Facilitating Participatory Research with Young People: Ethical and Practical Considerations

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A thesis submitted as part of the requirements of the University of East London for the Doctorate in

Educational and Child Psychology

April 2025

Abstract

This study delves into the experiences of a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) while facilitating a participatory research (PR) project with young people within a mainstream secondary school setting. The central focus is on the researcher's reflective journey, highlighting the complex ethical and practical challenges encountered in empowering young co-researchers to actively shape the research process. Employing a collaborative approach, the study involved four young co-researchers who participated in stages of the research, from methodology design to the presentation of findings.

Key findings underscore the critical importance of ongoing reflexivity and open dialogue in navigating the inherent power imbalances between the adult researcher and the young co-researchers. The researcher's experience shows the need for constant vigilance in ensuring equitable participation and addressing potential biases within the co-researcher group. Furthermore, the study highlights the ethical dilemmas arising from time constraints, particularly in relation to providing adequate training and ensuring informed consent. The co-researchers' reluctance to be recorded, coupled with the extended training periods required, underscores the importance of prioritising the co-researchers' comfort levels allowing them to shape the research parameters.

The transformative potential of PR was evident in the co-researchers' increased confidence and the development of valuable transferable skills, such as data analysis and public speaking. Moreover, the study provided nuanced insights into the lived experiences of young people individual needs, offering valuable perspectives that can inform educational practices and interventions.

This research holds significant relevance for EPs, emphasising the importance of adopting a collaborative and empowering approach when working with young people. By centring the voices of

young co-researchers, the study underscores the necessity of listening to and valuing their perspectives in the development of effective and inclusive interventions. The study concludes that, while challenging, PR can create meaningful social change by challenging traditional power dynamics and amplifying the voices of marginalised youth, ultimately contributing to more equitable and empowering learning environments.

Declaration

University of East London

School of Psychology

Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

This work has not previous been accepted for any degree and it is not being concurrently submitted for any degree.

This research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

This thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full list is appended.

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April 2025

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank all of the co-researchers in this study, who have shown confidence, resilience, and a desire to learn. You have trusted me with your experiences, and I thank you for that. This research would not exist without your participation.

Secondly, I would like to thank my tutor, Janet Rowley, for her calm presence that has helped me feel supported throughout the three years of the doctorate, and I am ever so grateful to you for helping my development.

Thirdly, I would like to thank all of my friends and family, who have stuck with me on this journey. Many sacrifices, yet you're always there.

Lastly, I would like to thank a good friend of mine, Callum Laken. Without your support, I would not be in the position I am in today.

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Table of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CRAE	Children's Rights Alliance for England
CYP	Children and Young People
EHCP	Educational, Health and Care Plans
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
LA	Local Authority
PA	Physical Activity
PR	Participatory Research
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UEL	University of East London
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UK	United Kingdom
TA	Thematic Analysis

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This research explores the implementation and challenges of conducting participatory research (PR) with young people as co-researchers. This chapter provides the background, context, and rationale for the research project. It introduces the concept of PR, examining its core principles, including social justice and giving a voice to young people. Different models of participation such as Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992) will be discussed to understand the complexities of involving youth in research, as well as exploring the national and local contexts that are relevant to the study. Lastly, the theoretical framework underpinning this research will be examined, discussing key psychological theories and concepts, before closing with the unique contribution of the research.

1.2 Terminology used in this study

This section will outline the various terms that are used throughout this study, specifically marginalised and exclusion.

1.2.1 Marginalised

UNESCO (2020) defines a marginalised group as "a group within a culture, context or history: at risk of being excluded and discriminated against because of the interplay of differing personal characteristics or grounds." These groups often include individuals and communities experiencing a range of challenges, such as poverty and social exclusion, bullying, mental health difficulties, and/or special educational needs (SEN). Marginalised populations refer to a group of individuals who are excluded or disadvantaged due to factors including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other characteristics (Fluit, 2024). As Downe et al. (2009) emphasise, effectively representing and facilitating the participation of marginalised groups requires a dedicated focus on the specific processes and structures that can support their inclusion.

1.2.2 Exclusion

Exclusion refers to the practice of removing students from the school setting either temporarily or permanently (DfE, 2017). While persistent disruptive behaviour is the most frequently cited reason for exclusions (DfE, 2017), research consistently indicates that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately affected (Gazeley et al., 2015; Graham et al., 2019; Strand & Fletcher, 2014).

1.3 What is participatory research?

PR can be described as an "attitude or approach" to research, rather than a specific method (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p. 1671). There are many terms associated with PR including inclusive research and participatory approaches (Salway et al., 2011). While the terms participatory research and participatory approaches share overlap in their meaning (Becker et al., 2014), for the purpose of this study, PR is used to encompass the methods employed. PR aims for collaboration between the researchers and participants, and further ensures that the research is explored together, as opposed to being carried out 'on' the participants (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015). Rather than children being involved as participants, having children contribute as co-researchers often leads to higher levels of participation (Hart, 1992; Kellett; 2010). PR is underpinned by a commitment to social justice and also aims to generate knowledge that not only expands our understanding of a phenomenon, but also contributes to meaningful social change (Creswell, 2009). As a result, there is increasing emphasis on involving research participants as active collaborators in the research process and utilising research findings to inform and influence policy development and decision-making (Kellett, 2010).

This growing emphasis on PR is evident at the international level, with organisations such as the United Nations Children's FUND (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) actively promoting its use in advocating for marginalised groups (Uvin, 2007). While PR has gained significant traction, debates surrounding its implementation and

underlying principles continue. Supporters of this approach emphasise its potential to address social inequalities and drive meaningful change. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue, researchers have a civic duty to use methodologies that not only generate knowledge but also contribute to social justice and the empowerment of marginalised communities. Creswell (2009) further highlights the historical roots of PR, tracing its origins to concerns about social inequality and the need to give voice to marginalised groups. This emphasis on social justice and the active involvement of research participants distinguishes PR from more traditional approaches, which often prioritise researcher-led inquiry and rely heavily on the researcher's expertise while minimising the voices and perspective of research participants.

Despite its growth, PR faces several critical challenges. Concerns have been raised regarding the potential for researcher bias and the difficulties in maintaining objectivity when researchers are actively involved in collaborative inquiry with participants. Critics argue that relations with participants can inadvertently influence research findings and potentially compromise the objectivity of the research process (Gristy, 2014).

Furthermore, the dynamic nature of PR, characterised by shifting power relations and evolving relationships between researchers and participants, presents significant methodological and ethical challenges. Banks et al. (2013) highlight how navigating these complex dynamics requires thinking about considerations and the potential for competing expectations among participants and researchers.

To conclude, although there is ongoing debate regarding the specific methodologies and approaches within PR, a shared understanding among researchers recognises its distinct philosophical underpinnings focusing on participation and bringin5g about some form of social change, something that it is often lacking in more traditional methodologies (Byrne et al., 2009). PR

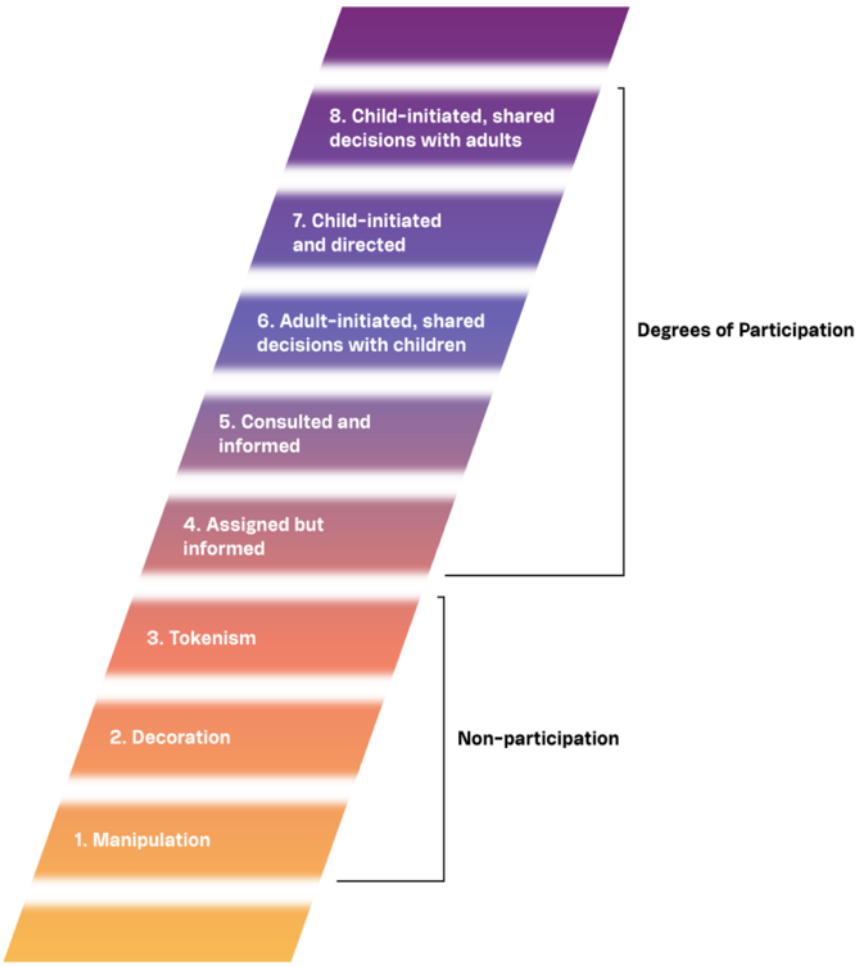
embodies an ethical focus that prioritises the voices and perspectives of research participants to make sense of their realities and contributing to meaningful change.

1.3.1 Models of participation

There are a number of models of participation that are used as a valued method for positioning children at the centre of knowledge construction, and offer a framework of understanding the different levels of involving CYP in the decision-making process (McMellon & Tisdall, 2020). Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation (Figure 1.1) for example, explains how a CYP's participation can develop over time. According to this model, CYP may start at different levels of the ladder depending on their level of need, however, all CYP are capable of gradually reaching a higher level of participation over time. This model has strengths in that it is visual and simple to understand; it provides eight steps within the ladder that makes it accessible for the researcher to navigate. Because of its accessibility, it clearly presents the differences between tokenistic participation and genuine decision-making power. This study aims to sit within the degrees of participation steps of the ladder (Figure 1.1), as it seeks to empower the young people to initiate and collaborate on decision-making.

Figure 1.1

Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992)



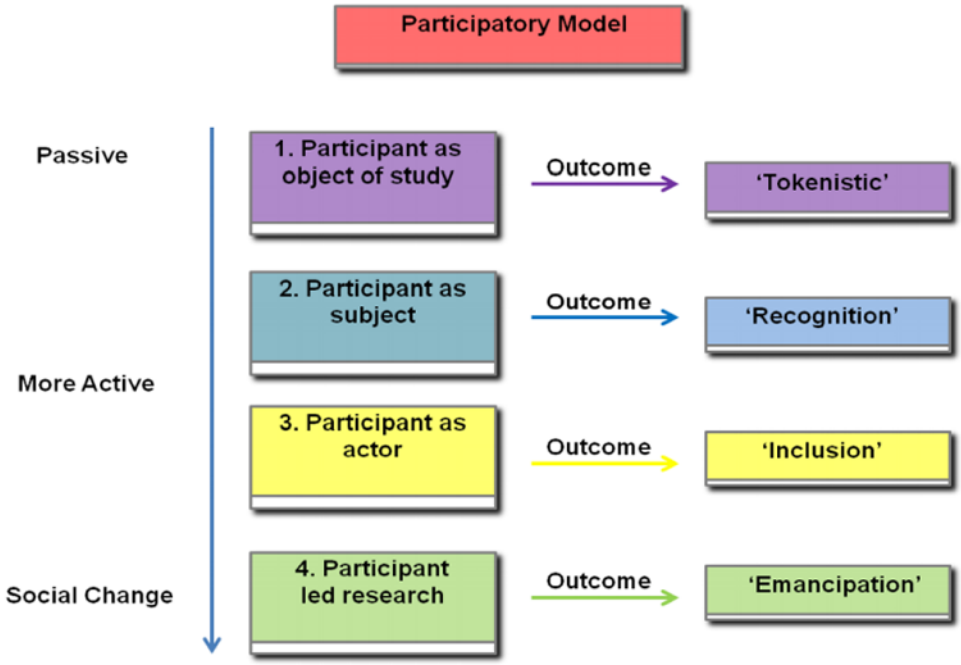
Throughout the study, Aldridge's Model of Participation (2017) (Figure 1.2) is also adopted as a framework that enhances "collaboration, inclusion and emancipation in research relationships" (Aldridge, 2017, p.26). Simplistic in its design, this model also has strengths in its accessibility, and offers an emphasis on the quality of participation rather than just the involvement. During the course of the research, the co-researchers were supported to adopt an 'active' role, leading to participant led research. As Figure 1.2 shows, this aligns with emancipatory outcomes of research

and enables participants to make social change or transformation, which is where this study intends to be placed, as it fits within the transformative and social justice aims of the study.

Adopting a PR method closely aligns with the LA's model of person centred planning with CYP. The LA in which the research was carried out emphasises the importance of involving the CYP to truly contribute to decisions that impact on them. Both of these models are used as a framework to help guide the research through the participatory elements.

Figure 1.2

Aldridge's Model of Participation (2017)



1.4 What is the person centred approach?

Person centred approaches and PR share several key principles that make them mutually supportive approaches. Pioneered by Rogers in the 1940s, the person-centred approach to

psychotherapy focused on the client's ability for self-growth through a supportive therapeutic relationship (Rogers, 1951). The main principles of Roger's person-centred therapy (PCT) are congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathy (Rogers, 1959). According to Rogers (1959), congruence (genuineness), is the foundation of counselling. This refers to the authenticity and transparency of the therapist, leading to the client experiencing the therapist as they are, and building trust as a result. Within the second principle, the therapist maintains a positive unconditional acceptance and respect for the client and values the client as themselves. This helps to nurture a safe space for the client to explore their thoughts or feelings without judgement. Finally, the therapist shows empathy in understanding the client's perspective and show sensitivity to their actions or feelings. This is particularly relevant to the present study as this highlights a core principle that has strong parallels in PR with young people: building genuine and respectful relationships based on understanding and empathy.

Both person-centred approaches and PR, therefore, prioritise the unique experiences, perspectives and needs of individuals. These approaches emphasise the importance of building collaborative relationships based on trust, respect, with a focus on empowering individuals to take control of their own lives. By integrating the principles of the person-centred approach into the implementation of PR, researchers can create more ethical and empowering research experiences for young people (Gray & Woods, 2022).

One of the main criticisms of person-centred approaches, however, centres around the flexibility and unstructured nature of person-centred approaches. The lack of clear goals and objectives can sometimes lead to instances where the client is unable to identify specific goals or make progress (Krebs et al., 2018). This lack of structure may therefore not be suitable for all clients.

Another concern relates to the potential cultural limitations of this approach. The core principles of this approach might not be applicable across different cultures. Critics argue that person centred approaches might lack adaptability outside of Western societies (Kim, 2018). For example, western societies might exist through an individual lens, focusing on the 'self', whereas other societies might focus on 'community'. The emphasis on individual autonomy might therefore struggle to resonate with individuals from collectivist cultures. Additionally, the therapist's own cultural biases may influence the therapeutic process and limit their ability to fully understand and appreciate the client's cultural background and experiences (Chu et al., 2016).

These criticisms of person-centred approaches can be applied to the context of the present study. For example, without a clear research focus and well-defined objectives, a PR project might lack structure and direction, resulting in a struggle to achieve meaningful outcomes. Another example is the potential for power imbalances. While PR aims to empower young people, there is potential for power imbalances to arise between researchers and young people. This could occur if researchers fail to address their own biases or if they do not actively work to create an inclusive research environment.

Whilst person centred approaches have criticisms, the principles have been influential in the development of EP practice. Within the last decade, national legislation has been introduced that emphasises the statutory requirement of person-centred practice when assessing CYP's educational needs (Children and Families Act, 2014; DfE & DoH, 2015). Person centred planning for example is increasingly recognised as an evidence-based approach for supporting the aspirations and goals of CYP (Gondek, 2017). While historically rooted in social justice and disability rights movements, there is a growing an understanding of the significance person centred approaches can bring for CYP's wellbeing. This recognition is evident in the increasing adoption of person-centred care within mental health services for CYP and their families, as well as in educational settings, including schools

and early year providers (Gondek, 2012). Person-centred approaches are therefore particularly pertinent to EP practice. EPs can implement the principles during goal setting with the CYP, by encouraging CYP to contribute in identifying their goals and strategies to achieve them (Gray & Woods, 2022). This helps to empower students to take ownership of their learning and become self-directed learners. By keeping CYP at the centre of planning and decisions that affect them, they are given opportunities that can change their attitudes, emotions and learning, leading to active participation in bringing about change (Gray & Woods, 2022). This is particularly significant to the present study as this research has transformative aims of encouraging change.

1.5 Context for the research study

The recognition of CYP as active agents with valuable insights has significantly evolved over in recent decades. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNRC), by protecting the rights of CYP to participate in decisions that affect them, has played a pivotal role in this shift. This recognition, accompanied with the growing prominence of PR methodologies, has paved the way for innovative approaches that focus on the voices and experiences of CYP.

To justify the use of PR in this study, it is essential to consider the broader socio-political context. This includes examining relevant legislation, such as the UNCRC, and exploring the national and local frameworks that support the participation of CYP in decision-making processes.

1.5.1 National context

The UK's legislative landscape, including the 2014 Children and Families Act and the SEND Code of Practice (2014), has significantly influenced the adoption of person-centred approaches and the emphasis on CYP's participation in decision-making processes. These legislative frameworks state the involvement of CYP and their families in decisions that affect them, reinforcing their right

to be heard and their expertise in their own lives. While these legislative frameworks provide a strong foundation, the implementation of these principles can vary across different local authorities.

The shift towards greater CYP participation has coincided with the growing use of PR methodologies. The UK has experienced a growing emphasis on CYP participation across various sectors, from statutory processes like Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) to the operational practices of numerous organisations working with CYP. The concept of 'participation' in this context refers to a range of activities, from taking part in decision-making processes and contributing to projects to simply being listened to and having their voices heard. It emphasises the importance of meaningfully integrating CYP perspectives into all aspects of their lives, whether it be within educational settings, healthcare services, or other relevant contexts.

CYP are increasingly being actively involved as co-researchers across various stages of research projects, reflecting a growing recognition of their unique perspectives and experiences (Coad & Evans, 2008). This shift towards greater youth participation has led to a diverse array of terminologies being linked to PR including participatory approaches and inclusive research (Coad & Evans, 2008). This study adopts the term 'participatory research' to encompass the research approaches that aims to involve CYP as co-researchers and fosters an inclusive research process.

Models of PR with CYP have evolved over the years, offering a spectrum of approaches ranging from minimal involvement to genuine youth-led inquiry. Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation Model provides a well-known framework for understanding different levels of child involvement, while Aldridge's Model of Participation (2017) focuses on the quality of participation rather than just the involvement. Despite the growing body of literature on PR, there remains a need for clearer definitions and more universally recognised ethical guidelines (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015).

Whilst models such as Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation have provided valuable frameworks for understanding different levels of child involvement, they have also been criticised for their hierarchical nature and their limited ability to capture the complexities of real-world participation (Wallace & Giles, 2019). Recognising these limitations, more recent models have adopted a more systemic approach, drawing upon ecological frameworks to understand the multiple and interconnected factors that influence child participation. For example, Gal's (2017) model, inspired by Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), considers the interplay of various contextual factors in shaping CYP's participation. This shift towards more ecologically-informed models reflects a growing understanding of the complexities of child participation and the need to consider the broader context in which it occurs. While not used as a primary analytical framework in this study, Gal's (2017) model will be drawn upon in the discussion section to reflect on the young people's observed levels of participation, exploring how various contextual factors might have influenced their engagement.

1.5.2 Local Context

1.5.2.1 PR and the Educational Psychology Profession

The principles underpinning PR closely align with the core values and practices of educational psychology (EP). The emphasis on addressing power imbalances and empowering individuals resonates strongly with the EP profession's commitment to advocating for CYP and ensuring their voices are heard (Kellet, 2010). This emphasis on listening to and involving service users such as CYP and their families has been a foundation of EP practice, long before legislative frameworks such as the Children and Families Act (2014) existed (Gersch, 1987).

The practice of EP itself embodies many of the principles of PR (Gersch et al., 2017). As Gersch et al.,,(2017) argue, all EP work in essence, involves a process of investigation and data collection, although often conducted within the dynamic and ever-changing context of real-world settings. This inherently research-orientated approach aligns with the core values of PR, emphasising the importance of gathering data, analysing information and drawing meaningful conclusions.

Furthermore, educational psychologists (EPs) routinely engage in collaborative inquiry with children, families and educators, seeking to understand their perspectives and co-construct solutions to challenges. This practice of working alongside children and families, valuing their sights, and actively involving them in the decision-making process, aligns with the core principles of PR and reflects a long-standing commitment within the EP profession to empowering children and advocating for their rights (Gersch et al.,2017). As outlined in the UK Standards for EPs (BPS, 2018), EPs are bound by ethical guidelines that prioritise the wellbeing and rights of all CYP. This includes a commitment to respecting young people's views and ensuring that their voices are heard and valued in all aspects of assessment, intervention, and decision-making.

The importance of the voice of CYP is particularly significant in the field of EP and CYP. Including the voices of CYP is central to many processes that EPs work in. For example, EPs play a vital role in eliciting the voice of the CYP in Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). In order to make education inclusive for CYP, EPs must ensure that pupils have opportunities to share their opinions and views in decision making and to advocate for themselves (Cowan et al., 2007). The Equalities Act (2010) recognises that EPs have a responsibility to listen to the experiences of CYP and their families, and to be aware of any special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) within the communities. Furthermore, the local authority (LA) aims and objectives in which the research takes place, includes 'empower people to meet their needs and aspirations', and this supports the unique

role of the EP in providing opportunities for CYP and their families to be involved in processes and decision-making that impact them.

The Children's Rights Alliance for England Report (CRAE) (2010) also recognises the importance of participatory practice. It indicates that an organisation can flourish by allowing CYP and their participation to be part of the organisational culture. Despite the legislation, there is little consistency in how CYP's participation is monitored (CRAE, 2010). This has implications on EP practice as evaluating CYP participation can help professionals to improve CYP's involvement in decision-making (CRAE, 2010).

1.5.2.2 Connecting Local Authority Priorities with PR and EP Practice

Central to the LA where this research takes place is its aims and objectives, which aligns with the principles of PR and the ethical guidelines of the EP profession. The LA's commitment to "empower people to meet their own aspirations" directly resonates with the core values of PR, which seeks to empower individuals and communities to take ownership of their own development and well-being. This aligns with the EP profession's focus on promoting self-determination, autonomy and resilience in CYP.

The emphasis on "meeting personal needs, wishes, and outcomes" underscores the importance of person-centred approach, which is a fundamental principle of both PR and the EP profession. This approach recognises the unique needs, experiences and perspectives of each individual and prioritises their active involvement in decision-making processes.

The LA's focus on health and wellbeing aligns with the growing recognition of the interconnectedness between physical, mental and social wellbeing (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This holistic perspective resonates with the researcher's commitment to promoting the overall wellbeing

of CYP, considering their social, emotional and cognitive development within a broader ecological context.

With this in mind, PR methodologies could be seen as helping the LA achieve its goal of improving health and wellbeing outcomes. By involving young people as co-researchers, the LA can gain valuable insights into their needs, aspirations and experiences, which can then inform future provision.

1.5.2.3 Rationale for the use of the boxing Intervention

The LA's focus on health and wellbeing provides a strong foundation for the implementation of PR projects. By aligning with the LA's priorities and leveraging the expertise of EP's, these projects can empower young people, generate valuable insights, and ultimately contribute to healthier communities.

The decision to utilise a boxing-based approach to this research project stemmed from an amalgamation of factors, including the researcher's pre-existing relationship with the school, the intervention's alignment with the principles of PR and community psychology (discussed in 1.9.1), and its relevance to marginalised groups.

This research project is situated an inner London borough, within a mainstream school setting that offers boxing as an intervention to pupils who are at risk of exclusion. In this context, youth engagement in physical activity (PA) and access to safe and supportive spaces can offer opportunities for re-integration into the mainstream school setting. This research project utilised the boxing intervention as a platform for conducting PR with young people as co-researchers. A convenient, or opportunity sample of young people were drawn from the school population,

specifically targeting those identified by school staff as having participated within the boxing intervention.

The pre-existing relationship with the school provided access to a student population and opportunity to build a research project with a marginalised population and the school community. The school's existing infrastructure and resources, including the researcher being familiar with how the school operates, further solidified its selection as the research site. This prior connection also streamlined the ethical approval process, as the school was already familiar with the researcher's work and practice as a TEP.

The boxing intervention itself was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, it aligns with the principles of PR by offering a dynamic and engaging activity that empowers young people to take ownership of their physical and emotional wellbeing (Levine et al., 2005). Boxing can provide a structured outlet for stress, frustration, and anger, potentially promoting emotional regulation and resilience (Bozdarov et al., 2022). Within the local context, boxing is perceived by the school staff and boxing coaches as highly engaging and motivating for young people, fostering interest and encouraging active participation. By utilising the young people's existing and previous experiences, this research aims to enhance their engagement in the research process.

Secondly, boxing has a historical connection with marginalised groups, often serving as vehicle for social development and personal empowerment. A popular narrative of boxing is that it "keeps kids of the street" (Barrett et al., 2020). To understand this perception, it is important to explore the current cultural context of boxing clubs and training. In England, 39% of all boxing clubs are located in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods (Barrett et al., 2000), feeding into the narrative that boxing engages with participants from marginalised socio-economic and ethnic groups.

Boxing clubs are more likely to be located in deprived areas than any other sport (Barrett et al., 2020). The sport of boxing is therefore positioned to reach individuals from underrepresented and marginalised groups. The findings of the report found that due to the deprivation of areas, many of the coaches from the clubs recognised gang-related crime and anti-social behaviour as the most prevalent issues within the communities they serve. Boxing clubs offer a space for individuals in difficult environment, acting as a refuge between external dangers and the involvement of police and social services. Typically, coaches reside or grow up in the local area, and they therefore bring with them, their wealth of knowledge and experience in dealing with the local community. From a community psychology perspective, the boxing clubs operate by understanding how the environmental factors can have an impact on the individual, and how participation in boxing might alter their interactions with their environments (Levine et al., 2005).

The role of the boxing coach plays a vital role in the CYP's development. Due to the intimate 'head to head' nature of the sport, close relationships are formed between the coach and participant, that often grows outside of the boxing environment. The report found that one of the key benefits of boxing training is the long term relationships and networks that are built through participation. Whilst this is a benefit for boxing, the development of long term friendships and connections are also seen in other sports, indicating that PA as a whole might be the key determent of relationship building, rather than the sport itself (Rowe, 2017). In spending considerable amounts of time with each other, coaches and participants build a level of trust, with the coaches taking on a 'mentor' role in the relationship. The coaches in the report, shared that they learn multiple aspects of the CYP's lives including their family, cultural and financial circumstances. The boxing coach is therefore positioned to understand the contextual factors of the individuals they work with.

Additionally, boxing is internationally recognised, and therefore has the ability to bring people together from diverse backgrounds. Young boxers from minority groups might identify with

admired athletes from their communities, encouraging others to participate in the sport (Barrett et al., 2020). The sport holds particular cultural significance in some marginalised groups. For example, within the Gypsy Traveller community, boxing is seen as a means of solving disputes, suggesting that boxing initiatives might be an effective tool for engaging with their community (Meek, 2018). The England Boxing Report (2020) also recognises the psychological barriers that comes with participants entering the boxing environment for the first time. These barriers include participants not knowing the coaches teaching style, intimidation, and a lack of perceived respect. This highlights the importance of coaches creating a safe and nurturing environment in which the participants can develop.

Lastly, community boxing programmes are largely dependent on volunteers and consistent financial support. Due to the demographic location of boxing clubs, many clubs operate on a low budget, with its members also experiencing financial struggles. Whilst this could be seen as a drawback for the continuation of boxing programmes in deprived areas, members who might be struggling to pay for boxing sessions may instead, be offered opportunities to contribute to the club in another way, such as training others. With the aforementioned community benefits of boxing, it is therefore surprising that organisations that directly shape the current education system, have opposed actions to include boxing in the national curriculum for PE (Barrett et al., 2020). One reason for this, could be the lack of statistical proof that these community boxing gyms are able to provide (Barrett et al., 2020).

Throughout London, there are a number of charities and youth programmes that offer boxing as intervention for CYP, with the overall aim of building confidence, self-esteem, self-worth and physical wellbeing. In recent years, psychologically informed boxing has been used by organisations to improve young people's emotional wellbeing. Charity organisations like London Community Boxing and "In Your Corner" view sport as a developmental tool for personal

development and social cohesion. From both a community psychology perspective, these organisations predominately engage with CYP from marginalised groups by offering involvement in boxing to increase social unity and integration, with an ethos of improving confidence, discipline and life skills. Both of the aforementioned organisations work closely with mental health services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Youth Justice Service, Children's Services and Family Early Help, and for the In Your Corner organisation, 85% of young people enter their boxing programme through referrals from one of the said health services. This high percentage indicates that boxing might be perceived as a beneficial intervention amongst mental health professionals and CYP.

For young people facing exclusion, whether due to socioeconomic factors, educational challenges, or experiences of discrimination, boxing can therefore offer a sense of agency and control. It can provide a pathway to physical and mental wellbeing, build self-confidence, and foster a sense of belonging within a supportive community. This historical context, coupled with the potential benefits for emotional wellbeing and social connection, made it a particularly relevant intervention for the young people participating in this study. This research project hoped to utilise the young people's experiences within the boxing intervention in order to explore conducting PR with young people.

1.6 Young people's right to participation

The UNRC recognises CYP as active agents with the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. This principle, grounded in the understanding that CYP are experts in their own lives (Kellett, 2010), emphasises the importance of empowering CYP to have a genuine voice. While the UNCRC acknowledges the right to participate, it also emphasises the need for meaningful engagement that goes beyond tokenistic gestures. True participation requires creating opportunities

for CYP to actively shape their own experiences and contribute to decision-making processes within their communities (Olsen, 2023).

However, realising this right requires a fundamental shift in adult perspectives. As Kellett (2010) argues, genuine listening is crucial, particularly when engaging with marginalised CYP. Within educational settings, how pupils are encouraged to express themselves is significantly influenced by social norms and expectations. The way pupil voice is framed and interpreted by adults can either empower or marginalise CYP. Adults may inadvertently discredit young people's perspectives by questioning their competence or making assumptions about their maturity (Kellett, 2010).

It is important to move beyond the simplistic notion of 'giving voice' to CYP, as this implies that they are inherently voiceless. CYP possess their own unique ways of expressing themselves, and their silence can be just as meaningful as their words (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2018). Respecting CYP's agency means acknowledging their right to choose whether or not to participate and valuing their perspectives, even when they choose not to engage (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2018).

1.7 Social Justice

Defining social justice can be a challenging task. Definitions of social justice tend to differ due to an individual's varied personal experience based on factors such as gender, race, religion, sexuality, and politics (Hytten & Bettez, 2011). As there are varying definitions, it is often difficult to work towards a shared vision of social justice. Hytten and Bettez (2011) explain that the term does not have a single definition or meaning, and therefore makes it difficult to work towards a shared vision. However, for the purpose of this research, the researcher subscribes to Bell's (1997) viewpoint that social justice aims to protect and enhance non-discriminatory practices and the empowerment of families and communities. Incorporated within this definition are the themes of advocacy, equity, inclusivity and opportunity, which are in line with the researcher's ethical beliefs

(Mercieca & Mercieca, 2022). These themes align with the aims of the project as they are key contributing factors that support and build participation with CYP. Furthermore, the theories described in Community Psychology (Section 1.8.1) are centred on fundamental beliefs and values that embody a commitment to social justice for marginalised groups, and are therefore relevant to this study's population.

The complexities of social justice are apparent when considering the experiences of marginalised young people and the education system. Attaining social justice with young people from marginalised communities involves addressing the intersections of the individual including gender, race and class, and considering how these create unique experiences that are personal to the individual (Crenshaw, 1991).

The redistribution-recognition model (Fraser, 1998) explores the oppressive aspects of marginalised groups in society, and emphasises the importance of people being viewed as peers in order to achieve social justice. This model focuses on two components of injustice: recognition and redistribution (Fraser, 1998). The term recognition emphases the cultural and symbolic aspects of social justice, and considers the disregard, and devaluation of certain social groups. When individuals or groups are looked down upon and perceived as 'less than', social injustice occurs (Knihn et al, 2020). Due to societal and cultural norms, these groups might be denied equal social status and participation within society due to the aforementioned intersectional factors. The second component of the model, redistribution, refers to the unequal distribution of resources like income, wealth and healthcare assess. In order to ensure peoples voices are heard, these material resources must be fairly distributed (Knihn et al, 2020). This is particularly relevant for young people at risk of exclusion as they experience less opportunities for employment and further education (Kelly, 2013), and fewer social activities (Mencap, 2007).

The model's two dimensions can be applied to exploring the challenges faced by young people from marginalised groups and participation in various aspect of their lives. With regards to recognition and participation, misconceptions and stereotypes about specific needs can lead to social exclusion and a lack of recognition of the abilities of young people (Slee, 1998). This can limit their opportunities to participation in social activities, leadership roles, or decision making (Slee, 1998). A lack of accessibility for CYP with physical and communication barriers might also decrease chances for participation. A CYP who might need wheelchair access for example, might face limited educational and social opportunities if settings do not provide assets.

Fraser (1996) suggests that these two components are interconnected. For example, financial difficulties might lead to families being unable to afford the extra aspects that would improve their child's communication and participation with their learning. In order to achieve social justice for CYP and their families, inclusion and participation can be encouraged. Challenging stereotypes can be addressed by training school staff to apply awareness training within the school curriculum for pupils, in order to encourage peer work, and academic motivation (Fillippatou & Kaldi, 2010; Wagner et al., 2020). In line with national legislation (Children and Families Act, 2014; SEND Code of Practice, 2015; Equalities Act, 2010), professionals working collaboratively with young people, their families and the educational setting can help identity barriers of engagement and provide opportunities for promoting participation.

The principles of social justice align with the researcher's ethical beliefs and values, and are closely affiliated with how the researcher practices as a TEP, in order to give young people opportunities for participation. As previously mentioned, understanding social justice requires an understanding of the various intersections of an individual, and this is detailed in the next section.

1.8 Intersectionality

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) is a framework that acknowledges a person's identity in relation to socially and culturally constructed categories such as gender, class and disability. The Intersectionality Wheel (Crenshaw, 1991) is of significant relevance within this study, as it provides a framework for understanding the complex and interconnected social identities and experiences of young people from marginalised communities, as described in Figure 1.3 below. This framework is particularly relevant for PR, as it highlights the importance of recognising and addressing the multiple and intersecting layers that shape young people's experiences and influence their participation in research.

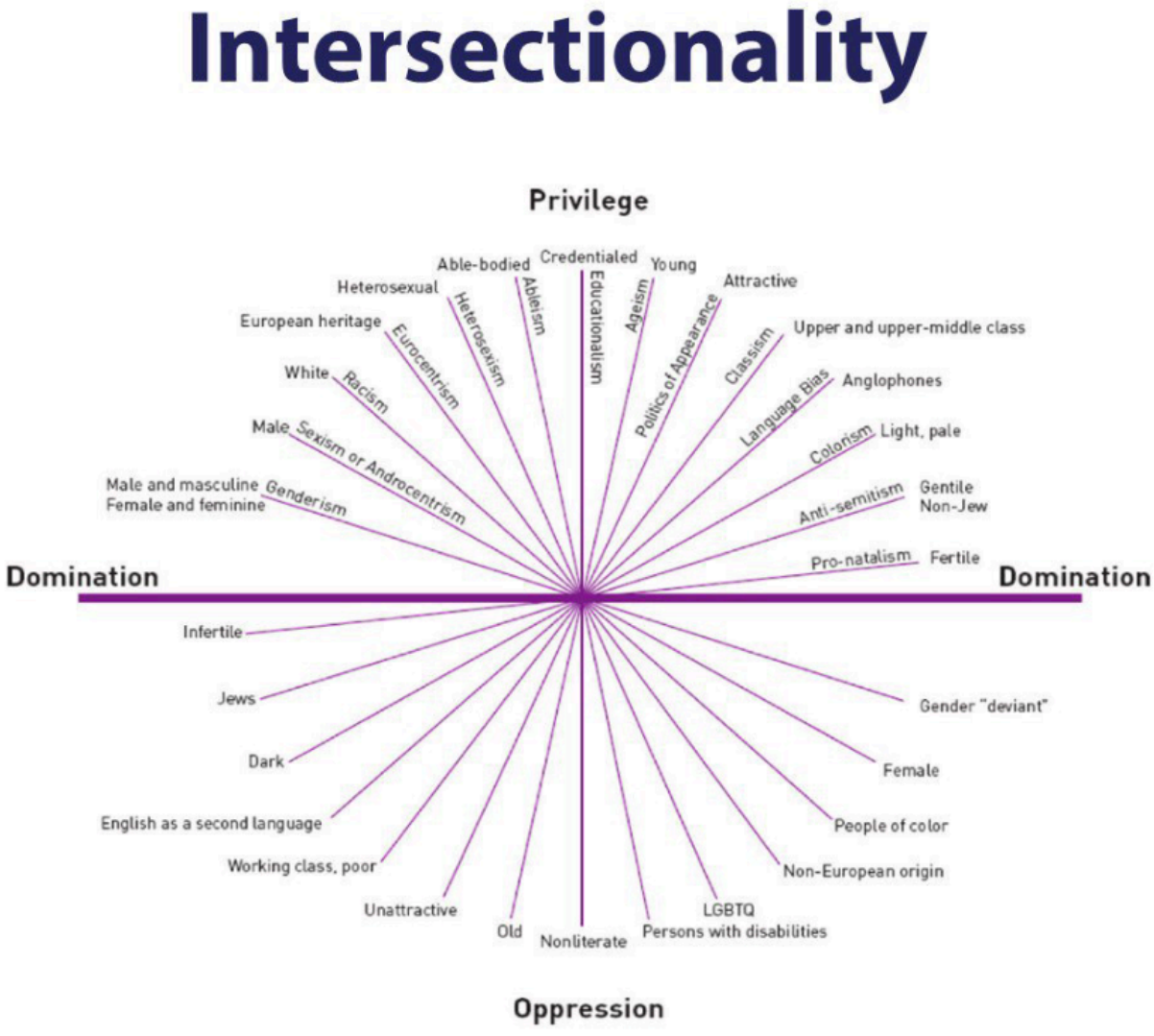
Many of the oppressive aspects of the Intersectionality Wheel (Crenshaw, 1991) could be considered as potential areas of intersectionality for the participants within the study. CYP from low income families for example, might have limited access to early intervention services or educational resources that are tailored to their individual needs (Lyon et al., 2021). Another factor described in the Intersectionality Wheel is 'Persons with disabilities', and this is particularly relevant with young people who have learning needs as they may experience implicit bias in the identification of learning difficulties (McGuire & Carel, 2018). When identifying CYP's needs, assessments might not consider the cultural differences, meaning the assessments might not contain culturally appropriate learning materials.

These intersecting identities can impact young people's access to resources, their experiences of discrimination, and their willingness and ability to participate in research. Therefore, recognising these intersecting identities is crucial for ensuring that the present study is inclusive, equitable, and truly responsive to the unique needs and experiences of young people, particularly those from marginalised communities. By incorporating an intersectional lens into PR, the

researcher can better understand the diverse and nuanced experiences of young people involved in the study, ensuring that their voices are truly heard and valued.

Figure 1.3

Intersectionality Wheel (Crenshaw, 1991)



1.9 Researcher's personal background

In adopting a participatory approach, it is essential for me to clearly share my values, beliefs and experiences, to help understand how these might influence the dynamics between myself and

the co-researchers. This section therefore hopes to provide transparency by how my own assumptions might influence the direction of the research (Willig, 2013).

Before this research project, I worked with CYP in a variety of settings from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, I worked as an Academic Mentor in a primary school setting and worked with young people from low socio-economic background families in a deprived area. Prior to this, I supported children with special needs as a teaching assistant for a foundation year classroom. At present, I work with a number of CYP and their families as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP).

My journey towards valuing the importance of CYP's voices was significantly influenced by my training as a TEP. Whilst I was already practicing participatory principles in my practice prior to training as a TEP, it was during the professional doctorate course where I was really exposed to the work of psychologists such as Gersch (2016) who emphasised the importance of empowering CYP by providing them with a voice and actively listening to their perspectives. This emphasis resonated deeply with my own values and beliefs.

During my training as a TEP, I embraced a solution-focused perspective, which recognises that individuals are experts in their own lives. This shift in perspective led me to prioritise active listening and to my view my role as one of supporting individuals in exploring their own strengths, identifying their own goals, and developing their own solutions. I began to implement these principles in my work with young people, particularly within group interventions addressing issues like anxiety, bullying, stress, and relationship building. Naturally, I incorporated participatory principles within this line of work, adapting and co-producing elements of the group intervention process with the young people I worked with.

The idea of PR therefore resonated with my personal experiences, values and beliefs. It aligned with my growing understanding of CYP as experts in their own lives and the importance of empowering them to take control of their own learning and development. PR, with its emphasis on collaboration and shared decision-making, offered a compelling alternative to traditional research models where researchers often dictate the research agenda. Having the opportunity to empower a young person during the research project served as a motivator, and PR offered a meaningful approach for achieving this.

1.10 Theoretical Background to the Study

This section outlines the psychological theories and concepts that helped the researcher frame this piece of research.

1.10.1 Community psychology

Community psychology emerged to address a gap within traditional psychology. Traditional psychology typically focused on the individual, whereas community psychology looked to explore the influence of our social environment. This approach explores the dynamic relationship between individuals and their communities, and emphasises the importance of promoting wellbeing and empowerment through a community lens.

Multiple theorists helped develop community psychology into what it is today. Riemer at al. (2020) highlighted the importance of social support systems, and demonstrated that strong relationships within communities can act as a defence against stress and promote mental health. Rappaport pioneered community psychology with an emphasis on empowerment and social change. He believed that collaborating with and empowering communities to advocate for themselves nurtures a sense of agency and promotes wellbeing (Rappaport, 1987). Emphasis is placed on the

psychological sense of community including factors such as shared identity and a feeling of belonging (Burton et al., 2007). Additionally, Sarason's (1974) description of community theory captured the correlation between a sense of community and building resilience.

Within community psychology, there are a number of beliefs including prevention focus, empowerment and social context. Unlike traditional psychology's reactive approach, community psychology prioritises preventing problems from arising in the first place. This proactive approach might involve interventions like promoting social support networks, improving access to mental health resources, or addressing environmental stressors within communities (Kloos et al., 2016). Another core principle of community psychology is empowering communities to take ownership of their well-being. This involves collaborating with others to identify their strengths, needs, and resources. Community members work alongside mental health professionals to develop culturally appropriate solutions that address their unique challenges (Rappaport, 1987). The social context is also considered in community psychology. This approach recognises that factors beyond individual personalities significantly impact overall wellbeing. It considers aspects like poverty, discrimination, access to education and healthcare, and the quality of the physical environment (Riemer et al, 2020). By addressing these social elements of well-being, community psychology functions to create environments that cultivate overall health.

A theoretical framework within community psychology is the Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This model emphasises how social systems at different levels (individual, family, community, society) interact and influence our development and wellbeing (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Community psychology focuses on the community level within this model, and the application of the Ecological Model within this research is detailed in Chapter 3. This model derives from Kelly's (1968) Ecological Theory, who understood the function of community through four principles: interdependence; adaption; cycling of resources; and succession. This theory offers a

helpful framework for understanding and supporting CYP from marginalised groups in terms of Kelly's (1968) principles. For example, with regards to the adaption principle, individualised support including the adaption of teaching strategies and learning environments might be offered to meet the specific needs of CYP. This will be adapted to the individual as what might be effective for one CYP, might be less so for another (Kelly, 1968). Kelly's (1986) interdependence principle can also be considered in terms of the CYP's environment. By exploring the various environments a CYP might navigate in, strengths and challenges within each environment can be identified to help support their learning and development. Kelly's Ecological Theory (1986) therefore provides a valuable framework for framing the young people's participation within this study, as it aids an understanding of the interconnectedness between their environments.

Community psychology however, is not without its limitations. Some argue that this approach tends to focus on specific geographical communities, neglecting broader social and political structures that have a significant impact on wellbeing (Kloos et al., 2016). Another critique is that applying and sustaining community-based interventions can be difficult due to factors like funding limitations and logistical complications (Kloos et al., 2016). Lastly, assessing the long-term effect of community-based interventions can be challenging due to the complex interactions of individual and community influences (Kloos et al., 2016).

Despite its limitations, adopting a community psychology lens enriches PR with CYP. Community psychology emphasises the importance of understanding individuals within their social and ecological contexts, recognising that individual wellbeing is intertwined with the health and functioning of the broader community. This perspective aligns with PR, which seeks to empower communities to identify and address their own needs and challenges. By centring the research process around the involvement of community members, the broader social, economic, and political factors that might contribute to levels of youth engagement in the research process are considered..

1.11 Unique Contribution of the Research

The motivation for this research project stemmed from a strong desire to conduct PR, where the research agenda is shaped by the needs and interests of the young people. To facilitate this approach, the researcher sought a school setting that would be receptive to this participatory model. Recognising that not all schools would be flexible to this approach, the researcher required a school that would be willing to collaborate in determining the focus of the research.

A secondary school where the researcher had previously worked with was selected as the research setting. The researcher therefore had prior knowledge of the school and the type of intervention and provision it offered. In order to explore PR with CYP, it was discussed with school staff that the research would focus on young people who are risk of exclusion and their experiences of participating in a boxing intervention that endeavours to reduce this risk. Discussions with school staff highlighted that involving young people within this research project could not only empower them by granting them responsibilities, but could also provide them with valuable opportunities that may reduce their risk of exclusion.

To provide a strong rationale for this research area, an initial literature search was conducted. Whilst research explored PR with CYP, there appeared to a distinct lack of research that recruited young people as co-researchers in every stage of the PR process. Secondly, there were no studies that involved CYP who were at risk of exclusion from school settings. Thirdly, previous research has suggested that qualitative research methodologies may be particularly well-suited for investigating the experiences of young people from marginalised communities. For example, Michener (2018), examined the perspectives of marginalised populations and concluded that qualitative research can lead to a more nuanced understanding of participation.

In conclusion, these factors justify for further research in this area. Given the focus of the research area, a qualitative approach may be most suitable for capturing the complexity of the young people's participation in the research process. This piece of research therefore has a dual purpose: to explore how to carry out PR with CYP at risk of exclusion in a way which addresses ethical and practical challenges; and to explore the experiences of young people who are at risk of exclusion and their participation in the boxing intervention. This chapter has provided an introduction to the present study, outlining an overview of the objectives and contextualising the study within relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The following chapter will delve into the existing literature on this topic, exploring relevant findings and identifying key gaps in current knowledge.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Through a systematic review, this chapter examines the existing research evidence on PR and the experiences of researchers facilitating PR with CYP. The chapter details the process of identifying relevant studies before undertaking a critical analysis of their findings and research designs. The main body of the chapter is divided into three themes: 'Ethical considerations in PR'; 'Impact'; and 'Practical challenges', where identified studies are presented and their findings are critically evaluated alongside their designs. The chapter then discusses gaps revealed by the systematic review and establishes the significance of the current research within the broader literature. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature and how it informs the present study.

2.1.1. Literature search strategy

A systematic literature review was carried out to identify studies that explored participatory approaches for CYP to answer the following review question: 'What is currently known about the experiences of researchers in facilitating participatory research with vulnerable and marginalised CYP'?

The review was guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA), a set of guidelines designed to improve the reporting quality of systemic reviews (Moher et al., 2009).

2.1.2 Identifying relevant studies

Seven databases (Academic Search Ultimate, APA PsycArticles, APA PsychINFO, British Education Index, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, ERIC and Teacher Reference Centre)

were systematically searched via the EBSCO portal in September 2024. The researcher's review question sought to explore the experiences of researchers in facilitating participatory research with vulnerable and marginalised groups of CYP. To identify literature relating to CYP, the terms 'children or adolescents or youth or child or teenager' were used. To identify literature relating to PR, the terms 'participation or engagement or involvement' and 'co-researcher or participatory' were used. Within the inclusion/exclusion criteria, the researcher focused on papers that included CYP who could be considered as vulnerable or marginalised. The researcher defined a 'marginalised' population as a group of individuals who are excluded or disadvantaged due to factors including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other characteristics. (Thompson & Zeus, 2019). It is acknowledged that there is potential for researcher bias in this definition and understanding of marginalised groups.

Initially, the inclusion criteria was set to include papers that were published between 2000 and 2024, however, this produced an overwhelmingly high volume of papers. In order to keep up to date with the latest papers related to participatory research, the publication date was therefore altered to between 2018 and 2024. Only full text papers published in the English language were included for accessibility. The inclusion/exclusion criteria therefore sought to identify papers that were relevant to the review question (see Table 2.1). The researcher recognises that this decision-making process may have limited the number of papers included in the analysis. In attempting to narrow the focus of the papers and answer the literature review question, papers that included a reflective element of the researcher's experiences using a participatory approach with vulnerable or marginalised groups were included.

Table 2.1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

	Include	Justification	Exclude	Justification
Population	Research carried out with CYP as co-researchers	Ensures relevance to the literature review question	Research not carried out with CYP as co-researchers	Does not relate to the focus of the literature review question
Focus	Research focuses on an aspect of marginalised groups	Ensures relevance to the aims of the research	Research without a focus on a marginalised group	Does not relate to the aims of the research
Focus	Research discusses or reflects on participatory research with CYP e.g. ethical, methodological, practical issues and challenges	Ensures relevance to the literature review question	Research without a focus on participatory research with CYP e.g. ethical, methodological, practical issues and challenges	Does not relate to the focus of the literature review question
Age	Age range: 6 – 18 years	Relates to participants within this research and provides context	Outside the age range 6 – 18 years	Does not relate to participants within this research

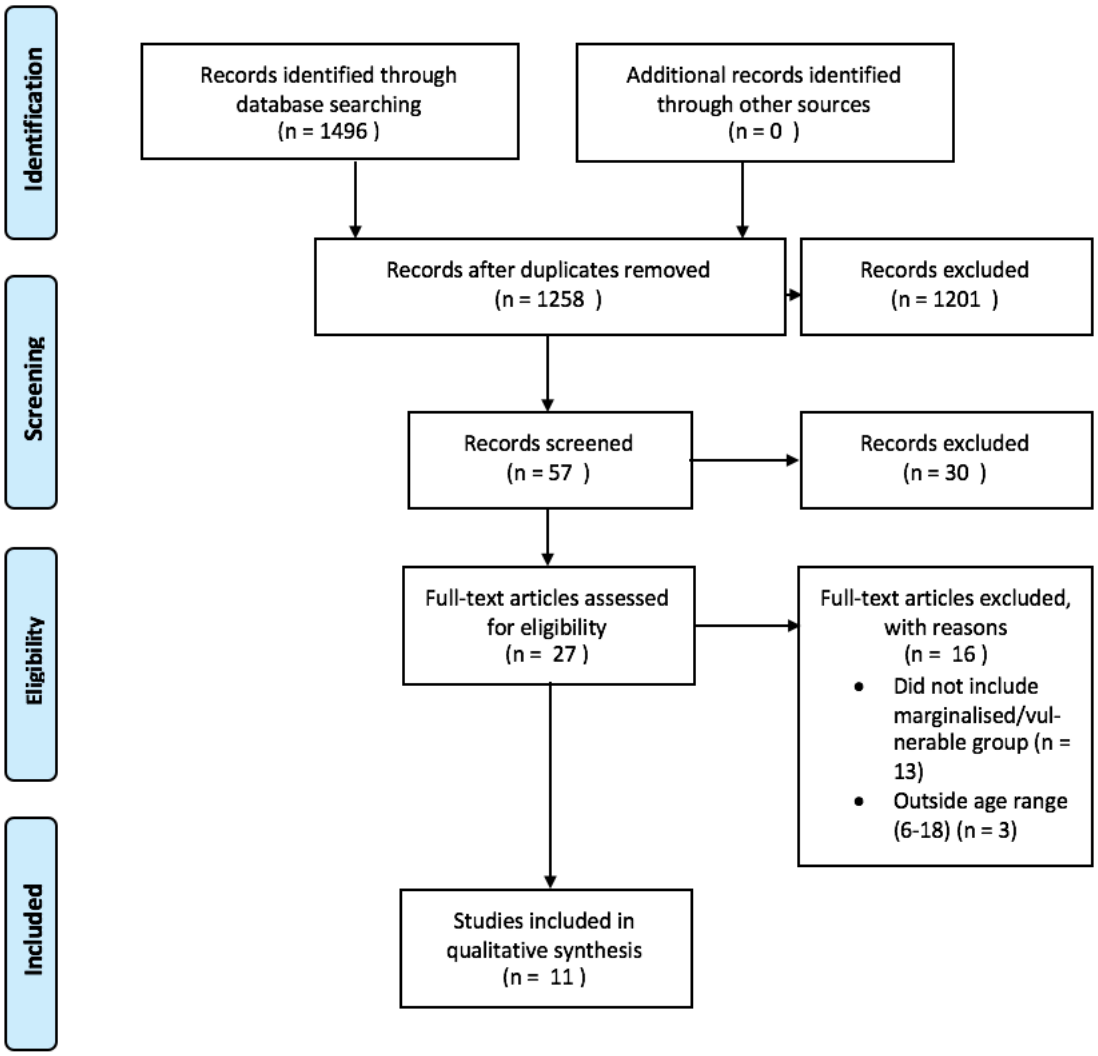
Publication date	Publication date between 2018 and 2024	Relevant to current theoretical beliefs that might impact participants of the study	Papers before 2018	Does not consider legislation such as the SEND Code of Practice (2015)
Publication availability	Full text available	Accessibility		
Language of publication	English version available	Accessibility		
Source	Peer reviewed journal articles	High methodological quality		

The search produced 1496 papers. Once duplications were removed, 1258 papers remained. To efficiently screen the large number of papers, the researcher used a two-stage screening process. Initially, titles and abstracts were reviewed to determine relevance to the inclusion criteria. Subsequently, full-text articles were retrieved and assessed for eligibility. To enhance reliability, the researcher repeated this process a second time. The researcher decided to limit the scope of the literature review to peer-reviewed journal articles. While grey literature sources such as doctoral theses, academic dissertations and government reports can provide valuable insights, their inclusion could have introduced heterogeneity in terms of methodological rigor and quality. The researcher therefore prioritised peer-reviewed publications to ensure a consistent level of quality across the included studies. After screening the title and abstract of these papers, 57 papers were identified as being potentially relevant in addressing the review question. A large number of papers were

excluded as they did not meet at least one of the inclusion criteria. For example, a high amount of papers focused on using participatory tools for data collection with CYP. There was a distinct absence of involving CYP as co-researchers in the majority of studies and these were therefore excluded. Similarly, studies focused on incorporating elements of PR with CYP, however there was no involvement of CYP as co-researchers within the process. Papers that did not involve the researcher's experiences of conducting PR with CYP as co-researchers were also excluded. Additionally, papers were excluded that did not have a focus on a marginalised population. After examining the relevant papers, 30 were excluded due to the following reasons: research not focusing on conducting PR with CYP as co-researchers; articles not considering the experiences or views of CYP on PR; and papers not including a focus on marginalised populations. 27 papers remained for inclusion in the review. Of the 27 papers, thirteen were excluded as these studies did not include a focus on a marginalised group. A further two studies were excluded as the age range of the CYP were outside the desired criteria, meaning that twelve unique papers were found. The reference lists of the identified papers were manually screened for relevant citations, however no additional relevant studies were identified. The literature search therefore found a total of 11 studies that met the inclusion criteria and were included in qualitative synthesis (see Figure 2.1 for each stage of the literature search process). A table of the included studies is in Appendix B.

Figure 2.1

Prisma flow chart



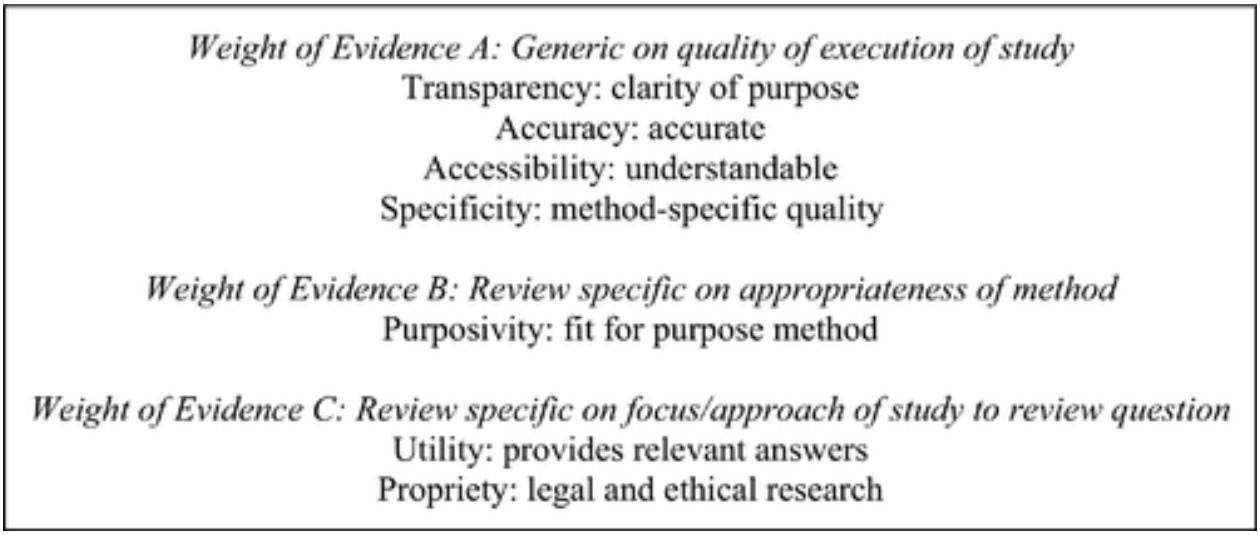
2.1.3 Appraisal of studies

The researcher used the Weight of Evidence Framework (Gough, 2007) to assess the quality and relevance of evidence within the 11 studies against the framework's criteria (Figure 2.2). In order to support the assessment of the method-specific quality, the researcher used the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme Checklist Items (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme International, 2019). In line with the Weight of Evidence's framework criteria, studies were given a score of 1, 2 or 3

within weight of evidence's A, B and C. These then provided an overall score; 0-3 'low quality'; 3-6 'medium quality', and 6-9 'high quality'. Out of the 11 studies, seven were rated medium quality and four were rated high quality (Appendix A). Once these studies were assessed, the researcher then synthesised findings by summarising, synthesising, analysing and authorising (Trafford and Lesham, 2008) (Appendix B).

Figure 2.2

Weight of Evidence Framework (Gough, 2007, p.224)



2.2 Characteristics of the papers identified

The following sections will assess and critique the 11 studies that were identified in the literature review. Three studies were conducted in the UK (O'Brien & Dadswell, 2020; Raman & French, 2022; Wilkinson et al., 2021); two studies in the USA (Qiu et al., 2021; Tsang et al., 2020); two studies in Australia (Luguetti et al., 2023; Spriggs & Gillam, 2019; and the remaining studies in Canada (Furman et al., 2019), Ireland (Donegan et al., 2023), Sweden (Tiefenbacher, 2023) and Uganda (Ritterbusch et al., 2020). All 11 studies were qualitative and involved participatory

approaches. Each study involved working with a marginalised population, and also included discussion of the researcher's experiences with PR.

2.3 Themes

The 11 studies will be critically discussed in the following sections, in relation to the focus of the study, research, design and analysis. For clarity, these studies' findings have been divided into three broad themes, 'Ethical considerations in PR', 'Impact, and 'Practical Challenges'.

2.3.1 Ethical considerations in PR

A central theme within the studies was the consideration of ethics when conducting PR with CYP. These studies suggest that PR with CYP conduces more complexities than traditional methods of research, and that ethical considerations must be reflected upon in order to reduce challenges including power imbalances, participant wellbeing and involvement, and navigating sensitive areas of involving CYP as co-researchers within this line of research.

Spriggs and Gillam (2019) investigated the ethical complexities of involving CYP as co-researchers. In their study, they interviewed ten participants who were researchers that had conducted research using co-researchers. Six of the ten participants carried out research with CYP. Three of these researchers discussed carrying out co-research with young people from marginalised populations, including sex workers and people from refugee backgrounds and disadvantaged communities. Spriggs and Gillam (2019) conducted their research using semi-structured interviews with the participants, and thematic analysis was used to identify issues and themes. The findings of the study showed that co-research with CYP might present some burdens for CYP as co-researchers. For example, CYP as co-researchers might feel obliged to remain involved because of the significance

adult researchers place on the research and the CYP's participation. Whilst adult researchers might dedicate a large amount of time into elements of co-research with CYP such as co-researcher training, CYP might find their involvement in the process time-consuming, meaning that there could be disparities in priorities between adult researchers and CYP co-researchers. Another re-occurring theme that was produced by the participants was the difficulties CYP co-researchers might experience when collecting data with familiar peers. In their views, CYP co-researchers might have already established relationships with participants, and this can often cause complexities in terms of uncomfortable feelings. For example, the co-researcher's relationship with other CYP could lead to instances where the participants feel pressured to participate. On the other hand, situations may arise where participants might evoke feelings of discomfort for the co-researchers. For example, an adult researcher might have the experience and detachment from the sample population, whereas a CYP co-researcher may find it difficult to understand their boundaries with the conflicting and differing relationship dynamics with participants in and out of the research process. There may be additional ethical considerations as CYP co-researchers could be exposed to distressing information. This might pose additional difficulties as the co-researchers might feel unsafe outside of the research process, following hearing other peers' stories.

A limitation of this study comes in the form of a lack of triangulation of data as the participants were only interviewed once. Although this research offered the adult researchers ample opportunity to explore and share their experiences of working with CYP as co-researchers, the study itself did not involve any components of co-design. The study also took place in Australia, therefore making the findings difficult to apply to the UK context as there will be differences in both the educational context of the CYP and in their relationships with peers. It is worth noting that whilst participants had conducted research with CYP from marginalised groups, Spriggs and Gillam (2019) did not directly work with CYP from marginalised communities. The reported findings therefore

must be viewed as providing context to enhance one's knowledge of conducting research with CYP co-researchers.

O'Brien and Dadswell (2020) explored the experiences of 13 young people (age range 13 – 16 years old) to understand their experiences of self-exclusion from school due to severe bullying. O'Brien and Dadswell (2020) co-designed the study with young people as co-researchers, and they used focus groups consisting of three and four young people to collect the data. The data gathered was analysed using thematic analysis.

Whilst O'Brien and Dadswell (2020) aimed to collaborate with the co-researchers at every stage, they acknowledged that this was not always possible due to different priorities between the researchers and young people emerging throughout the research process. For example, due to time constraints and funding, both the data collection and data analysis were conducted by adults and a collaboration with the young people was not possible. The researchers therefore questioned whether this research could ethically be labelled 'participatory'. Additionally, O'Brien and Dadswell (2020) recognise that the research proposal was initiated by themselves and not co-produced with the young people. Their reflections suggested that the ethical intentions and realities of PR are often in conflict with one another and need constant consideration as the research process develops. Although the study used a small sample size, there was diversity in experiences among the young people. Furthermore, the findings of the study must be carefully considered due to the gender imbalance (ten females and three males) within the participants.

Tiefenbacher (2023) examined the methodological challenges in research with children with disabilities. The study was carried out in Sweden and involved five children aged between 3 and 11 with neuropsychiatric disabilities (a Swedish umbrella term for disabilities such as autism and

ADHD). Using 'walk-and-talk' conversations with the children, the participants were asked about their surroundings and play area environment. Tiefenbacher, (2023) envisioned letting the children decide the terms for their participation throughout the study. The researcher used empirical material from the study to demonstrate and analyse the difficulties the researcher experienced despite the considered participatory research design.

Ultimately, Tiefenbacher, (2023) failed to gather the participants' views of their environment due to differences in 'control' throughout the study. Tiefenbacher (2023) described the difficulties between the aims of the study and the outcome of the study. The aim of the study envisioned including children and carrying out research with them. However, in reality, the methodology of the study including using walk-and-talk conversations was controlled by the researcher. This meant that the children participated on the researcher's terms under conditions that were dictated by the researcher during the entirety of the study. In order to ensure that research is conducted with the children, Tiefenbacher (2023) suggested that this ethical challenge can be overcome by the researcher letting go of control and of research-specific adult-devised techniques, and instead, focusing on the "children's own actions and activities as planned and done by themselves" (p782). In other words, the methods used can be decided upon based on the children's terms rather than the researcher's.

Tiefenbacher (2023) focused on CYP with disabilities and used a participatory qualitative method to help elicit their views. Despite the considered research design, this piece of research has its limitations. Whilst this study provides greater knowledge on conducting research with children with disabilities, ultimately the aims of the study were not met. Another limitation is that the gender of the participants is not known. The study also lacked information in relation to specific genders and their disability. This is particularly pertinent to the findings as research has shown for example,

that autistic females can present differently to boys (Goodall et al., 2019) and this data would have provided some useful context to the researcher's reflections.

Tsang et al. (2020) conducted a study in the USA that explored the benefits and limitations of involving young paediatric patients as co-researchers as part of a health research project. Sixteen adolescents aged between 13 and 23 were recruited as co-researchers for the project, with 11 of the co-researchers being female and the remaining 5 being male. The project involved the co-researchers working together over the course of a year to investigate the difference in perspectives of caregivers and youth when steering the transition from paediatric to adult care for young people with chronic health conditions. Unlike the other studies, this study involved the co-researchers being involved at every stage of the research process including methodology, project guidelines, and the organisation and planning of focus groups. Once the project was complete, standardised feedback surveys and qualitative interviews were used by the researchers to evaluate the impact of the study on the co-researchers' personal and academic growth. The researchers used thematic analysis to analyse the data collected.

A key theme that arose from the co-researchers' findings and the researchers' reflections was the idea of tokenism within co-research. For example, it is discussed that co-researchers are often recruited as a means of meeting certain fulfilments, and co-researchers are often under-trained to carry out research effectively and appropriately (Tsang et al, 2020). There was a considered recruitment process of recruiting co-researchers with lived experiences and the co-researcher's responses emphasised impact and advocacy in the global research community. 100% of the co-researchers reported a growth in co-operative learning/teamwork, 75% thought they had built skills in developing survey questions and 69% felt that they had advocacy in their role as a co-researcher.

There are several strengths of this study that should be noted. Unlike other studies, Tsang et al. (2020) carefully considered patient representation. Firstly, in comparison to other studies included in this literature review, this study contained a significantly higher number of co-researchers. The researchers made great efforts to recruit co-researchers that were able to advise and apply their lived experiences as patients throughout the research process. This key step allowed for greater opportunities for engagement and impact. The researcher's objectives were achieved, and demographic information was also collected thoroughly. Despite this, there are several limitations of the study. Firstly, the study is based in the USA, meaning that the educational and medical context of the co-researchers is different to other educational and medical contexts around the world. These differences in context mean that the findings of the study will need to be carefully interpreted as they might not apply to the context in which the present study takes place. The questions designed by the co-researchers during the interview are not reported within the study, suggesting that the presentation of findings might lack transparency.

2.3.1.2 Summary of 'Ethical considerations in PR' studies

A recurrent theme across the three studies was the acknowledgement that PR presents unique ethical challenges. The findings suggest that being mindful of the ethical challenges beforehand might enable researchers to navigate these complexities in order to uphold ethical standards and foster trust with participants.

2.3.2 Impact

The second theme that emerged from the papers explored the impact of PR with CYP. The literature review demonstrated that PR methodologies involving CYP has had several effects on those involved, highlighting the effectiveness of PR. This theme was identified within five studies.

Qiu et al. (2021) used a youth participatory action research framework to examine the collaboration between middle school and university graduate pupils in an after-school programme. The study took place in the USA with the majority of CYP being "historically marginalised students". The school identified as a low economic and low-performing school, with 90% of students identifying as Black or Latino. As part of the 12-week programme, students and facilitators (graduate pupils) engaged in a series of modules to explore and make sense of their school environment and community through a variety of participatory tools including artefacts, photovoice journals and improvised theatre and drama. The researchers composed written reflections on their experiences of facilitating the after school programme with the young people. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes from the reflective journal and artefacts that were collected from the youth. Several themes were highlighted indicating PR to be impactful for CYP. A theme that was identified in the students' artefacts was knowledge co-construction. Several students reported that they motivated each other to think critically in order to produce arguments on certain topics, leading to deeper discussions within the group. They also reflected on the importance of collaboration in community mapping and the construction of block amusement parks (an amusement park created by a collection of wooden blocks) to come to a shared understanding. The analysis also suggested development in agency, confidence and mental health due to experiencing different methods of learning and co-construction of knowledge. Researchers reported that they observed a growth in the youth's ability to articulate their needs.

The wide variety of data collection methods used by the researchers to elicit the students' voices is a strength of the study, as it appeared to enable richer discussion amongst the youth. Despite this, Qiu et al. (2021)'s findings showed the 'messiness' of taking part in co-learning. For example, due to the programme taking place in a separate setting, the participants were constantly changing, meaning that discussions and ideas were often lost after several sessions. This impacts the

trustworthiness of the findings. The researchers did not provide any demographic information regarding the pupils' gender, and this is a limitation of the study.

Donegan et al. (2023) investigated how the implementation of 'digital dialogues' empowered children as co-researchers to reflect on their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland. Through co-participatory research, the study involved 23 children aged between 9 and 10 across six primary schools. The term 'digital dialogues' referred to a methodological design, consisting of three phases; engage (initial zoom meeting and build relationships), inquire (plan questions and conduct interviews) and influence (discussion of findings) within the focus groups (Donegan et al, 2023). Digital dialogues were recorded, transcribed and coded using MAXQDA software. The findings showed that the children had both positive and negative experiences during the pandemic, particularly the distinctions between home life and school life. For example, all children agreed that they found the different structures during each stage of the 'lockdowns' difficult as their home and school routine were drastically different which led to feelings of confusion. Through their participation as co-researchers, Donegan et al. (2023) observed a development in the children's research skills including interviewing techniques, time management and collaboration, leading to an abundance of viewpoints they were able to obtain. Through the use of digital dialogues, the children were seen as the experts in their lives as they had the freedom to express their views, leading to a growth of resistance and agency for the children. Whilst this methodology led to a positive impact on the children as co-researchers, Donegan et al. (2023) highlight that adults were integral to facilitating their contribution, indicating the importance of power dynamics within the study.

The study involved children as co-researchers in most aspects of the co-design, however it is unknown whether the children were involved in the data analysis, and this is a limitation of the

study. This is the first study however, in which there is a gender balance within the participant sample (11 males and 12 females).

Furman et al. (2019) investigated non-binary youths' experiences of identity development, engagement in activism, discrimination, and mental health in Canada. Through a community-based participatory research project, arts-based methodology was used in the form of body-mapping workshops and individual interviews to gather the voices of ten young people aged between 16 and 25. Thematic analysis was used to make sense of the findings. The findings found that the implementation of the body-mapping workshop was beneficial in supporting participants to express themselves through creative methods. Participants reported feeling connected to others through their shared identities, and the data collection methodology was viewed as an impactful component for the group to connect.

The use of body-mapping within this study is a strength as this method appeared to elicit richer participant experiences and discussion. Although the youth did not lead the thematic analysis phase, participants had the opportunity to adapt the initial themes to better reflect their experiences through a member-checking session. For example, participants proposed using "micro aggressions" to describe their overall experiences of gender-based discrimination, instead of the term "transphobic violence" . Having said this, collaboration between the researchers and participants was not evident throughout the various stages of the research project. Whilst participatory methods of data collection were used, adult researchers offered and implemented structures to the youth without any co-production. Another limitation of the study was the lack of information regarding the aims of the study, making it difficult to understand if this study met its aims. This study also took place in Canada, and it is important to acknowledge the different cultural and social factors influencing the non-binary youths' experiences.

Luguetti et al. (2023) co-designed and implemented a 16 week youth participatory action research (YPAR) programme to examine the tensions and power relations that arise when conducting research with young people. Participants consisted of 58 young men and women (16-24 years old) who were part of a Football Empowerment programme in Australia. Qualitative methods were used for data collection including drawings, photos, freewriting and interviews, and the findings of the study included the challenges that were experienced carrying out YPAR. In terms of impact, knowledge production arose as a theme from the researchers' perspectives. For example, one of the researchers highlighted how listening to and incorporating the youth's proposed methods of knowledge production, allowed for development between the researchers and youth. Like Qiu et al. (2021), the researchers experienced 'messiness' during the research process, in which tensions arose throughout the project, making it difficult to manage power relations within the group.

This study achieved its aims through a participatory design. A relatively large sample size was used meaning the findings are more likely to be representative of the population, however this must be cautioned as the study took place in Australia, and the findings might not be applicable to the UK population.

Ritterbusch et al. (2020) used a qualitative research methodology to discuss their experiences of child participation in a YPAR initiative in Uganda. This was accomplished through child-led participant observation, semi-structured interviews, photographic exercises, and focus groups. The study involved 93 participants, consisting of 40 street-connected children, 19 sexually exploited children and 34 domestic workers. Data collection, analysis and dissemination activities were directed by the YPAR team involving four Ugandan street-connected youth between the ages of 16-25 and two Ugandan university-trained youth researchers. The findings of the study are outlined as a methodological reflection concerning the difficulties and impact of embracing children as researchers.

The researchers found the study to be highly transformative for a number reasons. For example, the authors commented on observing the transformative potential of YPAR in fostering communities dedicated to social justice and creating a space in research where CYP are able to work as agents of change against violence in their daily lives. The researchers also highlighted the significance of creating a 'contact zone' in which constant communication between the researchers, children and policymakers allowed for children to better survive spaces of violence.

A strength of this study is that it is the only piece of research within the literature review that truly involves young people in every stage of the research process. The study's objectives were clearly outlined and met, suggesting that the research methods were appropriate for the research questions. The findings of the study have implications for future participatory research, with the researchers emphasising the strength of involving and collaborating with youth in order to achieve social and transformative change within marginalised populations. A limitation of the study is the geographical location due to the unique cultural and social context of the study, making it difficult to implement the findings of the study to the UK context.

2.3.2.1 Summary of 'Impact' studies

The findings relating to the impact in context of PR highlights that PR empowers communities by giving them a voice in the research process. It can lead to more relevant and meaningful research outcomes, as participants' insights and experiences shape the research questions, methodologies and interpretations. Researchers can nurture collaboration and trust with CYP, and enhance the quality of research by incorporating diverse perspectives and ensuring that the findings are grounded in the lived experiences of participants.

2.3.3 Practical challenges

The third and final theme is 'practical challenges'. Two studies were identified that explored the practical challenges that are experienced by researchers and CYP within PR. These studies indicate that PR presents a range of practical issues that can hinder its effectiveness.

Raman and French (2022) used a participatory design (RD) approach (Sander et al., 2010) to design a game-based learning tool (GBL), with a focus on engaging participants across all stages of the co-design. In their study, 18 participants aged 16 and over (exact age and gender of participants unknown) with mild to moderate learning difficulties were recruited to co-design a GBL tool about online safety with young people with learning disabilities. In order to empower participants to share their lived experiences and expertise, a range of participatory methods were used including visual diaries, focus groups, Lego, visual mapping, and photographs. Seven stages of co-design were used and participants were involved in each session and thematic analysis was used to capture themes in relation to young people's experiences of participation including reflections on co-design methods and social experiences of participation.

A theme that arose from the analysis was 'genuine participation of young people with learning disabilities in co-design'. Preparation in practical terms was seen as fundamental in creating the 'best' conditions for engagement. For example, the researchers sought to meet the young people in a relaxed social setting in order to put participants at ease, and this is reflected in the participants' responses. The participants described this as a valuable 'stepping stone' at building relationships. Ongoing opportunities for feedback during each session of the co-design process was seen as a positive by the researchers, as the young people felt valued and respected. Practically speaking, the high level of engagement across the sessions was a testament to the value put on researcher and participant time, training, and scheduling. Prioritising and allocating specific times for

each session between the researchers and participants allowed for group cohesion to build across the various stages. Participants also reported that they were able to make informed decisions between different tools that aligned with their creative expression.

The researchers achieved their aim of exploring co-design approaches with young people with disabilities. Another key strength of the study is that the participants were involved in each stage of the co-design process. The study also took place in the UK, indicating that the findings of this study can be viewed as more applicable to young people with disabilities in the UK context. Despite this, the young people did not seem to be involved in the data analysis, therefore impacting the trustworthiness of the findings.

Wilkinson et al., (2021) carried out a study in the UK that aimed to engage with young people with Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis (AIS) and their parents. Ten young people aged between 14 and 16 and their parents (n = 11) were recruited as participants in the study. The researchers conducted two participatory design workshops with young people who had undergone AIS treatment and their parents in order to gather their views and experiences surrounding challenging aspects of consultations with health care professionals. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes from their responses. Following the workshops, the researchers kept researcher diaries containing fieldnotes and reflections on the content of the workshops and the challenges they experienced.

Wilkinson et al., (2021) used a variety of stimuli to engage with the young people and their parents including using emojis and speech bubbles to elicit their voices. At the start of the research project, the researchers considered the potential difficulties in engaging participants that had not met before. Particularly pertinent to this study, was the potential for participants to feel

uncomfortable in sharing sensitive information with others. In order to overcome this, the researchers used an icebreaking activity to help the participants feel at ease. The researchers describe building trust with others as an important step within PR. Given the experiences that participants might have had during the treatment process, establishing trust over the two workshops was integral for the group to bond.

A strength of the study seems to be an equal representation of young people and parents' voices within the findings, suggesting that the researchers' use of participatory methods was successfully implemented. The activities appeared to provide equal opportunities for all participants, and lessened the possibility of dominant voices holding power within the group as previous research has shown (Baiardi et al., 2015). A limitation of the study includes a lack of collaboration between the researchers and participants during the course of the study. Similar to O'Brien and Dadswell's (2020) study, it is questioned whether this study can truly be described as participatory as the participants did not contribute to any of the research design, suggesting that the research was carried out on the researcher's terms. Because of this, the research appears to be motivated by the researchers' interests as opposed to the needs and interests of the participants.

2.3.3.1 Summary of 'Practical challenges' studies

The findings of the studies suggest that PR can be a powerful tool for empowering communities and generating valuable insights. However, there are several practical challenges including time and resource constraints, power imbalances, communication considerations and logistical hurdles. To overcome these challenges, researchers must prioritise building trust, communication and ethical practices, in order to utilise PR for social change and knowledge production.

2.4 Conclusions of literature review and links with the current research

Themes within the studies highlight challenges relating to PR with CYP. Predominately, these challenges relate to the methods used to elicit the voices of CYP, and the central methods in which CYP can contribute to PR. The literature review demonstrated that the majority of the studies lack collaboration with CYP in the co-design stages. Some of the studies also highlight that the research design is being used 'on' or 'to' the participants as opposed to 'with' the participants, meaning that fundamentally, the PR process is being adult and researcher-led. This can create power imbalances between the researcher and participants, shaping how participants might engage with the research process and how knowledge is shared and produced. Researchers might overcome this challenge by positioning CYP as the experts in their lives and to involve them in all stages of the research process. By doing this, CYP are more likely to inform future research and practices that are relatable to their needs and hopes. The literature review highlights the importance of building strong relationships, establishing clear communication channels, and creating a safe and inclusive research environment. The literature also emphasizes the need for ongoing reflection and adaptation of research methods to ensure that the process remains responsive to the needs and interests of the CYP.

2.4.1 Current Research

The literature review highlights how researchers might identify and address potential challenges in PR. It highlights the importance of addressing power imbalances, respecting cultural differences, and ensuring ethical considerations are upheld throughout the research process. The findings of the literature review suggests that researchers can learn from past experiences and develop strategies to mitigate potential risks and challenges, such as time constraints, communication barriers, and the potential for exploitation.

Adopting a participatory approach and involving CYP in the various elements of the research process could therefore provide an approach for researchers and EPs to empower marginalised voices and ensure that research can lead to more meaningful and impactful findings. There therefore appears to be an opportunity for using a participatory approach with a marginalised group in order to explore the views of young people. By involving the young people in every stage of the research process, the researcher will reflect on the experiences, the challenges faced and the dilemmas experienced that might occur as a result of the methodology outlined in the next chapter.

In addition, only one study reviewed involved CYP that had experienced exclusion from the school setting, suggesting that there is scope for further PR for CYP at risk of exclusion. The current study therefore aims to explore how to carry out PR with CYP at risk of exclusion in a way which addresses ethical and practical challenges.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology used in the study to address the research question 'What are the experiences of researchers in facilitating participatory research with young people as co-researchers?'. It begins with introducing the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions, as well as the psychological underpinnings of the study. The researcher then explains the aims and purpose of the research and the rationale for selecting the research design and the methods of data collection and analysis. The ethical considerations of the research are discussed. The procedures for recruitment of the co-researchers as well as their role and training are described , along with the processes of data collection and analysis.

3.2. Research Paradigm

A paradigm is described as a set of values and beliefs which provide a framework for the research to follow (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It outlines how knowledge and reality exists, and the way in which data is analysed and interpreted. This study adopts a critical realist position on the basis that there is an underlying reality that shapes our experiences, but this reality is not directly observable (Willig, 2012).

3.2.1 Ontological position

Ontology refers to how one understands the nature of reality and its characteristics (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In line with critical realism (CR), this study adopts a realist ontology, under the assumption that there is a world that is independent of the human mind but cannot be retrieved in its wholeness (Letourneau & Allen, 2006). This approach to research assumes that data is indicative of reality and requires interpretation to uncover underlying structures (Willig, 2012). This aligns with the researchers' belief that there are universal and objective truths that exist

independently of human perception. In the context of this research with CYP the researcher believes that fundamental power dynamics operate across different social contexts. For example, within any social group, the researcher believes that there will inevitably be hierarchies of power and influence. This can be observed in classrooms, families, and peer groups, where certain individuals or groups possess greater authority, resources and influences than others. The ontological belief that reality is layered provides a framework for analysing data. According to CR, observable events are shaped by underlying social structures that are constantly evolving. These activities are operating beneath the surface, but can be revealed through research. In order to illustrate this, the iceberg metaphor is often used to widen our understanding. The tip of the iceberg (empirical level) demonstrates what we can directly observe, such as behaviours, attitudes and spoken language; below the surface (actual level) represents the underlying structures and processes that shape observable events including social norms and cultural practices; and the deepest level (real level) refers to the generative mechanisms that drive social structures and events, and these are often hidden and require deeper analysis to uncover (Fletcher, 2017).

3.2.2 Epistemological position

In contrast to ontology, epistemology considers how knowledge is created (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In line with a critical realist position, this study employs a relativist epistemology, and recognises that our understanding of reality is influenced by our perspectives, experiences and social contexts, but also recognises the existence of an objective reality (Willig, 2012). In other words, individuals will construct diverse understandings of reality based on their unique perspectives. Critical realists argue that while we may have not have direct access to the 'real' world, we can make inferences about it based on our observations and theories. They emphasise the importance of critical reflection and the use of multiple methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena. According to Price and Martin (2018), critical realist research aims to improve the

world around us, and this study hopes to achieve a better understanding of how to carry out PR with CYP as co-researchers.

3.2.3 Transformative paradigm

This study was also carried within the values of the transformative paradigm. The underpinning of the transformative paradigm empowers people and states that there are multiple realities shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, race, ethnic, gender and disability values (Kawulich, 2012). One of the key principles of transformative research is that it takes place 'with' others, and sees participants as active collaborators in the research. This study therefore has a transformative purpose as it aims to encourage the engagement of young people, whilst also considering that each individual's lived experiences and understanding of the world may differ. This research has the potential to be transformative in several ways. Firstly, it empowers young people by giving them a voice and agency in shaping the research agenda. By actively involving young people in the research process, they might gain valuable skills such as critical thinking, communication and teamwork. Secondly, this research might result in a greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing young people, leading to the development of more effective and inclusive work with CYP.

3.3 Psychological Underpinnings

This section outlines the main psychological theories and concepts that underpin the research. It will introduce Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) in relation to exploring a child's development within the context of the systems around them.

3.3.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems Theory is a framework that explores an individual's development by considering their relationships within the various systems, communities and wider societies that surrounds them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Developed by Bronfenbrenner, this theory therefore focuses on the "interrelationships between individuals and the social, physical and policy environment" (Stokols, 1996).

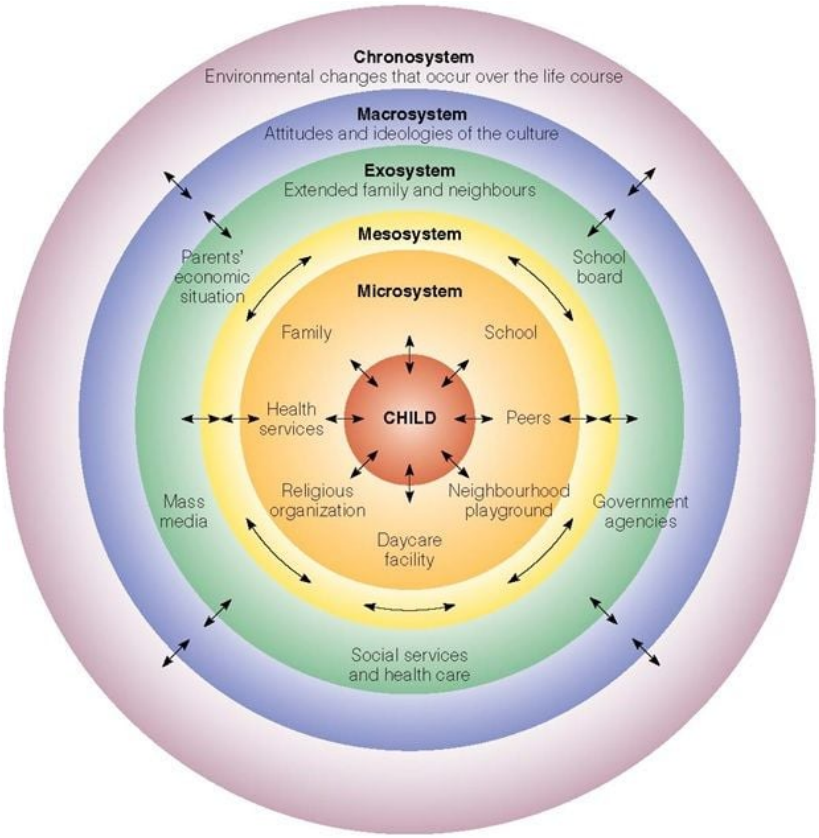
This framework has typically been used by EPs to help explore the relationship between a CYP's development and the various environments that surround them (Prendeville & Kinsella, 2024). By considering the various environmental systems that influence a young person's development, EPs and educational professionals can gain a more holistic understanding of their needs and create more tailored support (Antony, 2022). A holistic approach is comprehensive of the various systems CYP and their families are connected with, and better mirrors the dynamic nature of family relationships (Hayes & O'Toole, 2017). This theory also encourages collaboration between the various systems including educational professionals and families in order to create a strong support network for the CYP to flourish (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Given the demographic population of the London Borough where the research takes place, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1994, Figure 3.1) offers a useful framework for the present study. The model can aid the understanding of the development of CYP from different cultural backgrounds as their experiences interacting with the various systems might be influenced by their cultural differences (Pat, 2013). By using the theory as a framework, it helps to consider how their experiences at home and school, might influence on their experiences of the boxing intervention and their engagement with the PR process.

Furthermore, Bronfenner's (1979) theory (Figure 3.1) emphasis the dynamic and reciprocal nature of the different systems. It highlights that CYP are not simply passive recipients of environmental influences; they actively interact with and shape their surroundings. This resonates strongly with the principles of PR, which recognises young people as active agents in their own lives and empowers them to contribute to research that affects them (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Creswell, 2009; Hart, 1992; Kellett, 2010). By involving young people as co-researchers, their voices and perspectives can inform the development of interventions and policies that are more relevant and effective in addressing their needs within their specific ecological context.

Figure 3.1

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1994)



Whilst the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) can be applied to EP practice and PR, it is important for EPs to understand its limitations. There is limited research that explores the mesosystems, and it is unclear how these systems can influence a young person's development (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Additionally, the complex nature of the model may make it difficult to apply to real world situations, leading to assumptions that individuals who might not have strong and positive ecological systems, will struggle with their development (Christensen, 2016). For example, a child who grows up in a deprived area with negative peers around them may not necessarily develop at a slower rate. The model fails to consider the resiliency factor, and this is vital in understanding how a CYP might have a capacity to achieve, influence or grow (Engler, 2007). This critique is particularly relevant when conducting PR with young people as co-researchers. By failing to consider individual resilience, the theory may overlook the strengths and capacities of young people to navigate and overcome challenges within their environments. This oversight can lead to an underestimation of their agency and potential to contribute to change (Antony, 2022).

3.4 Aims and purpose of the research

3.4.1 Aims

This explorative study has been conducted using a participatory approach to investigate how to conduct PR with young people as co-researchers within a secondary school setting. The research aimed to:

- Explore how to carry out PR with young people in a way which addresses ethical and practical challenges
- Explore the experiences of young people who are at risk of exclusion and their participation in a boxing intervention

In addition, the research aimed to:

- Empower pupils as co-researchers
- Collect the voices of the young people and their experiences participating in a boxing intervention

With a participatory approach at the core of the study (as explained in Chapter 1), the research hoped to provide a number of benefits for the co-researchers:

- Building an understanding and application of research
- The opportunity to have their voices heard
- The possibility to make changes that might impact theirs and others' experiences

3.4.2 Purpose

The overall purpose of this study is to harness a qualitative participatory approach to explore how to carry out PR with CYP as co-researchers in a mainstream secondary school. One of the purposes of this research is exploratory as it aims to explore and expand on the limited information available in the area (Donegan et al., 2023; Furman et al., 2019; Luguetti et al., 2023; O'Brien and Dadswell, 2020; Qiu et al., 2021; Raman & French, 2022; Ritterbusch et al., 2020; Spriggs & Gillam, 2019; Tiefenbacher, 2023; Tsang et al., 2020; Wilkinson et al., 2021). Exploratory research occurs when there is little known about a certain area (Robson, 2002), and as Chapter 2 highlighted, little is known about the challenges experienced conducting PR with CYP who are at risk of exclusion. The study attempted to produce further insights into overcoming challenges that might occur when carrying out PR with CYP as co-researchers. The researcher considered that the findings may therefore impact future EP practice and school interventions.

Another purpose of the study was emancipatory, as it aimed to position participants as the expert of their experiences and to create opportunities for change and empowerment. In line with emancipatory principles, this study hoped to encourage participation, self-advocacy, collaboration and openness (Danielli & Woodhams, 2020). Emancipatory research assumes several ontological principles including knowledge is not only shaped by one lead researcher or dominant group (Groat and Wang, 2001). Emancipatory principles fit within the researcher's critical realist point of viewpoint. Both emancipatory principles and critical realism emphasise the importance of knowledge in fostering social change. Critical realism highlights the need for objective and critical knowledge to understand the underlying causes of social problems. This knowledge can then be used to inform social action and challenge existing power structures. (Price & Martin, 2018). Similarly, emancipatory principles emphasise the importance of generating knowledge that is relevant to the needs and concerns of marginalised communities can be used to empower them to bring about social change (Schudel, 2022).

3.4.3 Participatory Research

This study incorporates the principles of social justice by adopting the PR principles described in Chapter 1. The rationale for choosing this approach is to offer opportunities that promote participation and to give voice to a marginalised group (young people at risk of exclusion). This study will use both Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation and Aldridge's (2017) model of participation as frameworks to help conduct the research. By adopting a participatory approach and using these frameworks as a point of reference, this research endeavours to provide the co-researchers opportunities to influence changes that can benefit them, whilst building and applying research skills throughout the research project. In order to achieve the aims and benefits mentioned in section 3.4.1, adopting PR is therefore an appealing and appropriate method (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Byrne et al., 2009; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hart, 1992; Kellett, 2010; .

Giving young people opportunities to collaborate, plan, and evaluate the research is an important drive for this project and adopting PR principles within the study fits within the transformative paradigm (discussed in 3.2.3) as it encourages the participation of young people.

3.5 Research Design: Methodology

This section describes the order in which the research was carried out, and includes the rationale for selecting a participatory qualitative method, the selection of the research setting, the process of recruitment and selection of participants and co-researchers, the introduction of co-researchers, the training of co-researchers and the stages of participation of the co-researchers.

The purpose of this study is to explore how to carry out PR with CYP in a way which addresses ethical and practical challenges. In order for the researcher and co-researchers to make sense of the young people's world, the researcher required a design that enabled thorough exploration of individual experience, and a flexible process that could be adapted to meet the needs of the co-researchers. In doing so, the design would promote rapport building between the researcher and co-researchers (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015).

A qualitative approach was implemented for a number of reasons. Firstly, it utilises a range of methods that would be accessible for young people with a variety of needs. Secondly, this type of method is flexible and adaptable, allowing researchers to adjust their research questions and methodologies in response to the evolving needs and interests of young people throughout the research process (Busetto et al., 2020). Doing so ensures that the young people's voices are heard, and the research question can be addressed. This flexibility is integral in PR, as there is an emphasis on collaboration, co-creation, and responding to the emerging insights and perspectives of young people (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020).

3.5.1 Participatory Qualitative Method

This research was conducted using the principles of PR, as outlined in Chapter 1 (Hart, 1992; Aldridge, 2017). The rationale for selecting a participatory qualitative method is to firstly, provide opportunities for a marginalised group (young people at risk of exclusion) to share their experiences of participating in a boxing intervention, and for their voices to be heard. The participatory elements of the process enabled the research to be undertaken 'with' the young people, as opposed to 'on' the young people (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015).

3.5.2 Setting/Provision

The research took place in a mainstream secondary school, located in a London Borough. This research setting was selected as the researcher had a working relationship with the school. The researcher therefore had prior knowledge of the school and the type of intervention and provision they offer. In order to explore PR with CYP, the researcher worked with students who were part of a boxing intervention that is offered to them by the school. The secondary school offers boxing as an intervention to pupils who are at risk of exclusion and are part of an inclusion house. The inclusion house is a separate building within the school premises, in which students who have been excluded from regular lessons, attend a variety of activities such as boxing, cooking and social games to help integrate them back into mainstream lessons. Pupils are typically in in the inclusion house for a variety of reasons including disruption towards others and low school attendance. The pupils in the inclusion house attend boxing classes at a nearby boxing gym on a weekly basis for six weeks. Through discussions with the school SENCO and the qualified boxing trainer who works as a member of staff within the inclusion house, the boxing intervention is used to directly address the issues of exclusion of CYP within the school. The shared perspective among the school staff was that the pupils who take part in the boxing intervention might be better placed to apply the benefits they learn through their participation including discipline, respect, communication and teamwork to other areas of their life, resulting in a readiness to apply themselves in the mainstream setting.

The researcher inquired about the boxing intervention before observing one of the sessions, and the school showed a desire to participate, which then presented an opportunity for the researcher. During a planning meeting with the school SENCo and boxing coach within the school, the researcher presented the idea for the research, including the importance of PR and the role of the co-researchers and the school (Appendix F). Both the SENCo and boxing trainer considered the proposed research to be beneficial for the young people, as well as for the school staff who could potentially enhance their own practice. For example, it was discussed that participation within the research project could lead to a greater sense of agency within the school environment. School staff on the other hand, could gain invaluable insights into the impact of the boxing intervention, potentially informing their own practice and leading to improved support for the school's students. To summarise, exploring the boxing intervention with the CYP as a focal point provided an opportunity for exploring the practical and ethical challenges that might be experienced by involving young people as co-researchers in PR.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained by the University of East London's (UEL) Ethical Committee (Appendix C) and the LA where the research was carried out (Appendix D). Approval was also obtained from the participating school (Appendix E). The research was conducted under the ethical guidelines from agencies such as the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018), BPS Code of Human Research (BPS, 2014), UEL Code of Practice for Research (UEL, 2015), and HCPC Code of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (HCPC, 2016). These guidelines were adhered to, in order to protect participants and co-researchers by ensuring their confidentiality and data protection. The researcher ensured the anonymity of the data, including the details of the LA, setting, and participants/co-researchers. This research involved young people, and ethical considerations were therefore implemented to ensure that the study was fulfilled appropriately.

3.6.1 Informed consent: Co-researchers

This study adopted Flewitt's (2005) example of securing "provisional and then ongoing consent" (p.4) to ensure that the study was carried out ethically with the co-researchers. With this in mind, the researcher first obtained verbal consent from the co-researcher and then continuous informal and formal check-ins of ongoing consent. Each co-researcher was provided with opportunities to withdraw from the study at different stages of the project, both formally and informally. For example, co-researchers were given the option to withdraw from particular elements or stages of the research process, but this did not mean withdrawal from the whole project. This was explained via an information sheet (Appendix G), research presentation slides (Appendix F), and the researcher verbally stated that they were able to withdraw at any point in the sessions. Following this, the co-researchers were provided with several opportunities throughout the research to withdraw, including the start of the co-researcher training, and at the beginning of each of the subsequent sessions throughout the research process. Feedback from the co-researchers suggested that they enjoyed their participation throughout the process (Appendix M). One co-researcher withdrew from a data analysis session, due to the co-researcher missing out on her favourite lesson. Whilst an explanation or reason for withdrawal was not mandatory, the co-researcher wanted it to be known that the reason for withdrawing from this particular session, was due to her missing out on a PE lesson.

3.6.2 Informed consent: Participants and parents/guardian

Ethical consideration was also applied to the participants and caregivers of the study. Whilst each participant agreed assent to be a co-researcher, consent was gathered formally by an information sheet (Appendix G), participant consent form (Appendix H), and a parents/guardian consent form (Appendix J). Participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the focus group at any given time without explanation. Following the focus group, participants were given a de-brief sheet (Appendix L).

3.6.3 Confidentiality

All data relating to this study was collected in line with the Data Protection Act (2018) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (European Commission, 2018). The researcher also followed the Data Management Plan approved by UEL. All data was pseudonymised using names that were selected by the participants. Quotes used within this study and any future publications will be pseudonymised. The researcher explained both verbally and in the consent forms that confidentiality would only be breached if there were any safeguarding concerns. Any data was stored on UEL OneDrive for Business using a password-protected personal laptop only the researcher had access to. Any information shared with the supervisor during the research was pseudonymised.

3.7 Recruitment and selection of participants and co-researchers

Participants were recruited within the secondary school where the research took place. The available participant pool was the number of pupils who were at risk of exclusion (as they had been excluded from mainstream lessons and attended the inclusion house) and who were currently attending the school setting and were currently participating in or had previously participated in the boxing intervention. The inclusion criteria for potential participants were as follows:

- A pupil at the secondary school where the research took place
- Aged between 10 and 19 years of age (this is keeping with the definition of adolescent age range as defined by the WHO)
- Be a young person who has taken part in the boxing intervention
- Be at risk of exclusion
- Able to understand and communicate verbally via English language
- Able to record information (i.e. able to communicate verbally and physically with stationary including pens and pencils, or with electronic devices)

The inclusion criteria were chosen as it was thought that participants that fit the criteria would be best placed to provide insights into the phenomenon being researched (Creswell, 2014). The boxing coach identified those pupils who fit within the criteria, and the researcher then shared this information with the SENCo for confirmation. Once identification of pupils was confirmed, the researcher met each of the potential participants individually and showed a presentation regarding the research project. During this stage, the researcher explained the research and its purpose, the role of a participant and co-researcher within participatory research, and a time-scale of the stages involved in the research project (see Appendix F). During this stage, participants were also asked whether they would like to be recruited as both a participant and co-researcher. At the end of each meeting, consent forms and information sheets were given to potential participants. A separate information sheet and consent form was also given to potential participants to pass onto their parents/guardians. These forms were approved by the university ethical board, the LA ethical board in which this study took place, and the research supervisor (see Appendices 3.5, 3.6, 3.7).

The researcher offered the option for potential participants and their parents to call, email, or meet the researcher If they had any questions. There were no pupils or parents who wished to ask any queries. Once consent was obtained, four pupils volunteered to take part in the research, both as participants and co-researchers. For ease, co-researchers will now be used when describing the four pupils. The number of co-researchers (n=4) was deemed as suitable, given that four co-researchers is an ideal number for a group (Fugard, & Potts, 2015).

3.7.1 Introducing the co-researchers

This section introduces the co-researchers and provides context to their relational position within this study. Prior to the study, the researcher met the co-researchers individually in order to meet potential participants and co-researchers, introduce the research and obtain their consent. This section shows the information that each individual shared with the researcher during the

meeting. It is noted that the researcher did not initially include religion as part of the demographic data, however the co-researchers wished to share this piece of information. In total, four young people aged 14-15 participated in this study, both as the co-researchers and participants. The young people in this study have varying levels of needs as described by the secondary school they attend and through discussion in our initial meetings. Co-researcher characteristics and demographics are shown in the pen pictures below (pseudonyms have been selected by each co-researcher).

3.7.1.1 Meepat

Name: Meepat

Age: 14

Gender: Male

Religion: Muslim

Strengths and interests

- Being active and socialising with friends.
- Boxing is one of the few things he likes about school.

What I would like you to know about me

- Meepat can sometimes find the school experience difficult due to his difficulties concentrating in class.
- Meepat mentions that his focus is far better in subjects that he finds interesting.
- He finds it difficult to stay focused on a task and can become easily distracted.

How you can help me

- Repeating instructions to me.
- Giving time and space to think.
- By being patient.

Relationship to inclusion house

- Meepat had spent six weeks in the inclusion house due to low levels of engagement in lessons, behavioural difficulties and difficulties with peers in school.

3.7.1.2 Tony

Name: Tony

Age: 15

Gender: Male

Religion: Muslim

Strengths and interests

- Tony is a practical person who enjoys taking part in activities such as cooking, boxing and playing cards with his friends.

What I would like you to know about me

- Tony has difficulties regulating his emotions. He can get easily become frustrated or angry if he has a bad feeling about something.
- Tony has specific learning difficulties (SpLD), meaning he has difficulties processing and learning new information.
- He requires extra time during exams.

How you can help me

- Having extra time to complete work in lessons, homework, assignments and exams.

Relationship to inclusion house

- Tony spent six weeks in the inclusion house due to his attentional difficulties within the classroom and reported repeated defiant behaviour across the school.

3.7.1.3 Sarah

Name: Sarah

Age: 15

Gender: Female

Religion: Muslim

Strengths and interests

- Sarah describes herself as "sporty" and has a passion for exercise.
- She shared that the boxing intervention increased her interest in the sport, and she now participates in boxing classes outside of the school setting.

What I would like you to know about me

- Sarah has severe anxiety and has had panic attacks during school. This has had an impact on her attendance and her ability to access the school curriculum.
- Sarah describes her anxiety as "going from 0-100".
- She likes routine and being prepared for anything new in her school day.
- Building trust is important for Sarah.

How you can help me
• It's important for Sarah to be prepared for activities and anything new by school staff. • Sarah sometimes needs a break-card to get some breathing space when she feels overwhelmed.
Relationship to inclusion house
• Sarah spent six weeks in the inclusion house due to difficulties with her peers and repeated offences to school staff.

3.7.1.4 Nadia

Pen Picture – Getting to know you

Name: Nadia **Age:** 14 **Gender:** Female **Religion:** Non-religious
Strengths and interests
• Nadia likes helping people and wants to work in mental health when she is older.
What I would like you to know about me

- Nadia shared with me that she transitioned from a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) to the secondary school and that she finds it difficult to focus throughout most of the school day.
- She mentioned that she often finds herself in “trouble” during lessons because she tends to talk frequently.

How you can help me

- It’s important for Nadia to have someone at school she feels comfortable with to share and discuss what’s going on in her life.
- Nadia sometimes needs a space when she can let her emotions out.

Relationship to inclusion house

- Nadia spent six weeks in the inclusion house due to her SEMH needs, school refusal and a public assault incident. Nadia has difficulties managing her emotions and she can often become easily angered or frustrated, leading to outbursts of emotion. This has had an impact on her ability to build relationships at school.

3.8 Co-researcher training

In order to implement the principles of PR within this study, the researcher trained the co-researchers using Kellett’s instructional textbook (2005) as a framework. This allowed the researcher to train the co-researchers to provide the best opportunity for true engagement and participation. As the young people had a variety of need, the researcher adapted each session where appropriate to cater to their needs. Kellett (2005) suggests to use eight training sessions, however, due to time constraints, the researcher adapted the training content and the number of sessions. A total of four two hour training sessions took place over six weeks. The lesson structure and aims are shown in Appendix K. In order to promote engagement and accessibility for the co-researchers, the researcher used a range of methods including picture cards, videos, mind-maps and discussion during the

sessions. At the start of each session, the researcher re-capped the learning from the previous session(s), often using the mind-maps that the co-researchers had created. The co-researchers seemed to enjoy the variety of tools and resources that were used to help deliver the training. The co-researchers shared that they appreciated having options to access the learning, and the researcher adapted each session to cater to their preferences.

3.8.1 Co-researcher training constraints

While Kellett's (2005) suggested eight-session training programme, the practical implementation of such an extensive programme was challenging due to a number of constraints. The researcher had planned to carry out the eight sessions as Kellett (2005) recommends, covering the following sessions: What is research?; Research Questions and Hypotheses; Ethics in Research; Literature Review; Research Design; Data Collection Methods; Data Analysis; and Writing Up and Disseminating Research. Allocating time for these sessions were organised between the researcher and the school SENCo, however the researcher was mindful of the needs of the CYP and their attentional and interest levels throughout the process. In order to maintain co-researcher retention, the researcher therefore altered his expectations with the mindset that the number of sessions may have to be adjusted in order to meet the young people's needs. It was important for the researcher to work ethically, and the researcher therefore adopted an adaptive approach to meet the specific needs and circumstances of the young people.

Initial dates of the eight sessions were agreed upon between the researcher and school SENCo, however this changed following the first training session. Due to the young people having busy schedules and personal commitments, scheduling and sticking to the initial agreed sessions was difficult. It became clear that resource limitations also posed a significant obstacle. Organising and facilitating eight training sessions required consistent room availability and a member of staff to be

present throughout the sessions, however this was not possible due to the staff's other responsibilities and lack of resources within the school.

3.8.2 Role of the researcher

The researcher's role in the training process was also fundamental. It was important to maintain a balance of providing guidance and support whilst withholding any imposing thoughts or biases in relation to completing the desired eight sessions (Kellett, 2005). This involved careful consideration of the potential power dynamics and ensuring that the researcher's influence did not dominate the voices of the young people.

With these challenges in mind, it was crucial for the researcher to consider alternative approaches that balanced the need for comprehensive training with practical constraints. Instead of the planned eight sessions, the researcher therefore provided four more intensive training sessions in order to utilise the time that was proposed to him by the school. By adapting the training format to the specific needs and circumstances of the young people, it was hoped that this would achieve meaningful engagement and empower the young people to participate.

3.8.3 Co-researchers' stages of participation

To ensure this study was truly participatory, the principles from Aldridge's Model of Participation (2017) were employed. Using the model as a framework, allows this research to be led by the co-researcher during the various stages of the process. The participants and co-researchers are positioned as the experts to ensure that their voices are heard throughout. The researcher in this study helped facilitate their voices. The researcher and co-researchers worked together in deciding the different stages of participation. Ultimately, the co-researchers agreed their level of participation as outlined in Table 3.1. The table shows the different stages of the research process,

and the co-researcher's level of participation within each stage, in relation to Aldridge's Model of Participation (Figure 1.2) and Hart's Ladder of Participation (Figure 1.1) (section 1.3.1 provides further details).

Table 3.1

Stages of research with co-researchers' level of participation

Stages of research	Co-researcher participation	Aldridge's Model of Participation (Figure 1.2)	Hart's Ladder of Participation (Figure 1.1)
Stage 1: Preparation	• The researcher gained consent from the co-researchers. • The co-researchers undertook co-researcher training to ensure that they were able to carry out the following stages.	• Passive participation. Participant as object of study > Tokenistic. • Passive/More Active. Participant as subject > Recognition/Participation as actor > Inclusion.	• 2. Decoration – young people help implement adult's initiatives. • 4. Assigned but informed – young people take part in training.
Stage 2: Designing research questions and data collection techniques	• The researcher introduced the area of research to the co-researchers. • The researcher introduced a broad research question. • The co-researchers collaboratively refined the research question • The researcher introduced several qualitative data collection methods including individual interviews, focus groups, graphic illustration, diaries, digital storytelling and storyboarding, and drawing and collages (with spoken feedback).	• More Active. Participant as actor > Inclusion. • Social Change. Participant led research > Emancipation.	• 2. Decoration – young people help implement adult's initiatives. • 6. Adult initiated, shared decisions with children.

	• The researcher facilitated a reflective space for the co-researchers to discuss potential data collection methods. • The co-researchers agreed upon the preferred data collection method.	• More Active. Participation as Actor > Inclusion. • Social Change. Participant led research > Emancipation.	• 7. Child-initiated and directed.
Stage 3: Data collection	• The researcher facilitated the reflective space for the co-researchers to share their experiences using the selected data collection method.		
Stage 4: Data analysis	• The co-researchers participated in the data analysis including selection of final themes.	• Social Change. Participant led research > Emancipation.	• 7. Young people's initiative and leadership.
Stage 5: Data dissemination	• The researcher and co-researchers were both involved in data dissemination. They both delivered a PowerPoint presentation of findings to the co-researchers secondary school. The researcher delivered a PowerPoint presentation to the LA.	• Social Change. Participation led research > Emancipation.	• 6. Adults initiative. Joint decisions.

3.9 Research question

Kellett (2005) suggests that the process of creating research questions helps to empower co-researchers and promote ownership of the research. In doing so, co-researchers are more likely to stay motivated throughout the duration of the project. With this in mind, the researcher firstly introduced a broad research question to the co-researchers as an initial prompt. The initial research question proposed by the researcher was:

What are the experiences of secondary pupils with SEND who are part of a boxing intervention?

The co-researchers used this research question as a starting point to help them co-create a more targeted research question. The co-researchers considered the experiential impact of the boxing intervention, and they discussed that it was important to share the positive aspect of their participation. A discussion around SEND and what that means for each co-researcher highlighted a change in the language being used. The co-researchers redefined the research question to the following:

Is there a positive impact on secondary pupils with individual needs who are part of a boxing intervention?

3.10 Data Collection

The researcher introduced a number of data collection techniques to the co-researchers during the co-researcher training. During this stage, the data collection method was agreed upon by the co-searchers. The proposed data collection methods were all qualitative to ensure that the aims of the study were met, with specific consideration to gathering the experiences of participants. The proposed techniques included interviews, focus groups, graphic illustration, diaries, and drawings and collages (with spoken feedback). The researcher also made it clear that these qualitative

methods of data collection could be adapted to suit the needs of the group. The data collection methods discussed included creative child-centred tools, aligning with research suggesting that this approach promotes inclusive knowledge generation (Buck & Quigley, 2012). Having said that, the co-researchers decided their preferred data collection technique was a semi-structured focus group that utilises written responses onto a shared A3 piece of paper. It was also agreed that each co-researcher had the option of sharing information verbally. However, the co-researchers did not want any verbal responses recorded, and they decided that any spoken responses would feed into their written responses using the A3 paper. All of the individual responses were written onto one piece of A3 paper with each participant writing in a specific area of the paper that they selected. Given the range of creative options offered to the co-researchers, the researcher reflected on their decision-making in his reflective diary:

> "I was surprised that the co-researchers chose semi-structured focus group as I assumed they would want to use a more creative method of data collection. I was under the assumption that given their level of need and age, they would opt to pick a more creative method such as drawings or graphic illustration. I guess this shows that whilst the data collection process was participant-led, I still entered this space with my own assumptions and biases."

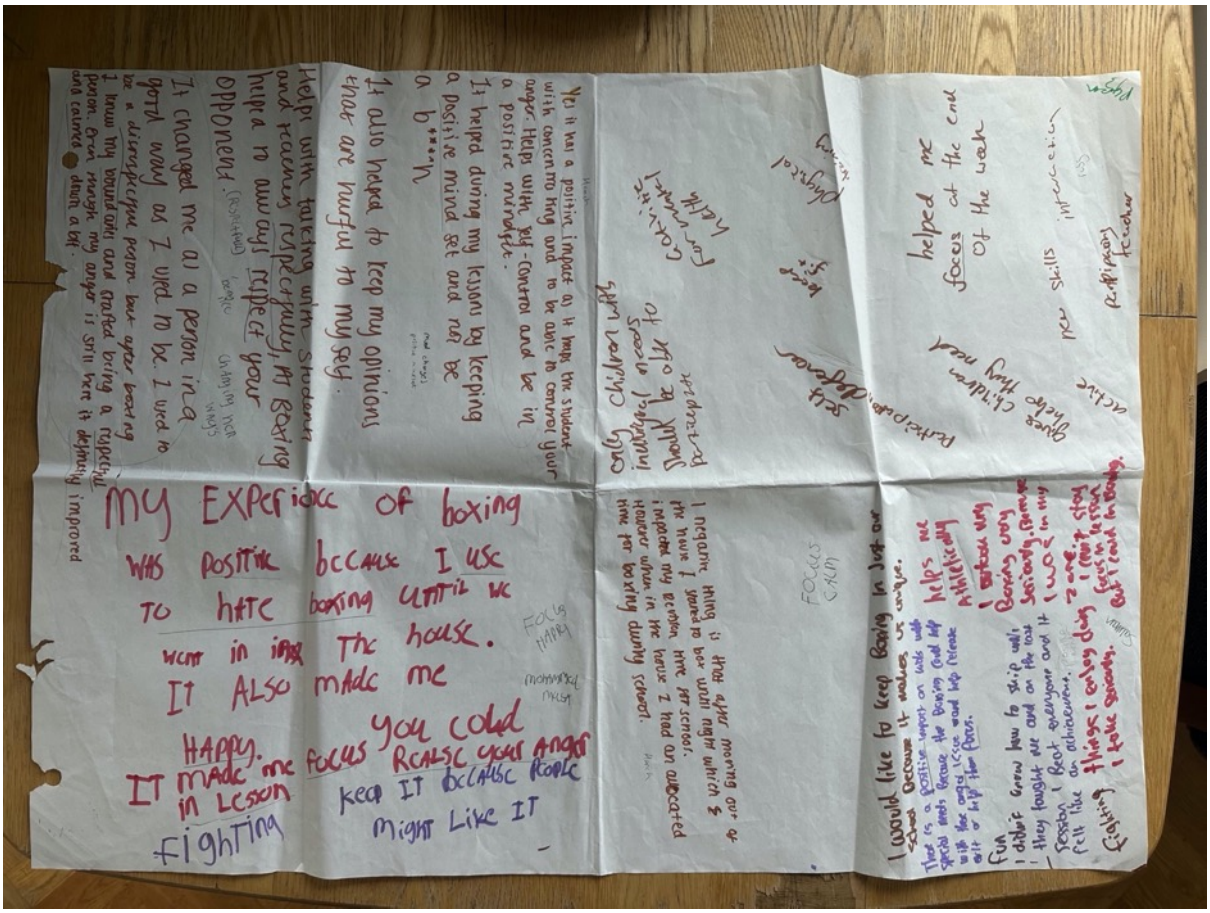
Throughout the research process, the researcher maintained a detailed reflective diary. This diary served as a record of observations, reflections, and emerging insights related to the PR process and the co-researchers' engagement. The researcher's findings illustrated in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.2) are the result of identifying key themes and patterns in the researcher's own experiences, perceptions, and learning throughout the facilitation of the PR process.

3.10.1 Semi-structured Focus Groups

The co-researchers deemed semi-structured focus groups to be the most appropriate data collection technique, and this would be facilitated by the researcher. The co-researchers used a shared piece of paper with written responses to share their thoughts (see Figure 3.2 for example), and they often shared their thoughts verbally to the group either 1) before writing their responses or 2) whilst writing their responses or 3) after writing their responses. This means that responses were given dynamically, both in group discussion, and then written responses were recorded individually throughout the focus group. To ensure everyone had the option of sharing their views, ground rules were created with the co-researchers before the data collection sessions, and each session started with a reminder of the co-produced ground rules. During each session, co-researchers could ask each other questions regarding the research question to aid thinking and sharing of experiences. This method fitted within the qualitative participatory methodology, as the open-ended questioning and flexibility, allows the conversation to take organic directions, as opposed to pre-determined questions that are pre-determined by the researcher. The co-researchers shared that they found the prospect of individual interviews intimidating, hence a preference for a group interview. The focus groups took place across two sessions on 11/07/2023 and 13/07/2023 lasting for one hour each.

Figure 3.2

Shared piece of paper with each individual's written responses



The co-researchers decided that the agreed upon research question offered a broad starting point to the focus group. It was also decided by the co-researchers that the researcher would adopt the role of the interviewer and ask the initial question, as well as neutral questions and prompts during the discussion. This is shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.2

Questions and prompts used in focus group sessions

Starting question	**Neutral**	**Prompts**
Is there a positive impact on secondary pupils with individual needs who are part of a boxing intervention?	What are your thoughts on the impact of the boxing intervention?	Can you tell me more about that?
	How has participating in boxing influenced your overall well-being?	Can you explain why you felt that way?
	Have you noticed any changes since the boxing intervention?	Can you think of an example?
		How did that make you feel?

		Can you think of any other ways in which boxing has helped you?
		In what way?
		What do you mean by that?

For the role of the interviewer, the researcher drew upon a variety of skills that is embedded within his practice as a TEP. For example, the researcher used consultation skills including active listening and non-verbal cues such as nodding. He maintained eye contact and shifted his gaze during the course of the focus groups and directed it to whoever was speaking at that time. The researcher often used verbal affirmations such as “Okay” and “thanks for sharing that” to show that he was paying attention and engaged as the interviewer. It was thought that this would enhance the facilitation of group discussion. Neutral questioning and prompts were used in order for the participants to feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts and opinions without feeling pressured or directed, and this meant that the possibility of leading participants towards specific answers would be minimised.

Facilitating the focus groups and collecting the data with the co-researchers was a difficult process, and this is reflected upon in the research diary, and was also raised with the research supervisor:

> “Some of the students were more vocal than others, and I was conscious of not asking too many probing questions to influence their answers. I was mindful of the process being participant-led, but I realise that their responses might be limited because of this. When I look at the data, I am mindful of how little data there appears to be. I need to raise this with my supervisor as I am a bit worried.”

As mentioned above, the researcher was aware that there was a limited amount of data collected. Originally, the researcher planned to triangulate the data by recording each session in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic in question. Having recordings would have added additional data, however the co-researchers decided against the focus groups

being audio recorded, and the researcher was respectful of their wishes and adhered to the participatory approach and ethics. Other data collection methods such as non-participant observation could have been proposed by the researcher to add data to the research, however the researcher wished to stay authentic and true to the values of PR. This type of data collection tool would have also required the researcher to interpret the findings, and it was important that the data analysis remained participant-led. As the co-researchers wished to use focus groups with written responses, the researcher reflected on whether questionnaires or surveys might have added to the data, however the researcher believes that this would not have captured the depth of young people's experiences and perspectives. Additionally, these methods would have required a pre-determined research design, which would have limited the flexibility and responsiveness of the co-researchers. The researcher reflected on this in his research diary:

> "I could have offered them other alternative methods of data collection, but I wonder whether they would have engaged? I shared with them a range of creative tools, and they decided on focus groups with written responses. I wonder why they didn't want their responses recorded? I also wonder whether any alternatives would have actually led to additional data being gathered? Considering their responses were already limited on a chosen and preferred tool."

A pilot study might have been beneficial in refining the questions, however this was not possible due to time and resource constraints.

3.11 Data Analysis

This section details the data analysis stage, using Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It outlines the rationale for involving co-researchers, explains the appropriateness of TA for the research, and also discusses the researcher's role in ensuring transparency. Lastly, this section concludes with a discussion of the critical considerations of using TA.

3.11.1 Participatory Data Analysis

Research has shown that the data analysis phase is often overlooked in PR as co-researcher's' contributions are often absent (Holland et al., 2008). Thomas and O'Kane (1998) argue that participation in data analysis enhances validity, as CYP are able to reflect on what the findings mean to them. This also helps produce more authentic findings as the knowledge produced reflects the experiences of those being researched (Grover, 2004). According to Kellett (2005), the perspectives of children and their development as researchers has suffered from the low expectations of CYP's abilities, particularly in relation to the data analysis stage. Jones (2004) highlighted this as an area where children's contributions are often overlooked. This study aimed to involve young people in the data analysis in order to enhance the validity and authenticity of findings, whilst also ensuring that co-researchers had opportunities for full participation. It is important to acknowledge that the contributions of some co-researchers may be underrepresented due to varying levels of participation. Identifying which co-researcher identified each theme could provide further insights into the range of participation.

3.11.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is an approach to qualitative research that involves identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), TA is a flexible process that can be applied to a variety of qualitative data including interviews, focus groups and it therefore offers a suitable approach for gathering data and generating meaning within the current study. This study envisioned the data analysis to be participant-led by the CYP, and TA is consequently relevant for its adaptive process. It aligns with both the researcher's critical realist position and the principles of PR. The rationale for selecting TA was influenced by recruiting the participants as co-researchers for a number of reasons. For example, the TA processes can be adapted to be more engaging and accessible using visuals methods such as mind mapping or drawing, to help young people identify and explore themes.

Additionally, the researcher assumed that the young people might not have had previous experience conducting research with qualitative methods, and TA offers a relatively accessible form of data analysis that does not require detailed theoretical knowledge (Kellett, 2005). It was thought that TA was therefore appropriate as the themes would be identified from the data, rather than being produced from any theoretical foundations (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, the researcher has the option of using collaborative coding and discussion to reach consensus on the identification and interpretation of themes should any complications with the participant's engagement arise. If this occurred, it is important to note that the researcher was aware of how his previous knowledge and experiences might influence the data analysis process. For example, the researcher had acquired a knowledge of themes within the literature review, and this knowledge may influence the present study's findings.

TA can be used in a number of ways. It can be used at either the sematic or latent level of the data. Semantic level analysis focuses on the explicit content and involves identifying themes directly from the surface level meaning of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Latent level analysis however, goes beyond the surface level and involves interpreting the underlying meanings and motivations behind the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). During the data analysis, the co-researchers did not tend to discuss the meaning behind the written responses beyond surface level, and the final themes generally mirror the language that can be seen in the data. Because of this, it is argued that the co-researchers mostly engaged with the data analysis at the semantic level. The co-researchers did however discuss the meaning behind some of the data, although this occurred too infrequently for the researcher to justify both semantic and latent analysis occurring at an equal level throughout.

3.11.3 Thematic Analysis Process

TA was used on the focus group written responses and the TA data analysis process is shown in Figure 3.3 below.

Figure 3.3

TA Data Analysis Process

Stage	**Description (Braun and Clark, 2006)**	**Co-researcher involvement**
1. Familiarisation of the data	Reading through the text and taking initial notes. Generally looking through the data to get familiar with it.	The co-researchers actively read through the written responses and on occasion, began discussing certain points with each other. Initial notes in the form of singular words were noted ready for coding (Figure 3.4). Codes were discussed as a group (TEP and co-researchers).
2. Generating initial codes	Involves highlighting sections of text in order to create codes that describe the overview of main points within the data.	The co-researchers produced initial codes, and collaborated on producing final codes.
3. Finding, reviewing, defining and naming themes	Identifying patterns among the codes in order to create themes. This can often involve grouping together several	The co-researchers discussed and grouped the codes into the following themes: "Positive mindset";

	codes into a single theme. This helps to capture the underlying meaning of the data. Refining and developing the themes, ensuring that they are representative of the data. Formulating what each theme means and how it helps to understand the data.	"Focused"; "Self-control"; Wellbeing"; "Active"; "Channel aggression"; "Change attitude".
4. Writing	Writing up the themes to help contribute to the overall findings of the research project.	The co-researchers did not have an active role in identifying particular quotes that were representative of each theme.

3.11.3.1 Step one: Familiarisation of the data

The co-researchers started the process by firstly, becoming familiar with the data. This involved the co-researchers reading and re-reading each individual's written responses, individually. Each individual took it in turns to take the A3 piece of paper and to begin the process of reading each individual's response to the research question. The co-researchers made initial notes in the form of singular words ready for coding (see Figure 3.4 below). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that

the data is read at least six times for familiarisation, however due to attentional difficulties and time constraints, the data was read twice by the co-researchers. The researcher understands that this is not ideal, although it could be argued that the co-researchers required less time to familiarise themselves with the data as it was produced by themselves.

Figure 3.4

Initial notes in the form of singular words ready for coding

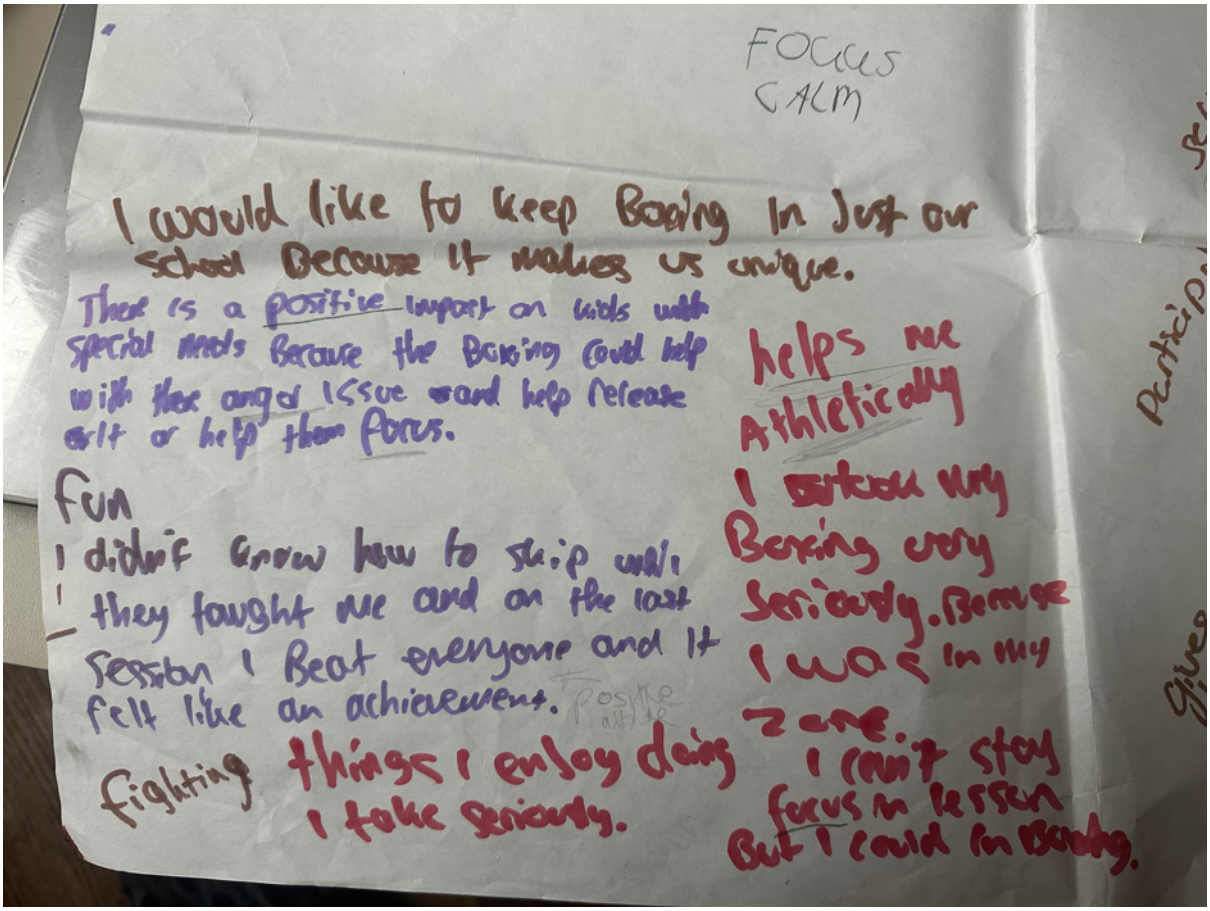


Figure 3.4 notes:

- *Focus*
- *Calm*
- *Positive attitude*

3.11.3.2 Step two: Generating initial codes

During this stage, the co-researchers discussed their interpretations of the data and initial coding. An example of identifying initial codes can be seen in Figure 3.5 below. Whilst some codes were written in the margins, others were underlined within the text. For example, "*disrespectful", "boundaries", "respectful", "anger", "definitely improved", and "calmed down"* were all underlined and highlighted as initial codes within the text. The co-researchers produced 24 codes upon analysing the data (see Appendix R) and these were generated at the semantic level as they focused on the explicit content of the data.

Figure 3.5

Initial codes on Nadia's written response

(*Nadia's responses during the focus group are written in Brown. The notes in the margin are written by the co-researchers. For example, respect is underlined with reference to being respectful and being nice. "Changing her ways" is written in reference to "it changed me as person in a good way…").*

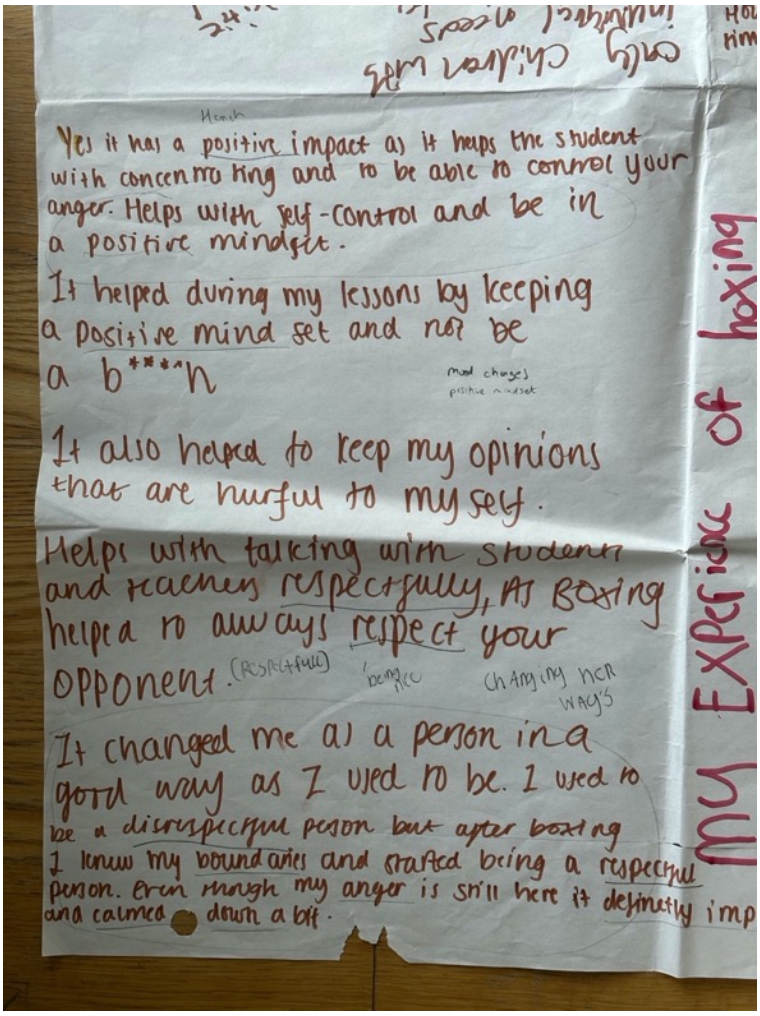


Figure 3.5 codes:

- *Mood changes*
- *Positive mindset*
- *(respectful)*
- *Being nice*
- *Changing your way*

3.11.3.3 Step three: Finding, reviewing, defining and naming themes

This stage involved the co-researchers discussing the codes and producing initial themes. These themes were agreed upon in relation to answering the RQ. Initially, the co-researchers

discussed a range of themes they felt were relevant in answering the RQ. Following group discussion, the co-researchers agreed upon seven themes and 15 subthemes. These themes were interpreted through open discussion with the co-researchers and this will be discussed in the following chapters. Some explicit interpretations can be seen in Figure 3.6 below, in which interpretations of three of the themes has been finalised and written on the right hand-side by the co-researchers.

Figure 3.6

Themes and sub-themes

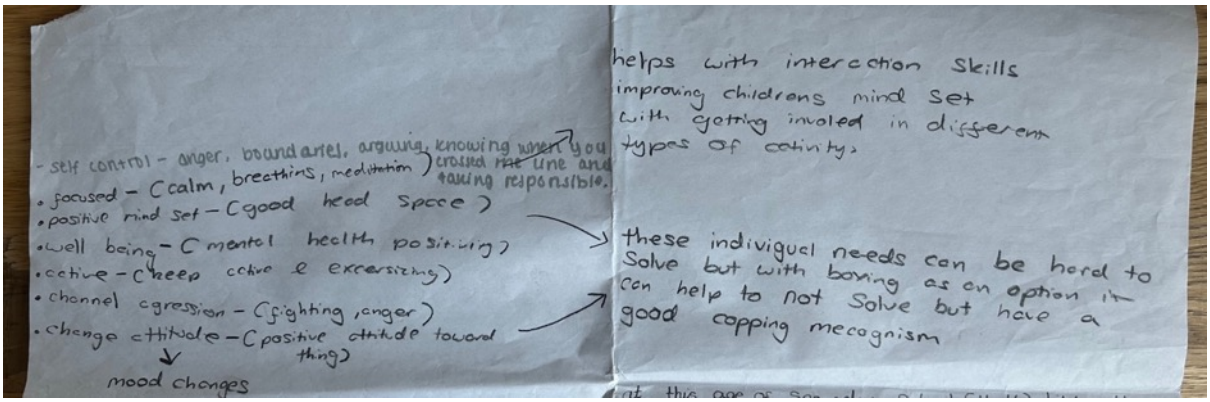


Figure 3.6 finalised interpretations of three themes:

- *Helps with interaction skills improving children's mindset with getting involved in different types of activity*
- *These individual needs can be hard to solve but with boxing as an option it can help to not solve but have a good coping mechanism*

3.11.3.4 Step four: Writing

Due to the co-researchers having difficulties remaining focused on the activity, the co-researchers did not identify particular quotes that were representative of each theme, and the co-researchers therefore, did not have an active role within this stage.

3.12 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a fundamental skill that is paramount for the researcher's practice and research. It is vital to engage in reflexivity in order to understand how personal biases may influence the course of the study (Willig, 2013). The researcher therefore reflected how their previous experiences might have influenced different stages of the research process. For example, the researcher contemplated how his expectations might have been influenced by his current work and interest in exercise.

Firstly, the researcher recognises that based on his own experiences with exercise and his exploration of the literature, he may have brought the assumption with him, that the experiences of the young people within this study will be a positive one. The researcher identified this possibility prior to the beginning of the research process, and kept a reflective diary throughout the study in order to reflect on his position, group dynamics and how he might have influenced the group (please see Appendix N for an example).

Aspects of the research were pre-determined by the researcher including participatory qualitative approach, the sample demographics and the boxing intervention focus. However, the researcher hoped that the remaining elements of the study would be discussed and agreed by the co-researchers.

During the co-researcher training, the researcher endeavoured to eliminate any influences over the techniques and approaches that were introduced. The researcher also recognises that factors including time constraints and deadlines of the thesis itself were not made transparent to the co-researchers, and the researcher acknowledges that the timings of the research were chosen by the researcher.

It was important to actively engage in reflexivity during the focus groups (Willig, 2013). As the co-researchers decided to gather the data using semi-structured focus groups, this meant that the researcher had the ability to ask follow-up questions that were not pre-determined. The researcher made conscious efforts to avoid sharing his own opinions, asking closed or leading questions, and other influences that might contribute to biases (Banks et al., 2013). However, the researcher also acknowledges that the follow-up questions might have been influenced by his own experiences and interests. At the start of each session throughout the process, the researcher engaged in building rapport with the co-researchers; in the form of problem-free talk. By doing this, the researcher hoped that the co-researchers would feel more comfortable in going through the various stages of research, and that it would build group relations and dynamics. The researcher was also aware of his position as a 'professional adult', and the impact this might have on the power dynamics between himself and the co-researchers (Banks et al., 2013; Gristy, 2014). In order to eliminate potential power imbalances, the researcher emphasised the role of the co-researcher throughout the process, and emphasised how the contribution of the co-researchers are what makes the research valuable.

The researcher also engaged in supervision with his research supervisor. With the supervisor, the researcher reflected on the role of the 'self' how his experiences might have influenced the co-researchers' behaviour and thinking. At the end of each session, the researcher ensured to create and facilitate a safe space for the co-researchers to share any thoughts, feelings or

emotions if they wished to. The co-researchers were also given the option to spend 15 minutes at the end of the session to share any views with the researcher if they wished to. The co-researchers expressed that they enjoyed having the space to share their thoughts and give feedback.

Evaluative feedback was also shared by the co-researchers at the end of the research. This allowed the co-researchers to reflect upon their roles and to express any positives or negatives they might have experienced during the process. This was collated by the co-researchers using written feedback (Appendix M). The co-researchers reflected on the research element, with one co-researcher expressing, “gave me a better idea into research”; “having sources”; and “exploring more information”. Another co-researcher shared “if you want to get info, you need to skim, read, scan as well”.

3.13 Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity and trustworthiness are often used to assess the value of research. In order to evaluate the value of the current study, the researcher used Yardley’s (2000) four principles of validity: “sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance” (Yardley, 2000, p.219). These guidelines were selected by the researcher as they can be applied to the qualitative research nature of this study, the use of TA, and the principles align with the researcher’s critical realist position. The researcher has reflected on these principles proposed by Yardley (2000) and these will be discussed below.

3.13.1 Sensitivity to context

Yardley (2000) describes showing sensitivity to context as a form of facilitating trustworthiness. The researcher was sensitive to the wider context of the research; this was achieved by familiarising himself within the existing literature on the experiences of conducting PR

with CYP who are seen as vulnerable. It is also important to consider the more specific context of the research (Elliot et al, 1999); in this case, the specificity of the LA and its principles; and the context of young people at risk of exclusion. By adopting a participatory approach and recruiting co-researchers, the research questions, data collection and data analysis were therefore appropriate and sensitive to the young people's contexts. The co-researchers selected semi-structured focus groups as their preferred data collection method, and this enabled them to reflect and share about their own experiences. It is argued that the data should be presented to the reader, in order to promote reflection on interpretations and alternative ways of thinking (Smith et al, 2012). With this in mind, the researcher will include verbatim quotations within the analysis section.

3.13.2 Commitment and rigour

Other principles described by Yardley (2000) are commitment and rigour. Examples of these principles within qualitative research are "in-depth engagement with topic; methodological competence/skill; thorough data collection; depth/breadth of analysis" (Yardley, 2000, p. 219). Firstly, the researcher carried out an in-depth literature review on the chosen topic and immersed himself in the existing literature. This research also follows specific framework in order to carry out the methodology processes (Smith et al, 2012). The researcher selected a sample that is appropriate in achieving the aims of the research (Tracy, 2010), adopted PR principles and recruited co-researchers. The researcher trained the co-researchers in order to equip them with skills and competencies as researchers. It is acknowledged that due to attentional difficulties and time constraints, the co-researchers did not spend the suggested time within the familiarisation of data analysis stage. It is also noted that the implementation of a pilot study would have been beneficial, if time constraints were not a consideration.

The researcher also engaged in testimony validity; he applied the attunement principles (Kennedy et al., 2011) that were learned in the training course to observe the participants and

adapt accordingly. The co-researchers were involved in every aspect of the data analysis, and the researcher facilitated the space to allow them to carry out the various stages. The co-researchers selected the final themes described in this study, and this can produce a greater understanding into the experiences of young people who are at risk of exclusion, and thus, improving the trustworthiness of the research (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). To conclude, the present study shows commitment and rigour, however it acknowledges that it could be improved in terms of data familiarisation and the use of a pilot study.

3.13.3 Transparency and coherence

These criteria relate to the clearness and clarity of the study. The researcher hopes that he has achieved transparency by including detailed information about the step-by-step process about the recruitment process, and how the data was collected and analysed. The researcher has also included extracts in the findings chapter to enable the reader to reflect on the co-researchers 'interpretations. The researcher's own experiences and biases have also been mentioned in the methodology chapter, and are also considered in the discussion chapter in order to strive for transparency throughout this study. Extracts from the researcher's reflective diary have also been shared within this study, in order to offer the reader an understanding of the researcher's thoughts and feelings throughout the various stages of the study. It is hoped that the information in this methodology chapter shows the reader that there is an appropriate fit between the research question, the psychological frameworks adopted, and the method of data collection and analysis. The researcher also attended a peer supervision group as part of the doctorate course, and discussed the procedures within TA. This practice can be described as credibility checks, and it helps the researcher engage in reflective and reflexive thinking (Smith et al, 2012).

3.13.4 Impact and importance

Lastly, Yardley (2000) suggests that research must be impactful and important. Tracy (2010) indicates that this can be achieved by firstly exploring a topic of value. The researcher believes the selected topic holds value as the literature review shows that the exploration of how to conduct PR with CYP who are at risk of exclusion is an unknown and unexplored area. The current study empowers young people who are at risk of exclusion as co-researchers by giving them the skills and knowledge to carry out research. By adopting a participatory approach, the study has also given a voice to a marginalised group, who typically, have been excluded from sharing their experiences in research. By recruiting young people as co-researchers, the study also achieved 'community validity' (Collins et al., 2009). Community validity refers to the recruitment and inclusion of members of the public, in order to ensure the relevance and significance of the research. In this study, young people who are at risk of exclusion were involved in each step of the research process, and this often leads to greater meaning for the individuals it represents in the public domain (Collins et al., 2009). The measure of impact can also be measured by the co-researchers desire and contributions throughout the study. Lather (1986) describes this as 'catalytic validity'. This refers to the relationship between the research process and participants (and co-researchers in this case), and how the research process impacts on the participants engagement and focus to make changes. This study can therefore be seen as impactful, as the co-researchers were involved in each stage of the process.

3.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the methodology used in this study to address the research question 'What are the experiences of researchers in facilitating participatory research with young people as co-researchers?'. It provided an overview of the research paradigm, including the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions. It described the rationale for the selected research design and the value of the research. The recruitment process of participants and co-researchers were also

outlined, as well as the co-researcher training. Additionally, the data collection process was explained, alongside the justification for a qualitative participatory research method. The chapter also explains the use of TA, and the step-by-step process including the involvement of the co-researchers during the data analysis. Lastly, it described the ethical considerations central to conducting this research, and the ways in which the quality of this study were reviewed. Having outlined the methodological approach and ethical considerations, the following chapter presents the findings that emerged from the data collection process.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on the challenges and dilemmas encountered during the process of conducting PR with CYP as co-researchers. It draws upon the researcher's personal experiences and observations, exploring the practical and ethical considerations that arose when facilitating youth participation throughout each stage of the research process. By reflecting on these challenges, this section aims to offer valuable insights for future researchers seeking to engage young people as co-researchers and to contribute to the ongoing development of ethical and effective PR methodologies.

The researcher's findings are presented theme by theme within this chapter. These themes were produced by the researcher. Findings from the participants' thematic analysis are shown in its entirety within this section, and will be embedded throughout to aid the researcher's reflections.

4.2 Thematic Analysis and Emergent Findings

The following section presents the key themes that emerged from TA of the qualitative data collected during the research project. The co-researchers actively participated in the data analysis process, engaging in coding and the production of themes. Through a collaborative process, distinct themes were identified that reflected the participants' experiences, perspectives and understandings of the research phenomenon. Figure 4.1 visually presents a thematic map, derived from the young co-researchers' analysis of their RQ: 'Is there a positive impact on secondary pupils with individual needs who are part of a boxing intervention?' This map illustrates the superordinate and subordinate themes the co-researchers identified including 'Positive Mindset'; 'Focused'; 'Self-control'; 'Wellbeing'; 'Active'; 'Channel Aggression'; and 'Change attitude'. This map serves as a foundational element for the subsequent findings and discussion regarding the challenges and dilemmas encountered during this PR.

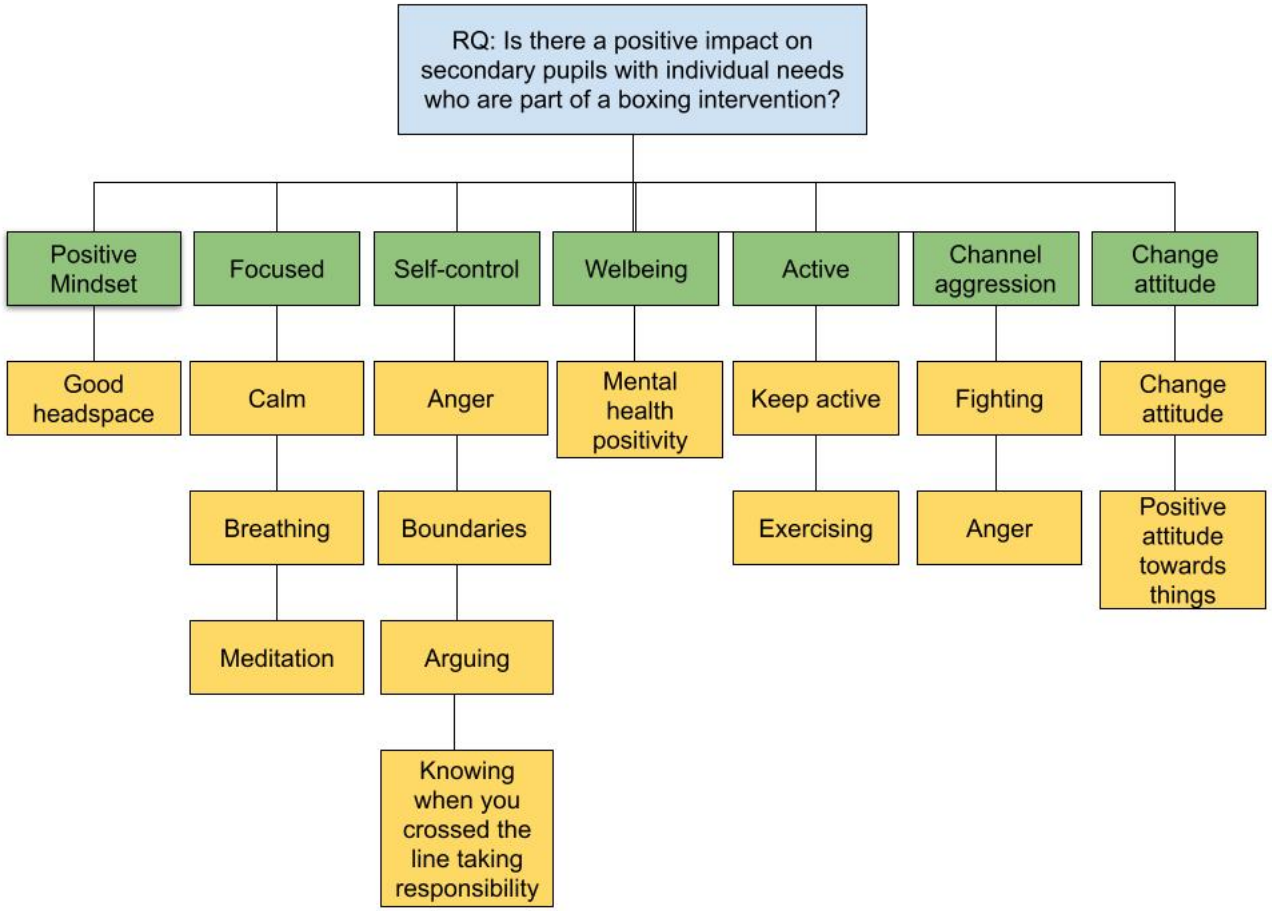
This visual representation of the participants' findings provides a baseline for understanding the evolving nature of their analysis, which will be further explored in the following section. Therefore, Figure 4.1 visually presents the co-researchers' findings related to the boxing intervention. The participants' involvement in the data analysis and their findings provides the necessary context for the examination of the challenges and dilemmas faced during the PR process, which will be elaborated upon in the following section. Representation of the themes from the participants' analysis is shown in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1

Visual representation of the themes from the participants' analysis

Key:

- Superordinate themes in green
- Subordinate themes in yellow



4.3 Lessons Learned: A Reflexive Analysis

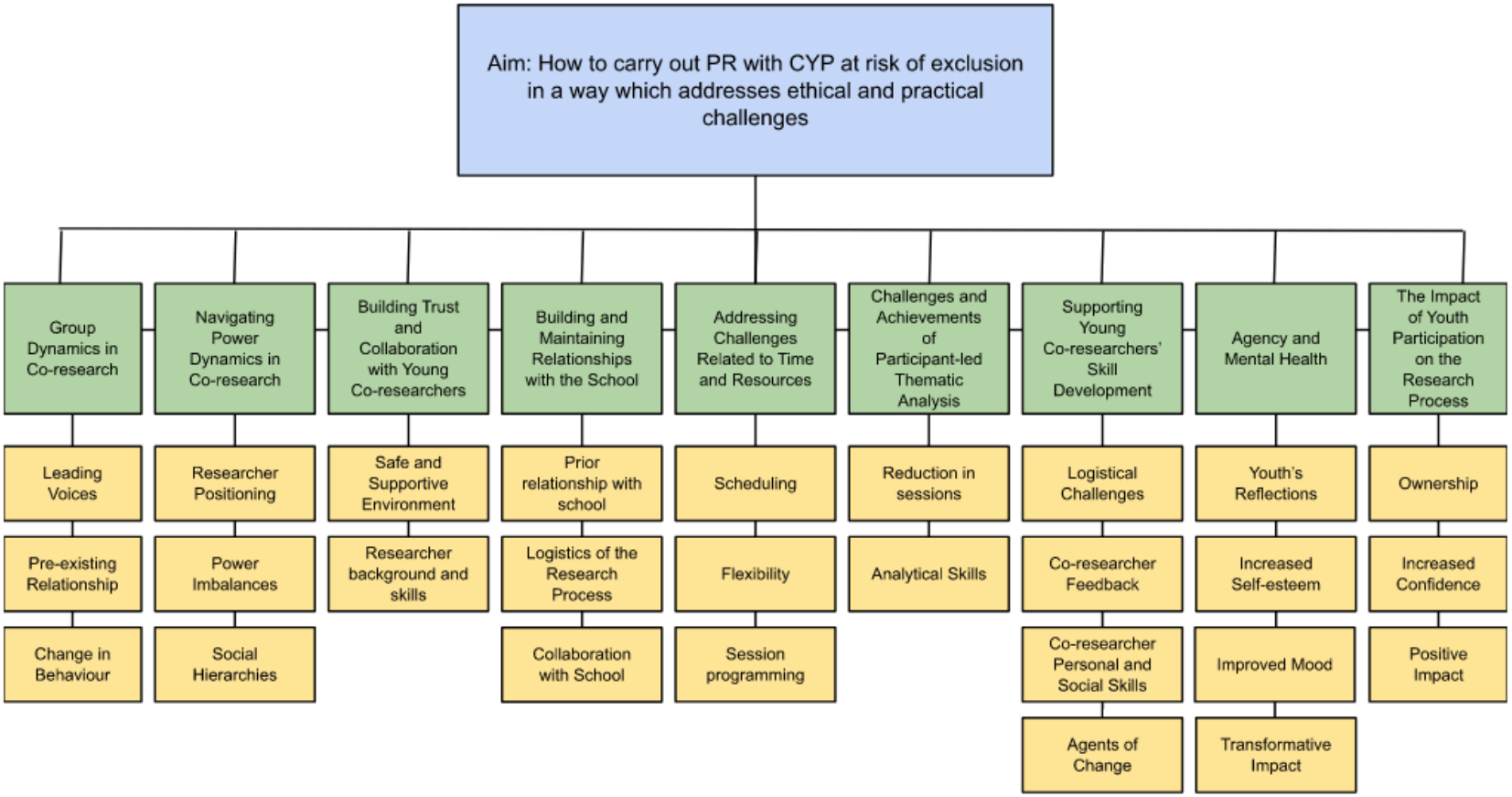
This section presents the researcher's experiences, the challenges faced, and dilemmas experienced in enabling participants to take on the co-researcher roles and carrying out the numerous stages of the research process. While the young co-researchers conducted their own TA, providing valuable insights into their experiences, the core findings of this research stem from the subsequent analysis, which are presented in relation to the aim of the study 'how to carry out PR with CYP at risk of exclusion in a way which addresses ethical and practical challenges'. To ensure transparency and reflexivity, it is important to explicitly acknowledge the influence of the researcher's own positionality and experiences on the research process. This section will therefore delve into the researcher's reflections on the challenges of facilitating youth participation, highlighting the tensions and complexities in navigating power dynamics, ethical considerations, and methodological adaptions. By critically examining the researcher's own role and experiences, the researcher aims to provide a transparent account of the research process and offer insights that may be invaluable for future research seeking to engage young people in PR. A visual representation of the themes from the findings is shown in Figure 4.2 below. ' This map illustrates the superordinate and subordinate themes the researcher identified including 'Group Dynamics in Co-research'; 'Navigating Power Dynamics in Co-research'; 'Building Trust and Collaboration with Young Co-researchers'; Building and Maintaining Relationships with the School'; 'Addressing Challenges Related to Time and Resources'; 'Challenges and Achievements of Participant-led Thematic Analysis'; 'Supporting Youth Co-researchers' Skill Development'; 'Agency and Mental Health'; 'The Impact of Youth Participation on the Research Process'.

Figure 4.2

Visual representation of the themes from the findings

Key:

- Superordinate themes in green
- Subordinate themes in yellow



4.3.1 Group Dynamics in Co-research

4.3.1.1 Leading Voices

The complexities of group dynamics emerged throughout the duration of the research project with the co-researchers. The researcher experienced challenges of ensuring equitable participation and addressing different perspectives and biases within the group. Group dynamics may have impacted on the co-researchers' discussion. For example, one participant was particularly vocal throughout the research process, and the researcher wrote in his reflective diary (Appendix O) whether the data might have disproportionately represented the opinions of those who were more talkative.

4.3.1.2 Pre-existing Relationship

The researcher also reflects on the relationships between the co-researchers. The four co-researchers were of similar age and had all participated in the boxing intervention, albeit at different stages throughout the school year. Two of the co-researchers were close friends, and this was often evident in their interactions with one another. The researcher considers how these two co-researchers often shared similar responses within the focus groups, and the effect this might have had on the other's responses (Appendix N, reflective diary).

4.3.1.3 Change in Behaviour

During the first focus group session, one co-researcher shared that the co-researchers should make great efforts within sessions because their participation and answers they share are a part of doctoral research (Appendix N, reflective diary). This idea that participants might change their behaviour according to the awareness of the project is known as the Hawthorne Effect (Fox et al., 2008). This phenomenon suggests that when people are aware that they are participating in a study, the attention and focus of the research might cause them to change their interactions.

Demand characteristics explains the phenomenon in which the participants of a study would draw conclusions concerning the research study's objectives, and either subconsciously or consciously alter their behaviour as a result (Orne, 2009). With the aforementioned co-researcher's comments in mind, the researcher recognises that the intentions of the co-researchers might have involved supporting their perception of the researcher's implicit agenda.

In order to reduce the possibility of the Hawthorne Effect, the researcher considered several factors throughout the process. Participants in research often take time to familiarise themselves with the research process and an unfamiliar environment. With this in mind, any changes in the co-researchers' conduct may stem from a place of discomfort as opposed to a desire to meet some form of agenda. Over time, it is hoped that co-researchers felt increasingly more confident and comfortable with the research process. This ideology is strengthened by the absence of further remarks by the co-researchers in future sessions regarding potential demand characteristics.

The researcher also reflected on the possibility of groupthink amongst the co-researchers. Groupthink refers to the process whereby members of the group have a desire for group consensus and typically avoid any sharing of opposing views and opinions (Baron, 2005). During the creation of the research question, the researcher offered an initial research question to prompt the co-researchers' thinking. The co-researchers decided to alter the research question from 'What are the experiences of secondary pupils with SEND who are part of a boxing intervention?' to 'Is there a positive impact on secondary pupils with individual needs who are part of a boxing intervention?'. Whilst the researcher recognises that this was a group decision, the researcher reflected on the role of the word "positive", and how this might have led the group to suppress any negative experiences they might have had as a result of their participation in the boxing intervention (Appendix P, reflective diary). This also led the researcher to reflect on the diversity of the group, as he questioned whether there was a variety of different perspectives, which might have resulted in a

more balanced conversation. The researcher however, acknowledges that the co-researchers felt strongly in changing the language of the research question, and this occurred during the earlier stages of co-production, and therefore suggests that the participants naturally aligned in their creation. In order to avoid groupthink, the researcher made sure that he allowed as much as time and space as possible for the participants to share their views.

Social desirability within research might result in an emphasis of sharing positive experiences of the boxing intervention (Weber & Cook, 1972), which could produce inaccurate data of the co-researchers' experiences. Whilst the overall theme of each participant's experiences were positive, each participant discussed and reflected upon the challenges and difficulties they experienced in the process. Participants sharing their personal struggles and showing vulnerability in the research process suggests that they were not attempting to conduct themselves in a socially desirable manner.

4.3.2 Navigating Power Dynamics in Co-research

4.3.2.1 Researcher Positioning

The researcher appreciates that power imbalances between himself and the co-researchers were likely to be present throughout the research process. Firstly, the researcher entered the school setting with the titles TEP and researcher, and this alone brings a perceived level of power and authority. In order to address this, the researcher ensured that the co-researchers understood that they were the experts in their experiences, and that they were able to bring meaning to this piece of research. The researcher remained self-aware of his position and the impact this might have on the group, and strived to adopt a position that empowered the co-researchers to structure the study how they wished.

4.3.2.2 Power Imbalances

During the focus group, the researcher minimised power imbalances by allowing the participants to lead discussions. Using Gibb's Reflective cycle (1988) with his placement supervisor, and problem-solving with his academic tutor, allowed the researcher to discuss and navigate through any power imbalances that arose. For example, demand characteristics was discussed with his academic tutor, in relation to the possibility of co-researchers responding in a manner they believe is expected of them by the researcher. Doing so allowed the researcher to adapt throughout the research process, a skill that he has further developed and is transferrable to his role as a TEP.

The researcher also addressed any power imbalances by using the models of participation (Hart. 1992; Aldridge, 2007) as frameworks. In relation to Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation (Figure 1.1, Chapter 1), co-researchers worked together throughout the research process, sharing power and decision making, as evidenced in their co-produced design and implementation of the research. With regards to Aldridge's (2007) framework, co-researchers were seen as active members of the research, in which they experienced increased levels of decision making power.

4.3.2.3 Social Hierarchies

The young people's voices may be mediated by social hierarchies of 'cool' within their peer groups, leading to variations in how their contributions are valued. During some of the sessions for example, there were instances where the girls' contributions were overlooked or dismissed by the boys. This example shows that while engaging young people as co-researchers can help address power imbalances, it does not remove them. The co-researchers did however, hold positions of power within the context of this study. They were positioned to influence the research design with their voice being at the centre of decision-making.

Lastly, the researcher's role within this study shifted from that of a traditional researcher figure to that of a facilitator, adapting to changing circumstances and empowering young people to take ownership of the research process. One constant struggle was the management of 'disruption' within the sessions. At times, some young people would engage in casual conversation with each other, often discussing things that were off-topic and not focused on the research. This would sometimes distract the other young people, to the point where the flow of the learning was impacted. The researcher reflected on his attempts to manage the group dynamics in his reflective diary: "Today's session was a lot of back and forth. It quickly became apparent that the group dynamic was going to be difficult to manage. A couple of the young people were distracted and off-task. They kept interrupting each other and side-tracking the discussion. It was frustrating to try and keep everyone engaged and on track. I had to remind them gently about the importance of listening to each other and respecting everyone's contributions. I think I could have handled it better. Maybe I should have taken a short break to allow them to refocus their attention. It's a constant balancing act – creating a safe and inclusive space while also ensuring that the learning objectives are met." This example emphasises the constant balancing act between creating a supportive environment and maintaining the focus of the learning activities. Further extracts can be seen in Appendix T and Appendix U.

In relation to power, the researcher also experienced several complexities in his role as facilitator. Letting go of 'control' was a struggle for the researcher. The researcher struggled to merge the desire to create a safe and supportive environment where the young people felt comfortable sharing their vulnerabilities with the need to maintain and achieve the learning objectives. Despite the researcher's efforts to position himself as both co-researcher and facilitator, navigating the power dynamics within the adult-student relationship proved to be a complex and ongoing process.

Navigating power dynamics within youth participatory co-research required ongoing attentiveness and a commitment to creating an inclusive research environment. The researcher believes that by actively acknowledging and addressing power imbalances, prioritising youth voice, and fostering a collaborative and respectful research partnership, researchers can ensure that the research process is both meaningful and empowering for all involved.

4.3.3 Building Trust and Collaboration with Young Co-researchers

Building trust and rapport with the young co-researchers was a crucial but ongoing process. Initially, some participants were hesitant to share their personal experiences and opinions. To address this, the researcher invested time in building relationships with the young people through activities such as strength cards and informal conversations showing a genuine interest in their lives and interests. For example, prior to the research taking place, the researcher visited the young people and observed them during the boxing session. The researcher walked with the young people to and from the boxing gym and engaged in conversation with them in order to build rapport with the young people.

4.3.3.1 Safe and Supportive Environment

Creating a safe and supportive environment was paramount to fostering trust. The researcher emphasised confidentiality, ensuring that all co-researchers felt comfortable sharing their views without fear of judgement, and actively addressed any concerns or issues that arose. For example, at the start of the first training session, a rapport-building activity using strength cards took place with the hope of fostering a supportive and positive working environment. One co-researcher however, expressed concerns about the potential for their identity to be revealed, even if their name was not used in the research report. To overcome this, the researcher reassured the participant that all identifying information would be removed from the data and that their anonymity would be protected at all times.

During the second focus group session, an observation from the researcher highlighted the development in terms of relationships between the co-researchers. As explained in Appendix N, one co-researcher invited another to have lunch together, suggesting a positive relationship formed through their collaborative work on the project.

4.3.3.2 Researcher Background and Skills

As a trainee EP, the researcher's background influenced his approach to building trust and collaboration with the young co-researchers. The researcher utilised his understanding of developmental psychology, recognising that young people at this age are navigating complex social and emotional challenges, and exploring their identifies. This understanding informed the researcher's approach to communication and interaction, emphasising empathy, patience, and a genuine respect for their perspectives. For example, the researcher employed active listening techniques, such as reflecting back their feelings and acknowledging their concerns, to build rapport and show that their voices were being heard and valued. The researcher also incorporated elements of experiential learning, such as case studies (Appendix K) within the co-researcher training, to make the process more engaging.

4.3.4 Building and Maintaining Relationships with the School

4.3.4.1 Prior Relationship with School

Establishing and nurturing a positive relationship with the school where the research took place proved to be vital for the duration of the research project. The researcher acknowledges that his relationship with the school prior to the research process allowed for opportunities that may not have presented itself outside of the school setting. For example, after two years working with the school, strong relationships had been built between the researcher and school staff, including

teachers, administrators and teaching assistants. Because of this, the researcher believes that the research was conducted in a manner that was respectful of the school's needs and priorities. The pre-existing relationship with the school was instrumental in securing ethical approval and gaining access to the co-researchers. The relationship with the school facilitated open and honest discussions about the research aims, methodology, and potential benefits for the school community. The researcher wonders whether the school staff were more receptive to the current research proposal as they had witnessed the researcher's commitment to previous work and practices in the school environment.

4.3.4.2 Logistics of the Research Process

Building and maintain a positive relationship with the school proved invaluable in streamlining the logistics of the research. The school staff were engaged in facilitating participant recruitment and provided logistical support by arranging times and locations for the research activities. For example, the learning assistants assisted with the transportation of co-researchers to and from research sessions, significantly reducing the logistical capacity of the researcher. This level of cooperation and support from the school staff was crucial for the efficient implementation of the research project (see Appendix V, reflective diary for further detail).

4.3.4.3 Collaboration with School

This trust and rapport fostered a collaborative environment where the researcher and school staff could work together to address any concerns and ensure that the researcher was conducted in a manner that was both ethical and beneficial for the school and its students. While the pre-existing relationship with the school offered numerous benefits, there were potential drawbacks. The school's familiarity with the researcher's work and perspectives could have inadvertently influenced the research process in several ways. For example, although the researcher

had not previously worked with any of the young people, the young people themselves might have been influenced by their knowledge of the researcher's previous work or their perceptions of the researcher through conversations with their peers or their observations of the researcher within the school.

4.3.5 Addressing Challenges Related to Time and Resources

Managing time constraints was a constant challenge through the study. The school environment presented practical hurdles. Coordinating research activities with the school timetable, which included lessons and extracurricular activities required careful planning and flexibility.

4.3.5.1 Scheduling

For example, scheduling the co-researcher training sessions involved finding times that accommodated the availability of both the co-researchers and their teachers, while minimising disruption to the school day. It was also important for these sessions to take place at regular intervals to prevent the risk of losing the learned knowledge from previous sessions.

4.3.5.2 Session Programming

Because of this, session programming was altered in ongoing communication and negotiation with school staff, ensuring that the research activities did not interfere with the student's' academic or social well-being. The initial plan had envisioned eight training sessions to comprehensively equip the young co-researchers with the necessary skills and knowledge. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, including scheduling conflicts and time constraints, it became apparent that reducing the number of sessions to four would be necessary. The researcher considered the ramifications, as it was acknowledged that a shorter training program could

potentially compromise the quality of youth participation and the overall research outcomes (see Appendix W, reflective diary).

4.3.5.3 Flexibility

To lessen the impact of this reduction, several strategies were implemented. Firstly, the content of each training session was carefully reviewed and condensed to ensure that the most essential information was covered within the reduced timeframe. This involved prioritising core skills such as ethical considerations, data collection techniques, and data analysis. Secondly, the researcher incorporated interactive and engaging activities into each session to maximise learning within the limited time available. This included group discussions and watching interactive videos. While the reduced training schedule presented logistical challenges, it also became apparent that the young people's high level of need impacted their ability to fully engage with the training. Although the researcher attempted to create an efficient timetable that considered the needs of the young people, the researcher acknowledges that he might have provided too much content during a reduced amount of time. This might have led to co-researchers having difficulties accessing the learning, which may have impeded their full participation in the research process. This experience highlights the importance of flexibility, adaptability and resourcefulness in conducting PR with young co-researchers within a school setting.

4.3.6 Challenges and Achievements of Participant-led Thematic Analysis

Empowering the young co-researchers to lead the data analysis was a daunting prospect. Guiding the young co-researchers through the complexities of TA presented a unique set of challenges. While initially eager to engage with the data, the young people quickly encountered the inherent difficulties of navigating a large volume of qualitative data. The abstract nature of the analytical process, involving the identification of patterns, themes and underlying meanings, proved to be particularly challenging. For example, the young co-researchers often expressed feelings of

frustration, struggling to move beyond the surface-level interpretations of the participants' responses.

4.3.6.1 Reduction in Sessions

The reduction in training sessions from the initial eight to four sessions presented a significant challenge for the young co-researchers during the data analysis phase. The condensed training schedule provided less opportunity for hands-on practice, and the researcher believes this lack of practice impacted on their implementation of TA. This highlights the importance of regular reinforcement and the opportunity to address individual learning needs, which were inevitably compromised by the reduced number of training sessions.

4.3.6.2 Analytical Skills

Despite these challenges, witnessing the young co-researchers gain an understanding of the data and complex ideas, and gradually develop their analytical skills was a rewarding process. Their insightful observations and discussion often enlightened the researcher, highlighting the value of their unique perspectives and lived experiences.

4.3.7 Supporting Young Co-Researchers' Skill Development

Supporting the young co-researchers' skill development was a key focus, albeit one that presented challenges given the reduced number of training sessions.

4.3.7.1 Logistical Challenges

As previously mentioned, logistical constraints required a reduction from eight training sessions to four. This presented a dilemma, as it was crucial to ensure that the young people acquired the necessary skills and knowledge within a condensed timeframe (see Appendix W,

reflective diary). The co-researchers actively participated in all aspects of the research process including formulating research questions; gaining an understanding of and deciding upon a data collection method; and developing skills in coding and analysing data as part of TA. The co-researchers however, found it challenging to move beyond surface-level interpretations of the data and to identify the underlying meanings and motivations behind the responses. To address this challenge, the researcher provided ongoing support and guidance, and facilitated group discussions where the co-researchers could share their coding decisions, discuss any interpretations and collectively refine the themes. It was hoped that these discussions provided opportunities for peer learning and helped to broaden the co-researchers' understanding of the data, whilst also developing their analytical skills. Through collaborative work, the co-researchers developed strong negotiation, listening and communication skills.

4.3.7.2 Co-researcher Personal and Social Skills

The researcher also observed a development in the co-researchers' personal and social skills. The research experience provided opportunities for self-reflection, allowing the young people to develop a deeper understanding of their own perspectives, values, and beliefs. Sarah for example, reflects on the changes she experienced following her participation in the boxing sessions: *"It changed me as a person in a good way as I used to be a disrespectful person but after boxing I knew my boundaries and started being a respectful person. Even though my anger is still here it definitely improved and calmed down a bit."* (see Appendix S).

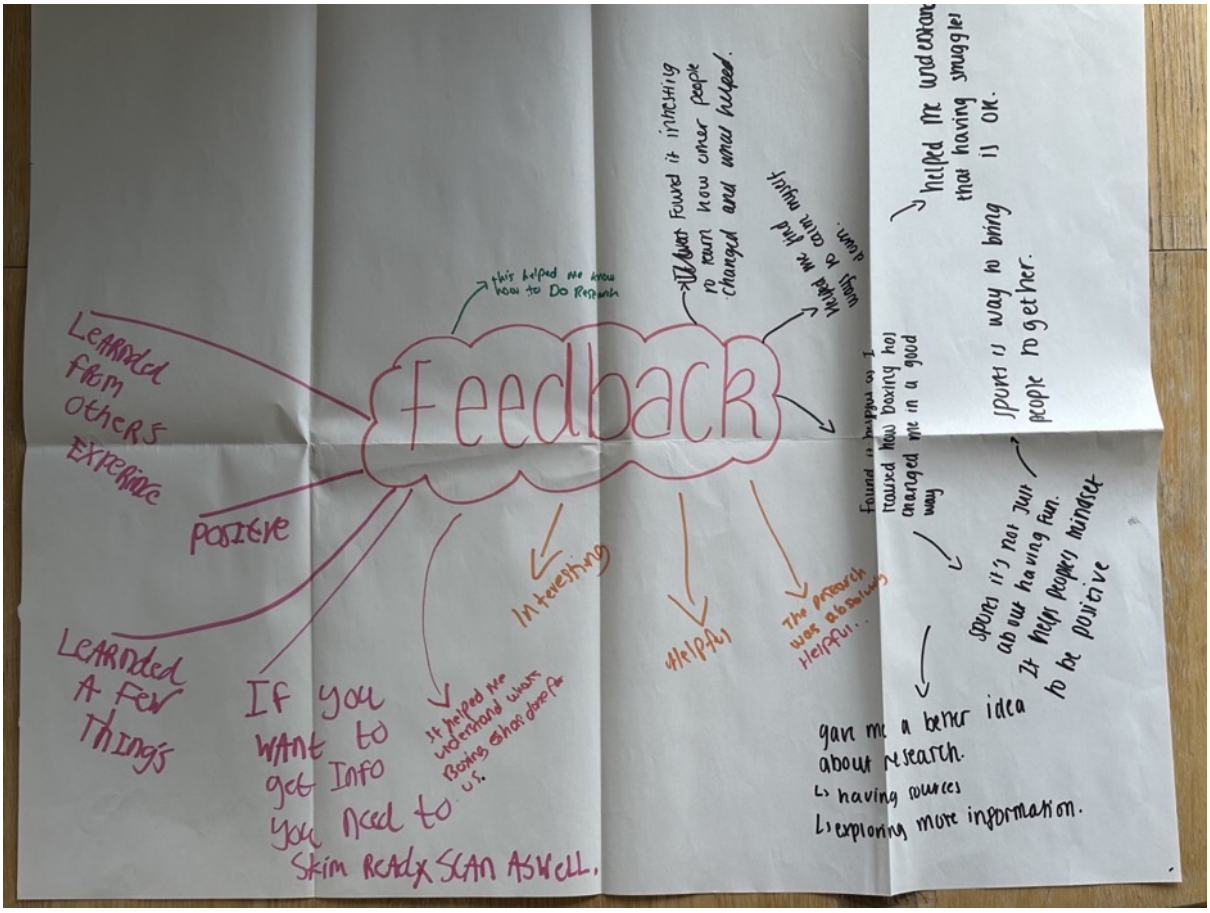
4.3.7.3 Co-researcher Feedback

During the final session together, the co-researchers were invited to share their feedback on the research process (see Figure 4.3). For example, one co-researcher wrote "found it interesting to

learn how other people changed and what helped", and another co-researcher said "helped me understand that having struggles is okay".

Figure 4.3

Co-researcher feedback



The co-researchers wrote the following:

- Learned a few things
- Learned from others experience
- Positive
- If you want to get info you need to skim read scan as well
- It helped me understand what boxing has done for us
- Interesting

- Helpful
- The research was absolutely helpful
- Gave me a better idea about research
- Having sources
- Exploring more information
- Found it helpful as I realised how boxing has changed me in a good way
- Sports its not just about having fun. It helps people's mindsets be positive
- Sports is way to bring people together
- Helped me find ways to calm myself down
- Helped me understand that having struggles is okay
- Found it interesting to learn how other people changed and what helped
- This helped me know how to do research

4.3.7.4 Agents of Change

Reflecting on this research journey, it is clear that the young co-researchers were not merely participants but active agents of change. Their insights and perspectives enriched the research process. They developed valuable research skills, and enhanced their communication and collaboration abilities. Sarah's reflection, where she describes how participation in the boxing intervention helped her to improve her anger management, exemplifies the personal and social growth experienced by many of the young co-researchers. The co-researchers' feedback (Figure 4.2) also revealed that the research process enhanced both their research skills and fostered personal growth and self-awareness. The observation that "found it interesting to learn how other people changed and what helped" suggests that peer learning and collaborative reflection took place within this PR.

4.3.8 Agency and Mental Health

Reflecting on the young co-researchers' journey, the researcher observed a clear development of their agency. This was evident in their engagement with diverse learning approaches, their active participation in the co-construction of knowledge, and their growing confidence in expressing their own perspectives.

4.3.8.1 Youth's Reflections

The young people began to articulate their needs and experiences more clearly throughout the research process. For example, one young person, Nadia, wrote: "At this age of secondary school (11-16) children/teenagers find it very hard to maintain a happy positive mood for a long period of time due to this being their hormonal phase. So therefore having a form of exercise weekly can improve their mental health and wellbeing which can also lead to impact their learning throughout the school week." Another student, Tony, described how exercise can affect children's mental: *"Exercise helps people with special needs and can positively impact kids mental health."*

The youth's reflections served as a source of validation for the researcher. It reaffirmed the belief in the research objectives: to empower the co-researchers to recognise the value of their voices and their capacity to effect change. Working alongside these young people, the researcher witnessed first-hand the transformative power of conducting PR with young people.

4.3.8.2 Increased Self-esteem and Improved Mood

Their reflections provided compelling evidence of increased self-esteem, improved mood, and a greater sense of agency. Tony's responses illustrates this: *"I didn't know how to skip until they taught me and on the last session I beat everyone and it felt like an achievement."* He later added *"My experience of boxing was positive because I use to hate boxing until we went in the house. It*

also made me happy." This experience highlighted not only the development of new physical skills but also the impact on their self-esteem.

4.3.8.3 Transformative Impact

Furthermore, the young people's reflections revealed a deeper understanding of themselves and their own resilience. This self-awareness was further enhanced by their participation in the research process. By reflecting on their own experiences, analysing data, and sharing their insights with others, the young co-researchers developed a deeper understanding of themselves and their own capacity for change. This recognition of their own resilience and ability to overcome challenges demonstrates the transformative potential of PR with young co-researchers and the impact it can have on mental health.

4.3.9 The Impact of Youth Participation on the Research Process

The last theme that was identified was the impact of youth participation overall, on the research process.

4.3.9.1 Ownership

The involvement of young co-researchers had a significant impact on the research process. Firstly, the young people's insights and experiences helped to refine the research design and ensure that the research was relevant and meaningful to their lives. For example, the co-researchers suggested that the research focus should be altered to exploring the positive impact of the boxing intervention. The co-researchers also shifted the discourse surrounding their level of need within the research question. This demonstrates the young people experienced a sense of ownership and empowerment in their involvement as co-researchers.

4.3.9.2 Increased Confidence

The young people grew throughout the research process. Initially described by adults at the school as 'difficult to engage and quiet', the researcher initially had difficulties engaging them in conversation. By the end of the research project, they presented their findings to an audience of boxing coaches and school staff, a significant step for individuals who initially struggled to engage in group discussions (see Appendix X, reflective diary).

4.3.9.3 Positive Impact

This research appeared to improve the young people's confidence, fostered by the trust and empowerment experienced within the research team and the recognition of their valuable contributions by school staff, likely contributed to positive impacts on their mental well-being, as shown in the co-researchers' feedback (Figure 4.3). The young people's enthusiasm for the boxing intervention was evident throughout the research process. They actively advocated for the continuation of the programme within the school, demonstrating a strong sense of ownership and a commitment to improving the wellbeing of their peers. This observed passion not only enriched the research process, but also demonstrated the empowering potential of youth participation in addressing issues that are relevant to their lives.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the researcher's experiences of facilitating PR with a group of young people as co-researchers. Extracts from the participant's findings and their feedback, as well as extracts from the researchers' reflective diary were used to support the researcher's reflections. These findings will be discussed within the next chapter 'Discussion', in relation to the research question, literature, psychology theory, as well strengths, limitations, and implications for educational psychology practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings of the research, which aimed to explore how to carry out PR with CYP who are at risk of exclusion in a way which addresses ethical and practical challenges. The findings are divided into themes, addressing the RQ 'What are the experiences of researchers in facilitating participatory research with young people as co-researchers?'. Subsequently, the findings are examined in relation to the research aims, current literature and relevant psychology theories. Adopting a critical realist epistemology, the connection between the co-researchers' experiences and existing research are considered tentative, acknowledging the multiple ways in which individual experiences can be interpreted within the broader field of knowledge. The researcher's perspective on the process and outcomes will be offered, followed by an outline of the strengths and limitations of the research. Following this, the unique contribution of the research will be presented, and the implications for future research, school and EP practice will be discussed. Personal reflections and research dissemination are presented, before a final conclusion will be shared.

5.2 Research Question

This study aimed to explore how to carry out PR with CYP at risk of exclusion in a way which addresses ethical and practical challenges. Research exploring conducting PR with young co-researchers at risk of exclusion is particularly scarce. A single RQ was created in relation to this aim:

What are the experiences of researchers in facilitating participatory research with young people as co-researchers?

To answer the RQ, the study adopted a participatory approach, using a semi structured focus group that explored the young people's experiences within the boxing intervention. In doing so, the

researcher was able to facilitate PR with young people as co-researchers. To answer the RQ, the researcher also explored his reflections on the research process. Chapter 4 presented the findings to this topic. The following sections will delve into a discussion of the implications of these findings.

5.3 What are the experiences of researchers in facilitating participatory research with young people as co-researchers?

5.3.1 Group Dynamics

The dynamics within the co-researcher group played a significant role in shaping the research process and ultimately, the findings. The initial phase of the research project was characterised by a period of exploration and adjustment, where the young co-researchers were developing their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The group's collaborative discussions led to the refinement of the research question, the development of data collection methods, and the identification of key themes and insights. The involvement of young people as co-researchers enriched the research process, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of their participation in the boxing intervention, and ultimately, how to conduct PR with young people as co-researchers.

However, it is important to acknowledge that group dynamics also presented many challenges within the research project. During the initial focus group session, a co-researcher expressed that the young people should exert significant effort during the sessions, recognising their contributions as part of a doctoral research project (Appendix N, reflective diary). This observation raises the possibility of the Hawthorne Effect, a phenomenon where participants alter their behaviour due to awareness of being observed in a study (Fox et al., 2008). In essence, the attention inherent in research participation can influence interaction.

Furthermore, the concept of demand characteristics suggests that participants may infer the study's objectives and consciously or subconsciously modify their behaviour accordingly (Orne, 2009). Considering the co-researcher's comment, it is plausible that their motivations included supporting what they perceived as the researcher's implicit agenda.

To reduce the potential influence of the Hawthorne Effect, the researcher took several precautions throughout the research process. It is important to acknowledge that participants often require time to adjust to the research process and the unfamiliar environment. Therefore, initial changes in behaviour might stem from discomfort rather than a deliberate attempt to conform to perceived expectations (Fox et al., 2008). Over time, it was observed that the co-researchers grew more confident and comfortable, evidenced by the absence of further comments regarding potential demand characteristics in subsequent sessions.

The researcher was mindful of potential group dynamics that could influence the co-researchers' contributions. Specifically, there was concern that groupthink, a phenomenon where individuals prioritise consensus over critical evaluation (Baron, 2005), might have influenced the development of the RQ.

The co-researchers, as a group, had modified the initial RQ proposed by the researcher. This prompted reflection on whether the revised wording might inadvertently discourage the co-researchers from sharing negative experiences (Appendix P, reflective diary). The researcher also considered whether the group's diversity was truly represented in this decision. However, the co-researchers' strong conviction in changing the wording of the RQ early in the co-production process suggests a natural consensus among them.

To mitigate potential groupthink, the researcher ensured ample time and space for individual views to be expressed. Additionally, the researcher was aware of the potential for social desirability bias (Weber & Cook, 1972), where participants might overemphasise positive experiences. While the co-researchers generally had positive experiences, they also openly discussed challenges and vulnerabilities, suggesting they were not solely presenting themselves in a socially desirable manner.

The research process revealed that group dynamics within the co-researcher team, potentially shaped by social hierarchies and peer group norms, significantly influenced how participants' contributions were perceived and valued. Notably, on one occasion, the girls' contributions seemed to be undervalued by the boys, illustrating how pre-existing group dynamics can persist within a participatory research setting. This experience underscores that while involving young people as co-researchers can mitigate power imbalances between researchers and participants, it does not automatically resolve power dynamics within the group itself. As Lugetti et al. (2023) have observed, internal tensions can emerge within co-researcher groups, posing challenges to navigating and effectively managing these dynamics. Although the co-researchers held positions of power, directly influencing the research design with their voices at the centre of decision-making, the potential for these internal group dynamics to affect participation and representation required ongoing attention and intervention.

Spriggs and Gillam's (2019) findings highlight the potential for young co-researchers to encounter distressing information from their peers, which can have emotional and ethical implications. This is particularly relevant to the present study, as the young co-researchers were exploring topics that might be sensitive for each individual. To mitigate this risk, the researcher facilitated a group discussion with the co-researchers about the potential challenges of PR, including the possibility of encountering distressing information. A set of ethical guidelines were

collaboratively developed, emphasising the importance of confidentiality, respect and support. This process not only ensured that the co-researchers were fully informed about the potential risks but also empowered them to actively shape the ethical framework of the research. By proactively addressing these ethical consideration as a group, the researcher aimed to create a safe and supportive environment for the co-researchers while also fostering their understanding of ethical research practices.

5.3.2 Power Dynamics

Through this PR, the researcher was acutely aware of the potential for power dynamics to influence the co-researchers' experiences and contributions. Entering the school as a TEP and researcher positioned the researcher as an authority figure, potentially impacting the co-researchers' sense of agency. To address this, the researcher actively sought to dismantle traditional hierarchical structures by emphasising the co-researchers' expertise in their own lived experiences. The researcher consistently reinforced the notion that their perspectives were central to the research's meaning and direction. Furthermore, the researcher adopted a reflexive stance, continually monitoring their own influence on the group and striving to create an environment where the co-researchers felt empowered to shape the study's trajectory. During focus group sessions, the researcher consciously minimised their direct involvement, allowing the co-researchers to drive the discussions and explore their own lines of inquiry. To further navigate the complex power dynamics in the research, the researcher utilised Gibb's Reflective Style (1988) (Appendix Y, researcher diary) and engaged in regular problem-solving discussions with their university supervisor. These reflective practices provided space to critically examine and address emerging issues, such as the potential for demand characteristics, where co-researchers might have felt compelled to respond in ways they perceived as expected. This ongoing process of reflection and adaptation allowed the researcher to refine their approach, fostering a more equitable and

collaborative research environment – a skill that has proven invaluable and transferable to their professional role as a TEP.

Donegan et al.'s (2021) findings, which emphasise the crucial role of adults in facilitating youth PR, are relevant to this study. While the researcher aimed to empower young co-researchers, the inherent power dynamics between adults and young people must be acknowledged. Despite efforts to minimise power imbalances, the researcher's role inevitable influenced the research process. Although collaboration and shared decision-making were fostered, the adult presence inherently shaped the research landscape (Appendix Z, researcher diary). Recognising this dynamic is crucial for researchers engaging in PR with young people. Adult facilitation should aim to foster genuine youth voice and agency while acknowledging the inherent power imbalances within the research relationship.

The researcher also addressed any power imbalances by using the models of participation (Hart, 1992; Aldridge, 2007) as frameworks. In relation to Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation, co-researchers worked together throughout the research process, sharing power and decision making, as evidenced in their co-produced design and implementation of the research. With regards to Aldridge's (2007) framework, co-researchers were seen as active members of the research, in which they experienced increased levels of decision making power.

There are also links between the findings of the present study and Tiefenbacher (2023). Tiefenbacher's (2023) findings highlighted that adults often hold the positions of power within PR, in which children participate under the researchers' terms. Researchers can overcome this challenge by letting go of control and actively supporting children's self-directed actions and activities (Tiefenbacher, 2023). Being mindful of the models of participation (Aldridge, 2007; Hart, 1992),

allowed the researcher to foster collaborative relationships by valuing the diverse skills and unique knowledge that each co-researcher brings to the project.

Giving over power was far more challenging than the researcher initially anticipated. Intellectually, the researcher understood the importance of empowering the co-researchers, but emotionally, it was difficult to relinquish control. There was a constant tension between wanting to guide the process and allowing them to lead. One of the main challenges, was resisting the urge to 'fix' moments when they went off track. For example, there were times when discussions seemed to wander, or when the co-researchers struggled to articulate their ideas. On these instances, the researcher had to remind himself that the 'messiness' was part of the PR process, and that allowing them to grapple with these challenges was essential for their learning and growth.

The school setting significantly influenced the research process, impacting factors such as scheduling and the nature of our interactions. While the researcher aimed to meet the co-researchers outside of regular lessons, scheduling conflicts arose due to their desire to utilise free time for leisure activities. To address this, the researcher collaborated with the school to conduct research sessions during their personal development lessons, recognising the overlap between research and curriculum. To differentiate the research activities from formal schoolwork, the researcher emphasised that participation was voluntary, and not mandatory. During the sessions, the researcher encouraged an informal atmosphere, aiming to create a more relaxed and less formal environment that would foster trust and challenge hierarchal power dynamics (O'Brien, 2019). The researcher also attempted to distance himself from the role of a staff member by encouraging the young people to call him by his first name, sharing personal experiences of his life, and adopting a more casual approach to his attire. However, as Fitzpatrick (2016) highlight, it is impossible to fully eliminate the impact of the adult presence and our identity on the research process.

Whilst there are power dynamics between the researcher and co-researchers, difficulties in power relations often occur within groups of the young people themselves (Horgan, 2017). The research process revealed that power dynamics within the co-researchers, perhaps influenced by social hierarchies and peer group norms, impacted how participants' contributions were valued. In one instance, the girls' contributions appeared less valued by the boys. The researcher attempted to manage this by consciously employing facilitation skills to ensure all voices were heard. This was achieved by actively soliciting input from the girls, specifically asking for their perspectives and validating their contributions. Secondly, the researcher highlighted the importance of respecting diverse viewpoint during the group discussions. This example highlights that while engaging young people as co-researchers can help address power imbalances, it does not automatically remove them. As Luguetti et al. (2023) observed, tensions can arise within co-researcher groups, making it challenging to navigate and manage power dynamics effectively. In this study, while the co-researchers held positions of powers, influencing the research design with their voices at the centre of decision-making, the potential for these internal power dynamics to impact participation and representation needed to be constantly considered and addressed.

The researcher believes that by actively acknowledging and addressing power imbalances (Banks et al., 2013) through explicitly addressing the importance of respecting different viewpoints amongst the group, prioritising youth voice, and fostering a collaborative and respectful research partnership, researchers can ensure that the research process is both meaningful and empowering for all involved.

5.3.3 The Importance of Building Trust and Communication with Co-researchers

Previous research has shown that building and nurturing strong relationships and collaborative practice requires time and careful consideration (Bennett & Brunner, 2022; Raman & French, 2022; Ritterbusch et al., 2020; Wilkinson et al., 2021).

Establishing trust required careful attention to ethical considerations, ensuring that the young people understood the research process, their rights as co-researchers, and how their data would be used. It was crucial to create a safe and supportive environment where young people feel comfortable expressing their views, asking questions, and sharing their concerns without fear of judgement. This involved building rapport with the young co-researchers actively listening to their perspectives, and demonstrating genuine respect for their contributions. As Raman and French (2020) highlighted, creating a relaxed and welcoming environment, such as meeting the young people in a familiar setting, proved to be an important first step in building rapport and establishing trust.

Open and honest communication was essential for maintaining trust and facilitating effective collaboration. This involved creating opportunities for regular dialogue, providing clear and concise explanations of research procedures, and ensuring that the young people's voices are heard and valued throughout the research process. This aligns with the concept of a 'contact zone', as described by Ritterbusch et al. (2020), where constant communication between researchers, children and other relevant stakeholders allows for children to better navigate difficulties. In the context of PR, this 'contact zone' fosters a space for open dialogue and collaboration, where the young people's voices are amplified and their perspectives are valued.

Engaging in ice-breaking activities, as suggested by Wilkinson et al. (2021), helped to create a relaxed and nurturing environment. Using strength cards in the first session as a group, fostered a

sense of belonging and encouraged communication among the co-researchers. The development of genuine relationships between co-researchers can be a valuable outcome of the PR process. In this study for example, two of the co-researchers developed a strong rapport. This was evident when one co-researcher asked another to have lunch together, suggesting the formation of a genuine friendship that extended beyond the research context. While the development of a strong rapport between two co-researchers in this study was a positive outcome, it also introduced potential challenges for the research process. Specifically, this relationship could have inadvertently skewed the data collection and analysis. For example, these two co-researchers might have unconsciously reinforced each other's perspectives, potentially leading to a narrower range of viewpoints being considered. Furthermore, the other co-researchers might have felt less inclined to express dissenting opinions. In order to manage this, the researcher ensured that each individual had equal opportunities to participate by facilitating the discussion. This example highlights the potential for PR to foster positive social relationships among young people (Arnold et al., 2022), demonstrating the multifaceted benefits of this collaborative approach.

Lastly, the researcher's established rapport with the school proved indispensable for the successful execution of this research project. The researcher acknowledged that the pre-existing relationship, cultivated over two years of prior work within the school, opened avenues that would likely have been inaccessible otherwise. This established connection facilitated strong relationships with school personnel, including the co-researchers, and significantly streamlined the logistical aspects of the research. School staff actively participated in providing crucial logistical support by arranging session times and locations, and facilitating the transportation of co-researchers to and from research sessions, which considerably reduced the researcher's logistical burden (Appendix V).

Building trust and open communication with young co-researcher was paramount for this PR project. By prioritising trust, respect and open dialogue, a collaborative and empowering research environment developed that enhanced their research skills, and generated participation.

5.3.4 Skill Development

An objective of this research was to empower young people as co-researchers. The participatory approach provided a unique opportunity for skill development.

A common barrier to young people's involvement as co-researchers is the assumption that they lack the knowledge and research competency to contribute meaningfully (Kellett, 2010). This contrasts with the assumption of competence typically afforded to adult research participants. As Alderson (2007) identifies, there is a tendency to view children as lacking the capacity and maturity to express their views and participate meaningfully in research. However, Lundy et al. (2011) argue that, in accordance with the UNCRC, the responsibility should not be on the child to evidence their worth , but rather on researchers to assume that young people have the capacity to hold their position. The researchers' findings showed engaging children as co-researchers is a complex and ongoing process, demanding a deep and continuous exchange between children and adults. This reciprocal interaction allows for the development of skills and knowledge in both children and adult (Alderson, 2008).

As highlighted by Donegan et al. (2023), youth participation in research can lead to significant skill development across various domains. In the present study, the co-researchers gained valuable skills in areas such as research design and methodology, data collection and analysis, and communication and presentation.

The co-researchers were actively involved in the development of the RQ, the selection of research methods, and the design of data collection tools. This provided them valuable insights into the research process and helped them develop an understanding of research design and methodology, aligning with Tsang et al. (2020) who emphasised the importance of developing questions and advocacy skills within youth-led research.

The co-researchers played an active role in deciding the data collection technique in form of a semi-structured focus group. This experienced provided them with skills in data collection. They also participated in the analysis of data, learning to identify codes and themes, helping them to develop their analytical and critical thinking skills, demonstrating the potential for knowledge co-production as highlighted by Qiu et al. (2021).

Reflecting on this research journey, it is clear that the young co-researchers were not merely participants but active agents of change. Their insights and perspectives enriched the research process. They developed valuable research skills, and enhanced their communication and collaboration abilities. Nadia's reflection, where she describes how participation in the boxing intervention helped her to improve her anger management, exemplifies the personal and social growth experienced by many of the young co-researchers. The co-researchers' feedback (Figure 4.3) also revealed that the research process enhanced both their research skills and fostered personal growth and self-awareness. The observation that "found it interesting to learn how other people changed and what helped" (Figure 4.3) suggests that peer learning and collaborative reflection took place within this PR.

5.3.5 Appropriate Co-researcher Training

Kellett (2010) identified the provision of adequate training as a significant challenge in involving CYP as co-researchers. Conolly (2008) further emphasised this point, highlighting the

substantial time commitment required for CYP to participate meaningfully as co-researchers. This raises concerns about the feasibility and sustainability of such programs, particularly regarding the availability of sufficient training resources.

Training schedules for young co-researchers must be tailored to the specific needs and context of each research project. Factors such as the young people's age, their needs, and the scope of their involvement will largely influence the frequency and duration of training. For instance, training schedules have varied considerably in their design, ranging from 12 weekly sessions (Kellett, 2005) to a more intensive one-week workshop (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). Regardless of the design format, most co-researcher training involves key areas such as research ethics and research methods (Kellett, 2005).

This study envisioned to adapt Kellett's (2005) recommendation of 12 weekly sessions to a total of eight sessions, with the idea being more frequent sessions may be more appropriate and beneficial for co-researchers to acquire a total grasp of the research process. Due to time constraints and practical challenges with the school timetable, the number of sessions reduced from eight to four.

The researcher carefully considered the potential consequences of a shorter training schedule, recognising that It could compromise the quality of youth participation and the overall research outcomes. In line with PR principles (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Uvin, 2007), the research process was dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs and interests of the co-researchers.

While challenges in implementing comprehensive training for co-researchers exist, they should not deter researchers from prioritising the development of young co-researchers.

Recognising the ethical imperative to ensure the wellbeing and meaningful participation of all research team members, it would be unethical to engage young people in research without providing them with adequate training and support. Engaging young people who struggle with traditional school learning presented unique challenges and required a tailored approach. Initially, some co-researchers exhibited reluctance to participate, mirroring their disengagement in formal school settings. This manifested as short attention spans, difficulties focusing on abstract concepts, and a tendency to become distracted. To address these challenges, the researcher created a relaxed and informal environment, shifting away from the traditional 'classroom' dynamics. Activities were designed to be interactive, emphasising visual aids, and collaborative brainstorming. Frequent breaks and opportunities for informal conversation were also offered, allowing the co-researchers to decompress. Despite these adaptions, maintaining consistent engagement remained an ongoing process. However, it was rewarding to witness their gradual shift from initial reluctance to active participation, demonstrating that alternative approaches can unlock the potential of young people who may struggle in traditional educational settings.

5.3.6 The messiness of PR with co-researchers

Research with CYP takes place within messy and unpredictable real-world contexts (Beazley et al., 2009), yet Cook (2009) highlights that this 'messiness' is crucial for reframing perspectives and generating new knowledge with both theoretical and practical value.

Reflecting on the research process, the researcher recognises the significance of time and relationship-building as highlighted by Connolly (2008). The constraints imposed by the school setting inevitably impacted the level of participation achieved. Moreover, the school context played a crucial role not only in facilitating access to co-researchers, but also in shaping the dynamics of our interactions. As Fitzpatrick (2016) emphasise, the school environment inevitably influences who participates and how. This experience has underscored the multifaceted nature of PR, and its

dynamic and nuanced process, characterised by the 'messiness' in real-world research (Beazley et al., 2009). Recognising this complexity requires ongoing critical reflection on the various reflection on the various factors that influence participation and the ways in which research can be adapted to better accommodate the needs and interests of all co-researchers.

Prior and during the research process, it was important for the researcher to adopt a participatory approach to this study, as the principles outlined by Hart (1992) and Aldridge (2017) closely align with the researcher's values and how he practices as a TEP. The researcher recognises that his beliefs of empowering others and building a sense of belonging, stems from much of the community work he does both in and outside of the EP profession. It was important for the researcher, that as part of the research process, the participants were able to share their lived experiences, and were also given the opportunity to shape the research. The researcher had adopted PR principles in his professional life prior to starting the doctorate course, however, he did not have an explicit understanding of PR approaches until his university teachings. Following university lectures on PR, the researcher consciously and actively engaged in participatory approaches throughout his work as a TEP and he acknowledges that his prior experiences with participatory principles influenced his decision making in adopting a participatory research method.

Throughout the research however, the researcher reflected on the reality of conducting PR and the challenges that came with this approach. There were multiple times where the researcher wondered whether he had selected a more difficult approach. For example, the researcher prepared and delivered training to the co-researchers in order for them to understand the research process from start to finish (Appendix F). During the facilitation and delivery of the co-researcher training, the co-researchers sometimes needed clarification and alternative ways of accessing the learning. This resulted in the co-researcher training extending beyond the allocated time in some sessions,

and the researcher questioned whether traditional methodology might have been less time consuming in comparison in his reflective diary:

> I am now in the reality of how time-consuming PR can be. Due to training the co-researchers previously unknown concepts and techniques, extra time is required in order for them to grasp unfamiliar or sometimes difficult things. I understand this, because it took me a certain amount of time to understand the learnings too. Whilst the very nature of this was expected, I realise now how traditional methodology might have been less time consuming. Although it's time consuming, the benefits of data quality and relevance to the people involved outweighs anything else. It is important to remember this during times when I realise the limitations of this approach. The fact that I am training the co-researchers in just four sessions seems a bit ridiculous as this is much lower than the suggested amount, however, this wasn't possible due to time constraints. You've got to work with the situation, and that's where we are.

Although PR might have been more challenging than conventional methodology, the researcher firmly believes that PR has had a real impact on the co-researchers, and ultimately, traditional methodology would have been a disservice to the pupils involved. The research was conducted as a genuine collaboration with the co-researchers, a process that the researcher reflects on positively, valuing its success in achieving its participatory objectives.

5.3.7 The Impact of PR with young co-researchers

There has been a growing recognition of young people as experts in their lives, shifting away from viewing them as 'passive' participants (Kellett, 2010). This shift in perspective is increasingly reflected in legislation and policy frameworks (Children and Families Act, 2014; SEND Code of Practice, 2014). The existing literature showed that young people's involvement in PR can lead to

knowledge production, agency, confidence and an improvement in mental health (Qie et al., 2021), whilst also fostering social justice and transformative change (Ritterbusch et al., 2020).

The involvement of young co-researchers significantly impacted the research design and process. Their valuable insights and experiences helped to refine the research focus, ensuring its relevance and meaning to their lives. For instance, the co-researchers suggested shifting the research focus to explore the positive impact of the boxing intervention. This shift also altered the discourse surrounding their level of need, demonstrating the young people's sense of ownership and empowerment in their role as co-researchers.

The young people demonstrated significant personal growth throughout the research process. Initially described by adults at the school as difficult to engage and quiet, they gradually gained confidence and actively participated in most stages of the research. The culminating presentation of their findings to school staff was a significant milestone for individuals who initially struggled to engage with learning and group discussions. This research experience appeared to foster their confidence, likely influenced by the trust and empowerment experienced within the research team and the recognition of their contributions by school staff. With this in mind, the research project provided context for the young people to have a voice and the participatory approach was successful in providing a platform for exploring their views of participating in the boxing intervention.

Their involvement as co-researchers led to a change in their agency and confidence, which was also observed in Qiu et al's (2021) findings. This research fostered a sense of confidence and empowerment among the young people, evidence by their active advocacy for the continuation of the boxing intervention within the school. This experience likely contributed to improvements in their self-awareness as evidenced in the co-researchers' feedback (Figure 4.3). This demonstrated

the potential of youth participation to not only enrich research, but also empower young people to address issues relevant to their lives.

5.3.8 Ethical Challenges in Facilitating PR with Young Co-researchers

The diary entry (Appendix Q) provides a glimpse into the ethical complexities encountered during this PR project. While the time constraints are a prominent concern, they are interwoven with broader ethical considerations related to power dynamics, informed consent, and the very nature of collaborative research with young people.

The researcher's realisation of the "time-consuming" nature of PR, particularly in training co-researchers in "previously unknown concepts," highlights the ethical dilemma of balancing research rigor with the co-researchers' learning curve. The reduction of training sessions, driven by "time constraints," raises questions about the co-researchers' preparedness and their ability to fully engage in the research process. Given that the researcher acknowledges "it took me a certain amount of time to understand the learnings too," it is reasonable to question whether the co-researchers were adequately equipped to contribute meaningfully to the research. Did the researcher's need to "work with the situation" compromise the co-researchers' agency and autonomy? These questions underscore the ethical imperative to prioritise the co-researchers' understanding and empowerment, even when faced with logistical challenges.

Furthermore, the inherent power imbalance between the adult researcher and the young co-researchers adds another layer of ethical complexity. The researcher's role as a TEP, coupled with their initial ideas of how PR might be conducted, could have inadvertently influenced the co-researchers' perceptions and contributions. This power dynamic necessitates ongoing reflexivity and a commitment to creating a truly collaborative research environment. The researcher's awareness of this dynamic, as evidenced by their efforts to minimise direct involvement during focus groups can

be considered. However, the ethical challenge remains: how to ensure that the co-researchers' voices are genuinely amplified and not simply assimilated into the researcher's agenda.

Moreover, the researcher's recognition of potential groupthink and social desirability bias highlights the need for careful consideration of internal power dynamics within the co-researcher group. The instance where the girls' contributions appeared to be undervalued by the boys underscores the importance of facilitating equitable participation and ensuring that all voices are heard. This requires the researcher to be vigilant in addressing potential biases and promoting a culture of respect and inclusivity within the co-researcher team.

Finally, the co-researchers' reluctance to be recorded, exemplifies the tension between data collection needs and the participants' comfort levels. This experience, along with the extended training period, revealed the co-researchers' vulnerability and highlighted the importance of allowing them to shape the research parameters according to their own needs. This required the researcher to adopt an insider-outsider perspective, engaging in reflexive discussions to understand the underlying motivations behind their actions.

In conclusion, conducting PR with young co-researchers demands a nuanced and ethical approach, prioritising the co-researchers' wellbeing and empowering them to actively shape the research process. Researchers must be prepared to navigate complex power dynamics, address unexpected challenges, and remain committed to ongoing reflexivity and dialogue to ensure that the research is conducted in a manner that is both ethical and empowering for the young people.

5.4 Strengths of the Research

A key strength of this research lies in its commitment to genuine youth participation. The co-researchers were actively involved in nearly all stages of the research process, from defining elements of the research focus and designing the methodology to collecting and analysing data and disseminating the findings. This high level of engagement fostered a sense of agency and empowerment among the young people, allowing them to shape the research agenda and contribute meaningfully to knowledge production. While the final write-up of the findings was completed by the researcher due to time constraints and the nature of doctoral research, the co-researchers' active involvement in all other stages of the research reflects a strong commitment to the principles of PR and a genuine effort to amplify the voice of young people.

Furthermore, the inclusion of a mixed-gender sample, comprising two boys and two girls, enhanced the richness and diversity of the data. This allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the research topic, capturing a broader range of perspectives and experiences related to social exclusion and marginalisation. By including both male and female voices, the research was able to explore potential gender differences in experiences and participation, contributing to a more comprehensive and inclusive analysis. The participant sample also presented indicators of racial and ethnic diversity. While specific racial or ethnic identities were not explicitly collected or documented during the research process, the researcher observed the co-researchers representing a mix of backgrounds. The observable diversity within the group provided a foundation for acknowledging the presence of varied experiences, even if a more detailed analysis of racial and ethnic differences was not possible.

5.5 Limitations of the Research

Despite the strengths of using PR, it is crucial to acknowledge the methodological limitations of this approach.

5.5.1 Methodological Rigour

One potential limitation of using PR is the potential lack of methodological rigour, which can impact the robustness and validity of the findings. Due to time constraints and group dynamics, the time spent on the data analysis phase by the co-researchers was limited. This aligns with Jones (2007), who argues that time constraints are a significant barrier to effective PR.

5.5.2 Focus groups

The selected method of a semi-structured focus group as the co-researchers' preferred data collection technique has its own limitations.

As the focus group was semi-structured, this meant that there was ample opportunity for open discussion amongst the participants. The focus group progressed with a range of open discussions, and covered various themes. This is a positive as it suggests that participants felt comfortable enough to share their experiences, indicating a level of group cohesion. Because of the nature of the focus group however, there was a degree of reliance on the researcher as a facilitator of discussion. For example, the researcher recognises that he asked probing questions throughout the focus groups in relation to the discussion that took place, in order to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses. The researcher acknowledges that the quality of discussion was impacted by his skills as a facilitator.

Due to time constraints, the focus group took place across two separate sessions, and this might have disrupted the flow of discussion. The second focus group session took place two weeks after the first, and although the researcher re-capped discussions that took place in the previous session, it is questioned whether a deeper exploration of the ideas, themes or areas may have been lost during this break.

5.6 Implications for PR

It is important to consider whether this research project achieved its aims. As explained in Chapter 3 (Methodology), this study aimed to:

- Explore how to carry out PR with young people in a way which addresses ethical and practical challenges
- Explore the experiences of young people who are at risk of exclusion and their participation in a boxing intervention
- Empower pupils as co-researchers
- Collect the voices of the young people and their experiences participating in a boxing intervention

With a participatory approach at the core of the study, the research hoped to provide a number of benefits for the co-researchers:

- Building an understanding and application of research
- The opportunity to have their voices heard
- The possibility to make changes that might impact theirs and others' experiences

This study adopted PR principles (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Uvin, 2007) throughout the research process, and it is also important to consider whether the participatory hopes of the study (discussed in section 3.5.1) were achieved:

- Building an understanding and application of research
- The opportunity to have their voices heard
- The possibility to make changes that might impact theirs and others' experiences

By adopting co-researchers as part of the research project, the co-researchers were involved in all but one of the stages of the research process (research project write-up). During the evaluative feedback session, the co-researchers provided a range of positive feedback including “learned a few things”, “if you want to get info you need to skim read, scan as well”, and “this helped me know to do research” (see appendix N). The co-researchers created the research question, decided the data collection method, and conducted the data analysis stage.

The co-researchers demonstrated that they had their voices heard throughout the study. For example, they showed that they felt empowered at the very start of the project when they decided to change the language of the research question to better reflect how they perceived their individual needs. Following the end of the research project, the co-researchers presented the findings of the research to the school in the hope that the boxing intervention can continue to benefit pupils within the school. The researcher believes that this demonstrates a degree of empowerment and confidence to have their voices heard and wanting to impact other’s experiences.

In relation to Hart’s (1992) ladder of participation, the co-researchers were involved in the decision-making at every stage of the research process and showed initiative and leadership. According to the ladder, this suggests that a high level of participation was achieved (Figure 1.1). In reference to Aldridge’s (2017) model of participation, the present study was also participant-led as it elicited the voices of marginalised participants and a ‘social change/transformation’ outcome occurred (Figure 1.2). This most significant change that observed was the empowerment of young co-researchers, who transitioned from being perceived as disengaged to becoming confident presenters of their own findings. This transformation was not just personal; it presented a shift in power dynamics, as the co-researchers actively shaped the research process, influencing decisions about recording and research questions. Ultimately, the research fostered a tangible change in how

these young people were perceived and how they perceived themselves, moving them from passive subjects to active participants in shaping knowledge and potentially, their own futures.

This study shows how the involvement of young people within PR can have a positive impact. The researcher believes that by training the co-researchers around research and specifically, PR, the co-researchers were able to gain a better understanding of the research project and how they might influence the process, as evidenced by their increased confidence throughout and their decision making. This suggests that young people's involvement in research projects may be improved by explicitly sharing information with them, and offering them opportunities to develop their learning.

PR works effectively when the young people involved are able to directly influence the planning (Cahill & Dadvant, 2018). Prior to the research project taking place, the researcher considered how this might be conducted most effectively, in order to offer the best opportunities for the participants and co-researchers. The researcher therefore considered how the young people might be best positioned in order to get promote participation throughout. Consent played an important part in this process, as formal consent was obtained at the start of the research, and informal consent was discussed throughout the various stages. Participants and co-researchers were given the option to leave at any point without reason, and this suggests that careful ethical considerations throughout the research process can result in higher levels of participation throughout a research project.

How the researcher positions themselves can also have implications on the level of participation within PR. As section 5.3.2 explains in further detail, the researcher consciously positioned himself in a manner that invited collaboration amongst himself and the co-researchers. It

is therefore important for the researcher to reflect on their position in PR and how this might influence the young people's participation within a PR project.

While this research project demonstrated the valuable contributions of young people as co-researchers, there are areas for improvement. For instance, the co-researchers' involvement in the analysis stage of the project could have been more extensive. Although they actively participated in the data analysis, their engagement fluctuated within this stage of the research process. This limitation was due to the co-researchers' level of engagement (see section 4.3.2), time constraints (see section 5.3.4), and the researcher needing to complete the thesis within a specific timeframe, making it difficult to schedule further sessions with the co-researchers. As Jones (2007) points out, insufficient time can be a significant barrier to effective PR.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the co-researchers were not directly involved in the writing up of the findings. As Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise, the writing-up process is an integral part of the analysis process itself. While the co-researchers actively contributed to stages of the research process, their direct involvement in the writing process could have further enriched the research and deepened the understanding of research findings, and levels of participation.

In this PR project, the researcher positioned himself as co-researcher and collaborator alongside the students. Having said this, it is crucial to acknowledge the inherent power dynamics that exists between the researcher and co-researchers. Further research should explicitly investigate young peoples' perspectives on their interactions with the facilitators and how these dynamics may influence their motivation to fully engage with research activities. As a researcher, we must be mindful of how our positioning may shape interactions within the research process. Instead of imposing our own agendas, researchers must be able to embrace a flexible and person-centred

approach for collaboration. This study showed that sharing and distribution of power are fundamental principles of conducting PR with young co-researchers. By actively engaging with students' perspectives and empowering them to shape the research agenda, researchers can create more meaningful research experiences.

5.7 Implications for Practice

5.7.1 Implications for School Practice

This research highlights the importance of adopting participatory approaches when working with young people within school settings. By involving young people as co-researchers, educators can not only gain valuable insights into their experiences and perspectives but also empower them to become active agents of change.

Building and maintain strong relationships with young co-researchers requires significant time and commitment. This necessitates a long-term approach that goes beyond short-term projects. School staff, particularly those with established relationships with students, such as form tutors, pastoral care staff, or learning support assistants, may be best positioned to initiate and sustain these relationships. However, it is crucial to recognise the time constraints faced by school staff and to provide adequate support and training to enable them to effectively engage in PR.

Furthermore, creating opportunities for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between young people and school staff is essential. This may involve regular meetings, informal discussions, and opportunities for young people to share their perspectives and contribute to decision-making processes within the school. By fostering a culture of open communication and collaboration, schools can create a more inclusive and student-centred learning environment.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3 (Methodology), the school in which the research takes place hosts an inclusion house that addresses the issue of exclusion of CYP within the school. By offering a variety of activities such as boxing and cooking, pupils develop skills that help integrate them back into mainstream lessons. The findings of the study encourage further use of the boxing intervention within the school as the findings show that the young people experienced a positive impact on their mood, attitude and engagement with learning as a result of participation. It is therefore suggested that mainstream schools, specifically applicable to secondary schools, might consider offering its pupils alternative activities including boxing as a means of promoting inclusion and engagement with their learning. Additionally, whilst this particular research setting school offers alternative activities for CYP who are at risk of exclusion, schools might want to consider integrating these activities as part of the overall school programme. This might minimise the likelihood of exclusion, as CYP with individual needs may benefit from these types of activities, in which they are able to transfer and apply the skills across their learning.

The research findings also found that the use of exercise on a weekly basis led to an increased mood and wellbeing amongst the co-researchers. This implies that settings might want to incorporate movement breaks to improve pupil's mood and attention regulation within lessons.

In conclusion, implementing PR within a school setting requires a commitment to long-term engagement, building strong relationships with young people, and recognising the valuable contributions of all stakeholders. By embracing participatory approaches, schools can empower young people, enhancing their learning experiences, and create a more inclusive environment.

5.7.2 Implications for Educational Psychology

This study has highlighted the comparisons between the core values and practices of PR and educational psychology (Gersch, 1987; Gersch et al., 2017; Kellet, 2010). Prior to the Children and Families Act (2014), the practice of EP already emphasised listening to and involving service users, aligning with the core principles of PR (Gersch, 1987).

For young people at risk of exclusion, EP's play a vital role in providing support to the CYP, their families and the educational setting. EP's are better positioned to support marginalised groups, and it is therefore, it is important that EPs have an understanding of how best to support young people (Dunbar-Kridge et al., 2010).

The SEND Code of Practice (DfE; DoH, 2015) emphasises the importance of listening to the voices of CYP and families. Whilst these guidelines highlight the necessity of involving CYP, there is a lack of confidence on how best to support their participation (Crutchley, 2017), with research showing that young people at risk of exclusion are often overlooked and not listened to (Hamil and Boyd, 2002). The Children and Families Act (2014) specifies the significance of the child in expressing their views and participating in decisions that affect their lives. It is therefore a prerequisite for EP's to provide these opportunities for CYP and families at both an individual and systemic level. This study provides evidence that young people's participation can be developed by involving them in decision-making and offering them opportunities for learning and collaboration.

Eliciting and listening to the voices of young people are fundamental aspects of the EP role (Mercieca & Mercieca, 2014). At the individual level, EPs can play a crucial role in supporting young people at risk of exclusion by fostering a sense of belonging within the school environment and empowering them to actively participate in decisions that affect them. Research has shown that young people at risk of exclusion experience less opportunities for employment and further

education (Kelly, 2013), and fewer social activities (Mencap, 2007), emphasising the importance for EPs to advocate for their inclusion in research and practice. This advocacy can contribute to positive changes in how young people at risk of exclusion are supported and understood within educational settings.

Engaging in PR involves a range of activities, and it is crucial for EP's to ensure that CYP fully understand the scope of their involvement, as their level of participation may vary. This study showed that engagement within the research process may be impacted by factors such as group dynamics, highlighting the importance of EP's explaining the role of the co-researcher.

The training element of PR requires significant time investment. This study demonstrated the need for EP's to conduct an appropriate amount of training sessions with the co-researchers to share information about research planning and methodologies. This can pose a significant challenge for EP's who are time-restricted.

Furthermore, the inherent flexibility of PR design can present challenges in obtaining ethical approval. The LA and schools may require more detailed planning and justification for projects that involve a high degree of time, flexibility and adaptability, and schools might not always be receptive or understanding of such projects. This level of flexibility and the aforementioned messiness of PR may also be unsettling for EP's who might prefer a more structured and predictable pathway.

5.7 Conclusion

This research, characterised by its messiness and complexity, has highlighted the multifaceted nature of PR with young co-researchers. It has underlined the importance of fostering genuine collaboration, navigating power dynamics, and valuing the unique contributions of young people in research. While the ideal of a completely equal and democratic research process may

remain aspirational, this study has demonstrated the transformative potential of youth participation in generating meaningful insights and empowering young people to become active agents of change within their communities. This aligns with the literature review findings, which highlighted a growing recognition of young people as competent social actors capable of meaningfully contributing to research.

Despite the challenges encountered, this research has reinforced the importance of flexibility, adaptability, and ongoing reflexivity in conducting ethical and impactful PR. It has highlighted the need for researchers to critically examine their own positionality and assumptions, ensuring that adult facilitation genuinely empowers young people rather than inadvertently reinforcing existing power structures. The researcher's pre-existing relationships with the school proved invaluable in facilitating the research process, understanding the importance of trust and support in PR.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on youth PR, offering valuable insights for researchers and practitioners seeking to engage young people in meaningful research. It underscores the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment where young people feel valued, respected, and empowered to share their perspectives and shape the research agenda. By embracing the complexities in PR, researchers can create opportunities for young people to not only contribute to research but also to develop their confidence, critical thinking skills, and sense of agency.

For EPs, this research highlights the potential of participatory approaches to empower marginalised students and foster a sense of belonging within educational settings. It underscores the importance of listening to and valuing the voices of young people, particularly those who have been traditionally excluded from research and decision-making processes. For schools, this study

emphasises the need for a more inclusive and collaborative approach to working with young people, recognising them as partners in their own learning and development. By embracing participatory approaches, EPs and schools can create more equitable and empowering learning environments that foster the wellbeing and agency of all students.

Ultimately, this research addresses the challenges that occur carrying out PR with young co-researchers and how these challenges might be navigated. It highlights the importance of listening to and learning from young people, recognising their unique perspectives and valuing their contributions to knowledge creation. By embracing the principles of PR, researchers can create more inclusive, equitable, and impactful research that benefits both the researchers and the young people involved.

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Appendix A - Weight of evidence (WOE)

	WoE A (Trustworthiness in terms of own question)	WoE B (Appropriateness of design and analysis for this review question)	WoE C (Relevance of focus for this review question)	WoE D (Overall weight in relation to review question)
Donegan et al. (2023) Ireland	**2**	**2**	**2**	**6** **Medium Quality**
Furman et al. (2019) Canada	**3**	**2**	**2**	**7** **High Quality**
Luguetti et al. (2023) Australia	**2**	**1**	**2**	**5** **Medium Quality**
O'Brien and Dadswell (2020)	**2**	**2**	**2**	**6** **Medium Quality**

UK				
Qiu et al. (2021) USA	**2**	**3**	**3**	**8** **High Quality**
Raman and French (2022) UK	**2**	**3**	**3**	**8** **High Quality**
Ritterbusch et al. (2020) Uganda	**3**	**2**	**3**	**8** **High Quality**
Spriggs and Gillam (2019) Australia	**2**	**2**	**2**	**6** **Medium Quality**
Tiefenbacher (2023) Sweden	**1**	**1**	**2**	**4** **Medium Quality**
Tsang et al. (2020)	**2**	**2**	**2**	**6**

USA				**Medium Quality**
Wilkinson et al. (2021) UK	**2**	**2**	**2**	**6** **Medium Quality**

Appendix B - Critical analysis of Identified studies

Author and country	Objective	Participants	Study design: data collection method	Data analysis	Main findings/Themes	Critical Analysis
Donegan et al. (2023) Ireland	Investigated how digital dialogues empowered children as co-researchers to reflect on their experiences of the pandemic	N = 23 Age = Primary school (exact age unknown) Gender = 11 males 12 females Researcher's interpretation of	Qualitative participatory method: Digital method using digital dialogues.	Digital dialogues were recorded, transcribed and coded using MAXQDA software.	Power dynamics between adults and children, and also between children themselves. Dialogues acted as platforms for resistance and agency for the children.	Used participatory method activities to elicit voices of young people = inclusive. Gender balance within the sample.

		marginalisation/vulnerability: Participants experience within COVID-19 context				Explored the development of a rights-respecting methodology that enabled children's capacity building as co-researchers.
Furman et al. (2019) Canada	Explored nonbinary youths' experiences of identity	N = 10 Aged = 16 – 25 Gender = 10 non-binary	Qualitative: Body-mapping workshop	Thematic analysis.	Engaging in body mapping with nonbinary youth was valuable in enabling participants to express	Used participatory method activities to elicit voices of

	development, engagement in activism, discrimination and mental health through a community-based participatory research project.	Researcher's interpretation of marginalisation/vulnerability: Sample consisted of ten non-binary youth participants (marginalised group).	Individual interviews		themselves through creative modalities without being limited by verbal and textual data collection methods. Art can feel awkward Lack of time and funding Connections through identity	young people = inclusive. Small sample size.

Luguetti et al. (2023) Australia	Used a decolonising lens as a theoretical framework to examine tensions, possibilities, and power relations that researchers and co-researchers encounter when	N = 58 Age = 16 – 24 Gender = 10 female, 48 male Researcher's interpretation of marginalisation/vulnerability: Sample consisted of African-Australian young people (socially vulnerable background) and coaches as part of the Football	Youth participatory action research. Qualaitive methods: Lesson plans, drawings, photos, freewriting, photos, audio messages,	Thematic analysis.	Finding sensitive ways to navigate the tensions of building trust and rapport Negotiating the struggle between the co-researchers and the coaches about the use of space within the sport context	Methodology was co-designed with co-researchers. Used participatory method activities to elicit voices of

	co-designing and implementing youth participatory action research through a project.	Empowerment (FE) programme.	videos and interviews.		The challenges of relinquishing power in research and knowledge production, as reflected in our collective struggle to communicate to participants the value of YPAR for themselves and their communities	young people = inclusive. Large sample size. Gender imbalance.
O'Brien, N., & Dadswell, A. (2019)	Explores the process of conducting a	N = 13	Participatory research co-design:	Thematic analysis.	Bullying leading to self-exclusion from school was	Although the study used a small sample

UK	participatory research project with young people to understand their experiences of self-exclusion from school due to severe bullying.	Gender = ten females and three males Age = between 13 and 16 years old. Researcher's interpretation of marginalisation/vulnerability: sample consisted of young people who have been self-excluded from school as a result of severe trauma usually involving bullying.	Focus groups		underpinned by anxiety. Reflections on participation and whether the research could be labelled as 'participatory'. Power dynamics Practicalities of participation Partnership working	size, there was diversity in experiences among the young people. Gender imbalance. Small sample size.

Qiu et al. (2021) USA	To share the researcher's experiences of engaging in intergenerational action research and provide a reflective tool for researchers and educators to draw upon when applying YPAR in after-school settings	Researcher's interpretation of marginalisation/vulnerability: Study took place in a middle school with the majority of CYP being "historically marginalized students". 90% identified as Black or Latino. The school is also identified as a low economic and low-performing school.	Qualitative: Semi-structured interviews Written reflections from researchers	Thematic analysis	Student development of critical literacy skills The importance of using multimodal tools Co-construction of knowledge Youth development of agency, confidence, and mental health	Used participatory method activities to elicit voices of young people = inclusive. Includes researcher's reflections throughout the process: reflections on participatory methods.

					The messiness involved in the Youth Participatory Action Research process.	Sample size is unknown. The researcher's clarify that this is due to student participants constantly changing.
Raman, S., & French, T. (2022) UK	Explored the issue of genuine participation of young people with learning disabilities in	N = 18 Age = Over 16 years old Gender = two male, rest unknown	Co-design process using participatory methods: Visual diary, focus group	Audio transcripts and participant feedback were analysed using	Genuine participation of young people with learning disabilities in co-design.	Used participatory method activities to elicit voices of

	participatory design.	Researcher's interpretation of marginalisation/vulnerability: Sample includes participants with mild to moderate learning disabilities.	with visual tools, lego, visual mapping, role play, photographs.	thematic analysis.	Engagement in creativity and conceptual decision-making. Impact experienced by participants.	young people = inclusive. Specific ages unknown. Gender unknown. Provides guidance for future co-designing and creative expression with young

						people using participatory methods.
Ritterbusch et al. (2020) Uganda	To discuss and reflect on learnings of child participation in a youth-driven participatory action research (YPAR) initiative	N = 93 Age = unknown Researcher's interpretation of marginalisation/vulnerability: sample consisted of street-connected children, sexually-exploited children and domestic workers.	Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, photographic exercises, and focus groups Child-led interviewing techniques.	Participatory data analysis process: participatory codebook design & conceptual validation; youth-driven coding session using NVIVO;	Insights for policymakers on possible ways for moving beyond tokenism	Age and gender of sample are unknown. Large sample size and a variety of data collection techniques were used.

				youth-driven analysis with NVIVO visualisations; first coding cycle; second coding cycle; inter-cosder reliability sessions with you researchers		Reflective element that explores children's capacity to continue as agents of change after project completion. Difficulties generalising the findings. This study took

						place in Uganda.
Spriggs, M., & Gillam, L. (2019). Australia	Explored the ethical complexities of involving children as co-researchers.	N = 10 Ten participants who were researchers that had conducted research using co-researchers. Age = unknown Gender = unknown	Qualitative: individual semi-structured interviews	Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Responses were analysed using content analysis to clarify content categories.	Researchers to be reflexive Need for support and training for child co-researchers. Taking advantage of children's relationships/networks	The paper directly addresses the focus of the paper, ensuring that the study's objectives were met.

		Researcher's interpretation of marginalisation/vulnerability: Three researchers discussed co-research with young people amongst other participant groups, e.g. sex workers, people from refugee backgrounds and people from disadvantaged communities. Four of the ten talked about using only adult participants as co-researchers, but some of these results (e.g. co-research with people with		Thematic analysis used to identify issues and themes.	Child co-researchers may gain access to knowledge they would not otherwise have about people Child co-researchers pressuring participants to take part Participants pressuring child co-researchers Child co-researchers' exposure to distressing information	Includes researcher's reflections throughout the process: reflections on participatory methods Gender unknown. Age unknown.

		physical or intellectual disabilities) are comparable and relevant to issues that arise when using children as co-researchers.			Possible burdens for child co-researchers	
Tiefenbacher, (2023) Sweden	Explored how methodological challenges in research with children with disabilities can be overcome.	N= 5 Ages = between 3 and 11 Researcher's interpretation of marginalisation/vulnerability: Participants include children with neuropsychiatric	Participatory qualitative method: Walk and talk conversations Video recordings and	Researcher used empirical material from the study to demonstrate and analyse the difficulties the researcher experienced	How we do research 'with' affects the possibility of children with disabilities' participation in research. Methods that allows the children to decide	Used participatory method activities to elicit voices of young people = inclusive.

		disabilities, a Swedish umbrella term for disabilities such as autism and ADHD.	field notes from play sessions	despite the considered research design.	their terms for their participation. Research can be reliant on research-specific adult-devised techniques, for the research and on the researcher's terms even though it takes place 'with' the children.	Small sample size Gender unknown Used and adapted participatory activities to engage with children Includes researcher's reflections

						throughout the process: reflections on participatory methods
Tsang et al. (2020) USA	Evaluated the benefits and limitations of involving young patients as co-researchers in the creation and execution	N = 16 Age = between 13 and 23 Gender = 5 male 11 female	Standardized feedback surveys and qualitative interviews were employed to evaluate the	Qualitative interviews were transcribed by a third party and coding of interview data and thematic	Empowerment from patient to partners Impact and advocacy in the global research community	Gender imbalance within sample. Research objectives were met.

	of an international participatory health research project	Researcher's interpretation of marginalisation/vulnerability: Sample consisted of young paediatric patients	impact of coresearchers' personal and academic growth	analysis was completed independently by authors VWLT and SF using NVivo.	Tokenism of involving youth within research projects	Difficulties generalising the findings. This study took place in USA. .
Wilkinson et al. (2021) UK	Engaged with young people with Adolescent Idiopathic	N = 10 young people and their parents (n = 11) Age = between 14 and 16	Participatory design workshop	Thematic analysis	Researcher's reflections on the methods used: - Young people	Used participatory activities to engage with

	Scoliosis (AIS) and their parents	 Gender = 9 female, 1 male			- Parents - Discussion	young people and parents Includes researcher's diaries and their reflections throughout the process: reflections on participatory methods

						Gender imbalance in sample

Appendix C - UEL Ethics Committee Approval Letter

University of East London

School of Psychology Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION LETTER

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

Reviewer: Please complete sections in **blue** | **Student:** Please complete/read sections in **orange**

Details	
Reviewer:	Please type your full name **Michael Higgins**
Supervisor:	**Janet Rowley**

Student:	**Matthew Barlow**
Course:	**Prof Doc in Educational & Child Psychology**
Title of proposed study:	**Understanding the experiences of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are part of a boxing intervention**

Checklist

(Optional)

	YES	NO	N/A
Concerns regarding study aims (e.g., ethically/morally questionable, unsuitable topic area for level of study, etc.)	☐	☒	☐
Detailed account of participants, including inclusion and exclusion criteria	☒	☐	☐
Concerns regarding participants/target sample	☐	☒	☐
Detailed account of recruitment strategy	☒	☐	☐
Concerns regarding recruitment strategy	☐	☒	☐
All relevant study materials attached (e.g., freely available questionnaires, interview schedules, tests, etc.)	☒	☐	☐
Study materials (e.g., questionnaires, tests, etc.) are appropriate for target sample	☒	☐	☐
Clear and detailed outline of data collection	☒	☐	☐
Data collection appropriate for target sample	☒	☐	☐

If deception being used, rationale provided, and appropriate steps followed to communicate study aims at a later point	☐	☐	☒
If data collection is not anonymous, appropriate steps taken at later stages to ensure participant anonymity (e.g., data analysis, dissemination, etc.) – anonymisation, pseudonymisation	☒	☐	☐
Concerns regarding data storage (e.g., location, type of data, etc.)	☐	☒	☐
Concerns regarding data sharing (e.g., who will have access and how)	☐	☒	☐
Concerns regarding data retention (e.g., unspecified length of time, unclear why data will be retained/who will have access/where stored)	☐	☒	☐
If required, General Risk Assessment form attached	☒	☐	☐
Any physical/psychological risks/burdens to participants have been sufficiently considered and appropriate attempts will be made to minimise	☒	☐	☐
Any physical/psychological risks to the researcher have been sufficiently considered and appropriate attempts will be made to minimise	☒	☐	☐
If required, Country-Specific Risk Assessment form attached	☐	☐	☒
If required, a DBS or equivalent certificate number/information provided	☒	☐	☐
If required, permissions from recruiting organisations attached (e.g., school, charity organisation, etc.)	☒	☐	☐
All relevant information included in the participant information sheet (PIS)	☒	☐	☐
Information in the PIS is study specific	☒	☐	☐
Language used in the PIS is appropriate for the target audience	☒	☐	☐
All issues specific to the study are covered in the consent form	☒	☐	☐
Language used in the consent form is appropriate for the target audience	☒	☐	☐
All necessary information included in the participant debrief sheet	☒	☐	☐
Language used in the debrief sheet is appropriate for the target audience	☒	☐	☐

Study advertisement included	☒	☐	☐
Content of study advertisement is appropriate (e.g., researcher's personal contact details are not shared, appropriate language/visual material used, etc.)	☒	☐	☐

Decision options	
APPROVED	Ethics approval for the above-named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice), to the date it is submitted for assessment.
APPROVED - BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES	In this circumstance, the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made **before** the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box at the end of this form once all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to the supervisor. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records. **Minor amendments guidance:** typically involve clarifying/amending information presented to participants (e.g., in the PIS, instructions), further detailing of how data will be securely handled/stored, and/or ensuring consistency in information presented across materials.
NOT APPROVED - MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED	In this circumstance, a revised ethics application **must** be submitted and approved **before** any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application. **Major amendments guidance:** typically insufficient information has been provided, insufficient consideration given to several key aspects, there are

	serious concerns regarding any aspect of the project, and/or serious concerns in the candidate's ability to ethically, safely and sensitively execute the study.

Decision on the above-named proposed research study	
Please indicate the decision:	**APPROVED - MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES**

Minor amendments
Please clearly detail the amendments the student is required to make
In most cases ensuring consistency across different parts of the form so if ever challenged there is no doubt what is meant e.g. "Teams logged in to a UEL account and saving to UEL's one drive for Business" as opposed to "Teams" in the second to last paragraph of Measures, Materials and Equipment section. **Section 4.2 – This needs to be a yes given that you are assigning pseudonyms.** **Also state how you are going to do this for any physical materials e.g. collages. At some point in the document you also need to state how you are going to keep any physical materials secure and what is going to happen to them after analysis.** **4.3 You need to state that the log of pseudonyms to names will be held in a password protected document separate to the e.g. transcripts and you need to say this every time you mention them.** **4.4 You need to encrypt and password protect the external back up hard drive as it will not be secure otherwise. You need to state this.**

4.5. Again say about encryption and password protection of the external back up hard drive

4.6 Rewrite this section to be clearer – I think in terms of long term it means after the study is complete so be clear what you want to keep after the study is over given you are telling participants their data is being deleted.

4.7 Ensure that you say "logged in via the UEL account" here.

6.1 You've clicked both yes and no – I'm assuming it's just yes given you've put in your DBS number below.

You need consistency across the parent and young person information sheets, consent forms and debrief sheets. E.g.

Withdrawal – as a parent you say 3 weeks but as a young person any time on the information sheet

Data saved – one year on the parent, as soon as the study is over on the participant, 3 years on the parent debrief sheet, five years on the young person debrief sheet.

Major amendments

Please clearly detail the amendments the student is required to make

Assessment of risk to researcher		
Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?	**YES** ☐	**NO** ☐
	If no, please request resubmission with an **adequate risk assessment.**	
If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard, please rate the degree of risk:		
HIGH	Please **do not approve a high-risk** application. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not be approved on this basis. If unsure, please refer to the Chair of Ethics.	☐
MEDIUM	Approve but include appropriate recommendations in the below box.	☐
LOW		☐

	Approve and if necessary, include any recommendations in the below box.	
Reviewer recommendations in relation to risk (if any):	Please insert any recommendations	

Reviewer's signature	
Reviewer: (Typed name to act as signature)	Click or tap here to enter text
Date:	Click or tap to enter a date
This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Ethics Committee	

RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE

For the researcher and participants involved in the above-named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UEL's Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard.

Confirmation of minor amendments

(Student to complete)

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data	
Student name: (Typed name to act as signature)	**MATTHEW BARLOW**
Student number:	**2190372**
Date:	**31/05/2023**
Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed if minor amendments to your ethics application are required	

Appendix D Educational Psychology Service Approval Letter

Matthew Barlow

Education Psychology Service

XXX Town Hall

XXX

XXX

Corporate Strategy and

Improvement Service

Strategy, Improvement &

Transformation Division

Chief Executive's Office

Tel XXX

Email XXX

05 May 2023

Reference: CERGF283

RGF Application Approval

Dear Matthew

Research Title: Understanding the experiences of young people with special educational needs and disabilities

Qualitative participatory approach to explore the experiences of young people with SEND who participate in a boxing intervention.

This is to confirm that your research proposal has been approved by the Research Governance Framework Panel.

Upon completion can you please submit a copy of your report or an extract from your conclusion to the above postal or email address. We may then publish details of your research on the National Social Care Research Register or equivalent.

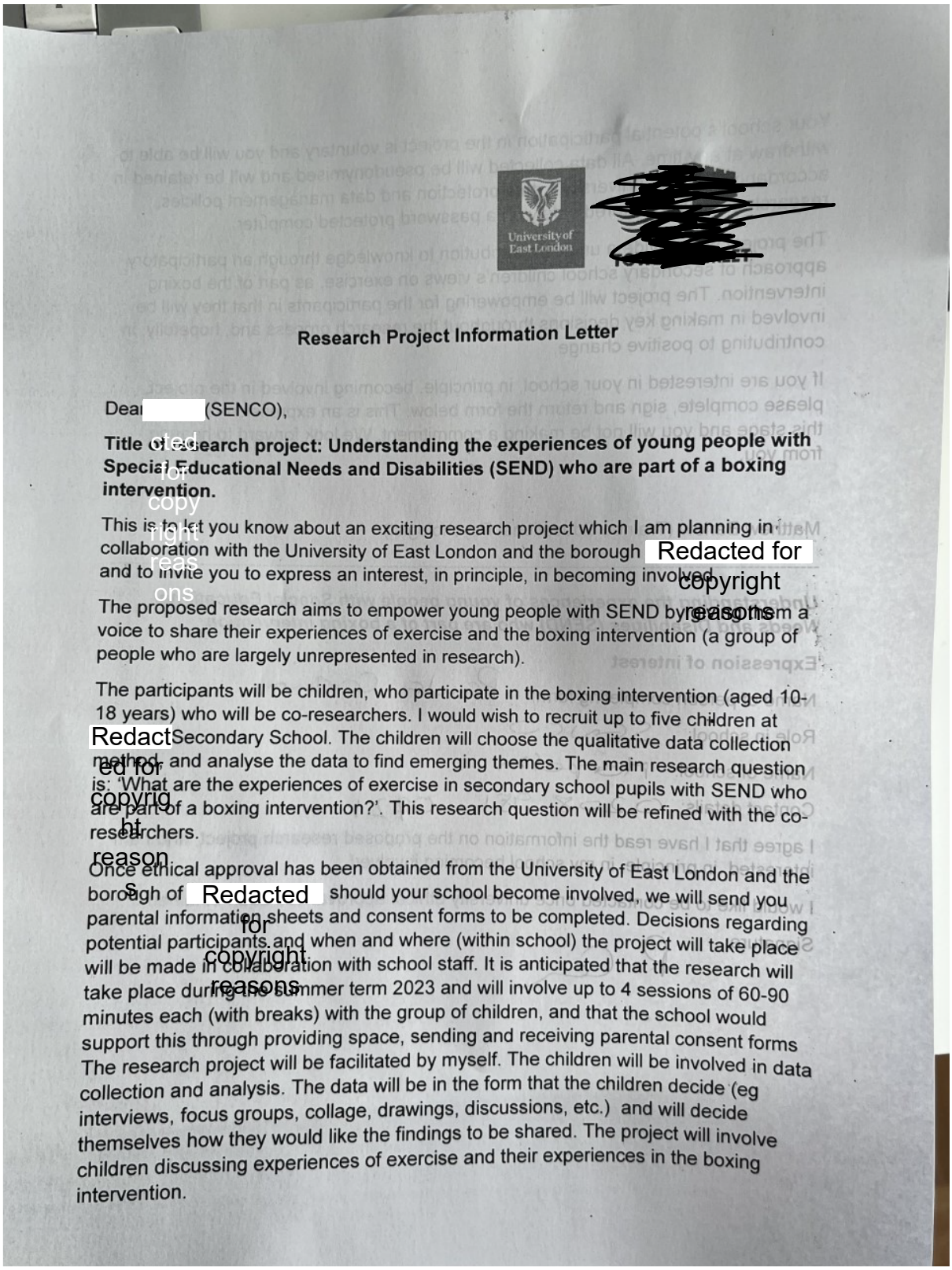
Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any further assistance.

I wish you well in your research study.

Yours sincerely,

RGF Co-ordinator

Appendix E – School Approval Letter



University of East London

Research Project Information Letter

Dear (SENCO),

Title of research project: Understanding the experiences of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are part of a boxing intervention.

This is to let you know about an exciting research project which I am planning in collaboration with the University of East London and the borough and to invite you to express an interest, in principle, in becoming involved.

The proposed research aims to empower young people with SEND by giving them a voice to share their experiences of exercise and the boxing intervention (a group of people who are largely unrepresented in research).

The participants will be children, who participate in the boxing intervention (aged 10-18 years) who will be co-researchers. I would wish to recruit up to five children at Secondary School. The children will choose the qualitative data collection method, and analyse the data to find emerging themes. The main research question is: 'What are the experiences of exercise in secondary school pupils with SEND who are part of a boxing intervention?'. This research question will be refined with the co-researchers.

Once ethical approval has been obtained from the University of East London and the borough of should your school become involved, we will send you parental information sheets and consent forms to be completed. Decisions regarding potential participants and when and where (within school) the project will take place will be made in collaboration with school staff. It is anticipated that the research will take place during the summer term 2023 and will involve up to 4 sessions of 60-90 minutes each (with breaks) with the group of children, and that the school would support this through providing space, sending and receiving parental consent forms The research project will be facilitated by myself. The children will be involved in data collection and analysis. The data will be in the form that the children decide (eg interviews, focus groups, collage, drawings, discussions, etc.) and will decide themselves how they would like the findings to be shared. The project will involve children discussing experiences of exercise and their experiences in the boxing intervention.

Your school's potential participation in the project is voluntary and you will be able to withdraw at any time. All data collected will be pseudonymised and will be retained in accordance with the university's data protection and data management policies, research data will be stored safely on a password protected computer.

The project will provide a unique contribution to knowledge through an participatory approach of secondary school children's views on exercise, as part of the boxing intervention. The project will be empowering for the participants in that they will be involved in making key decisions throughout the research process and, hopefully, in contributing to positive change.

If you are interested in your school, in principle, becoming involved in the project, please complete, sign and return the form below. This is an expression of interest at this stage and you will not be making a commitment. We look forward to hearing from you,

Matthew Barlow (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Understanding the experiences of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are part of a boxing intervention

Expression of interest

Name of person completing form: Redacted for copyright reasons

Role in school: SENCO

Name of school: Redacted for

Contact details: Redacted for copyright reasons

I agree that I have read the information on the proposed research project, and I am interested, in principle, in my school becoming involved.

I would like to be contacted once university ethical approval has been obtained.

Signature: Redacted for copyright reasons

Participatory Research Project

Matt Barlow (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Who am I?

- My name is Matt and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist
- I am doing a research project to try and find out the experiences of young people with SEND who have taken part in the boxing intervention
- Not much is known about the experiences of people with SEND and exercise and I was hoping you can help me

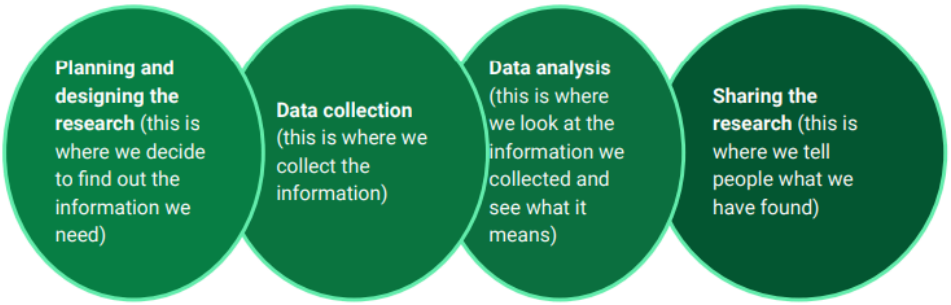
Researching/working together

- Participatory research
- I hope to involve young people with SEND to help lead this project with me
- This means that you can be involved in every stage of the project

What will your role be?

- If you volunteer to be part of this research project then you will have a role called 'co-researcher'
- This means you will receive training on how to carry out research
- You can choose to participate as little or as much as you would like (and I will be there to support you)

What are the different stages of the research project?



What will you be committing to?

- As a co-researcher the level of involvement in the research process is determined by you
- This means you decide which part of the research process you would like to involved with
- If you choose to be involved at every stage, it is likely to involve a weekly commitment
- This should be 60 - 90 minutes a week.

Why would you want to be a co-researcher?

You will learn new skills in carrying out research

The skills you develop will be useful for you in the future. You can put it on your CV, college and university application.

I'd like to be a co-researcher, what do I need to do?

- If you're interested in being a co-researcher, just let me know.
- I'll give you an information sheet tells you more about the research and includes things we spoke about today.
- Take the information sheet home and discuss it with your family.
- If you are still interested, then you and your parent will need to sign a form that confirms you will be a co-researcher


Any
Questions

Appendix G - Participant Information Sheet

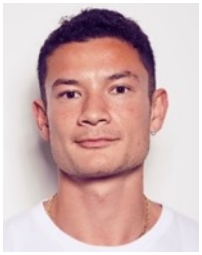
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Understanding the experiences of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are part of a boxing intervention

Contact person: Matthew Barlow

Email: u2190372@uel.ac.uk

Who am I?



You might have already seen me around school, or we might have even met! But just in case you haven't, let me tell you who I am. My name is Matt, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of East London (UEL). This means that I am learning how to work with young people like you and help support them at school.

What is study about?

I am really interested in your experiences of the boxing intervention you have been part of – the positives, negatives and any stories you might be able to share with me. This information will help adults like me understand how things like boxing may help or not help you. Before you decide whether to take part in my research, please read this letter with your parents or carers. Feel free to ask me any questions before you decide ☺

What happens if I want to join?

Hopefully, a few of you will join and we will have a group. You would be co-researchers on a piece of doctoral research (fancy I know!). This means that you will be able to plan the research with me and we can work out the best way to gather your experiences of the boxing intervention together. We will meet up to ten times in a group and we will discuss the questions you would like to ask and how you would like to answer the questions – this could be in interviews or drawings for example. We will then analyse the information together and see what the group thinks of the boxing intervention.

It is entirely up to you whether you take part or not, participation is voluntary.

Can I change my mind?

Yes, you can change your mind and leave without explanation. If you would like to leave the study, you may leave at any point during the study. If you decide to leave before we analyse

the data, your data will not be used as part of the research. But, if we have started to type up your interview I will use the data for my research thesis.

How will the information I provide be kept secure and confidential?

I will not use your real name or any information that could identify you. I might record these sessions if you decide you would like to do something like an interview, but only I will see these videos after. Then, I will write everything that happened in the video in a transcript (writing). All of the videos and transcripts will be deleted 1 year after the study.

I will not talk about anything you told me with anyone else, as long as it does not put you at risk. However, if you tell me something that might worry me about your safety, I will have to tell adults that care about you.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

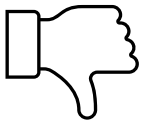
Appendix H - Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Understanding the experiences of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are part of a boxing intervention

Contact person: Matthew Barlow

Email: u2190372@uel.ac.uk

	 **YES**	 **NO**

I have read the information sheet with my parent or carer and/ or it was explained to me.		
I have had a chance to think about the information, ask questions and they have been answered.		
I know that participating in this study is my choice, and I can withdraw at any point in the sessions without offering an explanation or reason.		
I know that my personal information including audio/video recordings from the research will be securely stored and remain confidential.		
I agree to take part in the study.		

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……

Participant's Signature

……

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……

Researcher's Signature

……

Date

……

Appendix I - Parents/Guardian Information Sheet

PARENT/ GUARDIAN INFORMATION SHEET

Understanding the experiences of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are part of a boxing intervention

Contact person: Matthew Barlow

Email: u2190372@uel.ac.uk

Your child is being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part or not, please carefully read through the following information which outlines what their participation would involve. Feel free to talk with others about the study (e.g., friends, family, etc.) before making your decision. If anything is unclear or you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above email.

Who am I?

My name is Matthew Barlow. I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London (UEL) and am studying for a doctorate in child and educational psychology. As part of my studies, I am conducting the research that you are being invited to participate in.

What is the purpose of the research?

I am conducting research into how young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) experience the boxing intervention they take part in. The study will be designed with the young people to explore their experiences. This study aims to empower this group of young people by giving them a voice to share their experiences of exercise and the boxing intervention). Your child would also be provided with the skills to carry out research. The data collected will have implications for how young people are supported using exercise- based interventions.

Why have I been invited to take part?

To address the study aims, I am inviting young people with SEND between the ages of 11-18 who have attended the boxing intervention at Morpeth Secondary School to take part in my research. If your child fits this criteria, your child is eligible to take part in the study. It is entirely up to you whether your child takes part or not, participation is voluntary.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to take part?

If you agree for your child to take part, your child will be asked to attend up to ten sessions as part of a group with the researcher at school. The sessions will take 60-90 minutes. The

sessions will be designed with the young people to help them share their experiences of the boxing intervention in the most suitable way. The meetings may be recorded in video with university equipment and will be stored securely according to GPDR guidelines until analysis is completed.

Can I change my mind?

Yes, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw without explanation or consequence, by notifying researcher via email during the study. If you decide to withdraw before we have analysed your child's data, then it can be destroyed on your request. But, if we have started to type up your interview I will use the data for my research thesis.

How will the information I provide be kept secure and confidential?

Participants will not be identified by the data collected, on any material resulting from the data collected, or in any write-up of the research. The children's names will be pseudonymised, and any identifying information will be omitted. The raw data will be secured at the above account, for the length of 1 year after the research is done.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The research will be written up as a thesis and submitted for assessment. Should you wish to, you will have the option to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed from the contact details below.

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Matthew Barlow, via u2190372@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr Janet Rowley School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

Email: j.rowley@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of School Research Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

Appendix J - Parents/ guardian Consent Form

CONSENT OF A PARENT/GUARDIAN TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Understanding the experiences of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are part of a boxing intervention

Contact person: Matthew Barlow

Email: u2190372@uel.ac.uk

	Please initial
I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet dated XX/XX/XXXX for the above study and that I have been given a copy to keep.	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time, without explanation or disadvantage.	
I understand that if I withdraw during the study, my data will not be used.	

I understand that some data may be recorded using UEL video recording equipment.	
I understand that my personal information and data, including audio/video recordings from the research will be securely stored and remain confidential. Only the research team will have access to this information, to which I give my permission.	
It has been explained to me what will happen to the data once the research has been completed.	
I understand that short, anonymised quotes from my child's interview and sessions may be used in material such as conference presentations, reports, articles in academic journals resulting from the study and that these will not personally identify me.	
I would like to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed and am willing to provide contact details for this to be sent to.	
I agree to take part in the above study.	

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……

Participant's Signature

……

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……

Researcher's Signature

……

Date

……

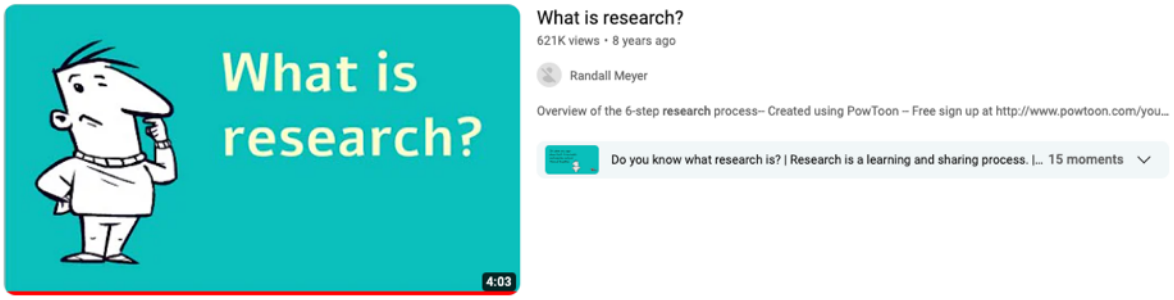
Appendix K – Co-researchers training session plan

Session 1: What is Research?

Learning Aims	Knowledge Content	Skills	Interactive Element
Begin to develop an understanding of the nature of research	The nature of research/enquiry The important of research	Critical thinking Separate facts and opinions	Video Worksheet Discussion
Begin to have an appreciation of ethical issues in research	The different types of research and their main characteristics	Interpreting research findings	Mind-map

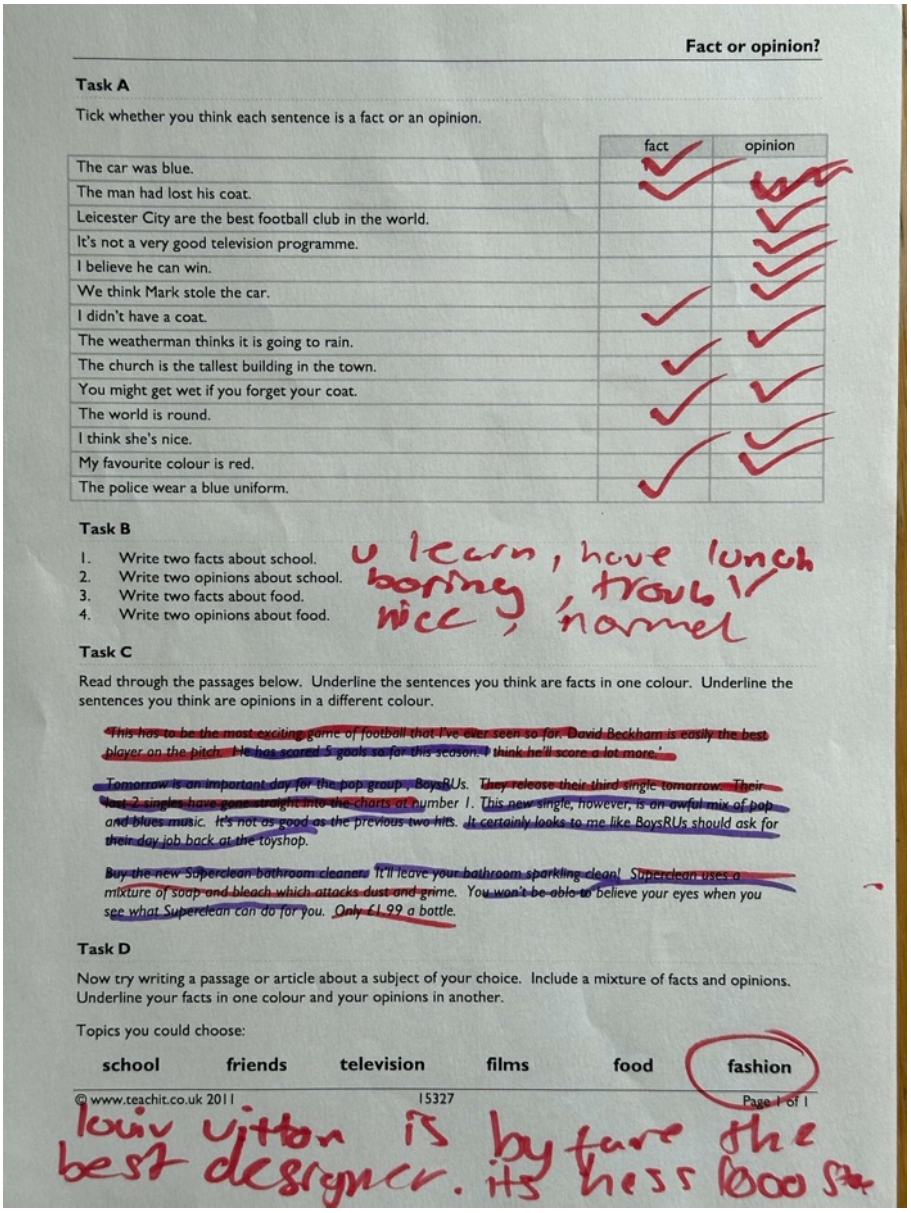
<u>Video: What is research?</u>

The co-researchers watched the below video, and we then had a discussion around What is research?



<u>Worksheet: Fact or opinion?</u>

The co-researchers then went through a worksheet individually, highlighting facts in one colour, and opinions in another colour. We then discussed the differences between the two as a group, and concluded how this might relate to research. One of the co-researchers worksheet can be seen below (on next page):



Fact or opinion?

Task A

Tick whether you think each sentence is a fact or an opinion.

	fact	opinion
The car was blue.	✓	
The man had lost his coat.	✓	
Leicester City are the best football club in the world.		✓
It's not a very good television programme.		✓
I believe he can win.		✓
We think Mark stole the car.		✓
I didn't have a coat.	✓	
The weatherman thinks it is going to rain.		✓
The church is the tallest building in the town.	✓	
You might get wet if you forget your coat.		✓
The world is round.	✓	
I think she's nice.		✓
My favourite colour is red.	✓	
The police wear a blue uniform.	✓	

Task B

1. Write two facts about school.
2. Write two opinions about school.
3. Write two facts about food.
4. Write two opinions about food.

u learn, have lunch
boring, trouble
nice, normal

Task C

Read through the passages below. Underline the sentences you think are facts in one colour. Underline the sentences you think are opinions in a different colour.

'This has to be the most exciting game of football that I've ever seen so far. David Beckham is easily the best player on the pitch. He has scored 5 goals so far this season. I think he'll score a lot more.'

Tomorrow is an important day for the pop group, BoysRUs. They release their third single tomorrow. Their last 2 singles have gone straight into the charts at number 1. This new single, however, is an awful mix of pop and blues music. It's not as good as the previous two hits. It certainly looks to me like BoysRUs should ask for their day job back at the toyshop.

Buy the new Superclean bathroom cleaner. It'll leave your bathroom sparkling clean! Superclean uses a mixture of soap and bleach which attacks dust and grime. You won't be able to believe your eyes when you see what Superclean can do for you. Only £1.99 a bottle.

Task D

Now try writing a passage or article about a subject of your choice. Include a mixture of facts and opinions. Underline your facts in one colour and your opinions in another.

Topics you could choose:

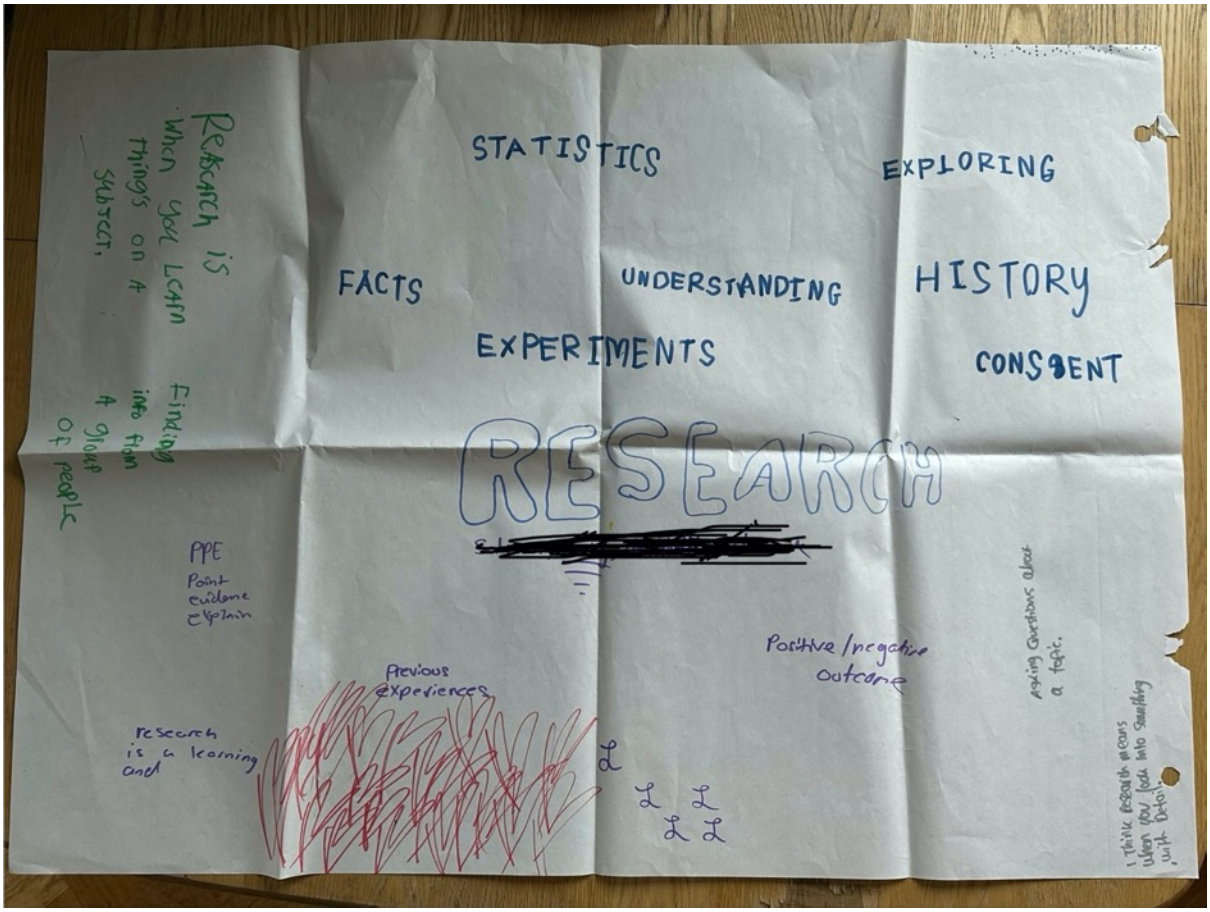
school **friends** **television** **films** **food** **fashion**

 15327 Page 1 of 1

louis vitton is by fare the best designer. its hess boo

Mind-map activity

At the end of the session, the co-researchers were invited to create a mind-map together, highlighting any information they have learned throughout the session to answer question, 'What is research?'



The co-researchers wrote the following words:

- Statistics
- Facts
- Experiments
- Understanding
- Exploring

- History
- Content
- Positive/negative outcome
- Asking questions about a topic
- I think research means when you look into something with detail
- Previous experiences
- Research is learning
- PPE (point evidence system)
- Finding info from a group of people
- Research is when you learn things on a subject

Session 2: Research Ethics and Framing a Research Question

First part: Research Ethics

Learning Aims	**Knowledge content**	**Skills**	**Interactive element**
Understand the primary importance of ethics in research	Informed consent	Thinking skills Appreciating other people's perspectives	Video Discussion
Appreciate a situation from another person's perspective	Human rights	Making balanced judgements	
Develop greater ethical awareness	Confidentiality/Anonymity	Exploring moral and social values	

Video: Psychological harm

The co-researchers watched the below video discussing research ethics and what this means in research. We then had a discussion on what we had learned from watching the video.

Research Ethics | Ethics in Research
100K views • 1 year ago
SciToons
You may already be familiar with what research is, but what defines good **research**? **Ethics** help answer this question.
CC

Discussion activity

This activity involved a group discussion, in which we reflected on the guiding principles in research (taken from Alderson & Morrow, 2004) and what this might look like in practice:

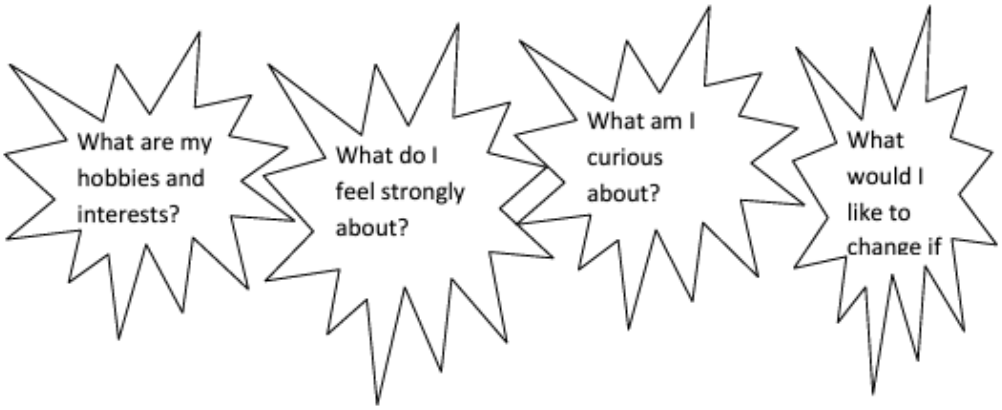
- Respect and justice – respecting participants' sensitivities and dignities.

  What might this look like in practice? – being kind, listening and not to put pressure on people
- Rights – participants' rights to be protected from harm, to be fully informed and listened to. What might this look like in practice? Get consent from participant and parents beforehand, and ask the right questions
- Best outcomes – to actively promote best outcomes for participants. What might this look like in practice? To answer any questions, have a list of resources they can go to, and to make sure that the research has a positive impact for the participants

Second part: Framing a research question

Learning Aims	Knowledge content	Skills	Interactive element
Begin to understand what a research question is and how it differs from a hypothesis	The pivotal place of a research question in the research process	Question framing Sorting the essential from the peripheral and/or irrelevant	Discussion Think sheet
Begin to understand how a research question informs the design and data collection methods of a research study			

Think sheet:



Topic Area:

What aspect of this topic especially interests me?

What exactly am I trying to find out?

Where and how could I find this out?

Draft Question

Are there any age or gender issues?

What are the timeframes I need to work to?

Research Question:

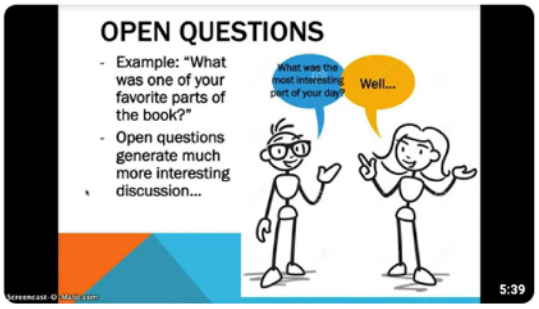
Session 3: Data Collection

First part: Data collection

Learning Aims	**Knowledge content**	**Skills**	**Interactive element**
To develop an appreciation of different interview structures, different question types and other data collection techniques	Structured interviews Semi-structured interviews Group interviews (focus groups) Graphic illustration Diaries Digital storytelling and storyboarding Drawing and collages (with spoken feedback)	Open questioning Closed questioning Creativity/drawing facilitating	Video Picture Discussion

Video:

The co-researchers watched the below video on open and closed questioning and what this means in research. We then had a discussion on what we had learned from watching the video.



Closed vs. Open Questions
79K views • 9 years ago
Kealy Jaynes
ELA_U6_W1_L2notes.
Intro | Closed Questions | Closed Questions Examples | Open Questions... 5 chapters

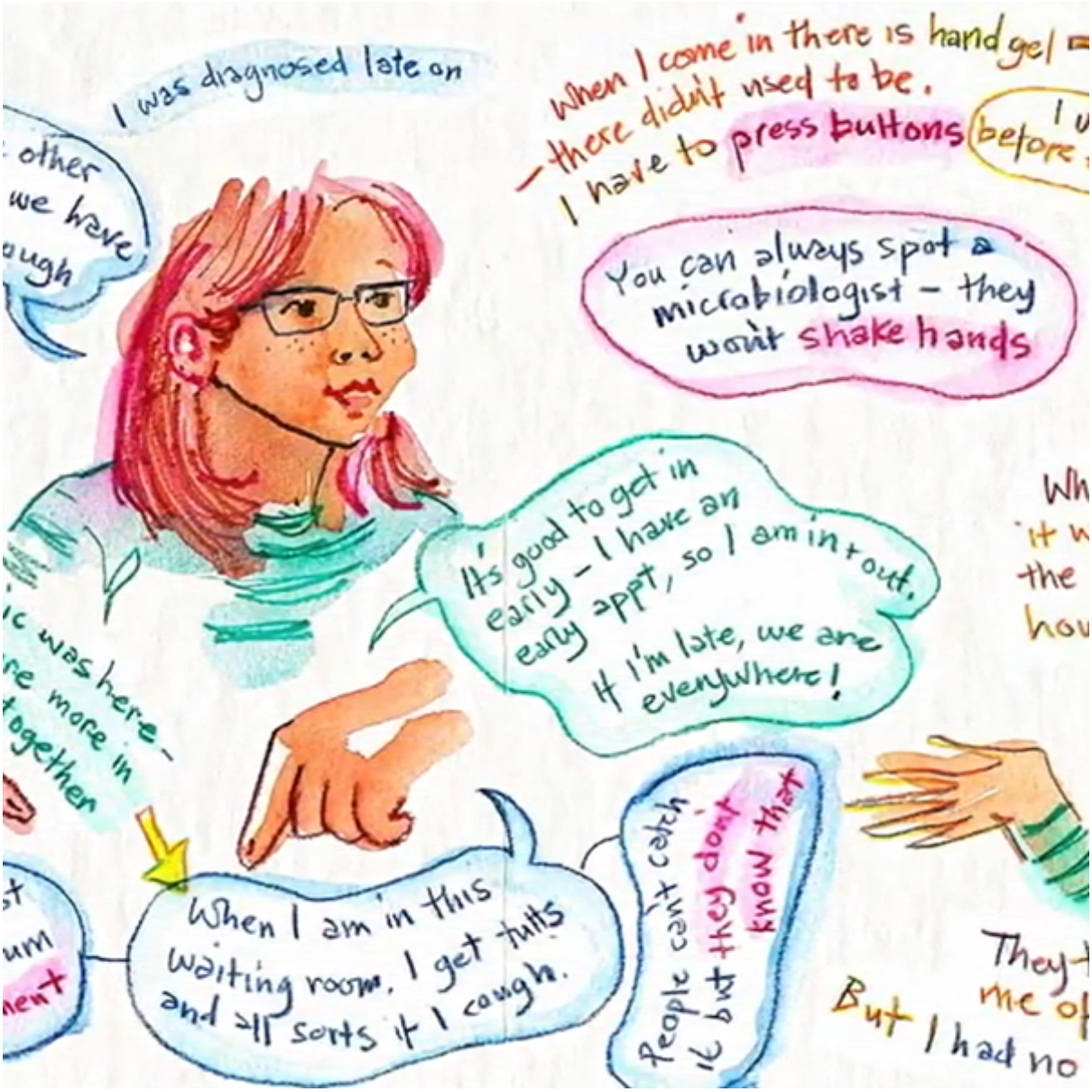
Video

The co-researchers watched the below video on focus groups and what this means in research. We then had a discussion on what we had learned from watching the video.

What Are Focus Groups?
50K views • 4 years ago
PlaybookUX
Start getting user feedback today: https://www.playbookux.com/. #ux #userexperience #focusgroup #userresear...
Intro | Preparing for a Focus Group | Pros of Focus Groups | Cons of Focus... 4 chapters

Picture

The co-researchers viewed the below picture and discussed how graphic illustration might be used in research.



Diary entry:

The co-researchers were asked to individually complete a diary entry using the template below. We then discussed how it felt completing the diary.

Dear diary...

Video: Digital storytelling and storyboarding

The co-researchers watched the below video on digital storytelling and what this means in research.

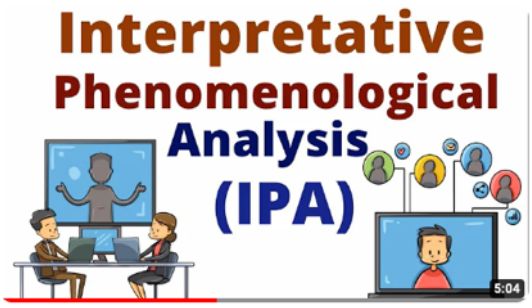
We then had a discussion on what we had learned from watching the video.

Session 4: Data Analysis

Learning Aims	**Knowledge content**	**Skills**	**Interactive element**
Begin to understand how to code and analyse qualitative data	Levels of coding Analysis of data	Organising, grouping and sifting large amounts of data Coding and categorising Theme abstracting	Video Discussion Activity

Video: Interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA)

The co-researchers watched the below video on IPA and what this means in research. We then had a discussion on what we had learned from watching the video.



Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis [IPA]: A qualitative data analysis approach

32K views • 2 years ago

Research Tube

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is one of the important and common type of analysis in qualitativ...

Introduction | Research questions | Sample selection | Semistructured interview... 6 chapters

Activity: We then had a discussion on how we might use IPA as a group:

Phase	Description of phase
Familiarising ourselves with data	Reading the data. Sharing initial thoughts
Initial note taking	Making initial notes on what the person is saying and how we think they mean.
Developing emergent themes	Searching for themes by connecting any patterns between exploratory notes
Searching for connections across emergent themes	Looking across the emergent themes to look for connections.
Moving onto the next case	Moving onto the next co-researchers responses and comparing to other's responses.

Looking for patterns across cases	Final stage involving looking for patterns across cases. Co-producing superordinate and subordinate themes.

Appendix L – De-brief Sheet

Understanding the experiences of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are part of a boxing intervention

Contact person: Matthew Barlow

Email: u2190372@uel.ac.uk

Thank you for being involved in this research project. This letter will detail what will happen to the information you've shared.

Please be assured that your details and the information you've given will remain anonymous. Your name or school will not mentioned in the thesis. The pseudonym you selected will be used. The findings will be shared with you, your parents, school and other professionals. But please remember, your actual name will not be used.

The information will be kept secure. Once I have finished writing up the findings and doctorate, I will destroy the data.

You have the right to withdraw from this study. I will keep this option available to you for the next three weeks, at which point I reserve the right to use the information you have provided.

If you would like further information about the research or have any questions, you can email me.

Matthew Barlow, via u2190372@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr Janet Rowley School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

Email: j.rowley@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of School Research Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

If you have been upset by anything that has come up in the course of this project be aware that support is available from school staff. Mrs X is able to provide support if you'd like.

Here is a list of resources you might helpful if you would like additional support:

Young Minds

Phone number: 020 7089 5050

24/7 Crisis Messenger Text Service: 85258

Parent Helpline: 0808 802 5544

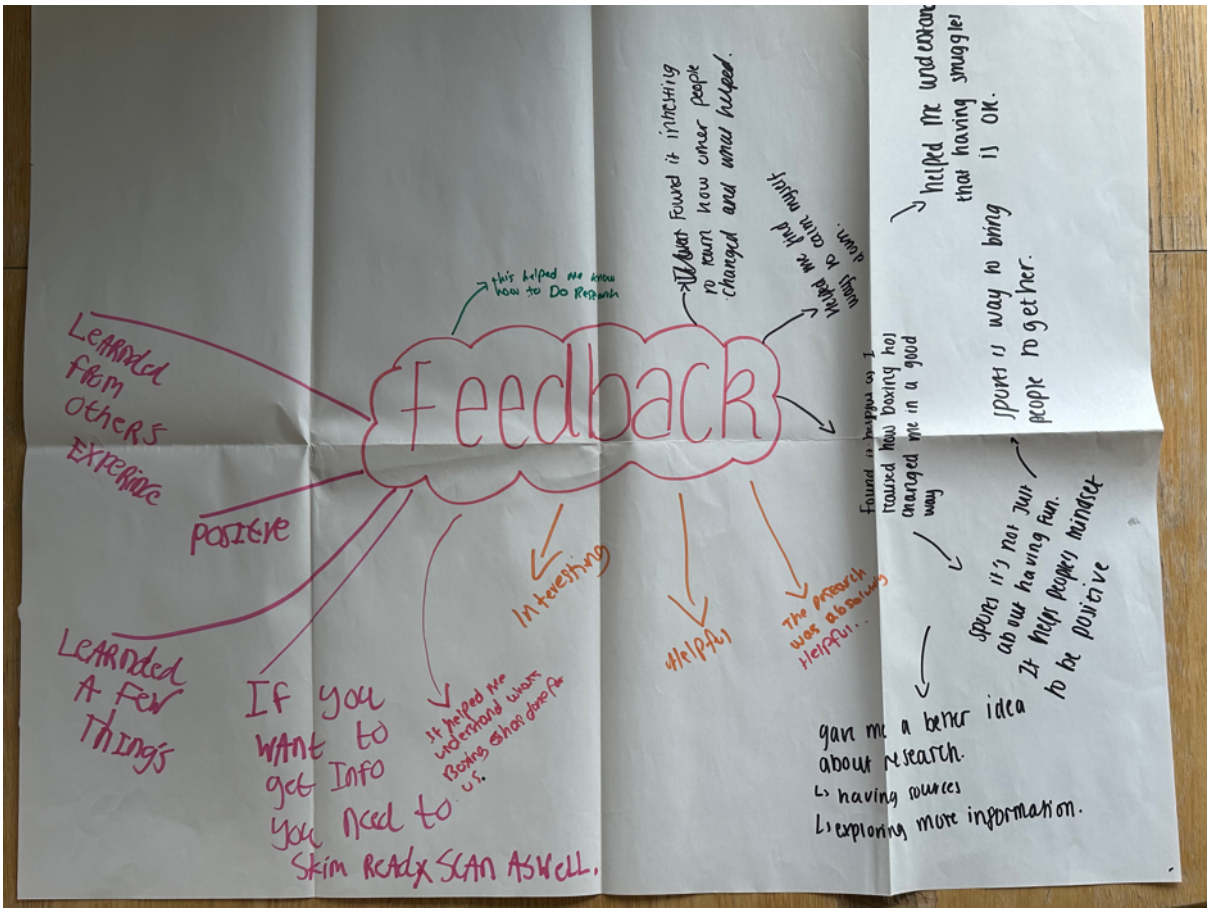
Parent Email Service: www.youngminds.org.uk/contact-us/parents-helpline-enquires/

Phone number: 116 123

Email Address: jo@samaritans.org

Thank you for taking the time to read this sheet

Appendix M – Co-researcher Feedback



The co-researchers wrote the following:

- Learned a few things
- Learned from others experience
- Positive
- If you want to get info you need to skim read scan as well
- It helped me understand what boxing has done for us
- Interesting
- Helpful
- The research was absolutely helpful

- Gave me a better idea about research
- Having sources
- Exploring more information
- Found it helpful as I realised how boxing has changed me in a good way
- Sports its not just about having fun. It helps people's mindsets be positive
- Sports is way to bring people together
- Helped me find ways to calm myself down
- Helped me understand that having struggles is okay
- Found it interesting to learn how other people changed and what helped
- This helped me know how to do research

Appendix N – Extracts from TEP's reflective diary

Focus Group reflections:

During the focus group, one of the co-researchers shared that the group ought to do really well to give responses because it's part of doctor research. This made me feel strange as I felt that she might be interacting differently because of her expectations? It made me think, have I explained the dynamics of the research well enough? I wondered whether her saying this will influence the other co-researcher's behaviours, interactions and responses moving forward. I also wondered how I might have come across? Was it obvious that I have an interest in exercise and boxing? Were they answering accordingly? I made sure to remain unbiased throughout, maybe this is the reality of me introducing the topic of boxing into the research and the young people realising I show an interest.

Role as a facilitator:

During the focus group, I was conscious of my role as a facilitator, and how this might be impacting the fluidity of discussion. I tried my best not to lead any of the conversation, waiting for the appropriate moments to ask further questions on things they raised. It was difficult at points though. Sometimes I found myself understanding their situation and experiences of exercise, and I was thinking "I understand you, completely" in my head. Rather than respond impulsively, I used the consultation skills I use every day with the families, school and young people I work with in the focus groups. There were moments today where facilitation found easy, and moments it felt hard. The group would often raise a topic and it felt like they could speak about that topic for the whole session, and so I was mindful of bringing the conversation back to the core research topic. I left minutes for this, as I feel like young people, and myself included can sometimes speak about something that seems completely unrelated, when in actuality, you realise part of the story is connected. I am happy with how today went – I was unsure how the young people would participate in the focus groups, yet they expressed an openness and conversed with each other throughout.

Whilst it's part of the participatory approach, and group dynamics can develop in any direction, I am thankful that there appears to be a group cohesion.

Relationship building/groups dynamics:

Whilst I was confident in myself building rapport with the co-researchers during our first meeting, I was unsure how they would get on as a group. Do they know each other? Are they friends? Are they 'enemies'? From our first meeting as a group together, it was clear that they knew each other relatively well due to the inclusion house and some of them having completed the boxing intervention together in the same six week period. Today, I started with a rapport building exercise using the strength cards, saying your name and why you chose that particular strength. Two of the co-researchers were socialising with one another talking about their strengths, and I was aware that appeared to be friends. I reflected on how their relationship might influence group decisions. I asked the group if any of them knew each other or had met previously, and they confirmed they were friends. I think by me asking that question actually created an openness within the group.

During the second focus group session, something struck me in terms of their relationships and how they've progressed over the course of the project. I heard one of the co-researchers ask another co-researcher "Do you want to hang out at lunch?". To my understanding, they had come together as a result from working on this project, and the fact they seemed to have made friends was a really powerful moment.

Appendix O - TEP Reflective Diary Entry

Voices of the young people:

I am conscious of the more vocal members of the group, and mindful that their voices may dominate discussions and steer the conversation, limiting opportunities for others to share their perspectives. I hope the quieter members don't feel intimidated to share their views because of this. As a facilitator, I feel like it's my role to ensure there's a balanced amount of participation within the group, to ensure that there's equal opportunities for discussion. Due to the size of the group, I was able to adopt a somewhat round robin approach, to ensure that everyone had the chance to speak. I would just check in with those that hadn't yet shared anything as and when space allowed. Using open ended questioning such as "did anyone else experience anything similar?" also invited others to add.

The more vocal member of the group was actually incredibly self-aware and she would often catch herself speaking for perceived longer amounts of time, and would say things like "Oh wow, I've talked so much sorry, someone else's turn". The self-awareness of this individual passed through the group, as others appeared to feel a kindness towards her actions in letting others speak.

Appendix P - TEP Reflective Diary Entry

Reflecting on the research question:

I do wonder whether having the word 'positive' within the research question is suppressing any negative feelings or experiences the young people might have had within the boxing sessions. Whilst I recognise, appreciate and am so proud that the co-researchers decided to change the research question themselves, I can't help but think that the 'positive' impact wording might influence the responses. In that, there might be a negative experience for example, but the co-researchers may choose to flip it and see it in positive light due to answering the research question. And this makes sense, I'm just conscious of any negative experience snot being shared for fear of not answering the research question, specifically the positive element.

Appendix Q – TEP Reflective Diary Entry

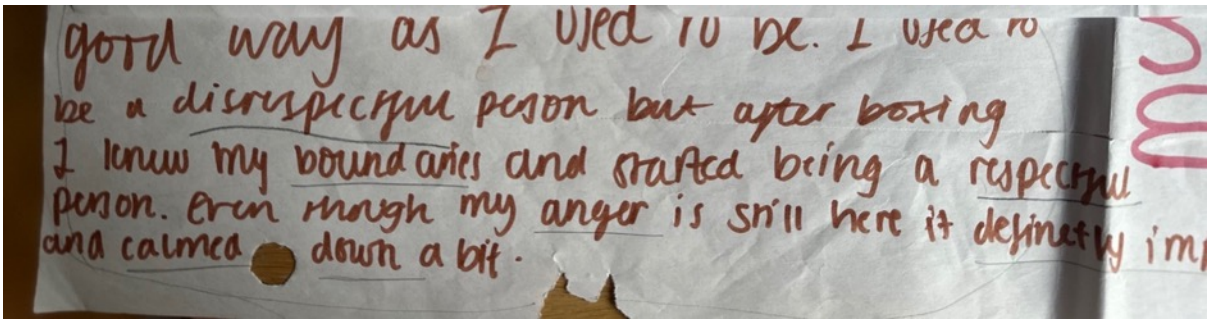
Participatory Research (PR) limitation

I am now in the reality of how time-consuming PR can be. Due to training the co-researchers previously unknown concepts and techniques, extra time is required in order for them to grasp unfamiliar or sometimes difficult things. I understand this, because it took me a certain amount of time to understand the learnings too. Whilst the very nature of this was expected, I realise now how traditional methodology might have been less time consuming. Although it's time consuming, the benefits of data quality and relevance to the people involved outweighs anything else. It is important to remember this during times when I realise the limitations of this approach. The fact that I am training the co-researchers in just four sessions seems a bit ridiculous as this is much lower than the suggested amount, however, this wasn't possible due to time constraints. You've got to work with the situation, and that's where we are.

Appendix R – Generated codes

Positive
Positive mindset
Mood changes
Respectful
Being nice
Changing her ways
Disrespectful
Boundaries
Anger
Definitely improved
Calmed down
Happy
Focus
Release your anger
Calm
Helps me athletically
Keep fit
Active
Reward
Engaged
Push
Mental health
Wellbeing
Different attitude

Appendix S – Sarah's response



Appendix T – TEP Reflective Diary Entry

Today I realised how important it is to create a safe and comfortable space for the co-researchers. We started with some ice-breaker games, and the atmosphere in the room really shifted! They were laughing and engaging with each other, and I could see their apprehension melting away. It reminded me that PR is about building relationships, not just data. I need to remember to balance the focused research tasks with opportunities for connection and fun. Maybe next time we could do a creative brainstorming session with coloured markers and sticky notes – that might keep them engaged while we explore the themes.

Appendix U – TEP Reflective Diary Entry

I felt a real sense of collaboration with the co-researchers. We were discussing the ethical considerations of our research, and they were asking really good questions. I could see them taking ownership of the project and really thinking about the issues. Although this is great, I also needed to provide guidance and ensure we were staying on track. I think I'm starting to find a good rhythm – offering support and explanations while also giving them space to lead and make decisions.

Appendix V – TEP Reflective Diary Entry

Things are really starting to take shape with the research project at XXX. Today, I had a real 'aha' moment about how much my existing relationship with the school is helping things run smoothly. Because I've worked with them before, I already know the staff and some of the students. It's made arranging the co-researcher sessions so much easier. Like, I knew exactly who to contact to get the ball rolling, and I already had a sense of the best times to meet that would fit around the school's schedule. It's also been a huge help in getting access to things like available rooms for our sessions. I think it's made a difference with the co-researchers too. They seem comfortable with me, and that's helped build trust quickly. I'm not sure it would have been this fluid to get things going if I were coming in as a complete outsider. It makes me think about how important those existing connections can be in PR.

Appendix W – TEP Reflective Diary Entry

I'm starting to feel the pressure of time constraints on this project. It's been a real challenge to balance the need for thorough training with the limited availability of the co-researchers and the overall project timeline.

We had initially planned for eight training session to cover the essential research skills, but we've had to cut that down to just four. It's been tough making those decisions about what to prioritise and what to leave out. I worry that the co-researchers might not be getting the full picture or feeling fully equipped to participate in every stage of the research.

I'm trying to be creative with the time we have. We're focusing on the most essential skills and I'm trying to be more flexible with the training schedule, offering shorter sessions or adjusting the timing to accommodate their availability.

Appendix X – TEP Reflective Diary Entry

I'm amazed by the young people in this project. Witnessing their growth and development throughout this process has been one of the most rewarding aspects. It's incredible to think back to how they were described at the start – "difficult to engage, quiet, lacking confidence". Seeing them present their findings to the school staff today was a truly remarkable moment. It was particularly powerful because these were young people who, just a few months ago, struggled to even speak up in a group setting.

This experience has solidified my belief in the transformative potential of youth PR. It's not just about giving young people a voice, it's about empowering them to use that voice to effect change. By actively involving them in the research process, I've witnessed increased confidence, and a sense of agency.

Appendix Y – TEP Reflective Diary Entry

Description: I consciously minimised my direct involvement, allowing the co-researchers to lead the discussion and explore their own lines of inquiry. I primarily listened, only interjecting to clarify or encourage participation when necessary.

Feelings: Initially, I felt a bit anxious. I was worried the discussion might lose focus or that they wouldn't know where to go next. There was also a slight urge to jump in and steer the conversation, to ensure we covered everything I thought was important. However, as the session progressed, I felt more comfortable and even excited to see them taking ownership. I felt a sense of relief and satisfaction when they engaged in rich, insightful discussions without my constant input.

Evaluation: The session went better than I expected. By stepping back, I created space for the co-researchers to explore their own perspectives and make connections I hadn't anticipated. They were more engaged and seemed to feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts. However, I wonder if there were moments where a bit more guidance would have been helpful to ensure we stayed on track with the overall research goals.

Analysis: Using Gibb's Reflective Cycle, I can analyse what happened. It seems my initial anxiety stemmed from a fear of losing control, which is a common challenge for researchers in participatory settings. My attempt to minimise power dynamics by stepping back was largely successful, but it also highlighted the need for a balance between facilitation and empowerment. The co-researchers' engagement suggests that they appreciated the autonomy, but I need to be mindful of providing enough support to ensure the research objectives are met.

Conclusion: I've learned that truly empowering co-researchers requires a shift in mindset from control to facilitation. It's about trusting their ability to lead and explore, while also providing gentle

guidance when needed. I need to be more comfortable with the uncertainty inherent in this approach and trust that the process will lead to valuable insights.

Action Plan: For the next focus group, I will:

- Prepare more open-ended prompts to encourage co-researchers to explore their own lines of inquiry.
- Be more mindful of my non-verbal cues and how they might be perceived.
- Allocate time for a brief debriefing at the end of the session to ensure we've addressed the key research questions.
- Continue to reflect on my approach using Gibb's Reflective Cycle after each session, to refine my facilitation skills and ensure I'm creating a truly collaborative research environment.

Appendix Z – TEP Reflective Diary Entry

Today, I'm reflecting on the influence I've had on this research, despite efforts to foster a collaborative and shared decision-making environment. While the co-researchers have been actively involved in shaping the research process, the initial decision to conduct participatory research for the research project was mine. This, in itself, established a framework that inherently guided the direction of the study.

Beyond the initial idea, my presence as an adult and researcher has subtly influenced the research landscape. The introduction of the training, the ethical considerations discussed, and even the concept of conducting 'research' were presented through my lens. My questions, resource choices, and even attempts at neutrality were inevitably shaped by my background and assumptions.

This realisation isn't about assigning blame or expressing regret. Rather, it underscores the importance of acknowledging the inherent power dynamics at play. It's a reminder that truly participatory research requires ongoing reflexivity and a commitment to understanding how one's presence, even with the best intentions, can influence the process. The objective isn't to eliminate all influence, but to ensure that the co-researchers' voices are genuinely amplified and valued within the context of the research landscape.

Appendix AA – Change of Title Request Form

University of East London

Department of Psychology and Human Development Ethics Committee
School of Childhood and Social Care
REQUEST FOR TITLE CHANGE TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

For BSc, MSc/MA and Professional Doctorate students

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for a proposed title change to an ethics application that has been approved by the Department of Psychology and Human Development

By applying for a change of title request, you confirm that in doing so, the process by which you have collected your data/conducted your research has not changed or deviated from your original ethics approval. If either of these have changed, then you are required to complete an 'Ethics Application Amendment Form'.

How to complete and submit the request	
1	Complete the request form electronically.
2	Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
3	Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to Dr Rita Lopes (Ethics Committee Member): r.lopes@uel.ac.uk
4	Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with the reviewer's decision box completed. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your dissertation.

Required documents	
A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.	**YES** ☒

Details	
Name of applicant:	Matthew Barlow
Programme of study:	Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology
Title of research:	Facilitating Participatory Research with Young People: Ethical and Practical Considerations
Name of supervisor:	Dr Janet Rowley

Proposed title change	
Briefly outline the nature of your proposed title change in the boxes below	
Old title:	Understanding the experiences of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are part of a boxing intervention
New title:	Facilitating Participatory Research with Young People: Ethical and Practical Considerations
Rationale:	Due to a significant amount of re-writing and editing of the thesis document, all chapters have gone through considerable amendment, as has the title and abstract to ensure they consistently reflect the revised focus of the research.

Confirmation		
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed change of title and in agreement with it?	**YES** ☒	**NO** ☐
Does your change of title impact the process of how you collected your data/conducted your research?	**YES** ☐	**NO** ☒

Student's signature	
Student: (Typed name to act as signature)	Matthew Barlow
Date:	23/04/2025

Reviewer's decision		
Title change approved:	**YES** ☒	**NO** ☐
Comments:	Please enter any further comments here	
Reviewer: (Typed name to act as signature)	**Rita Lopes**	
Date:	**29/04/2025**	