities, in that students grow to believe they can make a difference to undesired factors which may have a negative impact on their adult lives and health, explained at length in Chapter 1.

The iSaR model of participatory 'voice' proved to be replicable and that it could potentially be widely adopted but not as a short-term workshop. Any wider adoption of the iSaR model would also take more time, due to a seemingly resolute adherence to transmission-style teaching and learning approaches, and the substantial shift required in societal assumptions of what is attainable by students with learning disabilities.

8.3 Summary of contribution to the field

This thesis seeks to offer new theoretical and practical insights to a field in its infancy – *inclusive participatory 'voice' in educational studies*. To my knowledge this account is only the twelfth of its kind, that is to say that, in my review of the literature, I found only eleven (English-language) participatory studies within the

field of education that involved students who have learning disabilities as researchers or co-researchers. I believe that through this study, I have been able to make significant contributions to the field, especially in terms of the accessible methods detailed within the Methodology chapter, and the levels of student competency and personal development which can be observed throughout the Findings chapter. As I mentioned earlier, when I began researching in this field, there was no guidebook to accessible student voice – there still isn't. There were very few papers providing anecdotal encouragement or inspiration – there are still only a small number to be found. I hope that this study provides a route map, inspiring 'voice' practitioners and researchers to widen participation in their 'voice' activities and research, to include those who are learning-disabled. I hope I can disseminate this work wider, through presentations, articles, videos and through the continued engagement of the iSaR CoP, and that I can develop it deeper through future collaborations and social learning activities with the iSaR CoP.

Some plans are already set in motion for Laura and me to each share our experiences of student-led research in a co-written book chapter in the upcoming book: *'Collaborative Research in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities'*; the abstract for which has been accepted. Inclusion in such a book should significantly increase awareness of this study for readers, and I hope it will inspire them to explore, in the least, a more student-led approach to their everyday practice.

I have also recently been commissioned to utilise the *Photo-based Writing Scaffold* tool to co-evaluate undergraduate and learning-disabled people's experiences of the UK's first co-learning module at the University of East London;

they are spending twenty sessions together learning about and discussing different social theories through a lived-experience / disability lens. The tool will be adapted through collaboration with three learning-disabled co-researchers, and it will be accessed through personalised 'wiki' profiles, rather than a 'Mural' board, and in ways I cannot yet predict.

8.4 Closing statement

Students with learning disabilities should not be protected against uncertainty, as no student can develop as an agentic being in an environment where staff are relied upon to provide constant certainty, direction and knowledge. This 'safe' teaching approach cannot prepare young people for adulthood or stimulate thirst for lifelong learning, which is critical for everyone's act of becoming - as Shevlin said, there is no full stop to us.

Engagement in participatory 'voice' has been made more accessible through this study, and through iSaR practice, young learning-disabled participants have been welcomed into the world of research. They have infiltrated the world of Academia – a world which has, over the years, treated disabled people like datapoints rather than collaborators, and continues to do so in many cases. In Chapter 1, I spoke of the emancipatory scenes I had hoped to see through observations of Student Council meetings, and I have finally seen it through iSaR practice – the power of students in becoming effective agents for change – becoming researchers. Not only have they been making a difference, but they have been learning how to

make a *better* difference. It is hoped that they have been sufficiently prepared for a more self-determined, agentic adulthood – that is the difference I cared to make.

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APPENDICES

Appendix #	File name	File type
1	iSaR Practitioner Guide	PDF
2	Multi-modal interview process	Word
3	Gabrielle's first Value Creation Story	Word
4	Reflections booklets	PDF
5	Interview schedule. College leaders	Word
6	Laura. Coding. Term 5. Cycle 2	Word
7	Deductive codebook integrated. Cycle 1 and 3	Word
8	Matrix showing developing themes and codes. Cycle 3	Word
9	VCF Code matrix	Word
10	Information and consent for Host College	Word
11	iSaR recruitment presentation and booklet	PDF
12	Student consent form	PDF
13	Research profile	PDF
14	Supporting staff consent form	Word
15	iSaR Workshop information and consent form	Word
16	Easy read consent form and profile	PDF
17	Ethics application	PDF
18	Certificate of participation	PDF
19	Easy read VCF 1 st draft	Word
20	Work placement booklet	PDF
21	Data management plan	PDF
22	Risk assessment	Word
23	Definition of terms	Word

Appendices have been redacted from the repository version of this thesis.