

**An exploration of young people's experiences of a participatory project**

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## **Abstract**

Listening to and involving children and young people (CYP) in decision-making and services that affect them has become increasingly important. Since the 1990s, there has been a rise in participatory approaches and research with CYP. Both models of participatory research and practice in this area are being developed. This research aims to enhance developments in participatory research with CYP by learning from the experiences, perspectives and accounts of CYP who have experienced a participatory project.

The participatory research project that participants in this research experienced was The Verbatim Formula (TVF), a creative residential workshop for care-experienced young people, using applied art practices to investigate their experiences of care and plans for their futures.

This research used an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to explore how the young people taking part in TVF, experienced the project. A sample of five young people, ranging from the age of 16 to 21 years old took part in face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

The findings of this research focused on three main themes: the young people made sense of their experiences of the project through participating; learning and interpersonal relationships. The richness and power of how young people experienced the project highlighted the possibilities of what can be gained by asking CYP about their experiences and how these could develop participatory research practices and thinking. There are also implications for educational psychology practice and the potential for future research with Educational Psychologists is outlined.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UEL	University of East London
LA	Local Authority
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
EP	Educational Psychologist
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
CYP	Children and Young People
TVF	The Verbatim Formula
QMUL	Queen Mary University London
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
TA	Thematic Analysis
GT	Grounded Theory
NA	Narrative Analysis

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter both introduces and justifies the area of research that is the focus of this thesis. It begins by outlining the researcher's position (1.2). Next, it gives background and context by summarising both the national and local pictures (1.3). The purpose and aims of the research are then given, explaining how the research contributes to new knowledge (1.4).

### **1.2 Researcher's Position**

In this section the researcher will outline her position regarding research as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and how this influenced the current research. The researcher will then summarise relevant aspects of her professional background and personal values which further inform how this research was developed.

When first tasked with deciding upon a research area as part of the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology, the researcher felt conflicted. The decision to choose a research area, put the researcher in a position of privilege and she felt uncomfortable to have full responsibility for allocating this resource of time and effort. Surely this should be something that the people involved, or who may benefit from research, should decide, rather than the researcher? This led to the researcher's interest in participatory research and the notion that research can involve both researchers and participants working collaboratively. This interest was further fostered by the ethos of the doctoral programme at the University of East London (UEL) and the participatory elements of its curriculum. The UEL programme promotes making a difference, listening to service users and empowering individuals and communities - all of which are in line with the 2014 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice and participatory research approaches – and these elements are reflected in a curriculum that teaches theories and skills which support these elements.

From this initial interest in participatory research, the researcher sought out any participatory research projects that were planned, happening, had been requested or where interest for such projects had been shown. She did this by contacting students and

staff at UEL and the Local Authority (LA) at which she was on placement. Given the feedback and signposting received, as well as the constraints of doctoral research, the researcher found it more practical to focus this research thesis on a participatory research project that was planned to take place, rather than carrying out her own piece of participatory research. The researcher recognises the potential contradiction in this but hoped that even if her research itself was not participatory, it would still be closely linked to her personal and professional values. These will now be discussed, along with the researcher's professional background and how this links to the development of her research.

As well as the researcher's experience on the course, her personal values align with participatory research. The researcher values learning from others, collaboration and social justice, all of which are important elements in participatory approaches. These values have influenced the researcher's career thus far; she has worked for educational charities, taught in a secondary school and worked for a charity committed to addressing educational inequality. During this career and since being on placement in a LA Educational Psychology Service (EPS), the researcher has been interested in and applied positive psychology (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005), strengths-based approaches (Prince-Embury, 2006) and person-centred approaches (Rogers, 1951) to her direct work and psychological formulations. These psychological interests also fit with the psychological theories underpinning participatory research, as well as the methodology of the research.

The researcher's position in relation to this research therefore is one of interest in and commitment to the principles of participatory research with CYP. There is a rationale for this interest, based on the researcher's personal values, professional background and own feelings towards doctoral research. The researcher has used reflexivity to consider how this position has affected or influenced them at each stage and this will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

### **1.3 Background and Context**

The way children are seen in society has shifted both historically and culturally. Listening to and valuing the opinions of CYP is now an expected right, as well as a key



function of the work of Educational Psychologists (EPs) (Gersch, Lipscomb & Potton, 2017). International agreement on the importance of children's right to be heard and participate was reinforced through Article 12 of the 1989 United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which then led to "a plethora of initiatives to hear children's views on matters concerning them" (Nind, Boorman & Clarke, 2012, p. 643). This background, alongside the development of participatory research practices more generally (discussed further in section 2.2), paved the way for participatory research approaches to be used with CYP. To justify researching in this area, both the national and local contexts will now be considered, along with defining terminology.

**1.3.1 National background and context.** In the United Kingdom (UK), the 2014 Children and Families Act and the 2014 SEND Code of Practice focused policy and practice on person-centred approaches and promoted the participation of children, young people and families and their right to be listened to. Whilst this legislation indicates a commitment to involving children, young people and their families in any decision-making that affects them and the opportunity to share their views, how this translates into professional practice can look different across local authorities.

From this legislative backdrop and alongside the development of participatory research practices, participatory practices and participatory research with CYP have become increasingly popular (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; MacDonald et al., 2011; Kellett, 2005; Rifkin, 2010; Mallan, Singh & Giardina, 2010; Smith, Monaghan & Broad, 2002; Horgan, 2017).

Participation of CYP in the UK has been encouraged across many areas, from the statutory processes of Education, Health and Care Plans, to the culture of many organisations that work with CYP and whole organisations dedicated to promoting children's participation (looked at in more detail in section 2.5). The term 'participation' in this sense refers to CYP taking part, or being actively involved, or being listened to and integrating these elements into processes, projects, decision-making, organisations or anything else relevant to them.

In terms of participation in research, CYP are increasingly being involved as peer or co-researchers across all or different stages of research (Coad & Evans, 2008). There is

much terminology associated with participatory research approaches, not limited to but including ‘user involvement’, ‘participatory approaches’, ‘community consultation’, ‘inclusive research’ (Salway, Harriss & Chowbey, 2011). The term used within this research, ‘participatory research’, refers to research that aims to tackle power imbalances between the ‘researcher’ and ‘participant’ and allow for a more flexible and inclusive research approach (the definition and meaning is explored further in section 2.2).

A recent review of 45 studies of participatory action research with CYP, found evidence for positive outcomes for children, organisations and communities (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017). The review also found that participatory action research with CYP faces many challenges including how to best involve younger children, how participation can be meaningful and address power differences across diverse cultural contexts (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017).

Models of and practice around participatory research with CYP are developing. Models of participatory research with CYP range from Hart’s (1992) ‘ladder of participation’ which offered eight different levels of how ‘genuinely’ CYP could participate, to Gal’s (2017) ecological model which considers the ecology of participation, ranging from individual characteristics of children to the participatory processes and contexts. Participatory research practice is often conceptualised as a continuum of participation, but there is a call for further frameworks and distinct, universally recognised ethical guidelines to help define this research approach (Rifkin, 2010; Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015).

### **1.3.2 Local background and context.**

To explore the local background and context, first an overview of participatory practices and research with CYP within Educational Psychology will be given, followed by the specific context of the participatory research project which is the focus of this research.

**1.3.2.1 Participatory research and educational psychology.** Principles of participatory research link closely to educational psychology practice, for example addressing power imbalances and aiming to empower individuals (Kellett, 2009). Similarly, listening to and involving service users, seeking the voice of the child and using person-centred approaches has been an aim of educational psychology practice long before the recent legislation cited above (Burden, 1996; Gersch, 1987).

It has been argued that all work undertaken by EPs is ‘research’ in the broadest terms: investigation and collecting data to reach new conclusions, albeit often improvised and conducted in a natural environment (Gersch, Lipscomb & Potton, 2017). The role of the EP is commonly described as a researcher-practitioner. Additionally, EPs utilise participatory approaches in their day-to-day work with CYP and, as a profession, have been advocates for children working alongside researchers as co-researchers (Gersch, Lipscomb & Potton, 2017).

Whilst participatory approaches are common in social research (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015), these methodologies are not yet widespread in published research by EPs. There are examples of research carried out by EPs with adults as the participants in the design, as well as examples with CYP as the participants (in relation to the 2014 SEND Code of Practice requirement that CYP participate in decision making about them). Examples of participatory research with CYP carried out by EPs will now be presented.

One EP Hammond (2013) undertook research using Forum Theatre as a case study for eliciting and advocating for the views of a year group within a small, rural primary school. Hammond (2013) offers this case study as a creative method by which EPs can find children’s views in a collaborative and participant-focused manner, involving underlying emancipatory processes.

Pearson & Howe (2017) developed a research team of children who investigated how to change behaviour in the playground. This resulted in the senior leadership of the school making significant changes to the playground. The authors conclude that the children raised issues that had not been considered by adults (Pearson & Howe, 2017). Helpfully, the research included an assessment of the level of participation that children

felt they had in the project and this served to illustrate some of the challenges involved in working with children as co-researchers.

Further research has shown that participatory research approaches can be accessed by different groups of CYP that EPs work with. For example, Hill et al. (2017) explored the experiences and preferences of pre-verbal children, and young people with complex needs in residential special schools and Day (2010) published research about how an array – or mosaic – of different data collection methods were developed with children aged between 20 months and 4 years old to explore their views on the Children’s Centres they attended.

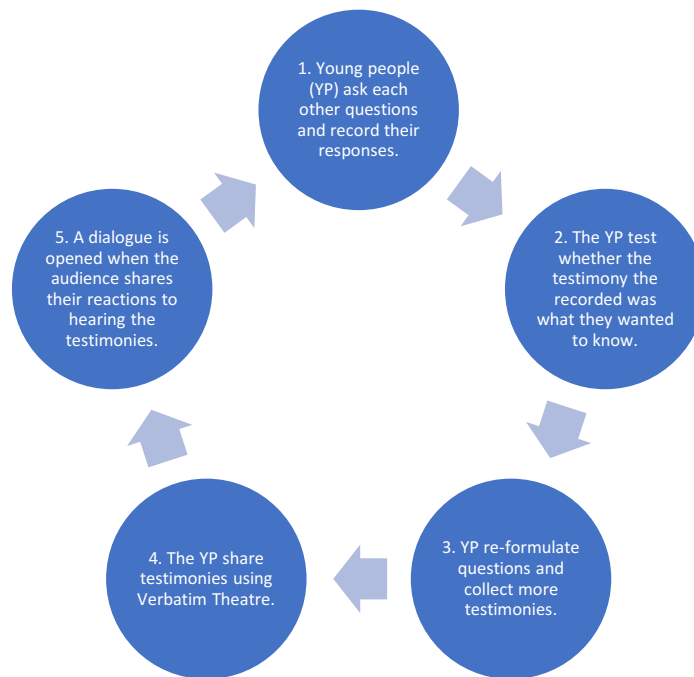
**1.3.2.2 TVF project.** The local context of this research is TVF, a participatory project taking place in London that is running a series of creative residential workshops for care-experienced young people (Research Councils United Kingdom, 2017). Various terms are used to describe CYP who have been in the care of LAs, such as ‘looked after children’ or ‘children in care’. As the young people taking part in TVF may either currently or previously have been in the care of a LA, the term ‘care-experienced’ will be used. The website ([www.theverbatimformula.org.uk](http://www.theverbatimformula.org.uk)) describes the project as “a participatory research project for care-experienced young people. It uses verbatim theatre techniques [using the exact words spoken by people in interviews], listening and dialogue to work with young people, care leavers, social workers, and universities”. The workshops use applied art practices to support the young people to reflect upon, articulate and plan for their future careers and education, in line with the Government’s strategy for supporting young people in leaving care (Department for Education, 2013).

TVF project began running at Queen Mary University London (QMUL) in 2015, resulting from recommendations that Universities do more to address systemic inequality for disadvantaged groups, the belief that creative practice can build both confidence and knowledge for care-experienced young people and their futures and the need to listen and learn from care-experienced young people (The Verbatim Formula, 2018). QMUL begun partnerships with four other London Universities to share their practice and funding for further TVF residential workshops to run. The UEL TVF project was the focus of this research and section 3.7.1 explains that process behind this.

UEL partnered with QMUL to be trained in how TVF project is run and then received ongoing support throughout the project, as well as a creative arts practitioner acting as lead facilitator to deliver the participatory content during the residential. UEL offered its own unique aspects to TVF by training both social work and drama students to act as mentors throughout TVF residential.

The residential workshops are run with the young people as co-researchers and utilising an iterative process that is represented in Figure 1 below. The participatory research process, or 'Verbatim Formula' begins with facilitating the care-experienced young people to ask each other questions, using iPods (belonging to the project) to record responses (number 1 in Figure 1). These responses are then labelled testimonies. The young people then listen back to the testimonies to check whether they want to know more, or something different (2 in Figure 1) and if so, re-formulate their questions and collect more testimonies (3 in Figure 1). Throughout the process, the social work and drama student mentors (previously trained in this iterative process) are involved: facilitating and supporting the young people.

The young people are shown how to use Verbatim Theatre technique which involves one person listening to another's testimony using headphones and speaking the words, sounds, pauses – everything they hear – verbatim. As the audiences do not hear the original voices, the testimony remains anonymous (if there is no identifiable information included). Using the testimonies collected and what they've learnt about Verbatim Theatre, facilitated to work as a group the young people decide what parts they would like to share with an audience and how. The young people and project organisers work together to amass an audience, typically inviting the care-experienced young people's social workers, foster carers or University staff members, and the young people share testimonies using Verbatim Theatre (4 in Figure 1). Following the sharing, the audience is asked to share their reactions and if they give permission their reactions are recorded, and the iterative process continues (5 in Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Representation of iterative research process used across residential workshops.

This research aimed to work with young people who were taking part in a participatory project and TVF project became the focus opportunistically. Looked after or care-experienced young people therefore have not been chosen from a particular interest in this group, rather they are an opportune sample, and this is reflected in the literature review.

Research shows that being looked after means that children are less likely to do well in education (Thomson, 2007). For EPs and other professionals working with looked after children, it is imperative that their rights to be heard and participate are upheld. This research aims to do so by exploring how they experience being co-researchers in this participatory research project and hopes that their voice will be heard by those developing the practices of participatory research with CYP.

#### **1.4 Research Purpose and Aims**

The purpose of this research is to explore young people’s experiences of a participatory project. In the national context of legislature and policy that promotes children’s rights to be heard, participation of CYP has been encouraged across services,

organisations and research. Participatory approaches also have relevance and close links to the practice of EPs. Focusing on one participatory research project, this research uses an IPA methodology to explore how the young people involved experience and make sense of participatory research. It aims to go beyond evaluation and provide an in-depth exploration of the young people's feelings about, understanding of and meaning making of 'participation' and their roles in participatory research. By gaining a deeper understanding of how CYP experience participation, the research aims to learn from the voice and perspective of CYP and then use this to develop participatory practices. The focus of this research is not the efficacy of participatory research and this is reflected in the literature review.

The participatory research project that the researcher was able to centre her research on was TVF, a partnership of Universities and other organisations that runs residential workshops for care-experienced young people using applied art practices. Despite the fact the young people involved in this project are care-experienced, the purpose of this research is not to 'study' care-experienced young people per se. However, this aspect of their shared experience as participants has influence over how they experience the project (as discussed in Chapter 5).

There is currently a gap in the literature of insight on participatory research that comes directly from young people themselves: this research aims to begin to address this gap by exploring how young people themselves experience participatory research. By doing so, the research aims to enhance the development of participatory research practices.

## **1.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has introduced the research by first outlining the researcher's position to illuminate reasons why the research area was chosen and what significance this has for the research. Context and background to the research were then given, first outlining the national context, followed by the local context of both Educational Psychology and TVF project. Finally, the purpose and aims of the research were outlined, informing the basis for the literature review in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter provides a critical overview of the relevant literature. It begins with the background to and definition of participatory approaches in research (2.2). It then explores psychological theories underpinning the research (2.3). Next, it gives details of the critical literature review (2.4). After that, it considers participatory research approaches with CYP and relevant theoretical models (2.5 and 2.6). Research that investigates or critiques participatory research with CYP is then outlined (2.7). Finally, the chapter provides the rationale for the current research and summarises the chapter (2.8 and 2.9).

### **2.2 Introducing Participatory Research**

What makes research ‘participatory’ is not the design or methods used, but the involvement of participants in the research process itself (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010; Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007). The involvement of participants varies across different participatory research, from the depth of participant involvement, to the stages at which they are involved, or to the extent to which they are ‘co-researchers’. Thus, participatory research has been defined as an ‘approach’ to research (Schatz & Walker, 1995).

Participatory research approaches allow for consideration of the issues of power and control within research, especially between researchers and the researched (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010). Wang, Li, Pang, Liang and Su (2016) describe researcher attitude in participatory approaches as an ‘orientation to inquiry’ that aims to address power imbalances and places value on the contribution of and collaboration between all those involved.

Bagnoli and Clark (2010) argue that participatory research approaches have grown in popularity alongside the post-positivist contexts of questioning and challenging the principles and practices of conventional research approaches. These can be seen in context of wider Western societal shifts towards re-calibrating power imbalances and welcoming different perspectives such as the platform that social media now gives for people to share their views, as well as the rise of ‘user led organisations’ particularly in



the National Health Service and social care (National Skills Academy for Social Care, 2011).

Various terminology is associated with these approaches, not limited to but including ‘user involvement’, ‘participatory approaches’, ‘community consultation’, ‘inclusive research’ (Salway, Harriss & Chowbey, 2011). In the United States of America (USA) for example, a common approach in social research is termed ‘community-based participatory research’, a partnership approach emphasising empowerment, shared decision making, social transformation and shifts in power at all levels (Becker, Reiser, Lambert & Covello, 2014). Today’s participatory research approaches may have grown from the foundations of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR was developed in social psychology in the 1940s and focused on the continual interplay between research and intervention (Potvin, Bisset & Walz, 2010). However, the notion of discovering knowledge in a collaborative, co-operative manner amongst people from a range of different experiences in participatory research approaches is likely to have stemmed from a wider amalgamation of socio-political and contextual changes as will be discussed in section 2.4.

Fox, Martin and Green (2007) describe 'participatory research' as a term synonymous with 'emancipatory research' and 'advocacy research' as each shares the fundamental element of working with marginalised groups with a view to emancipation and empowerment. PAR for example, actively involves participants in the research process, using a flexible design that can fit to the needs and nature of the research as it progresses over time (Robson, 2011). Similarly, without specifically using action research cycles, participatory approaches aim for ‘knowledge for action’ within the context of social change (MacDonald et al., 2011; Bagnoli & Clark, 2010). The idea of the terms being completely synonymous however should be approached with caution; there are examples of research that can be emancipatory yet not involve participation of the disempowered group (Creswell, 2014).

There is a current lack of consensus in defining participatory research as a term. This thesis understands it as an *approach* to research, an approach that values the involvement of participants, is concerned with addressing the power dynamics of research and that uses methodology flexibly to best suits the research needs.

## 2.3 Psychological Theories Underpinning the Research

Underpinning the notion of participatory approaches to research with CYP, involving CYP in the research process and addressing power imbalances, is a humanistic approach. Humanistic psychology arose in the 1950s and 60s, with Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow as two of its key figures (Jarvis, 2000). The humanistic approach is person-centred, taking a holistic view when trying to understand people and Rogers believed that all humans are motivated to fulfil their potential and ‘actualise’ (Jarvis, 2000). In line with humanistic psychology, participatory approaches to research with CYP consider CYP as individuals with agency and value, hoping to empower those CYP as part of the research process.

Within humanistic psychology, Maslow’s (1954) theory of human motivation - the hierarchy of needs - can also be seen to underpin participatory research with CYP. Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs explains different types of human need with the idea that once each need is satisfied, humans can move up the hierarchy which ends with self-actualisation – finding personal fulfilment and fulfilling one’s potential (Jarvis, 2000). Similarly, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of motivation and personal growth suggests that key to these processes are the need for an individual’s competence, autonomy and psychological relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The concepts of self-actualisation, competence, autonomy and psychological relatedness are all sought to be present for CYP within participatory research approaches. Ensuring that CYP access active, meaningful participation in research could be a contribution towards the fulfilment of their needs and enabling self-actualisation and motivation (Parker, 2011).

Positive psychology - the scientific study of human flourishing, analysing strengths and virtues that enable people to thrive - was developed by Martin Seligman and his colleagues in the late 1990s (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). The principles of positive psychology align closely with participatory approaches to research with CYP, such as working with the strengths of CYP and addressing power imbalances to enable CYP to thrive.

Resiliency theory, which promotes the idea that different protective factors or variables can influence how well a child or young person is able to withstand or recover from difficulties, is one strengths-based approach to understanding and working with CYP (Prince-Embury, 2006). Several researchers have identified participation as a key element of resilience for CYP. For example, Henderson and Milstein (2003) identified meaningful participation as one of six key factors for building resiliency in schools and Brown, D’Emidio-Caston and Bernard (2001, p.51), claim that “participation is indeed the key context of resilience education”.

Resiliency theory, strength-based approaches and positive psychology are often part of person-centred approaches or practice used by EPs or other professionals when working with CYP (Gersch, Lipscomb & Potton, 2017). The 2014 Code of Practice encourages keeping CYP and families at the centre of work and decision-making that involves them.

It can be argued that participatory research with CYP is underpinned not only by the ethos of humanistic psychology, but also by the principles of positive psychology and by the practical elements of applying strengths-based approaches. These psychological theories are also aligned with this thesis’ research and influenced the rationale for the current research which is outlined in section 2.8.

## **2.4 Critical Literature Review**

The purpose of the literature review was to explore and analyse the literature relevant to participatory research approaches with CYP. A critical literature review was the approach chosen as this type of review “aims to demonstrate extensive research and critical evaluation of quality” (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016, p.24). Critical reviews also allow for analysis that can contribute to existing theory or new conceptualisations which links to the second research question (section 3.5) and the possible emancipatory nature of this research. A systematic literature review was not appropriate given the vastness of the international field of participatory research approaches and the many variations of associated terminology. The process followed for the critical literature review will now be outlined.

In order to “identify the most significant items in the field” (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016, p.24), a literature search was carried out on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The databases searched were EBSCO, an online research database with access to scholarly journals, articles, books and theses; Scopus, a database of peer-reviewed literature and Science Direct, a database of journals, books and articles. These databases were searched using the search terms: “participatory”, “participation”, “child\*”, “young people\*”, “adolescent”, “co-research\*”, “joint-research”, “collaborative research”, “education”, “psychology”. The following inclusion criteria were used: research written in or translated to English, research from no earlier than the last twenty years (1997-2017). The initial search yielded 369 results.

An initial reading of all abstracts was done and the data extraction form (Appendix A) was used to ascertain which articles to include. The review focused on the highest quality evidence available (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016). Inclusion criteria were as follows:

- Articles written from 1997 onwards.
- Articles written in or translated to English.
- Articles with a focus on participatory research with CYP.
- Articles with a context similar enough to be related to participatory research with CYP in the UK (e.g. not within war-based contexts or not entirely medicalised).
- Articles that consider the experiences perspectives or view of CYP on participatory research.
- Articles that include any analysis or exploration of participatory approaches with CYP.

Key papers were identified and Scopus searches were done to explore the relevant citations from these key papers, followed by snowballing to explore internal citations and references. 54 results then remained for critical review after inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied (Appendix B). The themes, methodology, research findings and limitations of each piece of research were recorded. Gough’s (2007) weight of evidence framework was used to judge the quality and relevance to the review questions, to ensure all articles had an overall judgement of either medium or high (Appendix B).

This process was repeated on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2019 to search for research published since the initial search and four further papers were critically reviewed and included in Appendix B.

Once articles had been searched for and selected, synthesis was done both chronologically and conceptually (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016). Reviewing the articles found by the literature review, there were two main areas of research: research relating to the development of understanding and modelling participatory research and research relating to critiques of participatory research. Largely chronologically, the development of thinking about participatory research with CYP has moved from linear, hierarchical models, to more holistic, complex and systemic thinking (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007; Moules & O'Brien, 2012; Gal, 2017; Cahill & Dadvand, 2018). Participatory research has also faced much appraisal and criticism and the relevant articles found in the systematic literature review can be organised into power-related criticisms, ethical criticisms and practical issues.

An overview of the general context of participatory research with CYP is given next, followed by a synthesis of the findings from the systematic literature review.

## **2.5 Participatory Research with CYP**

This section introduces the key contextual information to participatory research with CYP. Since the 1990s, participatory research with children has grown, so much so that Bradbury-Jones and Taylor (2015, p.161) describe participatory approaches as “*de rigueur* in social research involving children”. This growth coincided with wider societal shifts towards acknowledging children as citizens with a right to be heard and who are capable and competent in determining their lives and being involved in decisions that affect them (Mallan et al., 2010; Fox, 2013). Arguably, these shifts can be traced back to the philosophy of Paulo Freire’s (2006) seminal text ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’. This text critiqued traditional educational pedagogy as a ‘banking model’ that viewed learners as empty vessels to be filled and argued instead for a pedagogy which treated the learner as a co-creator of knowledge. In some senses, current approaches to research with CYP attempt to practise this philosophy as Kellett (2009,

p.399) describes practices working with children as the “current climate of participation and consultation”.

This shift and ‘current climate’ is reflected politically in Article 12 of the 1989 UNCRC, which emphasises children’s right to be heard and to participate in decision-making about their lives. Arguably, Article 12 sparked a global increase in child-centred practices and research approaches (Wickenden & Kembhavi-Tam, 2014). Legislation such as the 2014 Children and Families Act and the 2014 SEND Code of Practice, outline the UK’s commitment to involving CYP, as well as promoting their voice. The principles underlying the SEND Code of Practice (2014, p.19) include LAs having regard for “the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person” and “the importance of the child or young person...participating as fully as possible in decisions”. Along with societal shifts and political legislature, children should be listened to and involved in research as they offer a unique perspective and insights that may not otherwise be found (Gersch, Lipscomb & Potton, 2017; Kellett, 2009).

As well as increases of participatory research with CYP in literature, several organisations in the UK also promote children’s participation. Participation Works Partnership (n.d.) for example, is “a partnership of seven national children and young people’s agencies” that supports the effective involvement of CYP relevant services, at all levels. INVOLVE is another organisation who, in collaboration with children and young adults, have created a guide to actively involve young people in research (Kirby, 2004). Similarly, the Open University’s Children’s Research Centre works with CYP to support their engagement in research. Over 150 CYP have carried out their own research projects and the Centre’s work is guided by a CYP’s research council. The Centre has developed a research skills training programme for children, designed for others to implement or adapt to enable children to become “active researchers in their own right” (Kellett, 2009, p.399).

Participatory approaches with CYP also offer creative methods by which to understand and embrace the competencies and knowledge of CYP, utilising art, photography, video and music (Gillies & Robinson, 2012; Davies, 2015; Mayes, 2016; Wissman, Staples, Vasudevan & Nichols, 2015). Another creative method is participatory theatre, a type of applied, community theatre that “provides a site for

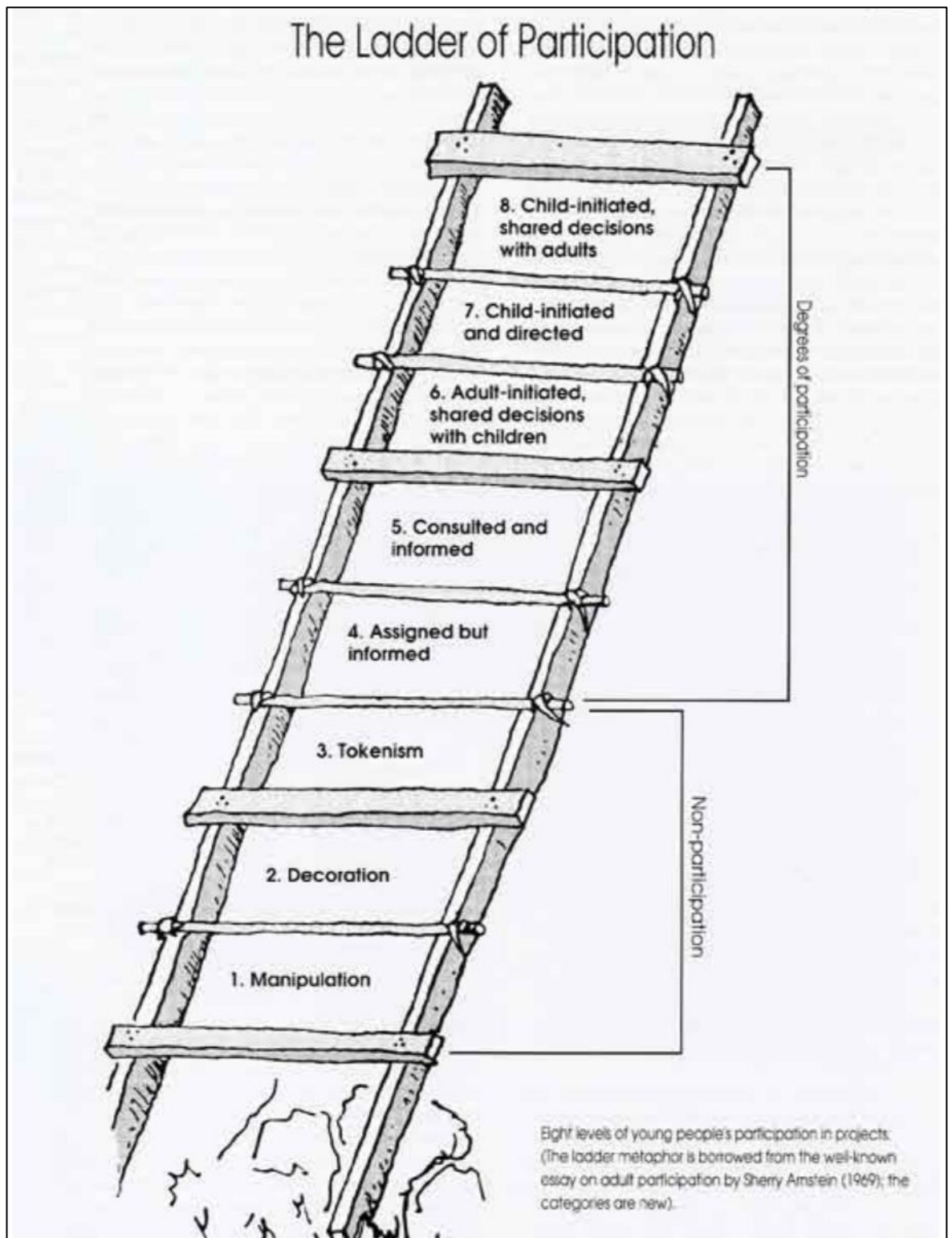
critical action and reflection” and is often used in social justice projects or with marginalised groups (Kumrai, Chauhan & Hoy, 2011, p.520; Erel, Reynolds & Kaptani, 2017; Rifkin, 2010).

Cahill and Dadvand (2018, p.243) describe participation with CYP as “an area of policy, research and practice that remains heralded, but relatively under-theorised”. The theorisation that has developed around participatory approaches with CYP will now be considered.

## **2.6 Models of Participatory Research with CYP**

A chronology of the development of thinking about participatory research with CYP and the resultant models and approaches will be outlined in this section.

**2.6.1 Linear models of participatory research with CYP.** Various models of children’s participation in research exist. Hart’s (1992) ladder of participation, adapted from Arnstein’s (1969) ‘Ladder of Citizen’s Participation’, was the first conceptualisation of children’s involvement in research and is arguably still the most widely referenced (Moules & O’Brien, 2012). Hart’s (1992) ladder, shown in Figure 2, was developed as part of a United Nations Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF) publication following the 1989 UNCRC. The ladder has eight different ‘levels’ at which children participate. The ladder is a simplistic representation of participation and does not necessarily account for contextual factors.



*Figure 2.* The Ladder of Participation. Reprinted from “Children’s participation: From tokenism to citizenship” by R. A. Hart, 1992, Florence: UNICEF, page 8.



Shier (2001, p.111) refined the ‘ladder’ into a 5-step model of participatory approaches with the following levels of participation:

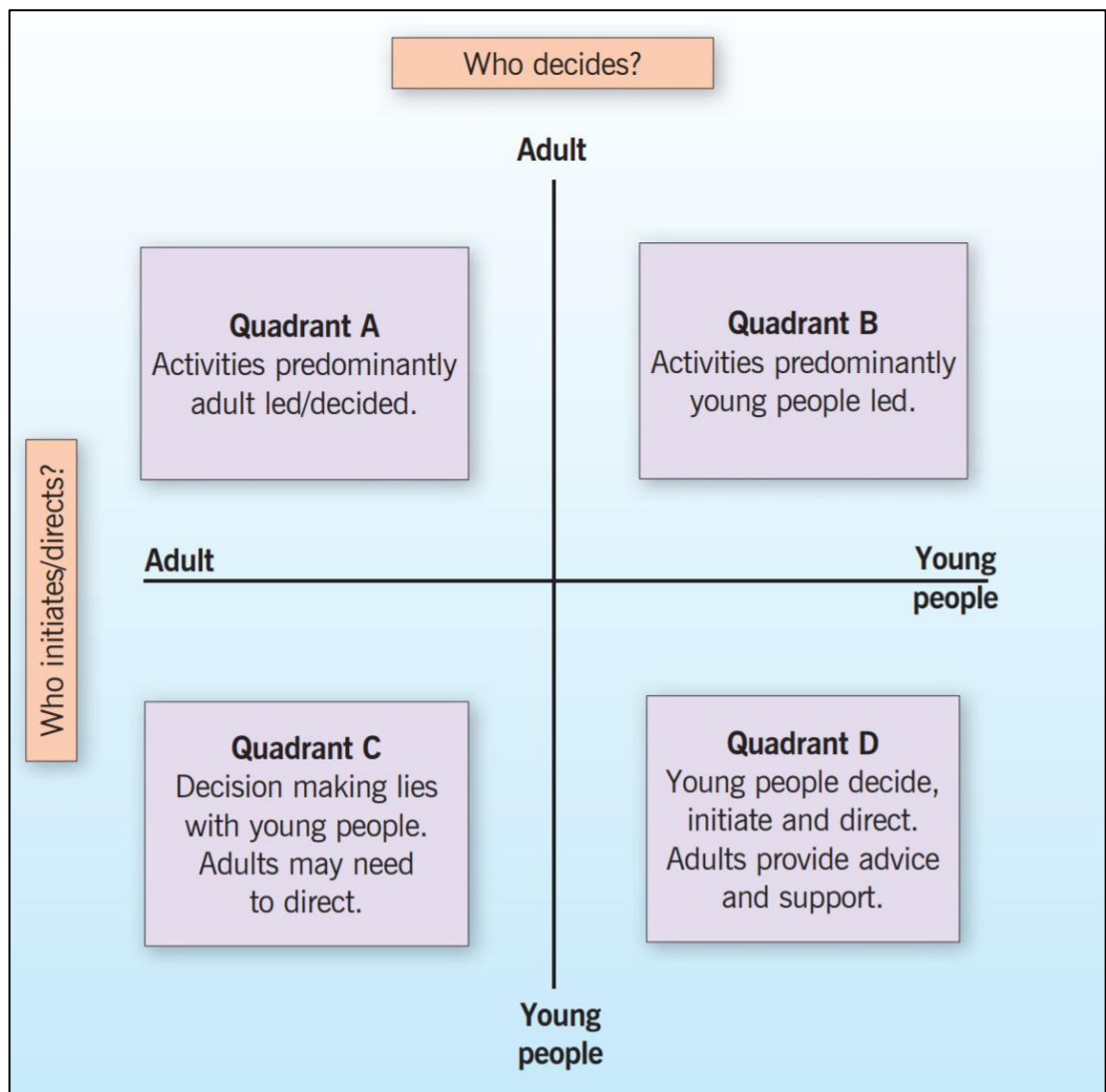
1. Children are listened to.
2. Children are supported in expressing their views.
3. Children’s views are taken into account.
4. Children are involved in decision-making processes.
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.

Kindon, Pain and Kesby (2007), then offered the ‘six degrees of participation’ model. The ‘six degrees’ begin with co-option (where participants are represented but not actively involved in research), then compliance (where participants are assigned tasks only), consultation (where participants’ opinions are sought), co-operation (where participants work alongside researchers), co-learning (where participants and researchers develop and conduct research in partnership) and finally, collective action (where participants set the research agenda and conduct the research without outside involvement). The six degrees of participation and Shier’s (2001) 5-step model both use representations of ‘levels’ of involving children in research, which are not always appropriate for the ethical, practical, cultural or political complexities of real-life situations (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018). Further criticism of linear models is their hierarchical nature, which could ignore the benefits of some levels and ignore the potential that can exist between levels (Moules & O’Brien, 2012), or the different purposes of, or wider socio-cultural contexts in which, participation occurs (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018).

### **2.6.2 Multi-dimensional models of participatory research with CYP.**

Following the above linear models of CYP’s participation, models offering multi-dimensional conceptualisations were developed. In 2012, Moules and O’Brien took data from two participatory research projects involving CYP. First, the researchers critiqued existing models of CYP’s participation and identified two ‘dimensions’ of participation: ‘decision making’ and ‘initiation and direction’. They then analysed data from reflective diaries (it is not stated, but it is assumed these belonged to the researchers), notes from meetings and children’s evaluations from the two participatory research projects. The data were then coded according to the two dimensions of participation and observations

on the participatory processes were discussed. From this, a ‘dual-axis model of participation’ was created to understand participatory processes in the research projects (Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* Dual-axis model of participation. Reprinted from “Participation in perspective: reflections from research projects” by T. Moules & N. O’Brien, 2012, *Nurse Researcher*, 19, 2, page 21.

Although the model offered a more complex representation of CYP participation in research, strength of the evidence-base and rigor in selecting the dimensions can be questioned (the dimensions for the axis arose from critique of previous studies rather than the analysis of the data from the research projects themselves). The two participatory research projects under review were run by one of the same authors

developing the dual-axis model and no discussion around potential impact was given. Finally, the review of data and development of the model were both from the perspective of the adult researchers themselves; no view or input was directly sought from the CYP involved in the research projects themselves.

In Mallan et al.'s (2010) case study to try and understand high-school students' use of technology and media, a tripartite model of participatory research was offered. Three elements - links with the communities involved in the research, ongoing reflexivity and transparency of the research process – were integral to this model and ensuring the research “adhered to the principles of participatory research”. However the model was itself designed by the adult researchers and therefore didn't necessarily take into consideration the perspectives of the participants (Mallan et al., 2010, p.269).

### **2.6.3. Models of participatory research with CYP that consider culture.**

With the complexities and nuances of participatory research with CYP recognised, a further drive to embed participation with CYP at an organisational level meant that research and models began to consider the importance of fostering a participatory culture. In 2003, the Department for Education and Skills commissioned a study to examine how participatory practices with CYP could become embedded within and integral to organisations (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin & Sinclair, 2003). Involving CYP throughout with a group of Young Advisors and Young Researchers, this study gathered data from 29 different organisations. It suggested a model where different levels of participation can occur in parallel when building a culture of participation (Figure 4), as well as developing a practical handbook for those wishing to develop participatory practices.



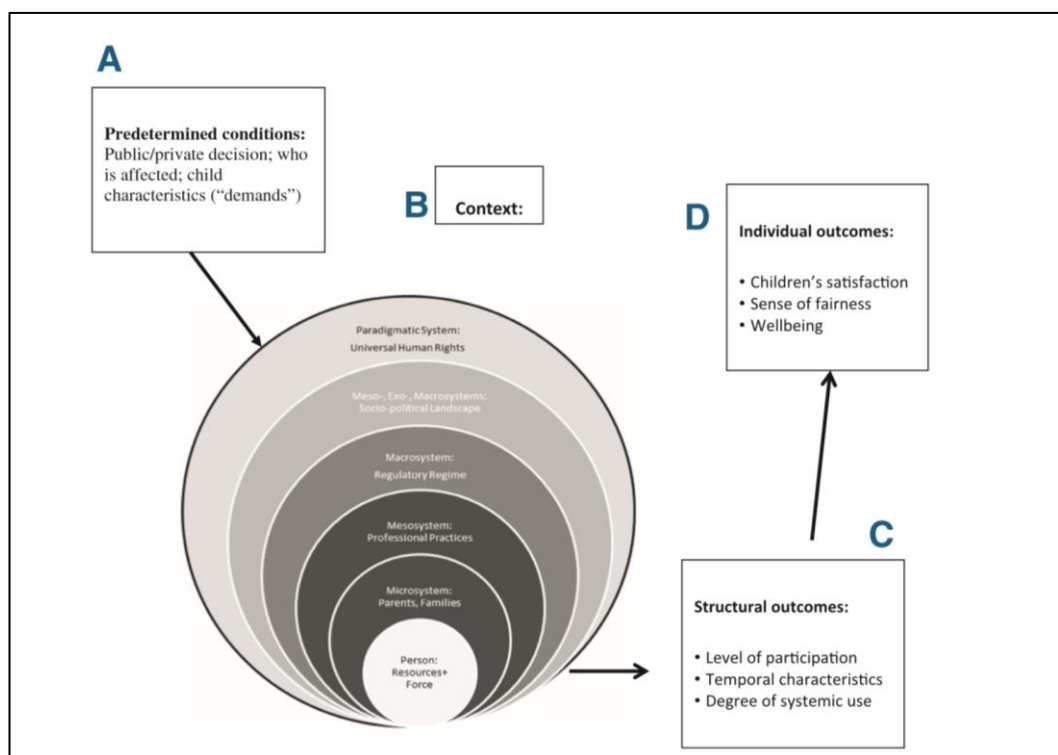
*Figure 4.* A model of the level of participation. Reprinted from “Building a culture of participation” by P. Kirby, C. Lanyon, K. Kronin and R. Sinclair, 2003, retrieved from [http://www.gyerekesely.hu/childpoverty/docs/involving\\_children\\_report.pdf](http://www.gyerekesely.hu/childpoverty/docs/involving_children_report.pdf)

Subsequently it appeared that CYP’s participation was being considered on an organisational level in places. For example, Parker (2011) stated that many LAs use the Hear by Right Model (Participation Works, 2007), based on the McKinsey seven-stage model of organisational change, to consider systemic factors that can promote an environment conducive to participation in their work. Similarly, the Children’s Alliance (2007) recognised the importance of higher-level participative practice within organisations to allow for a culture of participation in which CYP can thrive by holding power and their participation being fully embedded in the workings of an organisation.

**2.6.4. Systemic models of participatory research with CYP.** As the nature of models of CYP’s participation moved from classificatory to an explanatory nature, other models turned to use systemic frameworks. For example, Thomas (2012) suggests using Honneth’s (1995) theory of recognition (love, rights and solidarity) as a framework through which to analyse and consider CYP’s participation, albeit with the caveat that Honneth’s theory needs to first “critiqued for its inherent bias...against children’s agency, sociality and citizenship” (Thomas, 2012, p.464). The most recently developed model of participatory research with CYP found in the critical literature review, offers a systemic perspective. Gal’s (2017, p.57) ecological model of CYP’s participation uses Bronfenbrenner’s ecological approach “to uncover the relationships

between” what Gal found to be four central themes emerging from the literature: children’s ability to participate as an adaptable concept; professionals as gatekeepers; the importance of a detailed regulatory regime and participants as embedded in the socio-political landscape.

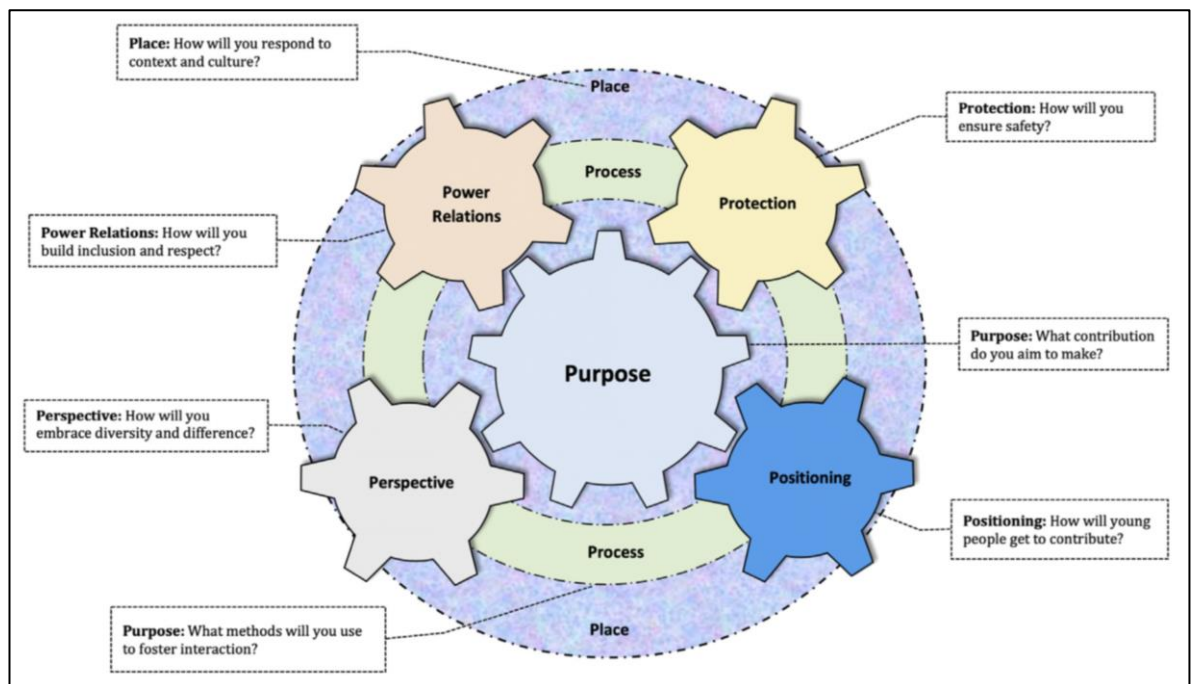
The ecological model (Figure 5) offers a multi-layered approach, encompassing a more holistic understanding of CYP’s participation and considering many dimensions of the phenomenon. However, Gal (2017, p.63) recognises the model requires “further empirical validation” and no guidance is given for *how* the model can be used either promote or enable meaningful participatory research with CYP.



*Figure 5. Understanding children’s ability to participate: An ecological model.* Reprinted from “An ecological model of child and youth participation” by T. Gal, 2017, *Children and Youth Services Review*, 79, page 58.

The ‘P7 Model’ offers a framework or “thinking tool for visioning, planning, enacting and evaluating youth participation” and considering some of the complexities associated with the participation of CYP (Cahill & Dadvant, 2018, p.248). This model uses cogs (Figure 6) to demonstrate the dynamic and fluid nature of participation as it

continuously responds to context, circumstances and the ebb and flow of relational power dynamics. Each cog represents one of seven interacting domains: purpose, positioning, perspective, power relations, protection, place and process.



*Figure 6.* The P7 Model: A thinking tool for visioning, planning, enacting and evaluating youth participation. Reprinted from “Re-conceptualising youth participation: A framework to inform action” by S. Cahill and B. Dadvand, 2018, *Children and Youth Services Review*, 95, page 248.

The ‘P7 Model’ is framework “informed by conceptual contributions from diverse fields of scholarship and traditions of research”, however no detail is given as to the process of its development (Cahill & Dadvant, 2018). Cahill and Dadvant (2018) apply their framework using two worked examples of real-life participatory projects with CYP retrospectively and it would be helpful to see how the framework can be used as a working tool.

Having considered the various models of participatory research, the next section will provide a conceptual synthesis of critiques of participatory research found in the critical literature review.

## 2.7 Critique of Participatory Research with CYP

As outlined above, advantages of engaging CYP in research and involving them as co-researchers may seem obvious; however, current thinking warns against blanket assumptions that participatory research with CYP is effective; the participatory “approach has more recently been problematised” (Horgan, 2017, p. 245; Smith, Monaghan & Broad, 2002; Fox, 2013; Holland, Renold, Ross & Hillman, 2010; Cahill & Dadvand, 2018). This literature review will now consider research that included critiques of participatory research with CYP. These fell within three broad areas; ‘power-related criticisms’, ‘ethical criticisms’ and ‘practical issues’ and have therefore been organised accordingly. Across all three areas the review focuses on the experience, perspective and views of CYP, to see where they fit, have had input or could be affected by them.

**2.7.1 Power-related criticisms.** A key issue for participatory research with CYP is power relationships, in relation to the people involved, the context of the research and the research process itself (Horgan, 2017). Foucault (1980) argues that power is relational; power dynamics depend on how individuals are positioned and are maintained by categorisation and cultural and institutional practices. Power dynamics therefore exist in any research, but in participatory research, adults are gatekeepers across both knowledge and access. This can be difficult to reconcile with the notions of collaboration and co-research which participatory research with CYP aim to promote. Power dynamics are also at play within groups of CYP (affected by influences such as group member status or established relationships between group members), within the CYP’s institutions or where the research takes place, as well as within research processes, which can facilitate certain voices to be heard over others; these can result in some CYP being disempowered by a participatory research experience or being excluded from the research in the first place (Horgan, 2017; Flicker et al., 2010; Parkes, 2008; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2018).

A possible example of this can be seen in Kellett’s (2009) research whereby two groups of children from different economic backgrounds were encouraged to create their own research projects, whilst the adult researchers involved had an overriding purpose - to investigate the influence of poverty on literacy. The children themselves

were not informed from the outset that this was the purpose. The researchers then ironically worried about the ethical dilemma of the children in one group finding out they had been labelled as ‘poor’, when in fact, encouraging the participants to carry out their own research when this was not actually the primary purpose appears to be a form of deception (Kellett, 2009).

Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2018) offer three case study vignettes from an in-school participatory research project to argue that researchers experience ‘unintentional power plays’ and that a child’s autonomy in the research space depends on the researcher-participant relationships. They argue that authenticity is more likely if a child’s unique capacity is assumed by researchers and if children feel safe and trust the researchers.

Chappell, Rule, Dlamini and Nkala (2014) present research conducted in South Africa that involved three young people with disabilities undergoing one week’s co-researcher training to investigate how a larger cohort of young people with physical and sensory impairments construct their sexual identities. Data were collected through focus groups and research journals kept by the co-researchers. Regular meetings were held between the co-researcher and the principal researcher to discuss the co-researchers’ experiences and any difficulties they were having. Chappell, Rule, Dlamini and Nkala (2014, p.396) claim that the study created a “dialogic space” between the co-researchers and principle researcher and that within this space, all researchers “underwent changes in self-positions” which in turn highlighted the fluidity of power and “went some way to transforming convention adult-youth and non-disabled-disabled power dynamics within disability research”. The research paper was written by both the principal researcher and two of the co-researchers. Although the findings regarding power dynamics is rich in anecdotal evidence and experiential nuance, they are lacking in a more impartial perspective or a more systematic approach to reviewing how the ‘power dynamics’ may have shifted for each researcher involved and why.

A grounded theory study found a common process that adults participating alongside CYP went through and outlined how they personally benefited from a experiencing a structured participatory program with CYP and their experience of sharing power with CYP (Kennedy, 2018). Kennedy (2018, p.304) concludes that the study justifies further research into the “bi-directional benefit or youth-adult



partnerships” in a participatory context and it would be interesting to involve CYP in this and to compare what they say about their experiences to the process adults went through.

The dynamics of power relations in participatory research with CYP are complex and multi-elemental, and Gillet-Swan and Sargeant (2018) argue that acknowledging, managing and being more cognisant of these dynamics can help CYP express their perspectives more freely and safely. Spyrou (2011, p.152) wrote a critical analysis of published works on children’s participation and made the case for a “critical, reflexive approach” that considers the research contexts and power imbalances within them. Although Spyrou (2011, p.162) gives neither guidance nor practical examples as to how to implement this “kind of reflexivity” , it is argued that a considered, potentially lengthy and messy, reflexive approach to research with CYP is the most ethical approach.

**2.7.2 Ethical criticisms.** Ethical considerations that would be standard protocol for most research, become more complex in participatory research with CYP. There can be tensions between following ethical procedures and the ethics of meaningfully involving CYP. For example, if ethical approval must be applied for before CYP have even been consulted, how participatory can the research be? Smith, Monaghan and Broad (2002, p.200) list several ethical concerns including risk of exploitation for a vulnerable group, use and value of the research, child protection, confidentiality and unanticipated risks. Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2018) discuss ethical considerations around the effects of non-participant adults coming into naturalistic research spaces and the associated power dynamics and confidentiality risks.

A further ethical concern raised is about how far participation is desired by CYP, or how far it is imposed on CYP by those seeking data (Birch and Miller, 2002). Despite its unique needs, there are no specific ethical guidelines or framework for participatory research with CYP. Following participatory research with refugee adolescents in the USA, Ellis, Kia-Keating, Yusef, Lincoln and Nur (2007) recommend the creation of an overall process for developing ethical protocols within different communities. Moreover, once again it appears that the voice of CYP is largely missing from this exploration of ethical issues within participatory research. In the context of CYP’s

involvement in research around domestic abuse, Houghton (2015, p.237) posits that this may reflect “the ongoing struggle to recognise children’s agency and to see children as central participants...who are competent in deciding their own best interests”.

**2.7.3 Practical issues.** Kellett’s (2005) discussion of methodological issues surrounding participatory research with CYP included the level of scrutiny that should be applied to the research of CYP and how it should be done; how autonomous CYP can be in their own research; how CYP’s research data should be analysed and how findings should be disseminated. None of these questions could be disentangled from the current context of the research world and therefore Kellett (2005) posited the question of whether an entirely new research paradigm is needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Participatory approaches as they currently stand, ‘fit in’ with the formalities of the current traditional research paradigm. Malone and Hartung (2010 in Fox, 2013, p.988) argue that any formal processes obstruct natural participation and any peer-reviewed journal articles about participatory research are likely to have relied upon some formal structures that will privilege certain groups of CYP. Similar challenges will be faced with any attempts for participatory research across networked groups of CYP as modern online groups are difficult to fit into traditional research structures (Mallan et al., 2010).

Similarly, Jones’ (2017, p.68) review of the application of Article 12 of the 1989 UNCRC to education in England finds children’s capacity for meaningful participation in English schools as fundamentally limited “because the school environment views children within a paternalistic framework and the available mechanisms for children to participate are adult-defined and controlled”. Jones (2017) examines Government statistics provided in the most recent UK report to the UNCRC committee to argue that the UK education system is failing to uphold Article 12 for CYP. The paper also criticises the UNCRC legislation itself for focusing more on monitoring and enforcing Article 12 rather than considering what is working for CYP, as well as its part in creating a global construction of childhood without the input of CYP (Jones, 2017). It is important to consider CYP’s participation in research in the context of the education system they have also experienced, whilst considering the wider factors relating to international legislation and the more expansive societal frameworks (for example,

demographics, economics, politics) that may be influencing from underneath the surface (Maconochie, 2013).

Bradbury-Jones and Taylor (2015) summarised participatory approaches with CYP by outlining six inherent challenges (shown in Table 1). However, alongside these challenges they offer counter-challenges and strategies/solutions. It appears that although researchers are recognising the difficulties associated with participatory approaches, they are nonetheless in support of the approach and committed to finding solutions to its challenges.

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Counter-challenge</b>	<b>Strategy/solution</b>
<b>Challenge #1: children lack research competence</b>	<p>Child should not have to prove capacity</p> <p>Meaningful engagement by children demonstrated in numerous studies</p>	<p>Assume child is competent to form own views</p> <p>Data collection methods need to be age-appropriate</p> <p>Treat children as equals</p> <p>Bespoke and age-appropriate training programme to prepare children for their role (see #2)</p>
<b>Challenge #2: a comprehensive training programme is required</b>	<p>If research is enhanced by the participation of children, then it would be amoral not to prepare them properly for that role</p>	<p>Young researchers can train other young people</p> <p>Ensure age-appropriate programme design</p> <p>Allow time to practise skills</p>

	Principal investigators have a duty of care to all members of the research team	
<b>Challenge #3: insider/ outsider perspectives are difficult to balance</b>	<p>Children as researchers can overcome inter-generational barriers</p> <p>Children can get responses from their peers in a way that is not possible for adults</p> <p>Adult interpretations are reduced, thereby enhancing the quality of the data</p>	<p>Do not assume children are homogeneous, even if they share similar experiences</p> <p>Establish clear boundaries and ground rules</p>
<b>Challenge #4: remuneration is complex</b>	<p>Reimbursement, compensation, appreciation and incentive are real issues for children</p> <p>Children need to be treated fairly</p> <p>Being researchers gives children knowledge, skills and experience that can help their future careers</p>	<p>Do not be tokenistic or paternalistic about remuneration</p> <p>Payment needs to be country, culture and context sensitive</p> <p>Consider the most appropriate way to remunerate</p> <p>Vouchers may be preferable</p> <p>Remuneration should be considered an ethically fair return on contribution</p>

<p><b>Challenge #5: power differentials need to be overcome</b></p>	<p>Children are rarely able to challenge research findings that are about them as much as when they can participate in all aspects of design and knowledge transfer</p>	<p>Do not perceive children as having absolute powerlessness</p> <p>Do not exploit the novelty value of children’s participation</p>
<p><b>Challenge #6: children need to be protected</b></p>	<p>Children and young people need protecting from harm as participants or subjects in research as much as they do if they are peer researchers</p> <p>The protection of children is always paramount, whatever the context</p>	<p>Make judgements about consent on an individual basis</p> <p>An adult may need to be present during interviews</p> <p>Allow time for reflection, review and debrief</p> <p>Recognise and encourage the role children have in supporting each other</p> <p>Clear child protection protocols are needed for every study</p>

*Table 1.* Children as co-researchers: challenges, counter-challenges and solutions. Adapted from “Engaging with children as co-researchers: challenges, counter-challenges and solutions” by C. Bradbury-Jones and J. Taylor, 2015, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 18(2), page 164-165.

What is missing in the literature critiquing participatory research is the perspective of CYP themselves. Lind’s (2007) participatory action research project with adolescents gives an example of a CYP’s perspective but does so by interpreting their language and

behaviour indirectly after the fact. They analysed one participant's behaviour as not fully embodying the role of co-researcher. Albeit an attempt to analyse how a young person may have felt about the participatory research process, this is nevertheless given through Lind's adult lens and personal interpretation. Similarly, research by young researchers Rome, Hardy, Richardson and Shenton (2015) includes the young people's own reflections on both their development and their involvement in their own research about decision-making in the lives of disabled people. These reflections however, are reported as merely two quotations within the research paper and it is unclear how, when, or for what purpose these were elicited; further depth and exploration of what these researchers have touched upon is needed.

Wintels, Smits, van Wesel, Verheijden and Ketelaar (2018) used an experience-based participation model to examine the personal experiences of how adolescents with cerebral palsy participate in society. Findings were conceptualised into a model that can be used to provide the perspectives of CYP with cerebral palsy to inform the practices of those providing relevant care or services. This exemplifies how CYP themselves can feed into thinking and conceptualisation around a phenomenon they have experienced.

It may be that limitations arise from the mode in which participatory research with CYP happens. Sclater and Lally (2014) suggest that virtual worlds (such as online chat rooms or other spaces to communicate) could act as frameworks for participatory research, integrating a child or young person's everyday experiences within an online activity system which would in turn provide the unit of analysis. Gathering the perspectives of CYP who have experienced using virtual worlds would be important to strengthen this claim.

Having synthesised the relevant literature into power-related, ethical and practical issues with participatory research involving CYP, there is a lack of contribution reported from the CYP involved or experienced in this area. In reviewing their participatory research study, Mallan et al. (2010, p.269) conclude that "attention needs to be given to how young people could be best involved so that process is negotiated to the satisfaction of both parties". The research in this thesis pays attention to that, by keeping young people's views on participatory research at the heart of the process. In an argument for the importance of CYP engaging in their own research, Kellett (2005, p.8)

states “children observe with different eyes, ask different questions...all of this can offer valuable insights and original contributions to knowledge”. It is this reasoning which the current research justifies the insight and contributions CYP could bring to participatory research approaches; further rationale will now be outlined.

## **2.8 Research Rationale**

Since the 1990s, participatory approaches to research with CYP have become increasingly popular (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Coad & Evans, 2008). As well as being open to critique, approaches and models of participatory research have been refined and developed over time. As mentioned previously, what is missing from the literature surrounding participatory research is CYP’s perspective on participatory approaches, as well as their accounts or reflections related to their experiences of participatory research. Evaluating three studies using participatory visual methods, Vindrola-Padros, Martins, Coyne, Bryan and Gibson (2016, p. 649) conclude that researchers must “continue to refine our approaches based on reflections of use in practice, as well as feedback from young people”. This research looks to fill this gap, by exploring directly with CYP how they experience one participatory project.

Part of this rationale is an underlying assumption that CYP would wish to be part of this research and to share their perspectives on participatory approaches. This assumption means that this research is not participatory. Despite this, this research is rooted in beliefs and principles from a humanistic approach to psychology, that CYP provide a unique and valuable insight on participatory research. Further rationale comes from the belief that CYP’s participation in this research may also be beneficial to them as their contributions will be valued and their voice added to the literature base.

## **2.9 Chapter Summary**

The critical literature review outlined in this chapter found that, with the recent rise in popularity for using participatory approaches to research with CYP, various models have been developed by researchers to try and understand, as well as bring structure, to the research approach. The review identified different models of participatory research with CYP, as well as criticisms of the approach. Critique centred largely around power, ethics and practicalities, presenting the challenges that come with using such a

malleable and context-specific research approach with CYP (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015).

What was lacking from the literature review however, was the voice and perspective of CYP themselves on participatory research, both in terms of developing models or in terms of critiquing. This research aimed to explore how young people themselves experience participatory research in the hope of using their insights and perspectives to enhance the development of participatory research practices. Given the conclusions of the critical literature review, enhancement may come in the form of further clarity or guidance on how participatory research with CYP can overcome power-based, ethical or practical issues, from the perspective of CYP themselves.

Participatory research with CYP is underpinned by humanistic psychology, positive psychology and strengths-based approaches. In line with this, this research aimed to approach the young people involved as individuals with agency, value and strengths. The methodology used and details of the data collection in this research will now be outlined in Chapter 3.



## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter sets out the methodology of this research. It begins by outlining the ontological and epistemological position (3.2). Next, the research methodology - IPA - is outlined, as well as the rationale behind choosing it over alternative approaches (3.3). The research aims and purpose are then explained (3.4), followed by the research questions (3.5) and research design (3.6). Data collection and data analysis are then explained in detail (3.7 and 3.8). Finally, issues of validity and ethics are discussed (3.9 and 3.10), paving the way for the research findings to be presented in chapter four.

### **3.2 Ontology and Epistemology**

Research paradigms are ways of looking at what is 'real' which then guide how that 'reality' is researched (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007). Paradigms can be defined by a researcher's beliefs about ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (how we know about reality) and methodology (how to go about gaining knowledge about reality) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Researchers must be explicit about their ontological and epistemological position to recognise and reflect on the influence and impact of the associated philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 2014). Moore (2005) argues that it is in fact an ethical duty for EPs to examine the ontology and epistemology behind their practice and methodology.

Paradigms have been mapped along a continuum between a scientific objective view of the world and a socially constructed view of the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). At one end of the continuum, positivism assumes there is only one objective reality that can be known about by valid quantitative and hypothetical-deductive methods (Popper, 1969). Positivism's focus on finding data to explain 'reality' and casual relationships did not fit the exploratory nature of this research, which aims to discover both similarities and differences in how young people experience reality. A positivist approach also positions the researcher as an objective outsider, therefore ignoring the potential influence a researcher has on data (Willig, 2013). In contrast, the researcher's

influence, position and interpretative stance was key to this research and as such, a positivist paradigm not appropriate.

At the other end of the continuum lies constructionism which assumes there are multiple realities, each individually and socially constructed. In the constructionist paradigm, qualitative research methods are utilised to understand these many realities and the role language and contextual factors play in their social construction (Burr, 2003). This researcher believes there are underlying unobservable deeper structures in the world and that the objective nature of reality cannot be explained by social constructions alone (Alvesson & Sklödberg, 2018), so this research is therefore in line with critical realism. Having outlined the paradigm within which this research lies, a justification for its critical realist stance will now be given.

Critical realism is both the ontological and epistemological position of this research (Danermark et al., 2001). Critical realism's ontological position is that knowledge is a social and historical product and its epistemology holds that there is an interactive link between the researcher and what is being researched (Scott, 2007).

Positioned towards the middle of the continuum, critical realism was part of the pragmatic 'solution' to the "paradigm wars' between positivists and constructionists" (Robson, 2002, p.43). Critical realism agrees that objects in the world exist whether the researcher can know them or not, but also recognise that any attempts to understand these objects would be fallible and knowledge is always changing (Scott, 2007).

Critical realism seeks to understand reality through both what is observable and through the 'deeper causal structures' that shape reality and the meaning of human perceptions (Jupp, 2006). As such, this research considers the structures of participatory research to be real – they exist independently of both the participants and the participants' conceptions of them (Shipway, 2013). Shipway (2013) claims that, in educational research, a critical realist perspective can offer an explanatory critique that can reveal problems in the underlying structures of systems, aligning with the potential emancipatory purposes of this research.

Having outlined the ontological and epistemological position of this research, the methodological approach, its theoretical basis and the rationale for using it will now be explained.

### **3.3 Research Methodology**

This research aimed for a detailed exploration of an individual's personal experiences - exploring how young people experience and make sense of a participatory project - rather than focusing on specific variables and looking to make generalisations across large numbers of participants. A qualitative methodology was therefore more appropriate than quantitative for this research (Yardley, 2008).

This research was also steered by phenomenology: thinking about the human experience and how people understand their experiences of the world (Smith, 2011). Phenomenological research emphasises an individual's subjective account and interpretation of lived experience and qualitative analysis of the data (Gray, 2013). This research was specifically focused on young people's experiences of one phenomenon – participatory research.

IPA was the methodological approach used in this research. IPA is a psychological qualitative approach to research which aims to “explore in detail individual personal and lived experience and to examine how participants are making sense of their personal and social world” (Smith & Eatough, 2016, p.50). IPA and its theoretical basis will next be outlined, along with further rationale for its use including why other approaches were not used.

**3.3.1 IPA.** IPA has been defined as “committed to the examination of how people make sense of...life experiences” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 1). Recognising that ‘experience’ itself is a complex concept, IPA considers the experiences that individuals are consciously aware or made aware of, usually of significance to the person (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The ‘experience’ (or phenomena) in focus for this research was a participatory project, one that is likely to be of significance to the young people taking part as it was a one-off event and a residential experience.

IPA is also connected with humanistic psychology and recognises humans as sense-making beings, whose accounts given are attempts to make sense of experience (Smith & Eatough, 2016). This grounding is in alignment with participatory research – the focus of this research - also connected with humanistic psychology. IPA’s focus on the emic perspectives of participants fits the ethos of this research which aims to fully appreciate and learn from each individual participant’s experience of the participatory project, valuing every account as much as the next (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). IPA uses detailed analysis of a case and the narrative life of an individual, before moving on to the next case (Smith & Eatough, 2016).

Whilst focused on individual accounts of experience, IPA also recognises the interpretation and sense-making necessary for a researcher to access these accounts (Smith, Flower & Larkin, 2011). This is known as a ‘double hermeneutic’, where researchers try to make sense of participants trying to make sense of their worlds (Smith, 2011). This acknowledgement of a researcher’s influences and the explicit emphasis that IPA puts on reflexivity as part of the analysis fits with the ethos and approach of this research.

The theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of IPA are rooted in phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography; a brief outline of each will now be given. Firstly, phenomenology is thinking about the human experience and how people understand their experiences of the world (Smith, 2011). Phenomenological research emphasises an individual’s subjective account and interpretation of lived experience and qualitative analysis of the data (Gray, 2013).

Next, hermeneutics, “the theory of interpretation”, is concerned with questions about the methods, purposes, analyses and results of interpretation (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p.21). The theory of hermeneutics contends that, to begin to understand the complexities of social reality, a researcher cannot just collect data, he or she also needs to interpret that data to deepen his or her knowledge and self-understanding (Gray, 2013). The process of hermeneutics in IPA is dynamic and iterative, with a researcher engaging with data and attempting to ‘bracket’ off their prior experiences, assumptions or pre-conceptions (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Lastly, idiography is concerned with the particular, both in detail and depth or analysis and in understanding how phenomena have been understood by particular people, in particular contexts (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Unlike nomothetic research that seeks to find generalisations, IPA will consider detailed cases individually and then cautiously establishes the “significant aspects of a shared humanity” (Smith, 2004, p.43).

**3.3.2 Consideration of alternative approaches.** From its positioning in critical realism, other methodologies were also considered by this research before IPA was chosen. Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory and Narrative Approaches will now be outlined, along with the considerations given to them.

**3.3.2.1 Thematic analysis.** Thematic analysis (TA) is the process of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Where TA focuses on themes, IPA explores the phenomenological world of participants and unpicks their interpretations of experience in depth. This research favoured IPA for this depth, as it aimed to explore young people’s experiences of a participatory project in detail to understand how they made sense of the phenomenon on a case by case basis. This ideographic approach is also relevant to the work of Educational Psychology, as EPs carry out work with individual cases involving children, their families and school, aiming to explore and understand how those involved make sense of and understand their experiences.

**3.3.2.2 Grounded theory.** Grounded Theory (GT) is an inductive methodology that facilitates the emergence of theory grounded in data and real word settings (James & Leyden, 2010). GT usually aims to create theories as representations of processes or phenomena. Rather than develop a theory about participatory research from the perspective of young people, this research aims to explore young people’s experiences of participatory research. While GT may have been better suited to research with an explanatory purpose, it was found not be an appropriate methodology for this exploratory research.

**3.3.2.2 Narrative approaches.** Narrative approaches consider how individuals interpret experience and the world and construct meaning through stories and narratives.

Narrative Analysis (NA) and IPA have commonalities, both typically using interviews to gain rich descriptive data about participant experience and then interpretation of the data.

NA encourages participants to provide narrative accounts of their experiences, structured typically with beginnings, middles and ends. This structure can be beneficial in supporting participants to make sense of their experiences, but was not used in this research so as to avoid any restrictions that the structure of a narrative might impose upon participants' meaning-making. Furthermore, the interviews in this research took place within the context of the experience in-focus. Participants would not necessarily therefore be in the position to look back and provide a narrative account of the experience; the research is instead focused on their meaning-making of an experience from within that subjective experience as it happens.

NA recognises the need for reflexivity when a researcher analyses the narrative accounts of participants (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). In IPA however, the double hermeneutics involved in the process of data analysis is highly valued and the process carefully systematised. IPA therefore is better placed to facilitate this research's aim to get as close as possible to understanding the sense young people make of participatory research. Finally, IPA was favoured over NA as the research methodology as NA considers how individuals construct narratives and is therefore situated in the social constructionist paradigm (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). Rather than focus on the effects of language used by young people, this research intends to focus on the meanings of that language for the young people themselves and use IPA to find meaningful insights which go beyond the what the young people share explicitly (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This can also be understood as analysis on a latent level, exploring underlying ideas and assumptions in what participants say, instead of analysing on a semantic level by identifying the explicit or surface meanings of the data (Boyatzis, 1998).

**3.3.3 Summary of research methodology choice.** When summarising the rationale behind IPA as methodological approach in the research, it is also important to recognise its limitations. In collecting rich and detailed data relating to a participant's experiences, IPA relies on its participant's' linguistic and reflective abilities. The young people who will be participants in this research will all be over 16 years of age and have been

recruited to take part in a residential focused on using Verbatim Theatre and so will have the necessary abilities to be able to describe their experiences and give their views. The extent to which the young people may want to share and be supported to share these however, is also dependent on the skills of the researcher as interviewer. IPA necessitates an interviewer to be highly adept at ensuring a participant is at ease and feels that what they say is of value; employing flexibility and dynamism to explore important tangents whilst maintaining relevancy to the interview schedule and keeping a slow and comfortable pace, checking participants are comfortable when appropriate (Smith & Eatough, 2016). This may be especially pertinent as the participants are care-experienced and may therefore have associated vulnerabilities. The influence of the researcher on the findings will be noted when appropriate in Chapter 4 and reflections on being a novice IPA researcher can be found in section 5.7.2.

As a methodological approach, IPA fits with both the humanistic psychology roots of this research and its ontological and epistemological position of critical realism. The research also connects with IPA in terms of the theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology (with its focus on the phenomena of participatory research), hermeneutics (recognising the inevitable layers of interpretation involved as data is collected and analysed) and idiography (valuing each young person's experiences and sense-making in detail individually, before considering the next and then any similarities or differences between them as a group).

IPA was also chosen as it goes beyond just looking for themes in what the young people have to say, using interpretation deeply and systematically to attempt to get as close to the young people's meanings as possible and allowing the young people to share in an open and unstructured mannered. It also has the opportunity to be used in participatory way and this idea is explored in section 5.6.

### **3.4 Research Aims and Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to exploratory, seeking new insights by exploring young people's experiences of a participatory project. It aims to explore young people's feelings about, understanding of and meaning making of 'participation' in a participatory project and their role as 'co-researchers'. By exploring this with young

people, the research aims to enhance to development of participatory research practices. In this sense, as well as by empowering the young people by valuing, listening to and making use of their perspectives, the secondary purpose of the research is emancipatory. There is currently a gap in the literature that provides insight on participatory research directly from young people themselves and this research aims to begin to address this.

### **3.5 Research Questions**

The research questions at the heart of this proposal are designed to fulfil the purpose of exploring young people's experiences of a participatory project and enhancing the development of participatory research practices. The research questions are therefore:

What are young people's experiences of a participatory project?

What can be learnt from young people's experiences of a participatory project?

To clarify the terms used in the research question above, the participatory project referred to is TVF, where young people are invited to be co-researchers during a residential workshop that uses applied arts practice (Research Councils United Kingdom, 2017). The 'young people' involved in the project and referred to in the research question are young people who are either currently in care or care leavers, aged between the ages of 16 and 21 years, specifically recruited to take part in TVF. Members of the project steering group at UEL had existing links with the Virtual School of one London Borough. Virtual School staff members were invited to a meeting to learn about TVF and sent documentation outlining the project (Appendix C). Young people were then recruited through the Virtual School and invited to a pre-meeting at UEL to hear more about the project and decide if they wanted to attend the two-day residential (Appendix D).

Whereas the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 discussed different models of participatory research as well as critique of the approach used with CYP, no literature found has yet predominantly sought the ideas, experiences or perspectives of those CYP involved in participatory research on the approach itself. This research aims to provide a unique contribution by gathering information about CYP's understanding of participatory practices, to add to and develop these practices.



### **3.6 Research Design**

Following on from the research methodology outlined in 3.3, the research design was qualitative using IPA. The research used IPA to allow for an in-depth and focused exploration of the young people's experiences in the participatory project TVF (Willig, 2013). Each young person is treated as a 'case' and their experiences were analysed, cross referenced and discussed (Hibberd, 2015). Using IPA, each 'case' was analysed in depth and detail before moving on to the next. In line with a critical realist position, as part of the multiple case analysis, generalisations about the experiences of young people involved in participatory research and the deeper casual structures that exist around this phenomenon were cautiously looked for. The limitations of IPA, such as its reliance on the expertise of the researcher and the generalisability of the data, will also be considered in the discussion (Wadey, 2015). Next information about data collection, including participants, strategies for gathering data and procedures will be outlined. As this aspect of the research included personal involvement and decision making, the first person tense will be used to explain what was done.

### **3.7 Data Collection**

**3.7.1 Identifying a participatory research project.** To investigate the research questions outlined in section 3.5, participants needed to have experienced participatory research. To scope out possible planned or ongoing participatory research, I contacted UEL tutors and EPs at my placement EPS to ask if they knew of any such research, projects, or groups that would be interested in having a TEP researcher involved. I was told TVF project at UEL that had recently emailed all UEL staff to request involvement.

TVF is a participatory project, running a series of creative residential workshops for looked after children, set up and coordinated by QMUL and the People's Palace Projects with residentials being run at three additional London Universities (Research Councils United Kingdom, 2017). The residentials were held at Universities because the research was predominately University-led, and for the opportunities and experience that spending time at a University may offer to the young people taking part in the residentials. I attended the first meeting of a steering group at UEL, set up to organise and run the residential. The steering group was keen to have me involved and to 'piggy

back' onto the residential to carry out my doctoral research. Further gatekeeping meetings were then necessary to negotiate my involvement, outline my research proposal, and get consent for the research from both the lead investigators at QMUL and the project lead for UEL's TVF. Please see Appendix E for a detailed outline of 'gatekeeping' meetings.

**3.7.2 Participants.** Having identified a participatory research project planned to take place during summer 2018 at UEL, permission to carry out the research was gained from principle gatekeepers and preparations for participant sampling and recruitment were made.

**3.7.2.1 Participant sample.** Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) suggest that participants should be selected for IPA research who can offer perspectives on the phenomena under study. As this research focuses on the experiences of participatory research, a purposive sample of participants was selected from young people attending TVF residential project at UEL. As the participant group was a group of young people pre-selected for the participatory research project, the sample was opportunistic. All participants were selected on the basis of experiencing participatory research and therefore were a homogenous sample.

**3.7.2.1 Participant number.** Being an idiographic approach, IPA has a focus on deep and rich accounts of experience and therefore a smaller sample size can allow for analysing patterns of similarities and differences across the participant group. It is made clear that in IPA 'cases' do not necessarily equate to 'individuals' and as such, with high quality data, single case studies can be powerful and for professional doctorate research between four and ten interviews are recommended as a guide (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009).

Five young people attended TVF residential. All young people were invited to take part in this research. This was because all perspectives were valued equally and the number of young people attending was in line with recommended sample sizes for IPA. Of these five, one participant did not stay overnight, and one participant only attended the first day of the project.

**3.7.2.3 Participant recruitment.** Prior to TVF, all young people invited to attend were sent information about the research (Appendix F) and consent for their involvement was requested from the person holding Parental Responsibility (PR) as part of the residential consent form.

Two weeks before the residential, young people who would be attending were invited to a pre-residential meeting at UEL. During this meeting I introduced myself and gave an initial explanation of the research to the young people and they were invited to ask questions and assured they would hear more about it at the residential itself. They were also given a written information sheet to take away (Appendix F).

At the beginning of the residential I introduced myself and explained my role again. During a reflection session towards the end of the first day of TVF, I explained again about my research and that taking part was optional. Young people were invited to sign up to a time of their choosing on the interview sign-up sheet (Appendix G). Before the interviews, the research was explained again in detail and participants were reminded of the terms of consent and right to withdraw. Participants completed their informed consent forms just before their individual interviews. After each interview, participants were invited to choose their own pseudonym.

**3.7.3 Research techniques.** In terms of research techniques, those that enable participants to offer a full, detailed accounts are best suited to IPA (Smith, 2011). This research used semi-structured interviews (interview schedule can be found in Appendix H). Young people were given a choice of interview slots across the two-day residential, beginning at the end of the first day. This was to ensure they had experienced at least a full day's worth of the participatory research project and to ensure that participants did not miss out on any project sessions while interviews took place.

The research took place within the TVF residential workshop and therefore the exploration of participants' experiences happened within the context of the experience itself. Attempts to minimise any confusion caused by this were done by explicitly acknowledging this was the case and by reassuring participants that whatever they wanted to share and anyway in which they chose to answer interview questions was valid. Data analysis also took into consideration that the fact participants were talking

from ‘within’ the experience and had less time and space to reflect upon the experience, as well as at which stage within the two days each interview took place.

A benefit of exploring the experience from ‘within’ the experience however, was ‘hot cognition’, fresh understandings or awareness of an experience (Hayton, 2017). Logistically and practically, it was easier to speak to participants within the TVF project time itself. Although participants were interviewed at different times across the two days, any effects from this were less considerable than if the interviews were to take place on days and at locations following the residential.

**3.7.4 Data gathering.** Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a method of data collection to allow for a dialogue between researcher and participant whereby initial questions can be adapted and refined according to participant responses (Smith, 2011). The flexibility this facilitated the participants’ active process of unpicking and reflecting upon the meaning that they were making of their participatory experiences as co-researchers.

Focus groups were not used. This was to minimise any possible participant group inter-personal or power dynamics that could interfere with understanding participants’ experiences. Similar possible affects and biases can also be present in individual interviews however. For example, the risk of researcher bias needed minimising, as I, the researcher, was present throughout the residential, not just during interviews and this is discussed further in 3.7.6.

IPA research questions are often abstract, therefore interview questions need to ensure that relevant topics are discussed, so that the research question can then be answered later by analysis (Smith, 2011). As such, an interview schedule was developed to incorporate the potential for prompts based on specific experiences during the residential to gain the ‘thickest’ descriptions possible (Appendix H). As interviews rely on the verbal competencies of the participants as well as the desire to share personal perspectives and ideas, opportunities for visuals designed to aid discussion were used when necessary. For example, the reflective postcards participants had written in an earlier session were used in one interview and specific activities or spaces were referred to at times as prompts.

Less experienced interviewers are advised to formulate specific questions in advance (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Smith and Osborn's (2003) guide for constructing semi-structured interviews was used to generate questions. The key points in the guide are:

1. Consider the broad range of issues to cover
2. Sequence topics appropriately
3. Create appropriate questions
4. Create possible probes and prompts for each question

Before interviews, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) suggest discussing interview questions with someone else to consider their appropriateness and when 'bracketing' off assumptions about the content of the answers may be especially necessary. An opportunity to do this with a young person taking part in another TVF residential run by QMUL was requested but unfortunately not possible. The option to discuss with a young person or adult who had experienced a similar project was also considered but unfortunately not available. Instead feedback on the questions was sought from both my Placement Supervisor and Director of Studies. Advice was also sought from a peer working group of other TEPs also using an IPA approach to their research. The feedback was incorporated into the design of the questions and schedule (Appendix H). After the first day of the residential, it was apparent that certain terminology was not used explicitly with the participants and so the schedule was adapted accordingly (Appendix I).

Research with student researchers has highlighted potential challenges to interviewing (Roulston, deMarrais & Lewis, 2003). These challenges were considered prior to the interviews and ways to deal with these were thought-through and recorded in Appendix J.

Smith (2004, p.49) advises IPA interviewers that when interviewing children they may need "to take a stronger role in guiding them than is usual in IPA interviews". Although participants were all over 16 years of age, it was found that in some interviews guidance such as references to specific activities, people or using a visual aid were useful for encouraging further responses. Interviews also began with a question

that aimed to be straightforward and simple to answer to help participants feel relaxed, welcome and that they are able to answer a question with relative ease. The fact that the researcher had also been able to introduce themselves to the participants as early as the pre-meeting, as well as be present during the residential aimed to build rapport with participants and feel comfortable to share during the interviews. However, the possible disadvantages to this is that it may have contributed to demand characteristics in the interviews or confused the role of researcher with that of other staff running the project (discussed further in 5.5).

As recommended by Eatough and Smith (2016), the interview schedule was learnt by rote, so that it could act as a mental prompt and allow the conversation to flow and move at a pace comfortable for the participant. The schedule was used as a guide and flexed to allow follow participants' lead, however difficulties with this are discussed in section 5.5.1. Handwritten notes were not taken during the interview, to maximise natural eye-contact, aid rapport development and support participants to feel their perspectives and views were of high value (Mertens, 2005).

The interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder (Olympus WS-831) and then transcribed using the VEC Infinity USB Foot Pedal and Infinity Express Scribe Transcription Software. The data was stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018) and will be destroyed after it is no longer needed.

The three interviews at the end of the first day of the project took place at the residential building used in the project and the two interviews on the final day took place at the UEL building where workshops were taking place. Each participant had a choice of two designated interview settings, one indoors and one outdoors.

Interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, with the mean time being 20 minutes. This is shorter than the length of interview generally recommended for IPA. However, it was felt that the length was appropriate given the participants were young people, care-experienced and were interviewed in the midst of a project (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) state that an interviewer must monitor how an interview is affecting a participant and determine how they might be feeling to

safeguard him or her. This was done and guided where prompts were made during the interviews. After the interview, participants were thanked for participating, given the opportunity to ask questions and offered time to speak about how they found the process. Participants were reminded of the purpose of the interview and that an opportunity for feedback would be organised.

**3.7.5 Procedure.** All data collection took place during the TVF residential project, based at University of East London in July 2018. An outline of the residential, along with details of the content across the two days can be found in Appendix K. The following steps outline the data collection procedure:

1. Contact was established with the Virtual School lead who was the contact point for all young people taking part in the TVF residential project. Information sheets with details of the research were sent to all young people. Informed consent forms were sent to those with Parental Responsibility (PR) for each young person.

2. Consent forms from those with PR were returned to researcher prior to residential.

3. All young people were invited to a pre-residential information meeting, two weeks before the residential began. I attended this meeting to introduce myself to the young people. I also introduced the research to them.

4. On the first morning of the residential, I joined the welcome breakfast where I once again introduced myself to the young people and explained the purpose and nature of my research.

5. During the reflection session at the end of the first day of the residential, I reminded the young people about my research and offered interview time slots for each of them to sign up to if they wanted to participate (Appendix G). As not all interviews took place on the first day of the residential, on the second day interview times were arranged individually with participants.

6. At appropriate times during both days of the residential, during the interview slots that participants signed up to, semi-structured interviews took place. At the beginning of

each interview I went over the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix F) with each participant and then gave them the Consent Form (Appendix L) to read and complete if they were happy to participate in the research. Appendix H outlines the interview schedule. After each interview, participants were given a de-brief. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and stored securely.

7. The plan for a feedback session with the young people following data analysis can be found in Appendix M and is discussed further in section 5.4.

**3.7.6 Role of researcher.** In educational research, an ‘emic’ perspective focuses on the internal language and meanings of a culture: representing the idiographic in IPA research (Olive, 2014). In contrast, ‘etic’ perspectives provide an external view, using pre-existing theories and frameworks to study a culture or group: the hermeneutic cycle in IPA research (Olive, 2014; Kottak 2010).

As a researcher, I experienced both emic and etic positions, emic in my role in the UEL steering group which planned and organised TVF residential and etic in my researcher role across the two-day TVF project and use of IPA. Tensions were felt when I was asked to take on additional responsibilities as part of the steering group. For example, I was asked to complete the UEL ethics application on behalf of the steering group. The rationale given was that I would be going through the process of applying for ethics for my own research and therefore more familiar with the process. I felt that I was able to complete the UEL ethics application without comprising or it interfering with my own research and that this allowed my status in the steering group to be of a member who had contributed towards the project, as well as having benefited from it.

I was also aware of having been in an advising and organisational role during the planning of the residential as part of the steering group, I had to be clear to others that during the residential itself I was acting as researcher only and therefore could not take on additional responsibilities such as facilitation or mentoring. A balance and clear boundaries were needed between these emic and etic positions. Overall, the discrepancies between emic and etic perspectives were viewed as an opportunity rather than a limitation, as my position on the steering group contributed to my overall understanding of the project and its participatory nature which then informed my



interview questions and kept them specific to the project and its nuances (Olive, 2014). Additionally, the systematic process of interpretation in IPA data analysis was useful for making the process of considering emic and etic perspectives explicitly.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

Data was analysed using IPA, as it allowed for detailed exploration of how each participant experienced and made sense of the phenomena in focus, whilst incorporating the researcher's own meaning-making, interpretation and reflexion as a dynamic aspect of the analysis. The analysis is therefore "a joint product of the participant and analyst" (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p.80). Whether there is scope for IPA to become more participatory will be discussed in section 5.6.

Analysing data using IPA fits within the critical realism paradigm of this research. IPA analysis recognises that knowledge is socially and historically constructed (ideographically, for each participant) whilst also recognising there are causal structures that shape reality (looking for the commonalities across the group of 'cases'). IPA aims to produce knowledge about participants' perspectives, whilst acknowledging that this can only be done through researchers' own perspectives (Willig, 2013). Correspondingly, critical realism accepts that any attempts to understand and know about things that exist in the world will be imperfect (Scott, 2007).

Data analysis in IPA should be a flexible approach to applying the common processes and principles of IPA, rather than a prescriptive procedure (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The following stages of analysis suggested by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) were followed (as advised for novice IPA researchers):

- I. Reading and re-reading (bracketing off any initial observations or impressions, then engaging in close, repeated readings of the interviews)
- II. Initial noting (noting exploratory comments regarding anything of interest relating to the research questions)
- III. Developing emergent themes (distilling what is important from the initial noting)
- IV. Searching for connections across emergent themes (using various techniques to find connections across emergent themes to create subordinate themes)

- V. Repeating the above stages for each participant (bracketing off previous cases to carry out the steps for each new case)
- VI. Looking for patterns across cases (identifying which themes are recurrent across cases and producing a map of all themes)

IPA analysis is iterative and inductive and to further promote this, the above stages were revisited and repeated (Smith, 2007). Further details on how the above stages were put into practice will be discussed in detail in section 4.2.

During IPA data analysis it is recommended that “researchers totally immerse themselves in the data” (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p. 366). A two-week period was therefore set aside for the sole purpose of data analysis, with no other work or placement commitments.

**3.8.1 Transcription.** IPA requires a verbatim record of the data collection (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Transcription was completed by the researcher (using a VEC Infinity USB Foot Pedal and Infinity Express Scribe Transcription Software) as an additional opportunity to develop familiarity with the data.

Smith and Osborn’s (2003) guide for transcribing interviews was followed and a semantic record was created of all words spoken by everyone present, words were spelt conventionally, and notes were included on any notable non-verbal utterances.

### **3.9 Validity**

Validity is the extent to which data collection and analysis address the research questions (Willig, 2013). Qualitative research methods are more flexible and open-ended, therefore allowing for validity issues to be addressed during the research, compared to quantitative methods that may use techniques or instruments with pre-determined validity (Willig, 2013). In examining validity, qualitative researchers must consider the trustworthiness of the findings. Accepted criteria for the quality of qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability; an outline of how each were considered in relation to the current research follows (Mertens, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

**3.9.1 Credibility.** The credibility of research is how far the findings represent the information drawn from the original data – equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research. Strategies to ensure credibility include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and feeding back data to participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). By being present throughout the participatory project as an observer (as discussed in section 3.7.6), I became familiar with the setting and context of the phenomenon in focus. I also used this opportunity, as well as the pre-residential briefing to build rapport and trust with participants. Being present during TVF residential also allowed for opportunities for observation and triangulation of data in the interviews and should make later feedback to participants easier (as this can be coordinated through members of TVF steering group). How my presence affected my interpretations is considered where appropriate in Chapter 4. Descriptive validity of the data was ensured by the audio-recording and verbatim transcription of all interviews and the credibility of my interpretations were checked through discussions with my Placement Supervisor, Director of Studies and the peer IPA working group.

**3.9.2 Transferability.** Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be transferred to other contexts, or participants in other settings – equivalent to external validity in quantitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This research aimed to gather ‘thick’ descriptions so that experiences of the participants could be understood in the context in which they occurred, enabling readers to then ‘make judgements about the applicability of the research findings to their own situations’ (Mertens, 2005, p.259). Although the idiographic nature of IPA mean that findings will be specific to this participatory project, it is hoped that it can also shed light on the context of participatory research more broadly.

**3.9.3 Dependability and confirmability.** Dependability and confirmability focus on the stability of findings overtime and include an audit trail of all steps taken within the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To promote transparency, an audit trail has been produced including a log of all TVF project meetings attended (Appendix E), a log of all interview dates and times (Appendix N), a log of dates for stages of data analysis (Appendix O) and an example of transcribed interviews with stages of data analysis included (Appendix P).

**3.9.4 Validity in IPA.** Guidelines have been offered for maintaining and assessing validity to IPA methodology by Yardley (2000, 2008). These were also considered when ensuring trustworthiness in this research. An outline as to how will now be given for each guideline.

**3.9.4.1 Sensitivity to context.** Good qualitative research should show sensitivity to context across all areas of the research process and in the relationship between researcher and participant (Yardley, 2008). I showed sensitivity to the context of relevant literature and theory through my literature review and basing the discussion of my findings in theory. Sensitivity to context in interviews can be shown in good interactions, showing empathy, putting participants at ease and recognising power play and any interactional difficulties, all of which I have tried to do and reflected on in section 5.5.1 (Smith et al., 2009). I orientated myself to the socio-cultural setting of the study through involvement with TVF project prior to the residential. During data analysis, I immersed myself in participants' accounts.

**3.9.4.2 Commitment and rigour.** Commitment refers to prolonged engagement and care shown during data collection and analysis (Yardley, 2008). My engagement with TVF project prior to data collection was thorough (Appendix E). I used careful, active listening during interviews and conducted data analysis methodically and comprehensively, including examples of each stage in the Appendices. Rigour refers to thoroughness in the data sample and collection. The sample was chosen to be able to answer the research questions and steps were taken to recruit all young people taking part in TVF project (section 3.7.5). I showed rigour by practising the interview schedule beforehand (although unfortunately not with a young person or through a pilot study) and during the interview by utilising what I had learnt about IPA and accessing my skills as a TEP.

**3.9.4.3 Transparency and coherence.** Yardley (2008) gives guidance for transparency in how stages of the research are described in write-up and coherence in how the research fits together and deals with contradictions. I have aimed for transparency and coherence and using tutorials and draft feedback to focus on these elements. **3.9.4.4. Impact and importance.** Validity of research relates to its impact and utility (Yardley, 2008). This research will give novel insight into young people's

experiences of a participatory project and aims for learning from this to be fed back into developing participatory practices.

**3.9.5 Reflexivity.** Vicary, Young and Hicks (2016) argue that validity in IPA is a dynamic construct, linked intimately to the learning-process of the researcher, and that validity can be achieved through reflexivity, reflection and journaling. Throughout the research process, I kept a research diary detailing reflections and thoughts; extracts from this will be drawn upon to illustrate different aspects of the process. The research process and every choice made within it inevitably shapes the focus of enquiry. Reflexivity is therefore necessary to acknowledge and explore the influence of a researcher both as a person (personal reflexivity) and as a theorist (epistemological reflexivity) (Willig, 2013). The process of IPA explicitly incorporates reflexivity by acknowledging the importance of the double hermeneutic – that while participants interpret and make sense of their experiences, the researcher interprets and makes sense of the participants sense-making (Smith, 2011). Whilst IPA necessitates a researcher has a reflexive attitude, it does not theorise reflexivity and prescribe how a researcher should be reflexive (Willig 2013). The ways in which personal and epistemological reflexivity were incorporated into this research will next be outlined.

**3.9.5.1 Personal reflexivity.** Personal reflexivity is the extent to which a researcher's beliefs, values and experiences shape the research and the research relationship (Willig, 2013; Korsjens & Moser, 2018). My process of personal reflexivity involved considering different positions I held and how these may influence the research. Positions included:

- White British female
- Person in her early thirties
- Current TEP
- Person who has helped organise TVF residential project
- Person who has not experienced the care system while growing up
- Person with a positive attitude about participatory research methods

My position as a white British female may influence the way in which the participants related to me and in turn, what and how they decided to share about their

experiences with me during the interviews. My age may have also influenced how participants, approximately a decade younger than me, related to me and what they shared during interviews. Using a non-judgemental approach and unconditional positive regard in all of my interactions was an attempt to neutralise possible effects of these positions.

Running concurrently to this research, I was on placement working for a LA as a TEP. During placement, I often worked individually with young people, gathering their views about what is important to them. I had to be careful that this identity did not confuse the role and approach needed as an IPA interviewer and that I held in mind the important aspects of interviewing to fully explore each participants meaning-making and sense of how they experienced the participatory project. I also made sure that even though those who were involved in organising the TVF project were aware I was a TEP, they knew that I was involved in TVF project in the capacity of researcher and not able to facilitate workshops, assist with managing difficult situations or be involved with participants in any other role.

As someone who has not experienced the care system while growing up, participants may be influenced in what or how they share with me their experiences as participants or co-researchers, in relation to their care experiences. It is hoped that confidentiality and informed consent measures will enable participants to share the information they feel comfortable to gain as accurate a representation of their thoughts and feelings as possible.

I was aware that in general, I believe in and feel positively about participatory research and projects. To minimise any effects or influence of this on the data that is collected, I included an interview question that specifically asked about negative experiences or thoughts to do with the project.

Wherever reflexivity was necessary in interpretation of and finding themes, it is highlighted in the transcription notes.

**3.9.5.2 Epistemological reflexivity.** Willig (2013, p.53) offers a series of questions with which to reflect upon the assumptions made during research and the implications of these. The questions are each considered in turn below:

*How has the research question defined and limited what can be 'found'?* It is hoped that the use of the word 'experience' in the research questions is sufficiently open to incorporate all aspects of the young people's thoughts and feelings about the participatory project. However, even by limiting data collection to verbal accounts, using language, means that we may not ever fully understand the experiences of the young people. The second research question focuses on what we can learn from the young people. Whilst this seems to help the young people's views and perspectives be viewed through a positive lens, it already assumes an expectation from them which may convey an air of pressure to 'perform' or expectation that could influence what they chose to share, or how they feel during interviews.

*How have the design of the study and the method of analysis 'constructed' the data and the findings?* By using IPA, data collected focused in on individual experiences. If a different approach had been used, it is possible that the data may have been gathered in alternative qualitative methods or quantitative and perhaps looked more widely at participatory research or projects and therefore generated more generalisable findings (considered in section 3.3.2).

*How could the research question have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation?* The research questions could have been investigated by focusing on a different project, by collecting data differently (considerations were including second or third interviews, after the residential was over or by triangulation using ethnographic methodology), or with different methods of analyses. There is potential for the phenomenon to have been understood from a less narrow viewpoint (of such a specific project as TVF), from the voice of CYP more generally (rather from those from the particularities of care-experienced backgrounds), from a longer-term, reflective position (if interviews weren't only conducted within the experience) and with less of an emphasis on interpretation.

### 3.10 Ethics

This research involved a vulnerable group of participants, young care leavers, and therefore close adherence to ethical codes and consideration of key ethical issues were needed. Although ethical issues pertinent to participatory research were found and outlined in chapter two, these will not be explicitly worked through as the current research itself did not use a participatory approach.

This research was planned and conducted in line with the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics (2014), the Health and Care Professions Council (2016) standards of conduct, performance and ethics and the University of East London (2015) code of practice for research ethics.

The University of East London School of Psychology ethics committee granted ethical approval for the research to take place (Appendix Q). The committee required an assessment of all potential risks to participants, including physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal (Sieber, 1998). LA ethical approval was not needed as the research was conducted within a University-led project (which had its own ethical approval).

In IPA, ethical research practice is a dynamic process which needs to be monitored throughout data collection and analysis (Smith, 2011). Arguably this process should permeate every single stage of the research. Throughout the research, I held in mind and enacted the British Psychology Society's (2018) principles of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity. Also considered was the ethics of interpretation, for example does the interpretation belong to those whose words have been interpreted or those who generated it, how much does it tell us about the phenomena versus the interpreter and what are wider social or psychological effects on those whose words have been interpreted (Willig, 2013)? With these questions in mind, I attempted to be explicit in the influence of my interpretation and consider the effects and ownership of the interpretation when sharing findings back with participants.

With regards to the participants, honesty, openness and candour were especially important (British Psychological Society, 2018). Care-experienced CYP are historically 'researched' often and may not have previously experienced many benefits from this



(Norwich, Richards & Nash, 2010). With this in mind, this research aimed to be beneficent as a guiding ethical obligation (Duncan, 2009). The participants were a ‘vulnerable’ group; therefore, I was sensitive to their needs throughout and adhered to all relevant safeguarding procedures (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, research is value-laden and political, especially working with a group of young people who are in care-experienced; the implications of this will be considered in Chapters 4 and 5 (Robson, 2011).

There can be risks and challenges associated with ‘piggy-backing’ other projects, such as roles and expectations becoming blurred or a lack of control. How I anticipated and controlled for issues around my role as a researcher are discussed in sections 3.7.6 and 5.7.1 and how the research incorporated changes to TVF project – over which I had no control – are discussed in section 5.5.4.

How ethical standards were upheld in relation to informed consent, confidentiality and safeguarding will now be discussed.

**3.10.1 Informed consent.** The research was explained to participants during a pre-residential meeting and then again at the beginning of the residential and briefly at the start of each interview (Appendices G and I). Participants signed consent forms at the beginning of the residential (Appendix L). Informed consent included information about how interviews would be audio-recorded, data storage, anonymisation, confidentiality, participants’ right to withdraw at any time and the research write-up (Robson, 2002). I differentiated the process of gaining informed consent for my research from informed consent for the project overall. This was to ensure participants understood that the interviews were not a compulsory part of the residential and that they had a choice over whether they were involved in my research.

**3.10.2 Confidentiality.** Confidentiality and its limits were explained to participants during the pre-residential meeting, in the participant information sheet and consent form. Participants were treated in the same way as adults and presumed capacity in relation to understanding confidentiality (Health and Care Professions Council, 2017).

It will be clear that the participants have attended a TVF residential so to ensure anonymity, their input was sought to the extent to which they are described (in terms of age and any other contextual information). Participants were asked to choose their own pseudonym for the research write-up and all chose to do so. Identifiable information, such as names or locations, were anonymised in the transcripts.

**3.10.3 Safeguarding.** TVF project had its own safeguarding plan, risks assessment and a designated safeguarding lead always present. However potential risks and challenges specific to safeguarding participants for this research were considered and necessary safeguards put in place (British Psychological Society, 2014). Interviews were planned to minimise or avoid distress or difficult topics and I was prepared to deal with participants' upset or disclosures should they have occurred. The feedback meeting with participants will also aim to minimise any potential negative social or psychological effects of interpretation on participants by giving them the opportunity to give their feedback and take ownerships over what is done next with the interpretation (Willig, 2013).

### **3.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the research methodology by first considering the ontology and epistemology of the research, followed by the research approach, justifying why IPA was chosen. The research aims, purpose, questions and design then followed. Data collection was described in detail, data analysis was introduced and considerations given to validity and ethics were discussed. Chapter four will discuss the research findings.

## **Chapter 4. Analysis and Findings**

### **4.1 Chapter Overview**

Following on from the methodology, this chapter will begin with further information about the participants and care-experienced young people in general (4.2). An in-depth explanation of the process of data analysis is then given (4.3). Next, findings will be introduced (4.4) and an overview of the three superordinate themes will be given (4.5). Each superordinate theme and its subthemes will then be presented: participation (4.6), learning (4.7) and interpersonal relationships (4.8). These themes will then be carried forward into chapter 5 to explore their relationship with the research questions and existing literature.

### **4.2 Participants as care-experienced young people**

To provide context for the analysis and findings, information about the features of care-experienced young people in general and further details about the participants in this research as care-experienced will now be outlined.

As well as care-experienced young people are identified as a vulnerable group. When assessed by children's services to be taken into care, a CYP's 'primary need' is recorded; as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, the 'primary need' for 63% of children was 'abuse or neglect', 'family dysfunction' for 15%, 'family in acute stress' for 8%, 'absent parenting' for 6% (almost all were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) and 'other' for 8% (Department for Education, 2018). Given these 'primary needs', care-experienced young people are likely to have experienced trauma, difficulties or other negative events in their lives, alongside their experiences of the care system itself.

Leaving care is characterised as a problematic time for vulnerable young people, when mental health needs are neglected and there is a shortage of adequate living arrangements; in 2017, forty per cent of 19-21-year-old care leavers were not in education, employment or training (Atkinson, Hyde & Kelly, 2019).

Participants in this research are care-experienced and either care leavers or approaching leaving care. Anonymised details about them are outlined below:

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
DK	21	Male	Both days and overnight
Tim	21	Male	First day and overnight only
Jacamo	17	Female	Both days (not overnight)
Yusef	16	Male	Both days and overnight
Jay	17	Female	Both days and overnight

*Table 2.* Anonymised details of the participants.

Participants' gender has been included as the pseudonyms participants chose were gendered. The ages of participants have been included as they indicate whether they are compulsory school age or older and therefore if they have left care or are likely to still be in care. Details of the participants' attendance at the residential can give insight into the differing experiences of the residential. Other details, such as ethnicity for example, have not been included as they are not salient for this research.

### **4.3 Introduction to Analysis**

This section gives a detailed overview of the process of analysis. The aim of analysis was to end with how the analyst thinks each participant is thinking, the double hermeneutic (Smith et al., 2009). To achieve this aim, the process of analysis necessitated "sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation" (Smith, 2007, p.66).

**4.3.3 Procedure for analysis.** There is no one 'correct' way to carry out IPA analysis, however stages of analysis have been suggested as guidance to novice IPA researchers (Smith et al., 2009). As it was the researcher's first time using IPA these were followed and these stages will now be outlined.

**4.3.3.1 Reading and re-reading.** Guidance from Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) was followed to begin analysis with the interview found to be most detailed, complex and engaging. Before reading, the researcher re-read the initial observations or impressions from the interview from the research diary and aimed to bracket these off from influencing the analysis and ensure the analysis could also lead to new ideas (Smith et al., 2009). Please see Appendix R for an example transcript with initial observations for bracketing.

Each interview transcript was initially read whilst listening to the audio recording to hear the voice, intonation and expression with which the words were said and this supported the idea of imagining the participant's voice during subsequent readings. Each transcript was re-read several times in attempts to "[enter] the participant's world" and build familiarity with the transcript and the structure of the interview (Smith et al., 2009, p.82).

**4.3.3.2 Initial noting.** The transcript was then re-formatted into a table which had three columns – the leftmost column left blank at this stage, the middle column with the transcript pasted into it and double spaced, and the righthand column for initial noting and exploratory comments.

The transcript was read through first with the intention of noting anything of interest about the ways in which the participant talked or thought about, or understood, their experience of participatory research (Smith et al., 2009). The transcript was then read again several times, each time recording the following types of exploratory comments:

- Descriptive – these comments focused on the content of what the participant chose to talk about and more explicit meaning;
- Linguistic – comments that focused on how a participant expressed themselves through language (for example, choice of words, degree of fluency, repetition), the use of linguistic devices (such as metaphor or comparison), as well as non-verbal communication (such as pauses or laughter);
- Conceptual – comments that looked at the data on a more interpretative level about the meaning of what the participant has said. De-contextualisation

strategies, including reading different sections of the transcript in different orders or reading paragraphs backwards, were at times employed to interpret the data to find more abstract concepts.

Equal value was given to all types of comments, however descriptive and linguistic comments tended to be made first, with conceptual comments arising upon further and further readings. Please see Appendix P for an example of initial noting and exploratory comments.

**4.3.3.3 Developing emergent themes.** The researcher then focused on the initial noting and exploratory comments (rather than the transcript) as data from which to develop concise statements that captured what was important in the comments. The statements were the emergent themes, phrases designed to encapsulate the psychological essence of each interview. In developing emergent themes, the data was re-organised into a new set of parts of interpretation (in preparation to come back together as a new whole during the write-up). Emergent themes were written in the left-hand column. A table was then made with quotations from interview transcripts and their page and line number for each emergent theme, so that the participant's direct account could be referred to easily if needed within the next stage of analysis.

**4.3.3.4 Searching for connections across emergent themes.** Emergent themes for a case were then printed out and cut up so they were written on individual slips of paper in chronological order. Themes were then laid out on a large table, to prepare to create a spatial map of how they fit together. Initially, clusters of related themes were formed (Appendix S, Stage 1). These were often left at times and returned back to, to look at with 'fresh eyes' and check previous clustering decisions.

Different processes of analysis, as suggested by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) were used. For example, contextualisation was used to look at how emergent themes were connected by temporal, cultural or narrative themes. The frequency with which emergent themes appeared was also noted and considered as one indication of their relative importance and relevance to the participation (the process of numeration). Emergent themes were also analysed for their function within the transcript, interpretation focused on what function themes may serve for a participant in the

interview. Processes of abstraction and subsumption were both used to either identify patterns between emergent themes to create ‘superordinate’ themes, or when an emergent theme brings together other related themes by taking on ‘subordinate’ status respectively. When subordinate themes were found by abstraction these were written on new slips of paper in colour, or if an emergent theme became subordinate by subsumption it was highlighted with the same colour (Appendix S, Stage 2).

Once emergent themes were clustered by subordinate themes, a graphic representation was made of the structure of how these all mapped, connected or related to each other (Appendix T). Descriptions of the analytic process and thinking behind it were kept for each case in a research diary, along with photographs of the different stages of analysis and reflections on the analytic process.

**4.3.3.5 Repetition of stages for each participant.** After completing the above stages for each participant or ‘case’, the stages were repeated systematically for the next case. As far as was possible, ideas from the previous case were bracketed, consistent with the idiographic nature of IPA. Analysis for each new case was always started on a new day.

**4.3.3.6 Looking for patterns across cases.** All subordinate themes were first placed in a table to identify which were recurrent (Appendix U). This was done first by checking the table of themes for each participant but also by, when appropriate, looking back at emergent themes, transcripts and comments, checking for the presence of the theme. Using guidance from Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), themes were classified as recurrent when present in at least three of the five participant interviews.

The convergent themes were then themselves printed and cut up and analysed using abstraction and subsumption to consider the interconnections between the convergent, recurrent themes and produce a thematic map (Appendix V, Stages 1 and 2). At this point the tables of emergent themes, annotations and quotations, along with the thematic map were brought to supervision with my Director of Studies for credibility cross-checking and further analysis. Following this the thematic map was analysed further and a graphic representation of the superordinate and ordinate themes was created (Appendix V, Stage 3 and 4). A summary of cross-case superordinate and subordinate

themes was listed (Appendix W) and a document was created with evidence from each participant for every subordinate theme (Appendix X). The graphic representation, along with a narrative account of the themes, will now be presented.

#### **4.4 Introduction to Findings**

In IPA, there is not a straightforward distinction between analysis and writing up the analysis (Smith et al., 2009). As each theme was written up as part of this section, interpretation continued to develop, and the findings section has therefore been through a process of drafting and re-drafting. The original whole interviews have been fragmented through analysis and are now coming together as a new whole, one manifestation of the hermeneutic circle (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

The findings will be presented theme by theme. It was decided to present the analysis in this way to address the research questions, yet care was taken to remain idiographic by integrating case by case analysis within each theme. Transcript extracts are used to illustrate each theme, to give participants a voice in the write up (quotations include the page number from where they can be found in the transcript).

Writing up the analysis took place directly after the analysis procedure described in section 4.2. The findings section intends to present a clear and full narrative account of the analytic interpretations of the interviews, illustrated by verbatim extracts from the transcripts. As set out in the American Psychological Association's (2010) guidelines, all quotations under forty words will be cited in text in italics with quotation marks and any quotations over forty words will be presented as a freestanding block of text.

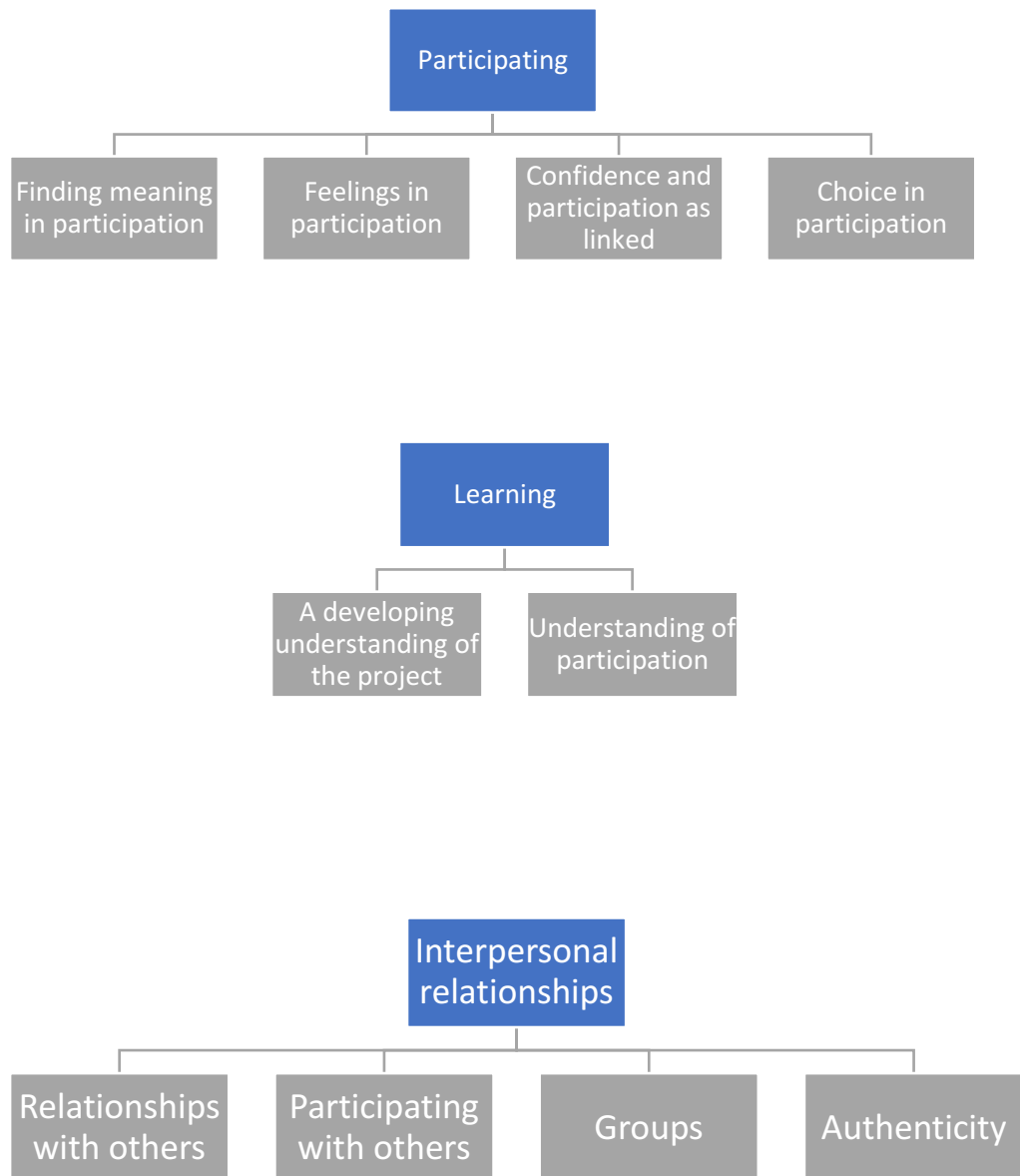
#### **4.5 Overview of Themes**

Themes have been identified from close reading, interpretation and analysis of what participants said in their interviews, as well as consideration of patterns of convergence and divergence in the data across cases. Themes from the analysis and interpretation of data are represented in Figure 7.

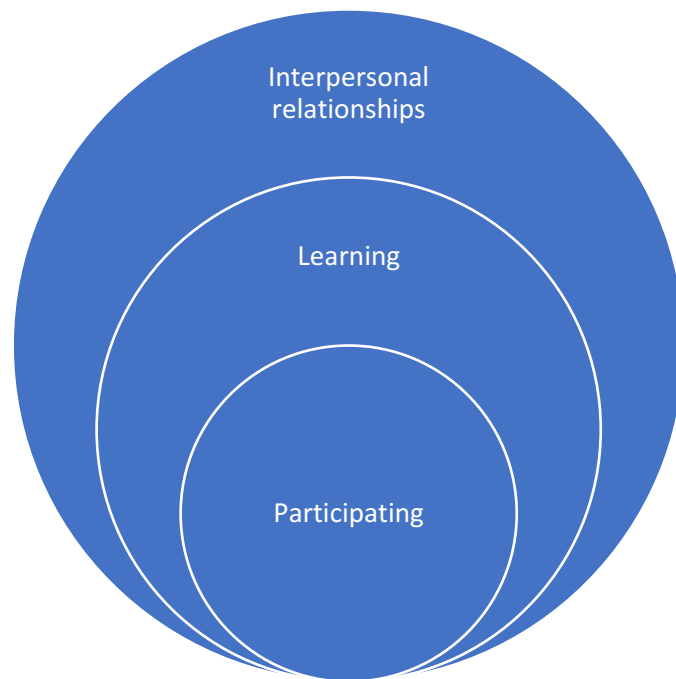
Although each superordinate theme and the associated subthemes will be presented separately, they are all seen as interrelated (as represented in Figure 8). Each



theme will be introduced and discussed both in relation to how it applies to each of the participants in the study and the researcher's interpretation. Every theme presented in this way will provide a narrative account of what has been learnt about from all the participants.



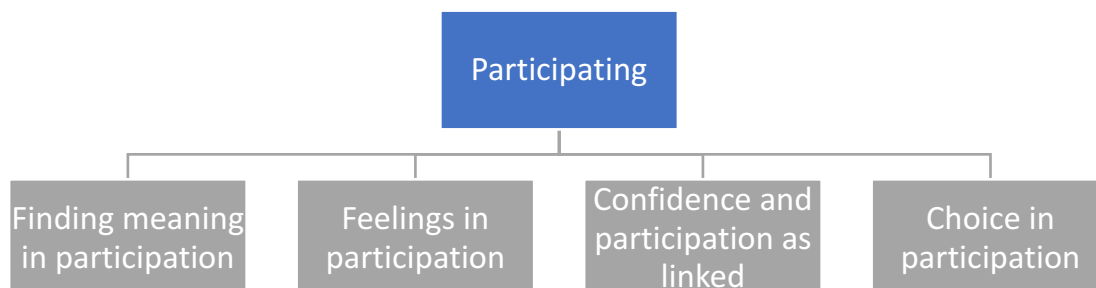
*Figure 7.* Superordinate and subordinate themes.



*Figure 8.* All themes as interrelated.

Superordinate themes will be presented in the order of prevalence, according to which had the most data associated with them. This order may indicate the importance of themes to the participants.

## 4.6 Superordinate Theme: Participating



*Figure 9.* Participating.

This theme explores the way that all participants made sense of participating. In all participant interviews, when talking about how they had experienced the project, the idea of participating was important. For example:

Like you know the other people, in the like room? It's like we all want the same thing. And we're all here for it, so like, I might as well join in and like help them, make change. (Jacomo, page 15, line 331)

Four subordinate themes (represented in Figure 9), related to how participants made sense of participating, were identified:

- Finding meaning in participating
- Feelings in participation
- Confidence and participation as linked
- Choice in participation

Highly related to this superordinate theme is the subtheme 'participating with others' which is discussed in section 4.7.2.

**4.6.1 Finding meaning in participation.** This theme reflects the idea that it was important for participants to have meaning or purpose to their participation, although the perceived meaning or purpose differed for each participant. This theme was present for Tim, Jacomo and DK, but not for Jay and Yusef.

When talking about what young people taking on similar projects should keep in mind, Tim says:

maybe have in mind, what you want to do in the future, maybe think about that, cos obviously the project's based around that, so obviously have in mind what you wanna do in the future so that's what I'd say... (page 4, line 83).

The repetition of the use of 'maybe' at the start of the first two clauses indicates uncertainty at the beginning of this statement, but by the end, '*maybe*' is replaced by '*obviously*' as Tim seems to have reassured himself of what he sees as the project's purpose.

For Jacomo, the purpose of participation focused more on the performance created by the young people which was about their experiences of care. The differences in Tim and Jacomo's perception may mirror the different times during the project at which their interviews took place. Jacomo said that, '*At first I didn't really want to do anything, cos I don't feel like, it was something important*' (page 15, line 323) suggesting that for her, participation should feel '*important*' or have some sort of meaning. In exploring this meaning, she compares her experience on the project to that of being at College, '*whereas here's like, I really know how it feels to be in care and I know like what needs to be changed and I know what's being done about it and what's not*' (page 15, line 337). Jacomo's statement here shows that she believes that participation in this project is about those who are care-experienced making changes in the care system and her use of the phrase '*I know*', indicates that she feels strongly connected to this purpose. Participants feeling connected to what they see as the purpose or meaning in participation may also be significant as it could be a way of helping participants make sense of where they fit into the project (for example, Tim was about to begin a course and therefore seeing the purpose of the project as focusing on the future could help him see how he fits). Likewise, Jay and Yusef who did not talk about finding meaning or

purpose may have not felt it important to explore how they fit in the project, or perhaps purpose was not as important to them as experience.

DK spoke explicitly about finding meaning in participating:

Like how it is today, you want it to be engaging, you want it to be fun, but you want there to be meaning, you know, you need to have that balance... I feel the balance is right. Between the enjoyment and the actual activities... (DK, page 13, line 283)

It is interesting that DK seems to make a distinction between there being '*meaning*' and '*actual activities*' with having fun, as if the participatory project had different parts to it (like 'work' and 'play') and the meaning in participation was not necessarily the same as enjoyment. DK later went on to say that for him '*...the meaning of the course which is essentially communication you know*' (page 13, line 287). DK also spent time talking about his daily life, with a sense that he was not completely fulfilled. Of the project he explained, '*cos its making me feel like, there's something else out there to do...*' (page 11, line 232), indicating that the project may have inspired him, or given him a sense of hope that his current daily life could be different.

DK says that there needs to be meaning for participation to work, similar to how Jacomo had to connect with that meaning to feel like she wanted to participate. Each participant's interpretation of the meaning or purpose of the project is different. It seems that the important thing for participants is connecting with and finding an element of participation that they see meaning in, which fits with the multi-faceted nature of the project and its aims.

**4.6.2 Feelings in participation.** This theme refers to participants talking about how participation in the project made them feel. All participants discussed some elements of experiencing enjoyment or fun, for example Jay describes the project as something enjoyable: *'It actually felt really good, like I was so excited to meet everyone'* (page 20, line 429). A sense of enjoyment also came through when participants spoke about having fun. Yusef mentioned *'that time everyone was laughing'* (page 5, line 109) and DK said, *'there's been fun brought into the course ... but it's been sooo, there's been so many jokes'* (page 13, line 289). These comments describe enjoyment and fun as an experience shared amongst others. DK describes fun as having been *'brought into'* the project which may mean it felt more like something that was part of the project design or initially caused, rather than happening organically.

For Yusef, a feeling that seemed important to him was being welcomed, *'When I first came in I felt like I was proper welcomed like, there were like food ready and everything, yeh.'* (page 5, line 116). At another point in the interview, Yusef again speaks about feeling positively about the project: *'they took us out for like to get fresh air and everything, I just think like, I think it was like, proper amazing, you know, yeh, just good'* (page 6, line 118). In both these examples, Yusef mentions things that relate to having your basic needs met – having access to food and fresh air – in a way that seems grateful and perhaps even surprised. These feelings may come from comparison to his experiences of school, or perhaps even of life before care or care where his basic needs and desires may not have been met or things like food offered openly. When asked explicitly about how participation felt however, Yusef's response was *'How did I feel? Like, when...?'* (page 5, line 114). This indicates that it may have been difficult to consider an overall feeling of the project. The need to think about how he felt at distinct times within participation may mean different parts felt very different, or perhaps being interviewed halfway through the project made it harder to have an overview of how it had felt.

Tim described how the experience felt in the following ways, *'like I dunno I just found it quite easy-going... a lot of people were talking to each other, everyone just felt comfortable'* (page 2, line 42). Tim describes a feeling of ease and comfort which seem to be positive for him. Similarly, DK also talks about participation feeling comfortable and natural, *'it doesn't feel like this is a meeting, this is just feels like a group of people*

*who are just hanging out together to just have a good time and just do a little something on the side*' (page 13, line 290).

But it seems that the feeling of participation is perhaps significant for DK as he also describes it as feeling different to his everyday life, as a '*change of pace to my normal home life*' (page 11, line 231). He goes on to talk further about how it feels: '*weirdly enough it's been relaxing. Yeah, it's more energetic, but it's actually relaxing me you know, getting all the stuff I want to forget about, out, letting it out and just bringing in some new*' (page 11, line 227). In this sense it may be that participation is a therapeutic for DK, a way to keep his mind occupied away from what he wants to '*forget about*', filling it instead with new ideas and energy.

Possibly related to the previous theme of finding meaning in participation, Jacomo described the way she felt by saying, '*To me it's like being part of something*' (page 17, line 374). To Jacomo, participation felt very much linked to her identity as care experienced and therefore the meaning and feeling of the experience was inextricably linked to its purpose.

**4.6.3 Confidence and participation as linked.** Another aspect of participating that was convergent across all participants was the idea that participation was somehow linked to confidence. At times participants spoke about external factors appearing to bring out or develop confidence in themselves or others, other times about confidence developing internally. Either way the general understanding was that confidence was necessary for participation and, as confidence grew, so did participation.

When Yusef talked about people growing in confidence in participating, he attributed this to the ice-breaker games that happened on the start of the first day. Yusef said:

Participating? ... Ermmm, to be honest I think it was all right cos every like, not everyone was nervous and everything but like trying to make everyone, ermm, like, everyone confident and ... I don't even know..., like, trying make everyone know each other so they can work ... I don't know... work together innit? [Interviewer: Mmm, so trying to make everyone feel...? ]  
Confident. (page 5, line 102)

Yusef talks about '*trying to make everyone*' feel confident but does not name what or who was doing the '*trying*'. This could imply that it is unclear who or what is leading the project or could be instead that he felt the project, and the development of confidence, was owned by all those involved. His response seems to imply that confidence is helpful to people working together and that this is important to participation.

DK says:

there's been communication, there's been conversations, you know and even that can help bring out the smallest little thing. You just need to know how and I think, which I come back to, it is this project has done that well (page 13, line 294)

In this extract, DK talks about the project bringing something out in others. He states that '*this project has done that well*' and it is unclear what he means by the 'project' in this context, whether it is the experience, the people involved, or if the project is seen as a separate entity.

The other participants discussed confidence and participation as being linked but seemed to see the development of confidence as something that was driven by themselves. When talking about participating in the project for example, Tim said that '*you can only like, come out of your comfort zone to move forward*' (page 3, line 49), indicating inner drive and perseverance to push himself to achieve. Tim also signified that he thought that developing confidence was a shared process, '*I think a lot of people came out of their skin on the project*' (page 1, line 23). The way he phrases this suggests that people opened up in some way, this use of metaphor evokes an image of a person shedding their previous selves and becoming something new and evolved.

The way Jay described confidence and participation being linked is below:

Erm, I found it a bit difficult at first because I was quite shy...I participated yesterday I didn't really participate, but today, I built my confidence up so much that I was forever wanting to do things with everyone, play games, speak out, so it was really interesting. (page 19, line 417).

Jay links being shy with finding participation difficult, but that changed over the course of the two-day residential. Jay indicates ownership over her confidence



developing by saying '*I built my confidence up*' and shows that she benefited positively as a result of this.

Jacomo's view on confidence and participation is linked to her sense of purpose found in the project. She says that by seeing other people participating, she felt more confident to participate, although it seems that participating with a meaning and purpose that she connected with was another necessary component for her to participate. The following interview extract hopes to exemplify this:

Interviewer    What made you want to join in?

Jacomo        Because that's what I believe in, but like, I didn't feel like confident enough to do it by myself.

Interviewer    Ok, so you didn't feel confident enough? What was it about the project that changed that?

Jacomo        Like you know the other people, in the like room? Its like we all want the same thing. And we're all here for it, so like, I might as well join in and like help them, make change. (page 15, line 328)

All participants seem to see the need for confidence in participation and often this is linked to being able to talk with or get to know others, and with joining in.

**4.6.4 Choice in participating.** The theme of choice in participating was present for most participants, explicitly or implicitly. Only Jacomo talked explicitly about making the choice to participate in the project, whereas Yusef and Jay's choice to participate appears to be implicit. DK and Tim both talk about the processes involved in choosing to take part before the project had started and Tim also talks about an instance where he felt a lack of choice in participation. Each of these points will now be discussed in turn.

Jacomo says, '*I want to join in*' (page 15, line 327) compared to '*at first I didn't really want to do anything*' (page 14, line 323), indicated that when she joined in, it was her choice, she took ownership over participating. It seems that this choice is rooted in the meaning she has found in participation (discussed in section 4.5.1) as Jacomo also says, '*I felt like I had to be part of it because that's what I want and I need to step up for it, like if I don't do it, no one will*' (page 15, line 324). She sees participating as having

to ‘*step up*’ and there are notions of both obligation and consequence to her participation in what she says, bringing a feeling of urgency to the situation. Although in some ways Jacomo is indicating that she chose to participate in the project, paradoxically it seems that in other ways, her circumstances and situation necessitate her participating.

The theme of choice in participation also comes up for Tim and DK as both talk on the topic of how they came to be part of the project in the first place. When asked how it felt participating, Tim said:

It felt good, like at first I’m one of those people, I don’t really like, I don’t, I’m not really into this sort of stuff, I didn’t know it was going to be this, I thought when [Virtual School lead] told me about it I just thought I was going to come in and do like sporting activities, that’s what I thought. So when I got here it was a bit like, I was a bit like ‘oh no’ – like this. (page 2, line 33).

Here Tim talks about feeling at first that the project wasn’t what he had been told about or expecting. Not only that, it was the ‘*sort of stuff*’ that he is ‘*not really into*’. A lack of agency, choice and control over the situation comes through here, Tim indicates he was disappointed when he arrived ‘*I was a bit like ‘oh no*’’. It brings into question the recruitment process after Tim was ‘*told*’ about the project and the level of choice left to him once the project had begun and he realised it wasn’t what he was expecting.

At one point in his interview DK says, ‘*You know, if there were certain people here that if they weren’t here, I wouldn’t be here, you know so they also need to take a bit of credit for me being here, you know*’ (page 10, line 221). The cryptic nature of this comment may mean that this is something DK didn’t want to go into details about. If this is the case it may be that he is embarrassed that somebody was instrumental in encouraging him to come on the project. It seems ironic that DK feels the person needs ‘*to take a bit of credit*’ but does not want to name them or give them credit at this point. The obvious person to guess he is speaking of is the Virtual School lead as they led on recruiting young people to join the project. Perhaps the cryptic and anonymous way in which DK talks about ‘*certain people*’ influencing his choice to participate indicates that taking part in this project wasn’t a straightforward decision and not one he would have necessarily made independently.

When Jay talked about the project or activities during the residential, any decisions to participate that she did or didn't make were not discussed explicitly; her choice to be there and take part generally seems implicit in her straightforward descriptions of participating. Similarly, Yusef does not touch on the process of choosing except for once during the interview. Yusef was asked how he found a Verbatim activity on the residential:

Oh, erm, first, I was a bit nervous, kinda yeh a little bit nervous, but then, yeh, there was, I told myself that there was no point and everything so obviously, it was just like, I just did it and I found it like, erm, like, I don't even know, can we skip that? I don't even know how to answer that (page 6, line 134)

At first Yusef describes using self-talk to overcome nerves. In one way he is choosing to take part here by pushing through his nerves, but did he feel pressure to, or that he had no other choice? Yusef then goes on the struggle to say how he found the activity, asking to skip that part of the question, saying he didn't know how to answer. Perhaps his difficulties in answering reflect an uncomfortable memory of the activity, or the fact he hadn't yet made sense of the experience himself enough to talk about it.

Tim also discusses a Verbatim activity unprompted in his interview and says, '*...like I was kind of forced to read out something, that the other group did, which was basically a joke*' (page 2, line 47). The negativity of the word 'forced' stands out and shows a lack of choice Tim had over participating in this activity. He goes on to say:

Like, I'm not going to say what it was, but it was basically a joke and like I felt like, I felt like, it kind of like, was a bit of a joke if that makes sense, like I mean like I did it, and that's the main thing... (page 2, line 48)

In this extract it is as if Tim wants to say how this experience made him feel but can't quite express it. The struggle to express himself seems to come when he says '*like I felt like, I felt like, it kind of like*', as if he is almost about to say how he really felt, but then goes back to the safety of repeating that it was a joke. Did Tim not want to seem to be complaining or being negative and was therefore reluctant to say more? He said that doing it was '*the main thing*' so perhaps for him, the negativity of being forced into doing something he didn't want to do was counteracted by the fact that he still managed to accomplish the task.

Overall, there is a sense of a lack of choice in what participants say about participation. Tim said he felt ‘*kind of forced*’ in an activity; Tim and DK talked about other people being involved in their decisions to take part in the project; Yusef described persuading himself to take part in an activity and Jay didn’t explicitly mention choice in participating. Only Jacomo described actively choosing to participate, but even then, her reasons given indicated that she felt compelled or obligated which contradicts somewhat with the idea of choice.

#### 4.7 Superordinate Theme: Learning

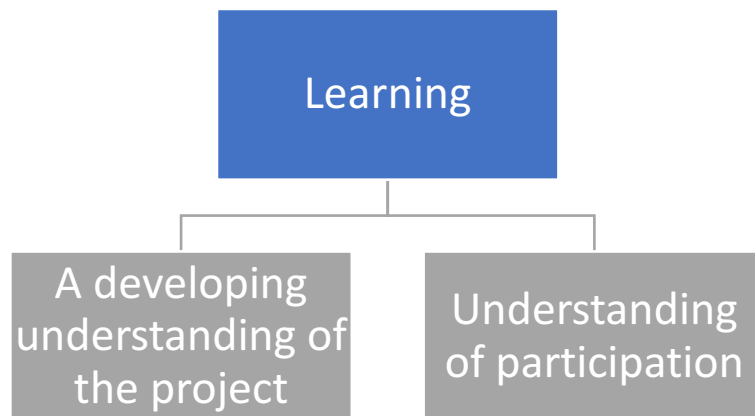


Figure 10. Learning.

A theme that came across in all participant interviews was one of learning in relation to the project. For example, DK says: ‘*just being here, you know, its learning something else*’ (page 10, line 209).

The subordinate themes which emerged (represented in Figure 10) suggested that learning took place through the following:

- A developing understanding of the project
- Understanding of participation

**4.7.1 A developing understanding of the project.** Just as some participants seemed to find different meanings from participating in the project (section 4.5.1), they also had different ways in which they made sense of the project and this theme looks at the developing understandings of the project. Also present in most participant interviews was the sense that understanding of the project was ongoing, developing for participants over time.

DK appears to be comfortable with not really understanding the project:

I'm still kind of baffled what the whole point is, but I'm slowly getting my head round it. And it's like I still don't get why it's called the V-whatever it's called-I can't even pronounce it! I still have no idea what that word even means! But, it, it's a new experience you know... (page 10, line 205)

The word '*baffled*' feels gentle, almost comical, suggesting that not knowing the point of the project might be part of the fun. According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, the word 'baffled' may be derived from the Scots word '*bawchillen*' to 'discredit publicly' or the French '*beffer*' to 'mock, deceive' ("baffled", n.d.). Although it is likely that links to these meanings were not on DK's mind when he chose the word and 'baffled' for him was a way of expressing confusion, the notions of mocking and deception shed a different light on the idea of young people are involved in a project they don't necessarily understand. Is he wondering why he is on the project? This idea will be explored further within the subtheme of authenticity (section 4.7.4). DK says he's '*slowly getting his head round it*' which alludes to an evolving process of understanding. He then goes on to say that he can't even pronounce the word Verbatim, but this is fine as he qualifies, '*but, it, it's a new experience*'.

Yusef also seems to understand the project in different ways. When first asked what he thinks of the project, he says '*Umm, I think the project is, was useful cos it gives us information about University and yeh...yeh...*' and this trails off into an unintelligible mumble. By picking the most obvious aspect of the project first suggests this was perhaps the part of the project most easy to understand, however the way he trails off could be an indication of feeling uncomfortable answering this question. Later, Yusef talks more about the different activities and other people involved with the project which seems to suggest that he understands the project in other ways than just learning about University. Certain things throughout Yusef's interview however, such as asking

to skip a question (page 6, line 135) and sometimes seeming to give up on his ideas ('so, yeh, I don't even know, the activities are alright, let's just say it's ok...' (page 8, line 175)) suggests he hadn't yet reached a fully developed understanding of the project.

Tim also focused on the University-based aspects of the project, he said '*it was also eye-opening to find out more about the University and what you can do...*' (page 1, line 11). As well as saying this, Tim described how he found the University tour '*eye-opening*' and it may be that his own age and position as taking a place at the University next term had meant this was a more important part of how he understood the project.

Jacomo's understanding of the project seems to develop solely through the purpose she finds in the project. She says, '*At first...I don't feel like, it was something important*' (page 15, line 323) but later seems to understand the project to be all about making a change, something she does want to be part of '*to help the next generation that comes into care*' (page 16, line 356).

The theme of a developing understanding of the project is less present for Jay. She does say about the project, '*Erm, it just like taught me how to be ... confident within myself and around others*' (page 19, line 418). The use of the word '*taught*' suggests she may feel she has learned from the project, but this is not explored further within the interview.

Each participant approaches (or does not approach) the way they understand the project differently, some focusing on aspects that may be more important or straightforward to them, others showing they are comfortable not knowing, or their understanding changing over time. These varying approaches show that perhaps the project is not something easily understood, which could link to the fact that explicit attempts for the group to form shared understandings about the project weren't made at any point across the two days.

**4.7.2 Understanding of participation.** The second theme related to learning was that all participants seemed to come to their own understanding of participation. This theme is saturated because most participants spoke about their understanding, but its importance and the ease with which participants discussed their ideas differed. The perspective of each participant will now be considered in turn.

For DK, there seems to be a ‘right way’ to do participation: *‘if you do it right, the people that you bring onto the project will engage if you do it right’* (page 13, line 281). Although DK doesn’t explain immediately what this ‘right’ way is, his understanding of participation seems to be rooted around learning from others. He seems to see participation as non-directive:

you keep your views to yourself – I’m more than happy to hear ‘em out – just don’t expect me to follow them...I just like hearing the other side of the argument, the other side of the coin, to try and balance out, to try and come to a more informed decision’ (page 11, line 245)

and the Verbatim exercises as key: *‘when we done the recording and that repeating back exercise, I wouldn’t of thought of any of what was said’* (page 11, line 239). This seems to tap into DK’s earlier comments that the project really was a new experience for him, very different to his everyday life otherwise. DK says *‘...it’s a learning curve that I enjoy, I want to learn new things’* (page 12, line 266) and we might interpret the way DK embraces learning from others through participation - which allows him freedom and direction over how it is done - as linking to one of his drivers or motivators in life.

Yusef’s understanding of participation seems to be that it can work at different levels. For example, on one level where people can get together and learn together, such as about University. The other level on which Yusef seems to understand participation is rooted in his comment discussed earlier, *‘...like, trying make everyone know each other so they can work ... I don’t know... work together innit?’* (page 5, line 104). He seems to understand participation as people ‘knowing each other’ to ‘work together’, which is on a more active level. The way Yusef expresses this idea however, including *‘I don’t know’* and phrasing it as a question suggests that he might not be completely certain, or his idea not fully formed at this point.

Jay also shows signs that she finds it difficult to articulate her understanding of participation, when talking about it she shows some hesitation – ‘*where you, means like, where you*’ – and uncertainty with the repeated ‘*erm*’ (page 19, line 425). The way she seems to understand participation however is about joining in with others and ‘*being there*’ (page 19, line 426), being present and in a space that is designated to participation.

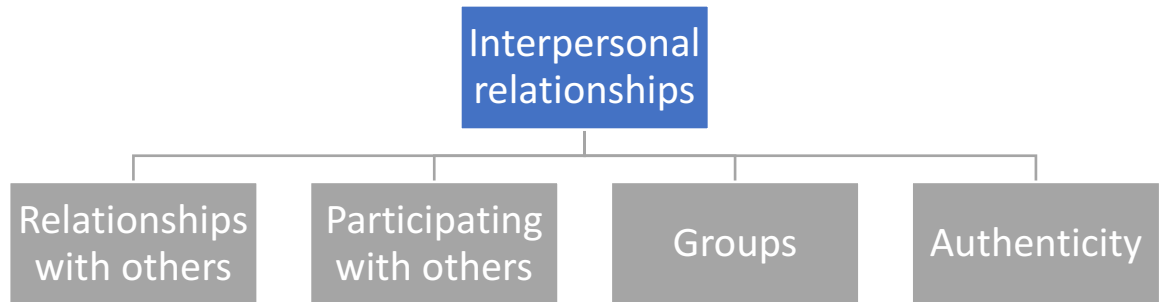
Tim seems to understand participation in terms of change. He uses phrases such as ‘*...you can only like, come out of your comfort zone to move forward...*’ (page 3, line 49) and ‘*I think a lot of people came out of their skin on the project...*’ (page 1, line 23). These phrases suggest his understanding of participation is about people developing, growing and change as a result.

Similarly, Jacomo seems to understand participation as being about change, specifically in the care system. Jacomo’s understanding of participation also seems to be a personal one, that it is something you need to be invested in for it to work, she says: ‘*To me it’s like being part of something and like, putting in effort and, doing everything with your heart...*’ (page 17, line 373). The way Jacomo has spoken about participation here and in comments previously discussed shows her deep connection with the meaning she sees in the project.

The theme of understanding participation has shown that participants have understood the phenomena in a range of ways, including being about change, being part of something and joining in, working together, being together and learning from others.



#### 4.8 Superordinate Theme: Interpersonal relationships



*Figure 11.* Interpersonal Relationships.

This theme represents how interpersonal relationships seemed to be a fundamental part of how participants made sense of participation and their experiences on the residential project. This is a saturated theme across all participants as each talked about other people, whether it be in relation to participation or to the different groups of people involved in the project.

Four subordinate themes (represented in Figure 11), exhibiting different aspects of interpersonal relationships, emerged:

- Relationships with others
- Participating with others
- Groups in the project
- Authenticity

**4.8.1 Relationships with others.** The theme of relationships with others is almost inseparable from the theme of participating with others however distinctions appeared between the two. Relationships with others is a saturated theme as all participants talk about relationships with others, whether in an abstract, more generalised way, or in a way that is practically related to the project itself. This theme however is far more prominent for some participants than others, for example, it seems most important for DK and Jay, less so for Yusef, Tim and Jacomo.

When DK first talks about relationships with others, he says:

no no problem, no problem at all, you know, other people don't phase me, you know, if you're an a-hole, then you will, there will be trouble, naturally, but if you're a nice, if you're a nice enough person to me, I'm a nice enough person to you. I have no problems being with other people. (page 10, line 221).

The way DK talks in a way that could be interpreted as passive aggressive. The prominence of his phrase *'no problems'* and its clash with the aggression of the phrase *'there will be trouble'* alludes to the possibility that DK has had issues surrounding his relationships with others in the past. His use of the phrase, *'if you're a nice enough person to me, I'm a nice enough person to you'*, suggest that a sense of equality and respect between people is important for DK. DK also says, *'I wouldn't try and force my views on anyone'* (page 11, line 239) which, linked with the previous comment, suggests that perhaps this is something he had to experience previously and didn't like.

Despite, or perhaps because of, possible difficulties with his relationships previously, DK talks about the benefits that he feels as part of relationships with others. DK says, *'Just the fact when I've come in, I've met new people, I've spoken to people I don't even know, which in itself is a reward for me, you know cos I'm not normally a social person'* (page 11, line 229). DK almost seems surprised that he has spoken to new people and by saying he is not normally social could link to the idea that interpersonal relationships could be problematic for him. In this extract, DK's use of the word *'reward'* elicits an image of relationships with others as transactional, an unexpected prize for taking part in the project. Other comments by DK can be interpreted as explanation as to how relationships with others are like a reward:

thinking about how other people work, how other people see things in the world... it's refreshing to see other people's views for a change... I just like to, see where I fit, you know, its, I'd say its opened my eyes, it opened my ears, its opened my mind, and it's opened my heart as well, to other people. (page 12, line 264)

This description implies that DK has possibly felt a change in his relationships to others from not normally being social, to appreciation of others' different perspectives and feeling more open to others.

Yusef spoke about relationships with others in the project, with what felt like an underlying assumption that relationships were built after '*the clapping game like kind of joined everyone together*' (page 5, line 108). After that, Yusef said, '*Yeh and then, yeh, it just get to know each other straight*' (page 5, line 111). This implied that he felt people in the project bonded quickly, straight-away.

The immediacy with which relationships were formed also seemed important to Jay. Jay compares her experience on this project to previous experiences, '*Erm, usually, within like, it takes me a week to get used to people. Where I just connected on the first day...*' (page 19, line 422), suggesting that something about this experience enabled her to connect with others more quickly. The speed at which Jay felt she built relationships again seems important when she says, '*Yeh, I was late but within 5 minutes I got to know nearly everyone*' (page 19, line 412). Jay also says, '*Erm, just by like the first day I could tell everyone was [short pause] connected*' (page 19, line 412), suggesting that she felt this experience was the same for everyone involved in the project.

When explaining how this connection was made, Jay said, '*...it was just like we all knew, what to talk about, we're all interested in mostly the same thing, football, World Cup, anything like that, basketball*' (page 19, line 423). The phrase '*it was just like we all knew*' suggests that the interpersonal relationships were formed in a natural way that was instinctive and effortless. The mention of the World Cup also conjures up ideas around events like this that can help people across England feel united and connected, driven by a collective purpose and this may reflect the cohesion and bond she seemed to feel between people on the project.

When Tim talks about relationships with others on the project, it seems as if these are people he wouldn't usually meet: *'Um, maybe just stay open-minded, maybe, like just because obviously you're going to meet people who you don't, who are from like completely different cultures and what-not...'* (page 4, line 77). Here Tim speaks as if he is giving advice to another participant, but this may reveal that he himself felt it was important to keep an open mind when building interpersonal relationships on this project. As DK did, Tim talks about the benefits of building relationships with new people on the project, *'it was eye-opening to socialise with people who are studying different things and who have different opinions and what-not'* (page 1, line 11).

Similarly, Jacomo also seemed to feel benefits from meeting new people and hearing their opinions, *'It's been good. I like it because like I got to meet new people, and I got to see the opening, like, like on what they think about erm being in care and leaving care'* (page 15, line 320). The difference for Jacomo, is that what she liked was hearing about others' opinions about care, which links back to her experience being rooted in the purpose of participation being about making change. Seemingly the more important part of relationships with others on this project for Jacomo was the sense of unity and affirmation that she gained from learning that others think in the same way as her: *'But I think what I liked the most is how people like think the same as I do. And we all want like a change in the system'* (page 15, line 320).

In summary, participants seemed to see benefits from relationships with others who are different from themselves, as well as when they share beliefs or experiences. Participants also talked about the immediacy with which relationships with others were built and in this, connection and working together were important.

**4.8.2 Participating with others.** A theme across all participants was sharing their thoughts on how other people fit in to their participation. Each participant seemed to have a different take on what was important to them about participating with others, yet there was consensus that participation was experienced only in relation to others.

When DK talks about participating with others, he describes the experience of sharing and listening with others: *'...I'm hearing about other people's stories, I'm hearing other people's experiences, I'm hearing other people's thoughts and opinions*

*about a number of different things...*' (page 12, line 249). With the repetition of the word '*hearing*', DK appears to emphasise that he is hearing much more than he usually does about other people. This may also tell us something about his experience of listening, indicating that listening in this context may be a more genuine, true kind of listening than everyday listening.

When talking about what he has heard from other participants, DK goes on to say, '*...and it's just some people have it worse than me, some people have it easier than me and I just like to, see where I fit, you know...*' (page 12, line 254). From participating with others, it seems like DK is saying that he can relate his own situation back to others' – '*see where I fit*' – suggesting that he may be comparing or learning from others about his own self-identity and place in the world. He doesn't mention his experience of care (something that is shared with all other participants) at this point, or at all during the interview, but it may be implicit behind the words he uses in this extract. This sense of privacy and holding back can be seen to be reflected often throughout his interview as his choice of words or examples are often abstracted or generalised.

In contrast to DK, Yusef's conceptualisation of participating with others seemed to be rooted in specific examples of different games played on the first day of the residential. For example, Yusef first describes one game that was played, '*...but when we first came, everyone was sitting separately and that, but then the clapping game like kind of joined everyone together, yeh*' (page 5, line 109). Yusef seemed to see the game as joining '*everyone together*' and there is an opposition between people sitting separately and then participation as people being '*joined*' together. Yusef then brings up another game to talk about which he describes as '*that one was so boring!*' (page 7, line 154). When asked what made it boring, he replied: '*It was just like...it didn't even make sense like people were not doing it, I tell people no-one was doing it! [laughing]*' (page 7, line 156). This comment, as well as his laugh which may have indicated embarrassment or incredulity, indicates fairness and following the rules is something Yusef values in participating with others. As the researcher was present during this game, reflexive diary entry (Appendix Y – extract 6) discusses how this may have impacted on the interpretation.

What seemed to be important for Tim in participating with others, was unique to Tim. He talked about the lead facilitator of the project being central to others in the project participating. Talking about the lead facilitator, Tim said '*he made it- ... his energy made it really good ... um, he he made it very interactive with each other*' (page 1, line 6). The phrase '*he made it*' suggests that Tim saw the lead facilitator as the driving force behind others interacting. When Tim compares the experience of the project to other things he has done he said '*the person hasn't made it like as he hasn't made it comfortable for everyone if that makes sense? Made it more like a chore if that makes sense*' (page 1, line 26). This implies Tim's previous experience may have influenced the way he views this project, as led or run by one person.

Tim also talked about the lead facilitator saying, '*the way he like ran-ran like the project I think-I think it made it a lot more easier, I think, a lot more easy-going*' (page 2, line 35). This indicates that Tim saw the lead facilitator as the one running the project and making participating with others feel easy going. The importance of this to Tim is shown by another similar comment he made: '*I dunno I just feel like [lead facilitator] just made it a lot more easier I just feel like everyone around which is just very non-judgemental if that makes sense, like I dunno I just found it quite easy-going*' (page 2, line 41). It is as if the lead facilitator is inextricably linked to the experience of participating with others for Tim. This sentence runs without pause to describe how the lead facilitator made participating '*easier*' and '*everyone around...non-judgemental*', although Tim seems less sure about how this was done (possibly shown by the almost stutter-like aspects of '*ran-ran*' and '*I think-I think*' in the first example and by concluding the last sentence example with '*I dunno...*').

When both Jay and Giacomo talk about participating with others they do so in a way that feels very immediate and 'in the moment', perhaps a reflection of the interviews taking place within the participatory experience at the residential. Jay said:

Participation means to me where you, means like, when you join in with the group, so you're not sitting there doing nothing, erm, you're always within the communication systems with everyone, no matter what, erm, playing games, just being there. It's participating within, your, erm, activity. (page 19, line 425)

The way Jay describes participation with others is about joining in and being an active participant with others. This explanation seems almost visual ('*you're not sitting*

*there doing nothing*'), as if it is rooted in the rooms where the project took place. Jay describes being '*always within the communication systems with everyone*', suggesting that she felt connected with others whilst participating with others and that some sort of '*communication system*' may have been co-created by the group during and across different activities.

In Jacomo's interview, she also seemed to see participating with others in a way that felt that she was 'in the moment' (she talked about the performance at the end of the residential in the present tense, '*it's pressuring but it's also fun*' (page 17, line 370)) and with a sense of being connected to others, '*it's like we all want the same thing*' (page 15, line 330). Jacomo also talked about liking the fact that when participating with others in this project she could have her views expressed by another person performing them:

Yeh, I like how um I can say stuff but then I'm not the one performing it, cos like, I wou-I wouldn't want people to know that I think that because, I don't really like, like the sound of my voice and people just know it's me, so I like that it's anonymous. (page 16, line 358)

There appears to be a slight contradiction when Jacomo says she '*wouldn't want people to know that I think that*' because she doesn't like how her voice sounds. It could be that she knows she has a '*voice*', views, opinions and something valid to say yet still may not feel empowered or safe enough to express or share their '*voice*' themselves in the world.

Participating with others was a theme present for all participants, yet different elements were important within this. These elements included listening to others, games that were played, the lead facilitator, joining in and the performance.

**4.8.3 Groups.** The presence of different groups of people within participation in this project was a theme talked about by all participants. All participants talked about perceiving different groups, but the way that they conceptualised and labelled these groups varied. For Jay and Jacomo, distinctions between different groups of people seemed more important than for DK, Yusef and Tim; participants will be discussed in this order.

The first indication that distinctions between groups of people could be important for Jay is when she describes an incident when first aiders were needed, *'we had first aiders within the younger groups including myself, we had first aiders on staff, and within the security at UEL Docklands campus itself'* (page 19, line 408). Looking at Jay's notion of *'younger groups'* first, age does seem to be a factor that Jay uses to make distinctions between groups and to position herself. She says, *'I just connected on the first day because they were all my age range'* (page 19, line 422), which suggests she feels it is easier to build relationships with those her own age.

Alongside age, status also appeared to be a factor between groups for Jay. She says, *'I've met a lot of great people including the staff, we all connected and they treated us as equals'* (page 19, line 407). It seems that a division was made here between groups of people on the project and it may be because Jay classified the interviewer as *'staff'* and was in some way acknowledging them in the interview. There is a division between *'them'* and *'us'* and that fact that she mentions *'they treated us as equals'* suggests this might not have been something that was expected or experienced before. When Jay later talks about younger adult and staff grouping, there appears to be a more level playing field in her conceptualisation:

times where I got to have conversations with the staff and the younger adults, where it helped me connect with them and helped me treat them equally and help them treat me equally. Even though I'm not their age group, I'm not a-I'm near their age range, but not their group. (page 19, line 413)

She seems to struggle slightly with the definitions she has created and doesn't sound certain about the differences between age range and age group that she talks about. This even extends to a suggestion that she isn't sure where she fits in *'I'm not a-'*, by leaving this sentence incomplete, Jay doesn't classify herself. Perhaps the nature of those involved in the project, a wide range of adults, with different ages and roles was



confusing, especially if they are meant to be treated equally. Finally, Jay demonstrates the potential importance of groupings for her as she concludes her interview by saying, '*it's been a great experience and hopefully I can come back as staff next year*' (page 20, line 438). As much as Jay talks about equality between groups, does this sentence betray the fact that she believes that groups in the project afforded different status, with '*staff*' being one to aspire to?

When Jacomo talks about different groups in the project, she uses the classifications of those who have experienced care, those that haven't and student social workers. Although Jacomo said that she felt the project needed more people who had left care (the group she identifies with), she seems to appreciate hearing from those who haven't experienced care:

...you get to see how people um think about something that you have been through and they haven't. And ma- kn- they might not always have the right answer, like the right opinions about it but they mean, you kinda get what they think about it because, they haven't been through it. (page 17, line 365)

The weight of difference between those who have experienced care and those who haven't is shown by the phrase '*been through it*'. Jacomo may also classify the student social workers on the project as those who haven't experienced care, but she talks about them separately as a distinct group:

they get to know how we feel and they can make a change because they're not social workers yet. So they know what to expect um from the young people that they're gonna work with. And they will know why they're acting like a certain way because they'll hear from us... But I think we need to include social workers in the project. So cos, they can tell us why they don't always call us back or like, why they're leaving and stuff. (page 17, line 361)

Jacomo explains what she sees as the benefits from having student social workers involved: she believes that by participating with care leavers, the students will be able to make positive change when they become social workers. Jacomo discussed this in what seemed a matter of fact manner but her mention of not being called back or being left by social workers evokes potentially difficult encounters that she may have had with social workers. These may add to the strength of conviction she feels about participating to create change in the care system.

In DK's interview, grouping others in the project seems less important and at one stage he describes the project as '*a small group of people*' (page 12, line 262). DK does mention '*teachers, tutors*' as one other group when he says, '*...a lot of teachers, tutors, don't get that balance right and that's one thing I've gotta say has been done well with this course*' (page 13, line 283). It may be that grouping people on the project was less important for DK because his ideas about others come more from comparing others to his own self-identity than grouping them:

...some people are anti-gun, I'm pro-gun. You know, some people are anti-drug, anti-marijuana should I say, I'm pro, you know, so it's, I just like hearing the other side of the argument, the other side of the coin, to try and balance out, to try and come to a more informed decision. (page 11, line 245)

DK seems to find listening to and participating with others more helpful (linking to sections 4.7.1 and 4.7.2) and for him, grouping others does not appear important for this.

When talking about others in the project, Yusef – like Jay – makes distinctions by age, as well as talking about another group, '*mentors*'. Yusef talks at length about a game that was played that he said didn't make sense to him (discussed further in 4.7.2) and part of this seemed to be differences he saw between what he called the '*kids*' and '*old people*' (page 8, line 173). Although Yusef doesn't seem sure why he didn't like the game, the different groups involved seemed to be at the heart of it: '*...cos like, kids, kids are more like, old people can't do it, it's cos like too much movement, so, yeh, I don't even know...*' (page 8, line 173). As Yusef was the youngest in the group, age differences might have been emphasised further. Yusef also spontaneously mentions mentors as a group: '*...the men-mentors, they were useful and they were supportive and that*' (page 8, line 176). The terms '*useful*' and '*supportive*' indicate that Yusef saw the mentors as holding a more powerful position than himself. Yusef had previously had a social work student mentor through UEL and it is not clear whether his mention of them as a group was necessarily distinct to his experience of the project. Either way, it seems clear that he found their input worthy of note.

The theme of groups in the project did not seem as important for Tim. He only mentioned a distinct group within the project once: '*the volunteers and what not, they also were very helpful ... they are pretty much half of the group, so without them there*

*probably wouldn't even be a project*' (page 2, line 30). Again, as with Yusef, the word '*helpful*' indicates that Tim could see the volunteers as being in a more powerful position. Even though he categorises half of the group as volunteers, Tim does not categorise or talk discretely about the other half of the group. We could assume he does not necessarily classify them homogenously from his distinct view of the lead facilitator as discussed in 4.7.2. It could be that he assumed a shared understanding about this half or hadn't made sense of this half of the group yet or was reluctant to classify himself for some reason.

In summary, all participants discussed the people involved in the project by using groupings of some sort. Although groupings varied, all had relevance to either age, status or power.

**4.8.4 Authenticity.** Authenticity is a subordinate theme that is present for Jay, Tim and Jacomo. Authenticity comes across as something that is valued for all participants and talked about in relation to the project, but also more generally. This theme suggests that authenticity is key to participation and questions whether the experience always felt authentic to participants or if they felt others involved were authentic.

Jay mentions authenticity as something important for connecting with others: "*...Just be yourself, cos otherwise... you won't, you won't connect with anyone at all*" (page 20, line 436). It is reasonable to interpret Jay as therefore seeing authenticity as fundamental to developing relationships with others in participation.

Authenticity was something that Tim discussed as a positive quality in relation to the lead facilitator of the project. Tim describes the lead facilitator as '*motivated*', '*enthusiastic*' and that '*he was very, you could tell his heart's in it... I can actually feel that energy with him... I think it's unexplainable, it was just the vibe he gave off...*' (page 1, line 17). This description centres around feelings, energy and vibes and fits the description of authenticity – a concept that is itself elusive and subtle.

Tim also explores the notion of authenticity and payment, in relation to the lead facilitator and the '*volunteer*' group. He first mentions that the volunteers do not get paid for taking part in the project. Then, Tim speaks about the lead facilitator: '*like he*

*weren't just doing it cos he was being paid, like obviously he's getting paid but he was actually doing it because he actually enjoys what he does'* (page 1, line 18). It's as if Tim is exploring the notion of whether you can do a job and be paid and still genuinely care about the work, if being paid to be involved in the project affects how authentically you can interact with others and participate.

Jacomo seemed to be exploring the same issue as she talked about foster parents. She uses second person so it is unclear whether or not experience is personal: *'some like, foster parents, can treat you like a job. Because they're getting paid for it though, but like, why are you getting paid for it? You're getting paid to look after a human being'* (page 16, line 338). Her use of a rhetorical question seems to represent her incredulity that human care and familial love should be treated as a transaction or be a form of employment. It seems that Jacomo is unclear whether being paid or benefiting from caring for a child means that that care can be authentic.

In relation to the project, Jacomo also seemed to see authenticity as important in participating with others. When talking about the group performance she says, *'if you're not performing it like, honestly and being truthful then its not really a performance. People can see that you're not into it'* (page 17, line 373). It seems that honesty and the truth are significant values for her, as without them she does not think there really is a performance. That Jacomo believes others can spot inauthenticity in someone may reflect back her own ability to see inauthenticity in foster carers. Perhaps authenticity was something that Jacomo felt in the project which helped her invest and believe in the potential for making change.

Authenticity was a theme for three participants and seemed to be something they valued and saw as important for both building relationships and participation. What seemed less clear for participants was the relationship between payment and authenticity and how much you might be able to trust someone who is being paid for working with you – in whatever capacity. Was the message participants were sending here in some way sublimated by the research process, by them feeling they should be 'nice' or 'positive' because that was the way the project and research was set-up and the role they thought they should play? How authentic could they be in giving their answers

during the interviews because of the underlying structures of research? what we can learn from this finding will be discussed in section 5.2.3.

#### **4.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the IPA analysis and reported the findings from this research in detail, using the participants' words wherever possible. This IPA account is not definitive, but a product of the researcher's interpretation and therefore the reader may also consider the findings from their own perspective. These findings will now be discussed in the next chapter, in relation to the research questions and literature, as well as any limitations, issues and relevance to educational psychology.

## **Chapter 5. Discussion**

### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

Research findings will now be discussed in relation to the research questions and previous research, theme by theme (5.2). The implications of the research and its relevance to educational psychology will then be discussed (5.3), followed by a proposal for the dissemination of the findings (5.4). Next, the limitations of the research will be outlined (5.5) and then a summary of implications for further research will be given (5.6). Personal reflections are then discussed (5.7) and finally, research conclusions given (5.8).

### **5.2 Findings Discussed in Relation to the Research Questions and Previous Research**

To answer the research questions, the findings will be discussed considering previous research around participatory research with CYP from the literature review in Chapter 2.

The research questions asked were:

- What are young people's experiences of a participatory project?
- What can be learnt from young people's experiences of a participatory project?

The research found that young people experienced the participatory project in several ways, relating to how they viewed themselves, others and the project itself. Participants talked about how they made sense of participation through finding meaning, how it felt, how it linked to confidence and choice involved in participation. Learning was another theme for participants, both in terms of their understanding of the project and participation. Lastly, the theme of interpersonal relationships was important in how participants experienced the project, including their relationships with others, participating with others, groupings and authenticity. Although the themes are interrelated, the distinct findings within each mean that the research questions will be addressed theme by theme.

The literature review in Chapter 2 organised the previous research into two main areas, the understanding and modelling of participatory research with CYP and the critique of this research approach. As such, the findings will be discussed in relation to these areas of previous research.

**5.2.1 Participating.** One superordinate theme identified in what young people said about their experiences of a participatory project focused on participation itself.

Previous research in this area has generated linear, hierarchical, multi-dimensional, culture-based and systemic models by which to understand participation. This is broadly how the models have developed chronologically. The first conceptualisation of the participation of CYP was Hart's (1992) 'Ladder of Participation' and subsequent linear models include Shier's (2001) 5-step model and the 'six degrees of participation' model (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007). 'Levels' of participation are represented by ladder rungs, steps and degrees across these models, all shifting upwards to the increased participation of CYP which is defined by CYP sharing power, decision-making and responsibility with adults, or initiating decision-making and research themselves.

The subordinate theme of choice in participating indicated that the young people felt a lack of choice in their participation, whether this was feeling forced into an activity or having others influence their decisions to participate in the project. Interpreting this with linear models of participation, indicates that young people involved in this participatory research were not at what these models describe as the 'top' levels of participation. Using Hart's (1992) ladder, some of what the participants described could be placed on the rung 'assigned but informed' or even 'manipulation' (for example, one participant described feeling that the project was not what they had been told it would be). This indicates that an important part of how young people experience a participatory project is how much choice they feel in participating, both in deciding to take part in the project initially and deciding to take part in different activities within the project. Linear models of participation recognise that young people need to share or initiate power, decision-making and responsibility to participate fully and we can learn from the young people that it is important they feel able to make the choice to participate and be involved themselves.

Even if young people do actively choose to participate however, this is not necessarily a straightforward decision or one that is completely self-initiated ('collective action' in the 'six degrees of participation' model indicates that this is the fullest degree of participation (Kendon, Pain & Kesby, 2007)). The one young person who did talk about making an explicit choice to participate in the project, explained that this choice came later and described their choice in the context of obligation, given their circumstances. This shows us that young people's choice in participation is complex and has the potential to change. There may be benefits to young people's choice in participating being considered carefully at all stages of participating and be discussed openly with young people in order to explore it within the process of participation itself.

Both the importance of choice in participating for young people and that participants in this study seemed to be reluctant to criticise or talk openly about feeling a lack of choice is supported by ethical concerns in the literature about the extent to which young people want participation (Birch and Miller, 2002) and the risk of exploitation for vulnerable groups (Smith, Monaghan & Broad, 2002). The P7 Model also cites 'protection' as important to reflect on; participation "can be experienced as personal, social or political risk depending on the culture, context, circumstances and methods used" (Cahill & Dadvant, 2018, p.250). Ways in which young people are given real choices to participate from the outset of, as well as continuously within, participatory research could help address any feelings of a lack of choice. According to SDT, feelings of choice could also be of benefit to CYP in terms of their psychological need for autonomy and creating a sense of self-cohesion (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Another subordinate theme was that all participants talked about the need for confidence to participate, linking greater confidence with increased participation. Moules and O'Brien's (2012) multi-dimensional 'dual-axis model' allows for participation to be considered in terms of what extent decision-making, initiation and direction is led by young people (in comparison to adults). It may be that the extent to which young people can lead in these areas, and therefore participate, is linked to confidence. From the perspective of SDT, feelings of confidence could be linked to the psychological need for competence and CYP may gain motivation from feelings of confidence fulfilling a need for competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). If so, participatory



projects may need to consider how confidence, or other conditions, are cultivated to support participation of young people.

The confidence participants talked about could also play into power relationships and dynamics within participatory research that literature has shown can facilitate some voices to be heard over others or affect a person's involvement (Horgan, 2017; Flicker et al., 2010; Parkes, 2008). If young people articulate this as confidence, then perhaps this could be a helpful measure in addressing power dynamics within participatory research. How CYP are positioned and treated can affect power relations and the sense of self CYP are developing (Cahill & Dadvant, 2018). The P7 Model offers questions as a 'thinking tool' to reflect on positioning in participatory approaches with CYP and it could be useful to also consider how to create the conditions for CYP involved to feel confident (Cahill & Dadvant, 2018).

Feelings around participation was another subordinate theme in young people's experiences of a participatory project. Similarly, Gillett-Swan and Sargeant (2018) found that, using case study vignettes to analyse researcher-child relationships, mood and atmosphere were key to participatory research with CYP. Positive aspects participants talked about were enjoyment, fun and feeling welcomed, as well as feeling part of something. Additionally, one participant talked about the project feeling different to other experiences and one participant was not able to express how participation felt. In modelling of participation on an organisational level, research has considered how to create a culture of participation for young people (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin & Sinclair, 2003; Parker, 2011; Children's Alliance, 2007). To learn from what the young people have said in this research, it may be important to consider how entering different cultural spaces of organisations can influence the way young people feel and, in turn, how they can participate.

Finding meaning in participating, a purpose that they personally connected with, was a subordinate theme shared by three of the five participants. This is relevant to Gal's (2017) ecological model of child and youth participation and the four interrelated themes from literature that the model is based on. One of Gal's (2017) themes is that young people have personal traits and capabilities to participate. The need for meaning and connection and the extent to which young people have the skills to find their own

meaning in participation could be categorised in this way. If finding meaning is considered an important element for participation, projects and research could be designed to encourage and develop skills for this. This is in line with the P7 Model which places ‘purpose’ at its centre and believes that CYP should participate in envisioning or re-envisioning the purpose of the participatory research or project they are involved in (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018).

Relating to practical criticisms of participatory research from the literature, the theme of young people finding their own meaning in participating may be their way of navigating the formal structures of how adults and professionals understand projects, research and participation; young people themselves making sense of the complex area of participatory research structures could be an attempt to find how they fit within it (Kellett, 2005; Fox, 2013; Mallan et al., 2010). The extent to which young people are able to make sense of participating however, may be influenced by the other contexts, systems or ‘regulatory regimes’ they have been exposed to previously (other themes in Gal’s (2017) ecological model). The fact that the young people involved in this participatory project were care-experienced may affect their awareness and perceptions of systems and regulatory regimes as they may have had more exposure to these than other young people their age, so this should be considered when generalising this finding.

**5.2.2 Learning.** The next superordinate theme was learning in relation to understanding the project and participation. Through the perspective of SDT, the theme of learning could be understood as important for the participants by fulfilling the psychological need for competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT understands the human striving for competence from the need for groups to be adaptive to a challenging or changing environment. Perhaps the project provided such an environment and learning was a way in which the participants’ need for competence was met (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Young people experienced the participatory project as one where their understanding of it was either ongoing and developing over time, was on different levels or they indicated a lack of understanding about the project. In many models of participation, young people’s understanding of the project or research is a skill or

knowledge that is assumed and underlies their ability to be involved in decision making and make initiations (Hart, 1992; Moules and O'Brien, 2012). What we can learn from these young people is that perhaps this understanding should not be presumed and even if the challenges of young people's research competence and training are met (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015), further attention may need to be given to understanding the project's intended purposes and reasons for taking place.

It could be argued that the understanding of a participatory project that aims to be led by young people themselves, should indeed be ongoing and developing, or unestablished. However, if the group of young people are all at different stages of understanding, with no shared understanding, who has the power? And who is managing risk for the young people (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015)? In participatory projects it may help to decide how important an understanding or shared understanding of the project is with young people and based on this, build in opportunities to develop an understanding.

The other way in which young people talked about learning in their experience of a participatory project was their understanding of participation. Like the previous subordinate theme, participants understood participation in different ways, or had not yet fully developed an understanding. This supports literature that recognises understanding of participation may change across time, place and context and that children's expectations and perceptions of the meaning of participation may not marry up with the reality (Gal, 2017). Can young people participate if they understand participation in different ways or do not yet understand it? This could be an area worth exploring in relation to efficacy and participation.

**5.2.3 Interpersonal relationships.** This superordinate theme was found to be part of young people's experiences of a participatory project: relationships with others, participating with others, grouping others and the authenticity of others. This theme could be understood using SDT's idea of the psychological need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT sees human tendency towards relatedness as a deep design feature of social organisms as evolutionarily, a cohesive group would have many more adaptive advantages (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This theme also aligns with Gillett-Swan and Sargeant's (2018, p.3) assertion that the potential influence of interpersonal context in the physical participatory research space is substantial and therefore "consideration of these conditions is critical to the establishment of an optimal research environment".

The participants all talked about their relationships with others (although some more than others) and about these relationships as being beneficial and for some, rapidly built. Previous literature states that effective participation is more likely when relationships are based on trust and respect (Gal, 2017). These values may have been present for the young people to feel positively about their relationships with others during the project. Models of participation and practical critiques do not necessarily state that participation need positive relationships between those involved. However, this may be important for the young people themselves to feel in participatory research.

Perceiving others by group was a subordinate theme in young people's experiences of a participatory project. Although the labels participants gave to these groups differed, what seemed to be important was age, status and power. In this way, young people recognised differences between those involved in the project. They did not, however, comment on or critique any bearing these may have had on their experience. The fact that some people involved in the project had experienced care and others had not was talked about by one participant and may have been implicit in distinctions made by other participants (such as describing other groups they didn't belong to as mentors, 'staff', social workers). Being care-experienced may mean the group of young people in this project are seen as vulnerable, which for Smith, Monaghan and Broad (2002) would be an ethical 'concern'; it could be interesting to therefore learn from the young people their perspective on how to best support them.

Present throughout all the grouping distinctions made by the young people was the notion of power. As previous research states, power dynamics are present within all research and all participation (Horgan, 2017; Spyrou, 2011; Cahill & Dadvant, 2018). What we can learn from young people is that, even if they express it in different ways, they are aware of power dynamics and Foucault's (2018) notion of power as relational. If at Spyrou's (2011) suggestion, a more reflexive approach was taken to consider power dynamics openly with the young people, would this make the project more ethical? It isn't clear whether it may be helpful for developing trust and respect across the group (Gal, 2017).

Participating with others was a subordinate theme: for all participants their experiences of participation was in relation to others. This is reflected in Gal's (2017) ecological model of participation that demonstrates the interrelations between variables, systems and other people in the contexts where participation occurs; participation never happens in isolation. For one participant, Tim, the lead facilitator was most important in how they experienced the project. Considering this with the dual-axis model of participation for example, at face value, the project could be judged as falling within 'Quadrant A – Activities predominantly adult led/decided' (Figure 3) (Moules & O'Brien, 2012). The dual-axis model acknowledges that there is no 'right' way to participate, that the balance between who initiates, directs or decides in participation will be continuously shifting. Now considering Tim's experience of the lead facilitator as key to their experience of participation, the picture is more complex. How can adults – in their positions of power - play a fundamental part in setting up participation and bringing young people together, yet then let them lead? And is leading and directing participation what is important to all young people?

For Jacomo, participating with others was fundamental to their experience as it allowed them to share their views more widely in the performance, by others sharing their words. This shows an alternative, beneficial way in which power can be shared within participation, or positioning theory can be used, so that those feeling less comfortable and confident are still able to participate.

The final subordinate theme was authenticity, something all participants valued. For three of the young people, authenticity was talked about as something important for

building relationships and for participation. We can learn that for these young people, the notion of adults being paid for something made them question and think about how this affects the adult's authenticity; perhaps the young people would have wanted to discuss this with adults in a "dialogic space" (Chappell, Rule, Dlamini & Nkala, 2014). It could be that, as the young people involved in this project had experience of the care system, considering the authenticity of adults was influenced by their exposure to adults being paid to look after children (Jacomu even speaks about this separately). Or they have had previous experiences that have led to mistrust of those in power (The Verbatim Formula, 2018). Either way we can learn that it is not easy to gain the trust of young people and if a space for them to question those in power is not opened, mistrust and doubt may always remain.

From discussing the themes in what young people said about their experiences of a participatory project, it is possible to see how these fit with different models of participation and can support power-based, ethical and practical criticisms of participatory research. Many things can be learnt from these young people's experiences, including how important choice is for them in participation, as well as how participation feels. That young people are aware of power dynamics and power within participation and that authenticity of others is highly valued and part of trust can also be learnt. Finally, support for young people to develop their own understanding of both the participatory project they are part of and participation itself could also be important and useful.

### **5.3 Implications of Research and Relevance to Educational Psychology**

This research has shown that young people can provide rich insights into their experiences of a participatory project that can be learnt from. This corroborates the value that international and national legislation has placed on the rights of CYP to be involved, participate and remain at the heart of the practice of adults, including EPs (for example, Article 12 of the 1989 UNCRC, 2014 Children and Families Act and SEND Code of Practice). It aims to substantiate the idea of CYP as ready for active participation in civic life and whose contributions should be valued (Cahill & Dadvant, 2018). First, TVF project changes will be outlined and then the implications for participatory research and relevance to educational psychology will be discussed.

**5.3.1 TVF project changes.** There were several changes to TVF UEL project, different to what was planned for or the published guidance from QMUL and the People's Palace Projects (The Verbatim Formula, 2018). The first was the language used by the lead facilitator to the young people: they were not explicitly called and encouraged to become 'co-researchers' as had been planned and therefore the principles of participation were not actively shared and discussed as a group. The second change was that some aspects of the participatory approach that had been planned for became directed by the lead facilitator (for example, the group generating and choosing ideas about what they would like to create a performance about and making decisions about the performance shared at the end of the project). TVF project at UEL lost some key elements of its planned participatory approach; this must be considered when its findings are read and if any generalisations are to be made.

Another difference in the UEL iteration of the TVF project was that staff from the Virtual School (who the young people at the residential had previously worked with) were required to be present. This has not happened at previous TVF projects and as the project aims to offer a fresh opportunity for care-experienced young people to engage with people they have not previously known, was not recommended. This change may have impacted on participants' experience of participation as it was originally intended by the project.

**5.3.2 Implications for participatory research.** The potential implications of this research for participatory research, both models and practice, with young people, will be discussed, taking relevant aspects of each theme.

This research found that learning, in terms of understanding and making sense of the participatory project, was part of young people's experience. If this drive for understanding can be facilitated or made explicit as part of participatory research or projects, young people involved may benefit. Models of participation tend to focus on how to increase young people's participation or shift ownership and leadership of projects over to young people and this may be easier if the young people involved have opportunities to develop their learning around participation.

Choice was also part of how young people experienced a participatory project. Implicit in models of participation is that if young people are making decisions and taking responsibilities, then this is their choice. There are ethical considerations around this assumption however and owing to the pressure and social norms of contexts and wider systems within which participatory research operates, young people may still experience feeling a lack of choice even when they are participating (Birch & Miller, 2002; Gal, 2017). This implies that the consent and willingness of young people to participate (at all stages) is complex, potentially changeable and something that needs to be carefully considered with the young people themselves to ensure participating is what they want.

The feeling of participation is also part of how young people experience a participatory project. How young people are made to feel when participating, when in a new environment, in a group, involved in a project and how far they feel they fit were all considerations that went into planning this project. So too, was how relationships between all involved could be cultivated and supported in a positive way. Wherever possible if young people can directly input or influence this planning, it may benefit participatory projects (Cahill & Dadvant, 2018).

Authenticity was a part of how young people experienced a participatory project and this has implications for both how participation is encouraged and for participatory practices. It seems that young people want to explore and understand the involvement of others in participation (and, possibly, their own too), to know why they are involved, why they want them to be involved and make a judgement on how genuine this is. Particularly when working with young people who have experienced care, adults should think about how their position and involvement in participatory research and projects is viewed or understood by young people and an openness about this could help build young people's understanding and even their choice to participate.

With the aim of distilling the findings from this research into recommendations for ways to develop participatory approaches and thinking, a handout has been produced (Table 3).



*Any practical examples given below should be considered and/or adapted within the specific context of the participatory research or project that is taking place.*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Learning point</b>	<b>Practical examples</b>
1. What we can learn from what young people said about participation.	It is important for CYP to find meaning in participation – researchers need to find ways to encourage, offer opportunities or develop skills to support this.	Openly discussing the purpose of the research or project.
		Adults explaining and modelling what meaning they find in participating.
		Asking CYP for ways they feel connected to the research or project.
	How participation feels is important to CYP, consider how the culture of the organisation, group or institution they will participate in may feel and cultivate feelings of enjoyment, fun, being welcomed and feeling part of something.	Ask CYP what they enjoy or find fun and incorporate these ideas.
		Treat CYP as equals in the research and project.
		Devise group agreements and codes of conduct together with CYP.
		Reflect on the culture of the place CYP will be joining or visiting as part of participatory research or a project and consider ways to help CYP feel comfortable.
	Create opportunities to cultivate CYP’s feelings of confidence in participating.	Ask CYP what helps them feel confident and incorporate their ideas.
		Support the group to bond and make connections.

		Differentiate the ways CYP can participate depending on how confident they feel.
	It is important that CYP feel they have a choice in participation, from choosing to take part initially and throughout all stages and activities during participation.	Discuss choice openly and regularly with CYP in a way that helps CYP make genuine choices.
2. What we can learn from what young people said about learning.	It is important that CYP's understanding of the project and its purpose isn't just assumed. Even if CYP understand the project differently, they are likely to benefit from opportunities to create shared understandings as a group.	Provide opportunities to create shared understandings about the project and its purpose as a group.
	CYP can understand participation in different ways, or still be building this understanding both during and after participation.	
3. What we can learn from what young people said about interpersonal relationships.	Positive relationships with others involved in participation are important to CYP.	
	CYP experience participation in relation to others. Exploring and discussing these relationships explicitly during participatory projects could benefit CYP.	Time for structured reflection on the group and relationships, either as a group or one-to-ones.
		Using psychoeducation to learn together about the psychology of groups, roles and dynamics.
	CYP perceived others involved in participation in groups based on differences between them. CYP were also aware	Opportunities for CYP to explore their perceptions of others and ideas about power through open discussion.

	of the power dynamics associated with different groups and roles within participation.	
	CYP felt that authenticity was important for building relationships and for participation. Open discussion about the roles of those involved in participation and if they are being paid and what this means could help build trust within participatory projects.	Have adults involved in the research or project outline their roles and why they are involved.
		Allowing opportunities for all group members to chat informally, and encourage CYP to ask questions about anything that is on their mind

*Table 3.* What we can learn from how young people experience a participatory project.

**5.3.3 Relevance to educational psychology.** EPs use participatory approaches in their everyday practice and educational psychology shares many of the values and principles of participation (further detail in section 1.3.2.1). The research findings are therefore relevant to EP practice, including their work with CYP of all ages, work with schools and work on an organisational or systemic level. Asking young people about the experiences and thoughts on participatory practice can be enriching for those involved, supporting the implication that EPs can always develop and expand their understanding of their work by involving and listening to the young people who are involved (Pearson & Howe, 2017; Hill et al., 2017; Day, 2010).

There are potential opportunities for EPs to work alongside existing groups of CYP, within schools, other institutions or communities within LAs, to find out what they are interested in and work together to conduct participatory research or use participatory approaches. Participatory approaches could also be useful for evaluating EPSs or when EPSs are planning new services or ways of working.

As the 2014 SEND Code of Practice extended the EP statutory role to work with young people aged 16-25 and statistics show that care-experienced CYP are over-represented in numbers of CYP with special educational needs, it may be that EPs will increasingly be working with care leavers (Atkinson, Hyde & Kelly, 2019). This may provide further opportunities for EPs to utilise participatory practices, even in terms of collaborating with care-experiences young people on what would be most helpful from EP practice and involvement.

As EPs have both a historical and legislative backing to promote listening to young people, involving them in decision-making and person-centred practices, they are in a strong position to promote and develop participatory research and approaches and to involve CYP themselves in this work (Gersch, Lipscomb & Potton, 2017). There is also potential for the doctoral training of EPs to take on increased participatory practices and involve CYP as co-researchers for doctoral research or other participatory opportunities. Despite EPs being well-placed for opportunities for participatory practice, the potential should not be limited to EPs; as EPs regularly work alongside other professionals and

train others, they are in an advantageous positioning for also promoting the use of participatory research and practice with others who work with CYP.

#### **5.4 Proposal for the Dissemination of the Findings**

As the remainder of this chapter focuses on personal next steps, reflections and conclusions, first person tense will be used. The most important aspect of dissemination for the author is feeding back findings to the participants, both because all expressed an interest in hearing this feedback and to add to the credibility of the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The steering group at UEL who organised the project plans to continue working with the group of young people who attended TVF residential project through their link with the Virtual School. As part of this, I will attend the next meeting and plan to share the findings with the young people and ask for their feedback (Appendix M). I am acutely aware of the potential irony of the fact that my research itself wasn't participatory, despite my advocacy for this approach and feel that this point of feedback and gauging whether or not the young people would like to continue researching in this area may be the opportunity with which I am able to continue working with the young people as co-researchers, if they so wish.

TVF project evaluators have requested a one-page summary of my research findings which will be provided in April 2019 (along with Table 3). I am also keen to follow up this summary with any further information or in-person explanations of the research, any implications the findings may have for TVF project specifically and whether this research can be furthered or built upon with TVF project.

An overview of the findings was fed back to the UEL steering group and link Virtual School staff member at an evaluation meeting in October 2018 and has fed into the planning that has begun for the same TVF project to run at UEL in summer 2019. I also hope to feed back the findings to EPs and the Virtual School at the inner London Borough EPS at which I am on placement as the research has implications for both EP practice and working with young people who are care-experienced. I will also take on any further opportunities to share the findings and implications with EPs, for example through conference opportunities at UEL or any other conferences relevant to participatory approaches.

A Centre for Applied and Participatory Arts has recently been established to develop “socially-engaged arts practice with partners...in a range of settings within UEL and beyond” (Centre for Applied and Participatory Arts, 2018). I was present at the launch and plan to be involved in the future. This multi-disciplinary initiative could provide an appropriate platform from which to disseminate the findings and implications of this research to a wider audience of professionals working in participatory ways with CYP and promote the importance of the voice of the young people in shaping the development of participatory practices.

## **5.5 Limitations of the Research**

This section will discuss the limitations of this research, including general limitations of the methodological approach which include the reliance on the expertise of the researcher and generalisability of the data.

**5.5.1 Interviews.** Choosing single interviews as a method of data collection has associated limitations, as well as limitations specific to how these interviews were conducted.

The context of an interview can produce demand characteristics from the interviewees, as well as power imbalances. Demand characteristics in interviews change the nature, behaviour or responses of participants (Mertens, 2005). There was a notable difference in the manner of participants when the interviews began and a sense they felt their responses should be positive (Appendix 7 – extract 4). Attempts to minimise these effects were explaining that responses would be anonymised, that the research was interested in all their experiences and by explicitly asking if there was anything participants didn't like (Appendix H). Power imbalances were also present in the interviews. Contributing to these may have been the age difference, role difference and potential for the participants to see me as an 'other' in terms of the groups involved in the project. The information sheet, assuring participants that anything they want to share is helpful and reflexive practice attempted to address power imbalances. However, engaging with participants over a longer period and enabling them to understand the research further could have helped minimise power imbalances further.

The interviews occurred either at the end of the first day of TVF project or towards the end of the second day, both to capture the participants' experience within the experience and for practical reasons, such as fitting with the project's schedule. Although this may have captured 'hot cognition', if a second interview had been included after the experience, this may have added further illumination to participants' experiences (Hayton, 2017). The timing of the interviews also struck a balance between participants having a choice in when they took place and two interviews happening late in the first day; ideally each interview would have had protected time in the residential schedule. Even though the designated interview settings were not where the rest of the project had taken place, they were still at UEL. If they were at a different site this may have given the participants a clearer perception of the interviews being part of research project, rather than TVF experience itself, and therefore a different perspective. The findings should be considered in light of this.

Other limitations to the interviews included the disadvantages from being a novice researcher (discussed further in section 5.7.2), the potential for the participants to understand my role more as evaluating the project rather than carrying out independent research (Appendix Y – extract 5), the lack of a pilot study and the last-minute change of interview questions. As the first day of TVF project ended, it was clear that the facilitators had chosen not to use the language 'co-researchers' with the young people as had been planned. The interview schedule questions therefore had to be amended with short notice when instead they would have benefited from a careful re-working (Appendix I). This made the notion of acting as an 'active co-participant', knowing when to use the schedule and when to move away from it completely, more difficult (Smith et al., 2009, p.64).

**5.5.2 Generalisability of the data.** As with any IPA study, generalisations must be made with caution. The fact that TVF participatory research project is relatively short at two days, that it involved creative and applied arts practices, that it was a residential experience for most participants and that each participant contributed and became involved to differing extents are all aspects to consider when looking to generalise from the findings and considering the transferability of the findings (Mertens, 2005). The sample of participants may also be relevant and is discussed next.

**5.5.3 The sample.** Although the sample of participants was homogenous as they had all experienced a participatory project, for this reason the sample were also all care-experienced young people (the focus of TVF was an opportunity for care-experienced young people to reflect on and plan for futures). Young people who have experienced care may have had past experiences, such as trauma or involvement of professionals, which mean the way they experience participation may be different (The Verbatim Formula, 2018). Where experiences may have been affected by the experience of care this was highlighted either in the participant's words or the researcher's interpretations.

IPA relies on participants to be competent in expressing themselves through language; language is interpreted on both a semantic and latent level (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). As the young people were all over 16, linguistic competence was presumed, and interviews deemed appropriate. However, analysing the Yusuf's interview for example, it seems that the participants may have benefited from a wider range of ways to express themselves for example using virtual worlds, photovoice or art (Becker et al., 2014; Sclater & Lally, 2014; Gillies & Robinson, 2012). That participants were all care-experienced may have also meant that an interview experience was similar to past meetings with professionals which may not always have been a pleasant experience. Building rapport before interviews and keeping a friendly and appreciative approach was an attempt to minimise this potential effect.

## **5.6 Implications for Further Research**

Given the insight and knowledge gained from young people's experiences of a participatory project and following on from limitations associated with the generalisability data, further research exploring the participatory experiences of CYP



would build upon this research. Exploring with CYP across a range of ages, who have experienced a variety of participatory research, projects and other forms of participation could develop and expand the themes found in this research, as well as strengthen the voice of CYP in developing participatory approaches.

Ideally, in line with the principles of humanistic psychology, participatory and person-centred approaches, this research would be developed with further participatory research. If a group of CYP who have experienced participation and are interested in how it is conceptualised and how practice is developed wanted to carry out their own participatory research, this could be an exciting opportunity to truly integrate the experiences and insights of CYP to the body of research. This would also give CYP an opportunity to design, collect data, analyse data and disseminate findings in the most appropriate way for them. This could be one way to answer Kellett's (2005) question of whether a new research paradigm is needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Another opportunity to develop this IPA research into participatory approaches with CYP could be using the idea of a triple hermeneutic, asking CYP themselves to re-interpret the findings, to further feed into and develop understanding of and practice in this area (Cromby, 2002). By creating an additional hermeneutic circle around the pre-existing circle, the involvement of CYP is continued and the methodology of IPA itself includes participation.

Finally, the role of EPs and the participatory nature of their work could be another area for future research. Exploring practice that already takes place in educational psychology, involving CYP in the exploration and investigating best practice could add to the research around participatory approaches and advocate for increased participation of CYP within the EP doctoral training (as outlined in section 5.3.2). Future research in this area could also increase the profile of EPs in participatory research and open opportunities for further cross-disciplinary work around participatory research practices.

## **5.7 Personal Reflections**

I have felt grateful and privileged to have the opportunity to speak with young people about their experiences of a participatory project and to spend time considering what can be learnt from them. I have also appreciated the opportunity to learn more

about participatory research and practice, TVF project and about the views of care-experienced young people. Involvement in a multi-disciplinary, cross-University research project has also shown me novel ways of working for EPs and the potential for their future role in relation to participatory practice. I attempted to maintain validity through reflexivity during the research process, using a research diary and supervision opportunities (Vicary, Young & Hicks, 2016).

**5.7.1 Role and position of researcher.** My role and position in this research was multi-faceted owing to the nature of ‘piggy-backing’ on to TVF project. I had a role as part of the UEL steering group, the wider group of those involved in TVF more broadly and as a researcher. As discussed in section 3.7.6 this did create some tensions, but also benefits of insight from both an emic and etic position (Olive, 2014). Despite explanations of my role on several occasions and a clear interview schedule (Appendices G and I), I believe these multiple roles may have confused the participants’ understanding or view of me as researcher. Just by nature of being another adult involved in the project could have contributed to demand characteristics in interview and the nuanced differences of my involvement compared to other adults may not have been important to the participants. The participants’ experience of being interviewed about how they found a project could have been easier for them to interpret as an evaluation of the project, rather than an in-depth attempt to understand their experiences.

What I found most difficult to reconcile was my role as IPA researcher and interviewer and my personal values and principles which align more closely with working with the young people as co-researchers (an approach I would have preferred to use if possible within the constraints of doctoral research). I worried about the ethical implications of putting the young people ‘under the microscope’ with my research, in conjunction with their experience with TVF project which was meant to be the opposite of that approach and reflected on this within my research diary (Appendix Y - extracts 1, 2 and 3).

**5.7.2 Being a novice IPA researcher.** This was the first time I had used IPA and this presents challenges in conducting interviews. Ensuring I was genuinely and actively listening to participants, making good judgements about which areas or words to explore or probe further and allowing participants space to lead wherever possible during interviews, whilst aware I had research questions to answer, was a difficult act to balance. Using probes or open questions such as ‘tell me more’ or ‘how did that feel?’ reminded me of therapeutic conversations or consultations I may have in my role as a TEP and may have shaped the participants’ responses. For example, the labels used by researchers in questions can shape their findings; the word ‘feel’ could suggest the category ‘emotion’ which in turn may evoke certain responses from participants (Willig, 2013, p.10). Although I reflected on and learnt from the first three interviews at the end of the first day of the residential, having all interviews take place in the space of two days left limited scope for development in interviewing skills.

I enjoyed developing data analysis skills throughout the IPA process and appreciated the importance it placed upon the researcher’s own assumptions, meaning making and interpretations. I ensured that reflection on the impact I was having on the interpretation took place continuously throughout data analysis, as recommended by Brocki and Weardon (2006). IPA allows for close and rich reading of participants’ words and the process felt like analysing poetry – the more you read and think about the words, the more insights and depth were revealed. With this, I found moving from the initial commenting stage to emerging themes challenging, a sense of losing the detail from layers of interpretation pervaded. Reading about the hermeneutic cycle and IPA analysis creating a new whole with the data helped me reflect and make peace with this (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Research supervision also helped me greatly with analysis and challenged me to consider whether my findings had been sublimated and influenced the process of drafting and re-drafting write-up, which became part of IPA analysis itself (Smith et al., 2009).

As a novice researcher, dealing with last-minute changes in TVF project (discussed in section 5.5.4) was a challenge. I worried about how the changes from the espoused participatory research to the less-participatory nature of the project’s reality would affect the participants’ experiences of the project, the interviews and the data. I shared my worries with another member of the UEL steering group who assured me the

framework of the project remained participatory even if some of the details had changed. I also reflected that, as the number of models and studies that have attempted to define and produce guidance for best practice or ‘true’ participation indicate, most real-life participatory research projects will deviate from their plans. Therefore, it is felt that the young people’s experiences are still just as relevant.

## **5.8 Research Conclusions**

Listening to and involving CYP in decisions that affect them is their right (UNCRC, 1989; Department of Health and Department of Education, 2014). Participatory approaches with CYP have increased in the UK since the 1990s (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Coad & Evans, 2008). This research used IPA methodology to carry out an in-depth exploration of how five young people experienced one participatory project. Even with the limitations outlined above, this research achieved its aim of seeking new insights from young people on how they experience participation and exploring what can be learnt from them to enhance to development of participatory research practices.

The findings of the research draw attention to the aspects of participation important for young people and the way they made sense of the experience. In terms of participating, young people talked about finding meaning in the project, what it felt like to participate, how participating was linked to confidence and choice or lack of choice in participating. If these elements are important to young people when participating, including them within the model of participation that is being used in projects, as well as explicitly addressing and exploring them with young people within participation could be helpful. The research also found that learning – developing their understanding of the project and of participation - was also part of young people’s experience. If in participation, CYP may not always understand the aims and processes, this could be helpful to consider during participatory projects. Interpersonal relationships was another theme in young people’s experience of a participatory project. Both relationships and participating with others, grouping others and the authenticity of others were all elements in how young people made sense of the experience. Considering these both when planning for and when participating with young people could help open a dialogue about what is important to them and support a co-constructed understanding of participation (Table 3).

In conclusion, this research highlights the richness and power of exploring the experiences of young people and how much can be gained from asking them about their experiences. The area of participatory approaches, which already focuses on listening to and involving CYP, is extremely well placed to support further research into how CYP can be learnt from to inform the development of modelling, understanding and practice in participation.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Data extraction form

		<b>Date extracted:</b>	<b>Reference number from Excel:</b>
<b>Author(s):</b>	<b>Year of publication:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Journal:</b>
<b>Question</b>	<b>If Yes</b>	<b>If No</b>	
Is the article from 1997 onwards?	Continue	Exclude	
Is the article written in or translated to English?	Continue	Exclude	
Does the article have a focus on participatory research with CYP?	Continue	Exclude	
Is the context similar enough to be related to participatory research with CYP in the UK (e.g. not within war-based contexts, not entirely medicalised, etc.)	Continue	Exclude	
Does the article consider the experiences, perspectives or view of CYP on participatory research?  OR  Does the article include any analysis or exploration of participatory approaches with CYP?	Continue	Exclude	

Appendix B

List of 58 included articles (54 from first search, 4 from second)

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Weight of evidence: HIGH (Include in critical review)</b>	<b>Weight of evidence: MEDIUM (Include elsewhere in Chapter 2 or Chapter 1 only)</b>
Arnstein, S. R.	(1969).	A Ladder of Citizen Participation.	Y	
Bagnoli, A., & Clark, A.	(2010).	Focus groups with young people: a participatory approach to research planning		Y
Becker, K., Reiser, M., Lambert, S., & Covello, C.	(2014).	Photovoice: Conducting Community-Based Participatory Research and Advocacy in Mental Health.		Y

Birch, M., & Miller, T.	(2002).	Encouraging participation: Ethics and Responsibilities.	Y	
Bradbury-Jones, C., & Taylor, J.	(2015).	Engaging with children as co-researchers: challenges, counter-challenges and solutions.	Y	
Chappell, P., Rule, P., Dlamini, M., & Nkala, N.	(2014).	Troubling power dynamics: Youth with disabilities as co-researchers in sexuality research in South Africa.	Y	
Children's Alliance.	(2007).	Listen and Change; A Guide to CYP's Participation Rights.	Y	
Coad, J., & Evans, R.	(2008).	Reflections on Practical Approaches to Involving Children and Young People in the Data Analysis Process.	Y	
Davies, E.	(2015).	Meanings and mess in collaborative participatory research.	Y	
Day, S.	(2010).	Listening to young children: An investigation of children's day care experiences in Children's Centres.	Y	
Ellis, B. H., Kia-Keating, M., Yusuf, S. A., Lincoln, A., & Nur, A.	(2007).	Ethical Research in Refugee Communities and the Use of Community Participatory Methods.	Y	
Erel, U., Reynolds, T., & Kaptani, E.	(2017).	Participatory theatre for transformative social research.	Y	

Flicker, S., Guta, A., Larkin, J., Flynn, S., Fridkin, A., Travers, R., Pole, J. D., & Layne, C.	(2010).	Survey Design from the Ground Up: Collaboratively Creating the Toronto Teen Survey.	Y	
Fox, R.	(2013).	Resisting participation: critiquing participatory research methodologies with young people.	Y	
Gal., T.	(2017).	An ecological model of child and youth participation.	Y	
Gersch, I., Lipscomb, A., & Potton, A.	(2017).	The history of research by educational psychologists into ascertaining the voice of the child and young person.	Y	
Gillies, V., & Robinson, Y.	(2012).	Developing creative research methods with challenging pupils.	Y	
Hammond, N.	(2013).	Introducing Forum Theatre to elicit and advocate children's views.		Y
Hart, R. A.	(1992).	Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship.	Y	
Hill, V., Yates, R., Greathead, S., Croydon, A., Kenny, L., & Pellicano, L.	(2017).	A participatory research approach to understanding the experiences of pre-verbal children and young people and those with complex needs in residential settings.		Y

Holland, S., Renold, E., Ross, N. J., & Hillman, A.	(2010).	Power, agency and participatory agendas: A critical exploration of young people's engagement in participative qualitative research.	Y	
Honneth, A.	(1995).	The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts.	Y	
Horgan, D.	(2017).	Child participatory research methods: Attempts to go 'deeper'.	Y	
Houghton, C.	(2015).	Young People's Perspectives on Participatory Ethics: Agency, Power and Impact in Domestic Abuse Research and Policy-Making.	Y	
Jones, T.	(2017).	Unsatisfactory Progress: Article 12 and Pupil Participation in English Schools.	Y	
Kellett, M.	(2005).	Children as active researchers: a new research paradigm for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century?	Y	
Kellett, M.	(2009).	Children as researchers: what can we learn from them about the impact of poverty on literacy opportunities?	Y	
Kindon, S. L., Pain, R., & Kesby, M.	(2007).	Participatory action research approaches and methods: Connecting people, participation and place.	Y	

Kirby, P., Lanyon, C., Cronin, K., & Sinclair, R.	(2003).	Building a culture of participation. Involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation.	Y	
Kirby, P.	(2004).	A Guide to Actively Involving Young People in Research: For researchers, research commissioners, and managers.	Y	
Kumrai, R. R., Chauhan, V., & Hoy, J.	(2011).	Boundary crossings: using participatory theatre as a site for deepening learning.	Y	
Lind, C.	(2007).	The power of adolescent voices: co-researchers in mental health promotion.	Y	
MacDonald, J. M., Gagnon, A. J., Mitchell, C., Meglio, G. D., Rennick, J. E., & Cox, J.	(2011).	Include Them and They Will Tell You: Learnings From a Participatory Process With Youth.		Y
Maconochie, H. A.	(2013).	Young children's participation in a Sure Start children's centre	Y	
Mallan, K. M., Singh, P., & Giardina, N.	(2010).	The challenges of participatory research with 'tech-savvy' youth.	Y	
Mayes, E.	(2016).	Shifting research methods with a becoming-child ontology: Co-theorising puppet production with high school students.	Y	

Moules, T., & O'Brien, N.	(2012).	Participation in perspective: reflections from research projects.	Y	
Nind, M., Boorman, G., & Clarke, G.	(2012).	Creating spaces to belong: listening to the voice of girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties through digital visual and narrative methods.	Y	
Parker, J.	(2011).	An exploration of children and young people's involvement in decision-making and of the skills linked to high-level participation	Y	
Parkes, J.	(2008).	The Power of Talk: Transformative Possibilities in Researching Violence with Children in South Africa.		Y
Participation Works.	(2007).	Hear by Right and the Third Sector, How to Measure and Improve CYP's Participation.	Y	
Pearson, R. & Howe, J.	(2017)	Pupil participation and playground design: listening and responding to children's views.		Y
Rifkin, F.	(2010).	The ethics of participatory theatre in higher education: a framework for learning and teaching.	Y	
Rome, A., Hardy, J., Richardson, J., & Shenton, F.	(2015).	Exploring Transitions with Disabled Young People: Our experiences, Our Right and Our Views.	Y	



Sclater, M., & Lally, V.	(2014).	The realities of researching alongside virtual youth in late modernity creative practices and activity theory.	Y	
Shier, H.	(2001).	Pathways to participation: Openings, opportunities and obligations.	Y	
Smith, R., Monaghan, M., & Broad, B.	(2002).	Involving Young People as Co-Researchers: Facing up to the Methodological Issues.	Y	
Spyrou. S.	(2011).	The limits of children's voices: From authenticity to critical, reflexive representation.	Y	
Thomas, N.	(2012).	Love, rights and solidarity: Studying children's participation using Honneth's theory of recognition.	Y	
Vindrola-Padros, C., Martins, A., Coyne, I., Bryan, G., & Gibson, F.	(2016).	From informed consent to dissemination: Using participatory visual methods with young people with long-term conditions at different stages of research.	Y	
Wang, Q., Li, H., Pang, W., Liang, S., & Su, Y.	(2016).	Developing an integrated framework of problem-based learning and coaching psychology for medical education: a participatory research.		Y
Wickenden, M., & Kembhavi-Tam, G.	(2014).	Ask us too! Doing participatory research with disabled children in the global south.		Y

Wissman, K. K., Staples, J. M., Vasudevan, L., & Nichols, R. E.	(2015).	Cultivating Research Pedagogies with Adolescents: Created Spaces, Engaged Participation, and Embodied Inquiry.	Y	
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Articles added after second search

Cahill, H., & Dadvand, B.	(2018).	Re-conceptualising youth participation: A framework to inform action.	Y	
Gillett-Swan, J. K., & Sargeant, J.	(2018).	Unintentional power plays: interpersonal contextual impacts in child-centred participatory research.	Y	
Kennedy, H.	(2018).	How adults change from facilitating youth participatory action research: Process and outcomes.	Y	
Wintels, S. C., Smits, D., van Wesel, F., Verheijden, J., & Ketelaar, M.	(2018).	How do adolescents with cerebral palsy participate? Learning from their personal experiences.	Y	



**DRAFT FOR PARTNERS**

***Making Places: Guide to a University Residential with Creative Practice for Looked-After Young People***

**The Verbatim Formula**



# The Verbatim Formula

The Verbatim Formula is a partnership that supports looked-after children (14-18 years old) by giving them an experience of visiting and studying at university. Since 2015, we have been inviting young people to Queen Mary University of London for a residential stay during which they take part in workshops, spend a night in university accommodation, and plan for the future. We call our project The Verbatim Formula because we have used practices from verbatim theatre along with a mixture of other creative and participatory practices.

The Verbatim Formula aims to:

- **care, respect and listen** to each young person.
- give looked after children an **experience of university life**.
- use **creative practice** to help young people plan for the future.
- ensure that the **high aspirations** of disadvantaged young people are supported and encouraged.
- use participatory evaluation to help universities provide for care leavers better by **improving their services**.

*'It's always been a dream of mine to go to university, it didn't change it, in fact it reinforced it.'* - Aaron, Care Leaver.

Led by a Drama practitioner with input from a team of young adult mentors and facilitators, the project also offers individual advice sessions from Widening Participation staff. Throughout the guide you will see transcripts of recorded testimonies gathered as part of the project. All names have been changed.

*'Lots of young people in care don't have enough guidance from family or even social workers to be able to experience university in a successful way. The TVF project helps you do this and you don't need training in the arts or be a performer to take part. I highly recommend it for young people in care intending to go to university, it encourages them not to have low expectations of their experiences and to flourish as much as they can while studying.'* - Kyle, Care Leaver.



## Who is this guide for?

This guide is for staff who wish to support **looked-after children and care leavers** in thinking positively about higher education as a part of their future. It gives practical advice on running a one night residential with two days of workshops.

It is based on the experience of **The Verbatim Formula** team, who have run residential at Queen Mary University of London since 2015, and at three partner universities, The University of East London, Goldsmiths, and the University of Greenwich, 2018-19

It will be of particular use to staff involved in **widening participation** and for those seeking to use **creative practice** with young people as a pedagogical and participatory approach.

Using dialogue and feedback as an integral strategy, it builds in **participatory research** and **creative evaluation strategies** that create opportunities for personal and organisational change.



The Verbatim Formula has been funded by the University Access Fund at Queen Mary University of London, by QMUL Departments of Drama and the School of Business and Management, and by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Its main partners are QMUL, People's Palace Projects, and the Greater London Authority Peer Outreach team - a group of young people who support youth services across London.

## **THE NEED FOR THIS WORK**

The challenges faced by looked-after children and care leavers in achieving their potential are well documented. Because of often severe disruptions to their home background, frequently having to be moved from one foster placement to another and uprooted from schools, friends and family members, going into care can often mean missing out on the continuity and emotional security of a stable home and family life (Golding 2008, Furnivall 2011, Ratcliffe 2104).

Very frequently, the disruptions that they experience to their education lead to much poorer likelihood of entering university or receiving professional training. According to the National Audit Office, 6% of care leavers are in HE, compared to around one third of all 19 year olds (National Audit Office 2015).

Related to the statistical case that can be made regarding social inequalities, is the quality of affective care that children in care receive. Practices in both care and education can be bureaucratic and alienating, and social stigma of looked-after children remains a problem. Since the adoption into UK law of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, the right of all children to have their voices heard and be listened to is emphasised in official and statutory documentation. Despite the awareness of the need for change in government, and the dedicated practice of many

foster carers and social workers, young people who have participated in our project have reported feeling unheard and unloved (Munro 2011, Department for Education 2016).



*'I've literally become a catalogue of statistics, and just irrelevant facts and info. And it's dehumanizing to be honest. And if adults don't really view you as a human then how can you view yourself? Right now, according to the system, kids have become just another number, another statistic, and it's not whether a child is being cared for it's whether they're being dealt with. And that's not the same.'*

Maya, 14 years old.

In Higher Education there is currently an increased emphasis on widening participation of disadvantaged groups. In 2016, a report by the Social Mobility Advisory Group, *Working in Partnership*, called upon universities to do more to address systematic inequality (Universities UK, 2016). In 2017, The Sutton Trust called upon Universities to reform their Admissions processes to allow a greater proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter university. Tim Blackman's report for the Higher Education Policy Institute emphasised the pedagogical benefits of a diverse student body (Blackman 2017).

It is the conviction of The Verbatim Formula team that doing more to support looked-after children is an ethically and socially urgent issue. Universities can use their rich expertise in creative and participatory practice to reach out to children in care and to support their progress in achieving fulfilled and happy lives.

*Universities can do more to help care leavers to make good choices, and to feel welcome in the university community.*

Throughout this guide, you will see images that illustrate our processes, and read real testimonies that we have gathered from our participants since 2015.

By sharing our experience of this project, we want to support you as university staff and practitioners with practical advice for running your own residentials, workshops or events for looked-after children and young people. Often we will use the term 'care experience' because we acknowledge and respect the insight and knowledge that young people whose lives have touched the care system have gained and can share with us as our co-researchers and advisors.

A list of Resources is provided at the end of this guide to supplement the information and advice provided here. A fuller version is given at: (website)

'I wasn't really supposed to graduate, I was supposed to be doing a 9 to 5 job at a retail store, and probably pregnant with two kids by now, but I'm not, I'm twenty-three with a degree now. I'm not an outcast. I'm normal. I can achieve what everyone else can achieve.' – Ava, Care Leaver.





## TRANSITIONING FROM CARE

### Challenges and Facing the Future

Higher education providers often define a care leaver as someone aged between 18 and 21 who at the age of 18 was in the care of a Local Authority or Health and Social Care Trust. Legally, a 'care leaver' needs to have been in care for at least 13 weeks from age 14, some of it when were aged 16 or 17.

Like all students, care leavers come from a variety of backgrounds, and each young person will feel differently about going to or arriving at a university, . Factors such as race, religion, regional background, neurodiversity and gender are parts of their experience.

An experience of care is just one part of a young person's identity. Care leavers have life experiences that contribute enormously to the kinds of learning that all students experience at university. Their knowledge and understanding can be very profound.

Research at the Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth with UK, Norwegian and Danish partners has challenged the negative representations of care and builds understandings of the complex identities and experiences that care leavers negotiate.

In our work we have found that every care experienced young person and care leaver has a unique and valuable experience of being in care, at whatever time in their lives. But it can be a disruptive experience that creates challenges, changes a young person's sense of who they are in society, and requires determination in dealing with the demands of life.

Though it is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that these young people get the care and support that parents provide, care leavers often face severe challenges with finance, accommodation and independent living.

This is why extra help and support can be so important to care leavers in making the transition from school to further or higher education.

'Education in itself needs to be consistent. It's the moving from school to school that makes it difficult to get those key and necessary grades that you need to go on to higher education. That's *really* difficult. I think universities need to be more flexible with their criteria and some are. There are various access schemes to higher education that do target care leavers which is brilliant. You need to look at the person and not their grades.'

Cathy, Widening Participation Staff Member in Higher Education

When it comes to applying for university there are extreme challenges. Not only is the potential of care leavers often missed or unencouraged, young people may not even have the access to good advice and the support in making choices, nor even in navigating the on-line systems that have become so prevalent in educational service provision.

'The best bits were our conversations about the uni. I asked them many questions like, I do BTEC, and asked if the university would accept me and they were like "Yeah but you need that specific grades." You know I'm leaving care soon so is it going to be the cost will be the same for me and what help this university will give me. What happens if my social worker can't help me?'

Erin, 16 years-old.

In 2016 a report by Universities UK identified socio-economic disadvantage and a lack of information, advice and guidance as significant factors. Young people need help in finding the right path to achieve their aspirations, whether this be via university or not. With a sometimes bewildering range of options, the advice young people receive is crucial.



The teacher in my school told me, “Law is hard - lots of exams - choose something you like.” Obviously that’s all I have wanted to do all this time. My mum gave me the idea to be a lawyer cos I talk a lot and am really argumentative. I am going to be straightforward with a person. I am not afraid of what I have to say. I speak my mind. I am going to be confident and that’s why my mum said, ‘You’re gonna be a good lawyer.’ But she died and I’m kind of regretting it ...But now many people at school, “Oh Law is too hard you can’t to do it and that.”  
Erin, 16 years old.



## **Mentoring and Networks**

As an ongoing project The Verbatim Formula has been working closely with young adult care leavers who have themselves known what it is like to live and work in the care system. They have told us that young people, who often go through multiple traumas throughout their journey in care, need non-judgmental and supportive guidance. Mentors who can provide this are often well received by a young person.

While a young person might feel that the care system is authoritative and inflexible, a mentor is there to listen and understand their needs, helping them to move towards their own set goals. i.e. maybe just getting to school on time, or not getting angry. Mentors offer young people the chance to model someone positive. Young people have told us that they can feel as if professionals always have a target to hit and forms to fill out, often fueled by the fear of not being considered a 'good worker' by management. The lack of this agenda separates mentors from a lot of the other people in their care lives.

During our workshops our young adult care leaver mentors have played a huge role in supporting and inspiring participants. Asked to attend to share their experiences and determination, they have shown enormous generosity which has been much appreciated by the young people attending the residential.

*I wasn't really supposed to graduate. I was supposed to have two kids and pregnant again by now. But I'm not, I've got a degree.  
Shazeer, Care leaver graduate, 24 years old*



In addition to support, guidance and mentoring, it is also important to help young people to have access to a network of people and services. On occasions as they enter adult life, care leavers will find themselves having to navigate complicated systems in order to

sort out their finances for example, or accommodation. A one stop shop approach, or reliance solely on one person or service, may in the end set them up to fail if that one person/service is not around anymore.

Helping young people to navigate different services and networks informally teaches looked-after children that when they leave care they can and have the right to access different people and services. This is enormously important in the isolation of the individual who is struggling or needs support of whatever kind.

Sometimes, being in care, you don't really have that system where you can get support , so you actually feel like you're by yourself. It's quite a lonely place, you don't really want to go there.

...

The one thing I've learnt from my birth mum, is that I'm too proud. I never like to ask for help, but that was one of the things that was causing me to fail in life. I thought that asking for help means that you are weak but it doesn't. It doesn't mean that you ask for help all the time, but if you are really stuck...asking for help is helping you to get somewhere.

Sam, Care leaver, 23 years old

## Using Verbatim Processes

Verbatim and documentary styles have become increasingly popular in mainstream theatre, with a host of theatre practitioners developing practices that use material for performance gathered from interviews, documents and recordings. The dictionary definition of verbatim is 'word for word' - its use suggests that a person's original words

are repeated exactly as they were spoken or written. In practice, these words are often carefully elicited, selected and edited by verbatim practitioners in ways that mediate the words. Nevertheless, verbatim practitioners often make a claim for the *authenticity* of the material they present in a way that differs from that of fictionalised drama.

Used as a type of theatre that gives a platform to rarely heard voices, verbatim performance also often promises to challenge or enlighten its audiences - taking for its subject matter the lives and experiences of marginalised people or bringing to light information hidden from public view. Its performance can often create a sense of intimacy with an audience, as private or hidden experience and feelings may be shared (Hammond and Stewart 2008).

Aside from its growing presence in mainstream theatre, the use of verbatim theatre practice in socially engaged contexts has become common. Often its practices are used to gather, share and amplify the experiences of those individuals and groups who are severely disadvantaged, marginalised or isolated (Gallagher and Freeman 2016; Inchley 2016). A Resources section near the end of this guide lists a number of books and articles where you can read more about these projects. In The Verbatim Formula, we have gathered many testimonies that give insight into the multiple issues faced by looked-after children and care leavers.

I left school with no GCSEs. I was put into school at the age of twelve. I got kicked out of school and I was arrested....

When I was at university I was in my hostel where I was for four years. ...there were a lot of fights, and a lot of gangs who came there just to chill. So while I'm studying there'd be music playing really loudly. I wasn't able to knock on anyone's door and say turn it down.

The lead tenant in the hostel had a fight with another young person and I had to split it up. They broke a bottle and the blood from her head went on my coursework and I had to re-do the whole thing.

I failed a lot of my units in first year...I didn't disclose to them that I was in care. I just said that I was finding it hard.

End of second year as part of my placement I was in Cornwall for a performance. Just as I was about to go on stage I got a call saying my brother had run away. This is someone I went into care with. At the time he was one...

Then I had to tell them I was a care leaver.

Ashley, 24 years old, 2016

### **Verbatim as a tool for teaching and research**

Verbatim theatre and its practices also offer a rich seam of material for use in university seminar and practice rooms as part of a Degree in Drama. Its uses in mainstream theatre, its contested claims to authenticity, the questions it raises regarding truth and mediation, and its potential for blending with other creative practices - all these aspects and more make verbatim theatre very rich material for use with university students in both practical and theoretical aspects. Quite apart from the discussion it provokes, its methodologies are also pedagogical and research tools. Using interviews brings the lived experience of individuals directly into the research process, facilitating a research methodology that acknowledges lived experience and includes a range of perspectives.

In our own verbatim project, the Verbatim Formula, we used verbatim theatre processes with young people in care, care leavers, foster carers and social workers and other professionals administering care in the UK. We then also began to use it in the context of the university (as you can read about below in the Extensions and Making Change section). Verbatim performance is a form that heightens the practice of listening: it seems to make listening visible.

*It makes you really listen, makes you listen in a slightly different way, makes you take a step back from what you're expecting to hear if you like. So I think I listened better, I think I listened with a more open ear if that makes sense.*

Rash, Social Worker

It seemed particularly appropriate to us for use in a context where a young person's wishes and feelings need to be heard. We use a technique where young people make interviews with each other and with adults. The recordings are chosen, edited, and loaded up onto MP3 players or i-pods. Listening back to the testimonies through personal headphones, the performer relays the original recording to an audience by paying minute attention to the words on the audio, repeating them accurately and respectfully.

With no script to learn, the technique is light on its feet, and because it allows a performer to focus on the audio, can free the self-conscious from anxieties around speaking in front of others.

All the testimonies are anonymous because they are performed by another person. Knowing that no one will know their words are being spoken, an interviewee can feel freer to say how they are feeling, or speak about an experience that might otherwise be awkward, embarrassing or painful to share publically.

*I think it's really cool to be able to make them anonymous, cos then the person doesn't feel afraid to say what they want to say.*

Kyle, 15 years old.

In The Verbatim Formula we explore how the performance of a testimony by another person of a different age, race or gender from the original speaker can both help to

provide anonymity for the original speaker, but also make a statement about listening to and solidarity with diverse identities and experiences. For audiences, the awareness that the performer is not the person to whom a challenging experience actually happened, can provide a distance that removes direct contact, or a feeling of being judged. A response that is both empathetic and reflective tends to be elicited. When listening to a young person's testimony, an adult is not obliged in that very moment to care for the speaker, but to think and speak about how care, and their own daily practice of care, could be better.

Using verbatim performance has allowed us to develop a critically reflective child-centred practice that pays attention to individual children's capacity to articulate their own experiences, it also enables us to listen to adults who work within a system where, as we have mentioned, pressures of time, money and concerns for protection and safeguarding can generate siloed thinking and jeopardise vitally important listening practices.

Early on in our processes, we realised the huge potential for verbatim processes to intervene in a system where adults and children are brought together and need to develop caring partnerships. We have not only recorded interviews with young people in care, but also with foster carers and social workers. We have found that sharing these testimonies with the young people can lead to a better understanding of the pressures that adult professionals face, and of the love and care with which many foster carers approach their work. Through the performance of our testimonies we can share the truly excellent practice that foster carers and social workers carry out despite having little time and/ or resources available.

*'All the time I listen with my eyes and my ears because I can read as much from the body as I can from what's being said, or what's not being said. So even at breakfast time, when the lad's going out the door, I check him over and talk to him, how you're doing and stuff. It's every day, it's all the time, it's part and parcel of everything'.*

Sue, foster carer.



## Appendix D

### Residential pre-meeting for young people

# The Verbatim Formula

Creative Practice for Young People in Twenty-first Century



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council



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## Today's Session

- Brief Overview of the Project
- What to expect
- Preparing for a residential
- Code of Conduct
- Consent

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## Brief Overview of the Project

Creative  
practice

Working with  
UEL students

Supported  
by UEL staff

You shape  
the project

University of East London

 University of  
East London

## What to Expect

- 2 days at the University of East London
- Workshops and activities
- Over-night stay at the UEL Student Halls
- Friendly and approachable Staff/Facilitators

University of East London

 University of  
East London

# Programme

## Day One (4 July):

- Arrive at 10am and meet everyone over a late breakfast
- In the morning start to explore goals and ambitions using creative practice including the verbatim formula
- Enjoy a UEL lunch in one of our campus cafes
- In the afternoon get to know the campus and more about going to university and planning for your career plus more creative practice
- Late in the afternoon check in to your room - each person has their own room with en suite shower/toilet
- Go for dinner with the team and then have some time in your rooms

# Programme

## Day Two (5 July)

- Enjoy breakfast on campus and then travel to our University Square Stratford Campus to work in our dedicated performance spaces on refining your creative work
- Packed lunch and a short break
- Finalise and prepare your work to share in the way you want to share
- Evaluate your experience

# Accommodation

<http://www.uel-virtualvisit.com/docklands/>

- Each room will have an en-suite shower room
- You will be supplied with:
  - a pillow
  - a duvet
  - bedsheets
  - toilet roll

University of East London



## What to bring:

- Clothes; including sportswear and trainers for a group activity
- Pyjamas
- Socks and undergarments
- Toiletries; toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, shower gel, deodorant and anything else for personal hygiene
- Towels
- Phone charger
- Plastic refillable water bottle
- Optional flip flops for use in the shower



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# Code of Conduct

- No form of bullying or abuse will be tolerated.
- No alcohol brought to the premises/purchased/consumed at UEL.
- UEL is a non-smoking campus however there are designated shelters

## Informed Consent

- We tell you about the residential and what's involved
- You give us your permission for different things
- You tick on the forms which things you give your permission for
- For example:



## My research

- Finding out your opinions on the project
- Having an interview with me on the Wednesday or Thursday
- Me recording it (but no-one else will listen to it)
- Me writing about what you tell me so that other people can learn from you (but not using your names)



## Appendix E

### TVF project meetings

Outline of project meetings attended:

Date	Meeting Outline
26.09.17	Meeting with University of East London (UEL) Tutor involved in TVF project to discuss my potential involvement.
25.10.17	Attended TVF steering group meeting at UEL
14.11.17	Meeting with head of TVF UEL steering group to negotiate my involvement and share my ideas and interests.
20.11.17	Met with TVF researcher from Queen Mary University London (QMUL) to share my ideas and negotiate involvement.
28.11.17	Attended TVF steering group meeting at UEL and shared my research ideas with all of the group. The group were in agreement that my research could take place.
4.12.17	TVF meeting at QMUL with all Universities running residential workshops. Shared my research with the group and all in agreement that it is in line with the project and should go ahead.
7.12.17	Meeting with member of TVF UEL steering group who works in UEL's Education and Community Partnerships team. Explained

	research idea in more detail and proposed methods of gaining consent and data collection. Began planning these aspects into the workshop and ensuring they are streamlined with other data collection and activities for the young people attending the workshop.
5.01.18	TVF UEL steering group meeting to discuss project planning.
22.01.18	TVF UEL briefing to let Social Work and Drama students know about the mentoring opportunities at the residential. I attended to help explain what the project involved and the nature of my involvement.
8.02.18	TVF UEL steering group meeting to discuss project planning.
15.02.18	TVF UEL training day for Social Work and Drama students who will be taking on mentoring roles during the residential. Led by QMUL practitioners and attended by London Borough Virtual School lead.
23.03.18	TVF meeting at UEL with all Universities running residential workshops.
26.05.18 and 7.06.18	TVF UEL training sessions for Social Work and Drama students who will be taking on mentoring roles during the residential. Discussed running of the residential delivery and what the two days would include. Began to map out when and where interviews could take place.

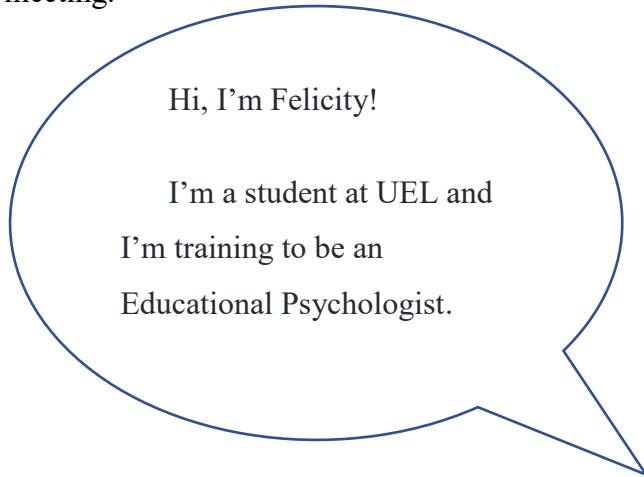


25.05.18	Phone call to discuss potential pilot opportunities with QMUL lead.
11.06.18	TVF UEL steering group meeting to finalise plans for residential. Interview timings and locations finalised.
20.06.18	Pre-meeting for young people attending the residential. Opportunity to introduce research and give research information sheet.
03.07.18	Pre-residential briefing for all adults involved.
04.07.18 – 05.07.18	<i>Residential</i>
13.09.18	TVF UEL steering group evaluation meeting.
29.11.18	TVF meeting at QMUL with all Universities running residential workshops. Shared feedback about project and research. Agreed as next step to feedback research one-pager in April 2019.

## Appendix F

### Information sheet

Sent to the participants prior to the project and given out at the pre-residential meeting.



#### **My research**

I'm really interested in projects like The Verbatim Formula and I'd like to know what you think about participation and being co-researchers at the end of the workshop.

#### **What's involved?**

- Having a conversation with me at the end of the first day
- The conversation will be recorded but no-one else will hear it
- Your name won't be used in the research

#### **Why?**

- Your opinion and views will be really helpful for other projects like this in the future
- It might be a good experience to think about how the residential has gone and what's been good about it
- After I've finished the research, I'll let you know all about it

#### **Agreeing**

- You don't have to say yes
- If you say yes you can change your mind later
- If you're happy for me to do my research, please say so on the consent form

If you have any questions, you can ask me any time during the residential. I look forward to meeting you then

Appendix G

Interview sign up sheet

Interview Sign-up

These will take place in foyer area.

6.30 – 7.00pm	
7.00 – 7.25pm	
7.25 – 7.45pm	
8.45 – 9.05pm	
9.05 – 9.30pm	
9.30 – 10.00pm	

## Appendix H

### Interview schedule

#### **Introduction**

- Check comfortable, drink?
- How has day been?
- Information sheet
- Consent form
- Anonymity reminder and chance to choose pseudonym.
- Conversation may feel strange, or one sided as I really want to hear their views and what they think.

#### **Debrief**

- Thanks
- My next steps and how I can report back to them
- Any questions?

#### **Interview questions**

1. How has the residential been for you?
2. Having taken part in this residential, how would you define participation/being a co-researcher? (Could show prompts here from the session where they discussed being co-researchers, e.g. photos, flip-chart.)
3. What does the word 'participation' mean to you?
4. What does the word 'co-researcher' mean to you?
5. How did it feel to be a co-researcher?
6. How is the project like or not like school/other place?
7. Was there anything you didn't like?
8. What advice would you give to anyone setting up another project with young people as co-researchers?

#### **Possible probes**

- Can you tell me a bit more about that?
- What do you mean by that?
- What was it about it that you liked/didn't like?
- Why is that/tell me about that?
- Anything else?
- Who would you like to hear these thoughts?
- How could this be better?
- How did you know?
- Is there anything else you think it would be helpful for me to know?

## Appendix I

### Interview schedule questions, before and after

<b>Pre-prepared questions</b>	<b>Questions prepared on first day of residential</b>
1. How has the residential been for you?	1. How has the residential been for you?
2. Having taken part in this residential, how would you define participation/being a co-researcher? (Could show prompts here from the session where they discussed being co-researchers, e.g. photos, flip-chart.)	2. Having taken part in this residential, how would you define participation? (Could show prompts here from the session where they discussed being co-researchers, e.g. photos, flip-chart.)
3. What does the word 'participation' mean to you?	3. What does the word 'participation' mean to you?
4. What does the word 'co-researcher' mean to you?	4. How did it feel to participate?
5. How did it feel to be a co-researcher?	5. How is the project like or not like school/other place?
6. How is the project like or not like school/other place?	6. Was there anything you didn't like?
7. Was there anything you didn't like?	7. What advice would you give to anyone setting up another participatory project with young people?
8. What advice would you give to anyone setting up another project with young people as co-researchers?	

## Appendix J

Potential research challenges (adapted from Roulston, deMarrais & Lewis, 2003)

### (a) unexpected participant behaviours

- *checking in with the participant – are they ok to continue? Is there something else they need?*
- *if become emotional – judge whether to ask if they want to continue; want me to stay with them; want me to get anyone else?*
- *if appear to be unable to communicate their views – can use prompts (sheets where activities recorded on, recollecting different activities, evaluation postcards, etc.)*
- *stay calm, stay present, no extreme reactions, ask if they know what they would like to happen or what would help them*
- *DSL will be present at all times if disclosure is made that needs immediate follow up*

### (b) consequences of the researchers' own actions and subjectivities

- *be very careful at set-up to ensure clarity around purpose and desire for participants to speak as openly and freely as possible*
- *bracket-off any pre-conceptions of participants formed having met and spent time with them prior to the interviews, before the interview takes place*
- *think about my 'state' before interviewing, try to take some minutes to re-focus from whatever was happening beforehand and therefore present as calm, thorough, approachable, etc.*
- *consider body-language, seating and other forms of non-verbal communication*

### (c) phrasing and negotiating questions

- *use clear and straightforward language if diverting from schedule*
- *remind participants to ask if they don't understand a question or words used*
- *using TEP questioning skills, remaining open, impartial, avoiding judgements or biases*

### (d) dealing with sensitive issues

- *checking whether participants feel able to share*
- *explaining anonymity/confidentiality in more detail*
- *using active listening and helping the participant feel heard*
- *signposting for further support if relevant*
- *checking they are ok before the interview is finished or what could help them feel ok*

Appendix K

Residential outline

Day One 4 July

<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Rest/Office Room Staff</b>	<b>Actions to complete</b>
9.00am	SD 1.03	<p><b>Welcome area set up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keys and registration desk set up</li> <li>○</li> <li>• Breakfast table set up and meet any early arrivers</li> <li>○</li> <li>• Meet</li> <li>○</li> <li>• Residential room checks</li> <li>○</li> </ul>	SD1.04: Break room/Storage	<p>Need white table cloths that can be written on</p> <p>Need paper plates</p> <p>Craft resources</p>
9.30am	SD 1.03	<p><b>Participants arrive</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base in SD 1.03</li> </ul>	SD1.04: Break room/Storage	<p>An area of the room will be set aside for storing bags. Room not to be left unattended.</p> <p>Ensure consent forms are signed, Participants register, allergies etc double checked.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff and student facilitators meet, chat, help carry bags and bring all to SD 1.03</li> <li>• Everyone to get juice and pastries as they arrive, take to café style table to eat.</li> <li>○</li> <li>• Virtual school staff welcomed</li> </ul>		<p>Lanyard, access card and contact card issued to each student.</p> <p>Ensure we have completed forms everyone who has arrived to take part.</p>
10.00am to 11.00am	SD 1.03	<p><b>Welcome breakfast</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory exercise, drama games and ice breakers</li> <li>• Ready, Respectful and Safe Talk: students to contribute to each section</li> <li>• Welcome – Welcome and DSO lead role</li> <li>• Code of Conduct for all</li> <li>• Staying Safe on Campus Talk</li> </ul>	Sd 1.04: Break room	<p>Group agreement for rules and how we will manage any issues</p> <p>All members should complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ - Code of Conduct</li> </ul> <p>Explain why we have cards and lanyards</p>



			Take student belongings to SD1.04	<p>White Lanyards: Staff</p> <p>Blue Lanyards: Student facilitators</p> <p>Purple Lanyards: Photo Consent</p> <p>Yellow: <b>No</b> Photo Consent</p>
11.00am to 1.00pm	SD 1.03	<p><b>Verbatim Session One</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing experiences of education</li> <li>• Drama practice</li> <li>• Introduction to verbatim – technique over content</li> </ul>		
1.00pm to 1.45pm	Sports Dock Cafe	<b>Lunch together as a team in Sports Dock</b>		Hand out Lunch Vouchers to all.

		Format is lunch voucher and choose a lunch option then sit informally at tables in the SportsDock café. This is a public space.		
1.45pm to 2.45pm	SD 1.03 and whole campus	<b>Campus tour and WP presentation</b>	SD1.04: Break room/Storage  De-brief time for student facilitators:	
2.45pm to 4.15pm	SD 1.03	<b>Verbatim Session Two</b>  Collection of verbatim: you, who you are, telling your story, what do you want people to know/not know, tell a different story. Future focus - aspirations  Set the scene for tomorrow – using the arts to tell their story –	SD1.04: Break room/Storage	3pm-4pm: Place Student Schedules in rooms as well as drinks and snacks in fridges.

4.15p m to 4.45pm	SD 1 .03	<b>Snack break and informal reflection</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflection and lead into interview explanation</li> </ul>	SD1.04: Break room/Storage	Introduce overnight student ambassadors
4.45p m	SD.1.0 3	<b>Move down to arena 2</b>	<b>SD1.04:</b> Break room/Storage  4.45pm to 5.00pm de-brief day team and notes for handover to the night team	
5.00p m to 6.00pm	Sports Arena 2  Hall 3	<b>Animation/sports Session</b>		
6.00p m to 6.30pm	SD.10 3 and Halls	<b>Transition to Evening</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evening Schedule</li> <li>• Introduce Night arrangements and Health and Safety in Halls</li> </ul>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocate Keys and staff members to show people to their rooms</li> </ul>		
6.30pm	Own flats	<p><b>Personal Time</b></p> <p>Interviews by arrangement (sign-up sheet)</p> <p>Interviews take place in foyer area</p>		7.30pm – Collect pizzas and set up Buffet area in Halls and Games
8.00pm	Kitchen areas	<b>Pizza meal in the kitchen areas</b>		
9.00pm to 10.00pm	Halls	<b>Games and Chill Out Time</b>		
10pm	Flats	<b>Into own flats</b>		
11.00pm to 11.30pm	Own rooms	<b>Into own rooms by 11pm</b>		
11.30pm to 7.30am	Halls	<b>Overnight duties</b>		

Day Two – 5 July 2018

<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>USS</b>		
7.30am to 8.45am	Halls	<b>Wake up calls</b>		<p>Make sure bags are packed.</p> <p>Check personal belongings</p> <p>Room check by staff member after everyone has left</p>
8.45am to 9.25am	SportsDock Cafe	<p>Breakfast in Sports Dock and Key Collection</p> <p>Key collection</p> <p>Check that everyone is okay</p> <p>Reminder of day ahead</p>	<p>Students to make way to East building and be there by 9.30am for Addison Lee.</p>	<p>Take register of students</p> <p>Return keys</p>

9.30am to 10.15am	East Building  Entrance	Travel to USS by taxi in groups:  2 staff members/facilitators minimum in each car		Look at Travel Schedule.
10.15am to 12pm	Room 3.02	<b>Verbatim Session Three</b>  Group back activity to bring group back together – check in and check out sessions  Arts practice and build your performance – developing their ideas		
12pm to 12.45pm	US 3.08	Packed lunch Room 3 08  All have lunch together		
12.45pm to 2.30pm	Room US 3.02	<b>Verbatim Session Four</b>  Rehearsal		

2.30pm 3.00pm	Room US 3.08	Afternoon break		
3.00pm to 3.45pm	Room US 3.02	<b>Sharing and interview the audience</b>		Organise audience members
3.45pm to 4.15pm	Room 3.08/3.02	<b>Reflect, evaluate and celebrate and next steps</b>		Complete Evaluation forms at 4pm
4.15pm		Close	De-brief time for student mentors?  Mentors to be prepared to stay until 5pm.	

Appendix L

Consent form

**Consent to participate in a research study**

An exploration of young people's experiences of a participatory project

- I have seen the information about the project and I understand what's involved.
- I have had the chance to talk about it and ask questions.
- I am happy to talk with Felicity, to share my thoughts about being a co-researcher. This should take up to 30 minutes.
- I understand that the conversation will be recorded and then the recording will be stored safely, where no-one else will be able to listen to it.
- I understand that the things I say will not be shared with anybody unless the adults are worried about my safety or the safety of anyone else.
- I understand that my name will be changed so other people won't know the things I said.
- I understand that Felicity will write about this research and let me know what she finds.
- I understand that I have the right to stop taking part in the research at any time and this is totally fine and I don't need to give a reason. I also understand that if I stop taking part after the resident, Felicity can still use my data without my name attached.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me.

Name	Signature	Date

**Thank you for taking part in the research.**



## Appendix M

### Plans to share findings with young people

#### Session Plan

1. Welcome and catch up (ice-breaker or sharing positives) – 10 mins
2. Re-cap about my research – 5 mins
  - a. Remind young people about the research: “I’m really interested in projects like The Verbatim Formula. These type of projects involved something called participatory research, which involves adults and young people working together to make decisions and find things out together”
  - b. Remind young people about the purpose: “The idea of asking you about how you experienced the project and participation was to learn from you and find out how participatory research as a whole can benefit from hearing your thoughts”.
  - c. Anonymisation and confidentiality: “I typed up your interviews and gave you the fake names that you chose, so that no-one should know who said what. I typed up what everybody said and have stored the recordings in a safe, locked place on my laptop. I will delete them next year, when my research is complete.”
3. Share findings – 10 mins
  - a. I looked at everything you all said and thought about what I thought it might mean. I tried to find themes in what you told me and then find the most common ones that at least half of you found.
  - b. This is what I found (show figure and talk through).
4. Gather feedback and views – 10 mins
  - a. Either as a whole group or in pairs/two groups to talk about what they think and record it on flipchart paper. Some prompt questions:
    - i. Is this how you remember feeling?
    - ii. Is there anything you think now that you’d like to add?
    - iii. Is there anything that surprises you?
    - iv. Who would you like to know this information?
5. Share my next steps – 5 mins
  - a. To write this up for my thesis
  - b. To try and share the findings with EPs, Virtual Schools and with others who do participatory research
  - c. To try and publish a version of it
6. Would they like to take any next steps? – 5- 15 mins

## Appendix N

### Log of interview dates and times

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Tim	04.07.18	8.45 – 9.05pm
Yusef	04.07.18	9.05 – 9.30pm
DK	04.07.18	9.30 – 10.00pm
Jacomo	05.07.18	2.30 – 3.00pm
Jay	05.07.18	4.30 – 5.00pm

## Appendix O

### Log of dates for data analysis stages

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Date</b>
Case 1 (reading and re-reading, commenting, emerging themes, connections across themes)	24.08.18 – 29.08.18
Case 2 (reading and re-reading, commenting, emerging themes, connections across themes)	03.09.18 – 07.09.18
Case 3 (reading and re-reading, commenting, emerging themes, connections across themes)	08.09.18 – 19.09.18
Case 4 (reading and re-reading, commenting, emerging themes, connections across themes)	20.09.18 – 22.09.18
Case 5 (reading and re-reading, commenting, emerging themes, connections across themes)	22.09.18 – 23.09.18
Patterns across cases and finding superordinate themes	24.09.18 – 29.09.18

## Appendix P

### Example of initial noting and exploratory comments

#### Key

- Descriptive comments in normal font
- *Linguistic comments in italics*
- Conceptual comments underlined
- **Questions for myself in bold**

	Initial comments	
	Original Transcript	Exploratory comments
<p>Developing understanding of the project</p> <p>Being comfortable with not knowing</p> <p>New experiences as positive</p> <p>Openness to change</p> <p>Stance/view based on past experiences (then and now?)</p>	<p>I        How has the project been for you so far?</p> <p>R        So far its been interesting, I'm still kind of baffled what the whole point is, but I'm slowly getting my head round it. And it's like I still don't get why it's called the V-whatever its called-I can't even pronounce it! I still have no idea what that word even means!</p> <p>But, it, it's a new experience you know, its opened my mind up to something I said I wouldn't do again, you know, and its changed my mind as well, you know, before I came here I said I would never re-apply for any University, you know,</p>	<p><i>'Interesting' and 'baffled' – confusion about the project? Or just mixed feelings?</i></p> <p><u>Confused about how he feels about it?</u></p> <p><u>(Influence of the point at which interviewed during the project? Nature of PR?)</u></p> <p><u>Project as not something straightforward, something that evolves, he seems ok with that.</u></p> <p>Not understanding the title of the project</p> <p><i>Repetition of not knowing the word – three times – to emphasise?</i></p> <p>Comfortable with not knowing/understanding fully? Seems like he could be...</p> <p>New experience as something positive (could this mean any new experience would be?)</p> <p><i>'opened my mind...' – shows flexibility, ability to change, transformative?</i></p> <p>Issue he previously had with the University (where project is based) is still at the forefront and important to him (shows a project will always have previous associations and links with a P's previous experiences)</p>

Change in attitude about University	but, halfway through the day you know I've already said, you know, by tomorrow, I'll have an application form put in. You know, so its, its opened my eyes, you know, just being here, you know, its learning something else, which is an added bonus in my opinion.	<b>How big a deal was it to be able to have changed his mind so quickly?</b>
Gaining new perspective	I Can you say a bit more about you know you said its opened your mind, your eyes?	<i>Slightly more use here of the phrase 'you know' compared to later in interview</i> The project has changed his original perspective on University and encouraged him to apply – <b>therefore positive experience? Or that he is a person that is open to change?</b>
Learning	R Just being here...observing current students, its opened my eyes to life on campus, you know. When like it was said earlier, you say University and you think a big Hogwarts building like Oxford or Cambridge, but if you look around, its nothing like that. You know, you've not got rich snobs looking down at you cos you've not got the latest sports car you know, its ordinary people that just want to do well in life. You know, that's what I wanna do, I wanna do well in life.	'opened my eyes', 'learning something else' 'just being here' – sense of place as important, an experience 'added bonus' – it is good in the first place and something even better. <u>Not deserving? Someone else in charge of what he gets out of experiences?</u>
Positive experience	I Thank you. And you know when you say it changed your mind about applying to University, what has it been that's done that?	<b>Why did I latch onto these phrases to explore more deeply?</b>
Sense of agency	R Its just been getting more information, and meeting people	'just being here' – sense of place and its importance. <u>Purely location can bring change?</u> 'observing' – interesting role to take on – how to this relate to participating? <i>Linguistic link to opening of eyes and watching, learning</i> 'life on campus' - use for the word life – does this mean different way of life? <i>Broad, encapsulating word to use</i> Expectations of University versus reality. Different to what he previously thought.  'Rich snobs', being 'looking down' on, 'latest sports car', sense of inferiority?
Importance of place		Aspirations, 'ordinary people' – <u>how he views himself</u>
'Eyes' and 'seeing'		<u>Reflecting on his overall aim/purpose in life – residential had a future focus</u>
Ways of life		<u>His self of himself? Is the project tapping in to who people are? What they want in life?</u>
Expectations vs reality		
How others view him		
How he views himself		
Purpose in life		

Sense of agency	<p>who work within the University, you know, who can give me the pointers that I weren't given first time I applied for UEL, you know, so, yeh.</p>	<p>Referring to the issue he had with applying to UEL before - important to him People, information and pointers – things that he sees as important in applying for University  <i>'I weren't given' – the University as not giving in the past, but giving now</i></p>
Issues around being with others	<p>I        Ok, thank you. How has it felt, the project, being in the room and sharing?  R        No problem at all. I'm used to having someone literally at the same house, near enough at the same time, like with me, you know, I've always got mates coming round to my flat to checking up, check up on me, see how I'm doing, to come round, you know, have a laugh, watch a bit of tv or play playstation with me, you know so being around people, its not a problem. You know, if there there was certain people here that if they weren't here, I wouldn't be here, you know so they also need to take a bit of credit for me being here, you know, but erm... its, its no honestly, being in a room, no no problem, no problem at all, you know, other people don't phase me, you know, if you're an a-hole, then you will, there will be trouble, naturally, but if you're a nice, if you're a nice</p>	<p><i>Repetition of the phrase. Did he assume I thought it would be a problem? Was it how the question was worded?</i></p>
Support at home Mundanity of daily living	<p>Support at home Mundanity of daily living</p>	<p><i>Checking up – sense that this is needed? That he might not be ok at home on his own?</i>  Comparing it to his life at home – <u>justifying he is used to being around others?</u></p>
Joining the project initially (/turning up)	<p>Joining the project initially (/turning up)</p>	<p><u>Suggesting he would only have done the project because of certain people, but not saying this outright – could mean it was a big deal to even take part in the project</u></p>
Being with others Sense of self with others	<p>Being with others Sense of self with others</p>	<p><b>Is it a strange concept, being in a room with others, not 'mates'?</b></p>
Relations with others Personal barriers to relationships with others	<p>Relations with others Personal barriers to relationships with others</p>	<p><u>Back to this sense that he personally is ok with being with other people and sharing (as opposed to it being anything to do with the project itself)</u></p>

Equality and respect between people	<p>enough person to me, I'm a nice enough person to you. I have no problems being with other people.</p>	<p><i>'other people don't phase me' – have they in the past?</i></p>
Participation as therapeutic	<p>I How has it felt participating? What's that been like?</p>	<p><u>Defensiveness? Might indicate certain things needed to happen to allow participation</u></p>
Disappointment with everyday life	<p>R Erm, weirdly enough its been relaxing. You know, cos, it may sound like er boring day, well it is you know, but most of the time</p>	<p><u>Sense of equality and respect between people as important. Could be how he makes sense of being with others/participating.</u></p>
Feelings of loneliness	<p>I'm just either asleep, watching movies or tv shows on my phone, or playing on my playstation, you know, that near enough all my day,</p>	<p>Thinks it's weird that he has found it relaxing? <u>Was the project in a way therapeutic?</u></p>
Newness as positive	<p>you know, so to do this, yeh its more energetic, but its actually relaxing me you know, getting all the stuff I want to forget about,</p>	<p><i>Describing his own everyday life as 'boring'</i></p>
Escaping from current situation or personal thoughts	<p>out, letting it out and just bringing in some new.</p>	<p>Comparing the project to daily life</p>
Impactful conversations	<p>I What about the day has allowed that to happen?</p>	<p><u>Lonely? Contrast to what he said earlier about always being with other people?</u></p>
Sense of agency	<p>R Just the fact when I've come in, I've met new people, I've spoken to people I don't even know, which in itself is a reward for me, you know cos I'm not normally a social person. You know, so,</p>	<p><u>'Energetic' and 'relaxing'. Energy as something positive (not sleep, playstation, phone)</u></p>
Weight of sharing	<p>there's that and, you know, just doing what we're doing, its, that change of pace to my normal home life. So, that in its own way is just</p>	<p>Describing the project as bringing something new into his life.</p>
Difference from everyday life		<p><u>Sense of difficult inner world/thoughts, way of escaping, more pleasant thing to be doing. Newness as important.</u></p>
		<p><u>Surprise that he has spoken to people he doesn't even know</u> <i>'reward for me' – reward as a more transactional choice of word</i></p>

<p>Struggles in life Comparing project to daily life</p>	<p>relaxing me cos its making me feel like, there's something else out there to do, you know, rather than just be bored at home, doing nothing. You know. Which being unemployed is all you really can do, no matter how many jobs you try to apply for. You know, so yeh, but honestly that's, that's it really, you know.</p>	<p><i>'Not normally social' – does this explain the possible defensiveness or justifications earlier about being around other people?</i></p> <p><i>'change of pace'. Not 'normal'</i></p> <p>Giving sense of opportunity – there is more out there <u>Summarises life as 'doing nothing' even though he described daily activities</u> <u>Finding life difficult, time at home, being unemployed and this project could be much more than a just project to him, instead a chance to be out, with others, doing things?</u></p>
<p>Assumptions about how other's view him</p>	<p>I How did you feel about the interviewing bit where theres the interviewing and the recording? R Nothing, no problems, no problems my end you know. Oo not from you anyway, the only problem was that firework display it was a bit distracting!</p>	<p><b><i>'honestly' – how is he feeling about the interview? About what I'm expecting or wanting to know?</i></b></p> <p><u>Answers a question about feeling with 'nothing', is this type of question more difficult or necessitating going to a different, more difficult place of feelings?</u></p>
<p>Eyes and seeing</p>	<p>I And what about, you know the bit in the sessions, you know where you had to answer the questions, do the interviewing...how was that bit?</p>	<p>Confusion over the question – I'm trying to ask about the participatory activity earlier, but R assumes I'm talking about the current interview... <i>Assumption that there might be problems, or problem would be expected? Perhaps to something to do with previous problem with the University and seeing me as representative of the University?</i></p>
<p>Perspectives of others'</p>	<p>R Eye-opening, cos it, its given me views on other people from what other people see that I wouldn't see you know, I wouldn't see what some of the people said when we done the recording and that repeating back exercise, I wouldn't of thought of any of what was said, you know, I'm very, my</p>	<p><i>'eye-opening' – phrase again</i></p>
<p>Verbatim as key to participation Learning from others Personal values</p>	<p>I wouldn't see you know, I wouldn't see what some of the people said when we done the recording and that repeating back exercise, I wouldn't of thought of any of what was said, you know, I'm very, my</p>	<p>Other people's perspectives, alternatives, comparing self to others?</p>



Views and outlook as identity Learning from other's outlook	views are my own, you know, I wouldn't try and force my views on anyone and in return I don't want people to force views on me you know, I keep my view alone and ... but to see someone else's, it's, how can I put it, it's refreshing, you know to see that [plane overhead]	<u>Verbatim formula description – important part of participating</u>
Openness as positive		<u>Sense of learning something new or seeing something new from other people. No mention of who the people were (sense of equality or that it didn't matter?)</u>
Others as fundamental to participation	R Yeh so, what was I saying, erm...	<u>How he acts, also speaking about his values</u>
Benefits of participation	I You were saying refreshing...	<u>Different experience – has he had others' views forced on him previously?</u> <u>His views – could be a big part of his identity? Sounds sure of them something that belongs to him clearly</u>
	R Oh yeh, its refreshing to see other people's views for a change rather than just constantly thinking about mine. You know,	<u>Maybe not used to listening to others' views in this way – gave fresh perspective on them</u>
Project as non-directive	I'm, like I said, you keep your views to yourself – I'm more than happy to hear 'em out – just don't expect me to follow them. You know,	<u>He is coming across as a very open person, open to new things and enjoying them</u>
Finding balance of opinions	some some people are anti-gun, I'm pro-gun. You know, some people are anti-drug, anti-	<u>'constantly thinking' – could be insight into an inner world that is full of constant thinking, being alone, doing the same activities each day...</u>
Hearing views of others	marijuana should I say, I'm pro, you know, so it's, I just like hearing the other side of the argument, the other side of the coin, to try and balance out, to try and come to a more informed decision. Yeh.	<u>'Refreshing' - again a sense of the project being different to everyday life for him and being around others as something he is enjoying/getting out of it/benefiting from</u>
Identity	That's me. That's me down to a tee.	<u>Is he talking about getting on with other people who don't share the same views?</u> <u>'follow them' – past experiences of being told what to do? Or think?</u>
Sharing and listening with others		<u>Stating views on topics as examples. 'Pro', 'anti', 'two sides of a coin' – didactic, black/white, straightforward – different from finding a balance and nuances and compromise.</u>

<p>Unique contribution of others</p>	<p>I Ah it's really interesting. So if that's kind of what you enjoy, how did that fit in with this project?</p>	<p><u>Sounds like something important to him, being able to hear different views and the impact this might have on his views</u>  <u>His identity – could be linking this to why he enjoyed the project</u></p>
<p>Understanding others</p>	<p>R Because I'm, I'm hearing about other peoples stories, I'm hearing other people's experiences, I'm hearing other people's thoughts and opinions about a number of different things, which I don't think I would've heard anywhere else,</p>	<p><i>Repetition of phrase beginning with 'other peoples...'. Describing listening to other people on the project and hearing their stories. <u>Sounds like genuine sharing, true listening to others</u></i></p>
<p>Self-development</p>	<p>you know, so, not only will this open other people's eyes it's sort of opened my eyes as well to other things that may seem silly to me, but to some people they are serious issues, and it's helped me see that soo much clearer than I used to.</p>	<p><u>Hearing other people's thoughts and opinions as something he feels is unique</u></p>
<p>The sharing of personal experiences</p>	<p>I Can you give me an example from today?</p>	<p><u>Recognising difference in others</u></p> <p>Some things seemed silly to him, I wonder what these were. <b>How significant is it for him to be able to see 'much clearer'?</b></p>
<p>Comparison of experiences</p>	<p>R From today, er it was more of a little private chat but yeh basically some things happen to people which are very .. not nice,</p>	<p>Describing a private conversation from the residential that appears to have made an impact on him.</p>
<p>Belonging</p>	<p>you know, and it's just some people have it worse than me, some people have it easier than me and I just like to, see where I fit, you know, its, I'd say its opened my eyes, it opened my ears, its opened my mind, and it's opened my heart as well, to other people. You know.</p>	<p><u>Participants in the project developed relationships to the extent they could share personal things that made impact on each other.</u></p>
<p>Openness</p>	<p>as well, to other people. You know.</p>	<p><i>'Worse than me' – he has had it bad in first place and others even worse</i></p> <p><u>Comparing his situation to others but in abstract, generalised way.</u>  Doesn't want to go into detail</p>

<p>Hesitation in discussing identity Sense of self Fairness</p> <p>Beliefs and self Belonging Seeing yourself in relation to others Group size Connection with others/project</p> <p>Extrapolating learning from project to life Project fit with self</p> <p>Learning from others</p> <p>Self in the world</p>	<p>I        What do you think it is about you that means you can get all of that out of this sort of thing?</p> <p>R        I don't know, I don't know, I'm... Can you try re-wording the question so I can...</p> <p>I        It's a bit of a weird question isn't it. I was just wondering what it is about you as a person that means you can see other people's points of views, that you can learn from others...</p> <p>R        Well you just said it! It means I can learn from others, just by seeing other people's views you know, I, I, there are some issues that I go for, some I go against, there are people out there that will oppose my views and just being here with a small group of people, who may or may not have you know similar views to me but things they say can really make people think, you know, and I'm a thinker, I like to think about things, you know, I've, reading and thinking are my hobbies, down to a tee. But, erm, you know so coming back to, thinking about how other people work, how other people see things in the world, its ..its a learning curve that I enjoy, I want to learn</p>	<p><u>'see where I fit' – learning or comparing from others – he doesn't mention shared experience of care but is this something that is important behind this?</u> Theme of opening up again. <b>He is opening up in a listening way, rather than a sharing way?</b></p> <p><i>'I, I' – does this hesitation suggest the topic may be more difficult to express?</i> <u>Back to the same 'issues' mentioned earlier – seem they could be important to sense of self. Again, didactic nature of 'go for' or 'go against'</u></p> <p><b><u>Does he have controversial beliefs, is this something that has been difficult for him in terms of building relationships/meeting people in the past?</u></b> <u>Sense of others against him 'out there'. His sense of self is offered in contrast to others who may have different views – is this further discussion of his identity as rooted in values and beliefs (some of which may be controversial?)</u> <u>Small group of people – group size may have been important (or just descriptive)</u> <u>Project has connected with something in him – the element of making him think</u></p>
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Value of others views	<p>new things, you know, even if from down to pointless information, down to things like you know, I'd love to be able to comprehend the Einstein's theory of relativity, you know, there's ...</p>	<p>Seeing things in the world – <u>looking at things in very 'big picture' way</u> His identity again, what he likes and how the project has fed into that <i>'learning curve' – about change, newness, going round the curve into something new</i></p>
Verbatim as way of exploring views	<p>I        What do you think, thinking about this project, is there anything it has done or hasn't done that helped that learning from others, sharing thing?</p>	<p>Wanting to learn – linking learning to hearing from other people</p>
Importance of communication	<p>R        It's helped me, see other people's views differently</p>	<p>Painting a picture of himself as wanting to know everything, learn, understand the world around him. <b>Is this the example of 'pointless' information he mentions?</b></p>
Basic needs (on residential)	<p>I        How?</p> <p>R        You can say something to me, one way, but you could, like what the exercise earlier, you could record it, and have someone else say it and I could interpret it differently, but it's sending the same message, it's the same view.</p>	<p><u><i>'It's helped me, see other people's views differently'</i></u></p>
Coping with problems in life	<p>[Burps] Pardon me. Yeh.</p> <p>I        Ok, thank you. I've got a couple more questions. Was there anything about this project you haven't liked?</p>	<p><u>Verbatim technique. Suggests that this exercise/element of the project may have been pivotal in him being able to exploring ways of communication/sharing views which had an impact on him.</u></p>
Positive attitudes	<p>R        Not really, not really. No the only problem I've got its more, just, you know, personal things... you know, I'm being a tall guy the beds are too small for me, but you know there's always a flaw. Every</p>	<p>Importance of how things are said and how this can affect him.</p> <p>Experience of a residential project – importance of comfort <u>Describes it as 'personal' – sees it as a different kind of issue to others discussed</u></p>

<p>Relating project to life</p>	<p>problem has it's own solution, you just got to think outside the box. You know, I, I'm, I don't think as problems as a negative thing because if we don't have problems, even if its something simple like, a game wasn't done right on this project or something. You know, that isn't a problem, you know, that is a situation, to get new opinions, get new views. Which is essentially what a problem is you know, you're stuck on something – look at it a different way you'll find an answer. Which is everything in life, that is everything, you know... Lightbulbs not working, you can't reach it, no ladder, well use a chair, use the table, perfect example right there.</p>	<p><u>Goes from describing a problem to talking about outlook on problems in general – trying to deflect from this to not seem like complaining? Also phrase 'always a flaw'</u></p> <p><b><u>Enjoying talking about himself, his views and outlook?</u></b></p> <p><i>'...I, I'm, I...' again hesitation may be from describing himself?</i></p>
<p>Making project relevance to self</p>	<p>I think I get you, thank you. Ok so last question is, what advice would you give to anyone setting up another one of these projects?</p>	<p>Links it to his attitude about this project</p> <p><u>Turning a negative into a positive</u></p>
<p>Important elements of participation</p>	<p>R Go for it, go for it, you're getting, the people you, if you do it right, the people that you bring on to the project will engage if you do it right.</p>	<p><u>Links it to life – way of making meaning of the project, the new experience?</u></p> <p><u>Could be his way of dealing with life, his outlook, the way he sees himself?</u></p> <p><u>These links to an outlook and the project – is this a way of understanding how the experience could be relevant to him?</u></p>
<p>Important elements of participation Role of those running project</p>	<p>I When you say 'do it right' ...? R Like how it is today, you want it to be engaging, you want it</p>	<p>Encouraging (<b>does this question imply that is the kind of response needed?</b>)</p> <p><i>Could show he thinks he does know how to make a good participatory project. 'do it right' ? 'people' – repetition of these two elements – are they most important?</i></p>

What is done vs how it is done in project	to be fun, but you want there to be meaning, you know, you need to have that balance. A lot of teachers, tutors, don't get that balance right and that's one thing	Thinks that people need to engage for the project to work
Meaning of project	I've gotta say has been done well with this course. I feel the balance is right. Between the enjoyment and the actual activities...	What's important for a project to be good, to work, for him: engaging, fun and a balance
Importance of fun	I And the meaning did you say? R Yeh the meaning of the course which is essentially communication you know	There has to be meaning <b><u>Does he think that that balance just come from the people who are running it?</u></b> <i>Choice of words 'teachers' and 'tutors'</i>  <i>Called it a 'course'</i> <i>'Actual activities' – sense that these are different from enjoyment</i>
Feeling/atmosphere of project	I How do you think they got that balance? R Well you had the few little interesting ice-breakers in the morning, you know, its been a joke, not in a horrible way, but its been sooo, there's been so many jokes, that it, it doesn't feel like this is a meeting, this is just feels like a group of people who are just hanging out together to just have a good time and just do a little something on the side. You know, and that is genuinely how I feel it's gone today so far.	<b><u>How did this relate to him though? Does this link back to his earlier point of meaning in listening to others and sharing views?</u></b> <i>Called it a 'course' again</i>  <i><u>Perhaps he thinks the word 'joke' may be taken negatively and tries to counter this – sense of trying to please interviewer?</u></i> <i><u>Sense of fun being an important element for the project working for him</u></i>
Mood of project		How it feels, describing the essence of the day and how it seemed to him Group of people – sense of equality?
Importance of conversations		Doesn't feel like 'work' Describing the feeling of the project as relaxed, enjoyable
Essence of participation	I How do you think that mood was created?	

<p>Project creating change</p> <p>Basic needs and how these are viewed</p> <p>Wanting to please interviewer</p>	<p>R Just a very positive attitude, there's been fun brought into the course, there's been communication, there's been conversations, you know and even that can help bring out the smallest little thing. You just need to know how and I think, which I come back to, it is this project has done that well, it has brought out something in at least one person in upstairs, I'm sure, I'm sure of it.</p> <p>I Is there anything else you'd like to add or anything else you think is important to know</p> <p>R Yeh, make stronger coffee! But seriously, no there's nothing I'd like to add, apart from keep up the good work, you know I wouldn't change anything about how this project is run at the moment so keep it going as it is.</p> <p>I Thank you [name]</p>	<p><u>Did this feeling/atmosphere resonate with him and his lifestyle and outlook specifically or would it work for most other people this way too? Or was this his interpretation of the project because of this outlook?</u></p> <p>Feels the mood was created with a 'positive attitude' and 'fun'</p> <p>Communication Conversations – importance of these. <b>How is he defining conversations?</b></p> <p><u>'You just need to know how' something indescribable about how to create right atmosphere and feeling for PR</u></p> <p><u>Sense of the project helping an opening up again 'it has brought out something in at least one person' (and change?) (/or just the one person and earlier in interview?)</u></p> <p>Saying it has been worthwhile for each participant</p> <p>Again, what is important for people's comfort in residential setting, coffee <u>'But seriously...' – why is coffee not serious, doesn't see his personal preferences or needs as part of the interview or important to it, more like separate?</u></p> <p>Encouraging again – <u>sense of wanting to please, to be positive</u></p> <p>Authoritative tone even – perhaps the question lends itself to this type of answer again.</p>
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Appendix Q

Ethical approval

**School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee**

**NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION**

**For research involving human participants**

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

**REVIEWER: Laura Mcgrath**

**SUPERVISOR: Miles Thomas**

**STUDENT: Felicity Wallace**

**Course:** Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

**Title of proposed study:** What are young people's experiences of participatory project?



## DECISION OPTIONS:


1. **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/examination.
2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but 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 below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): 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.

## DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

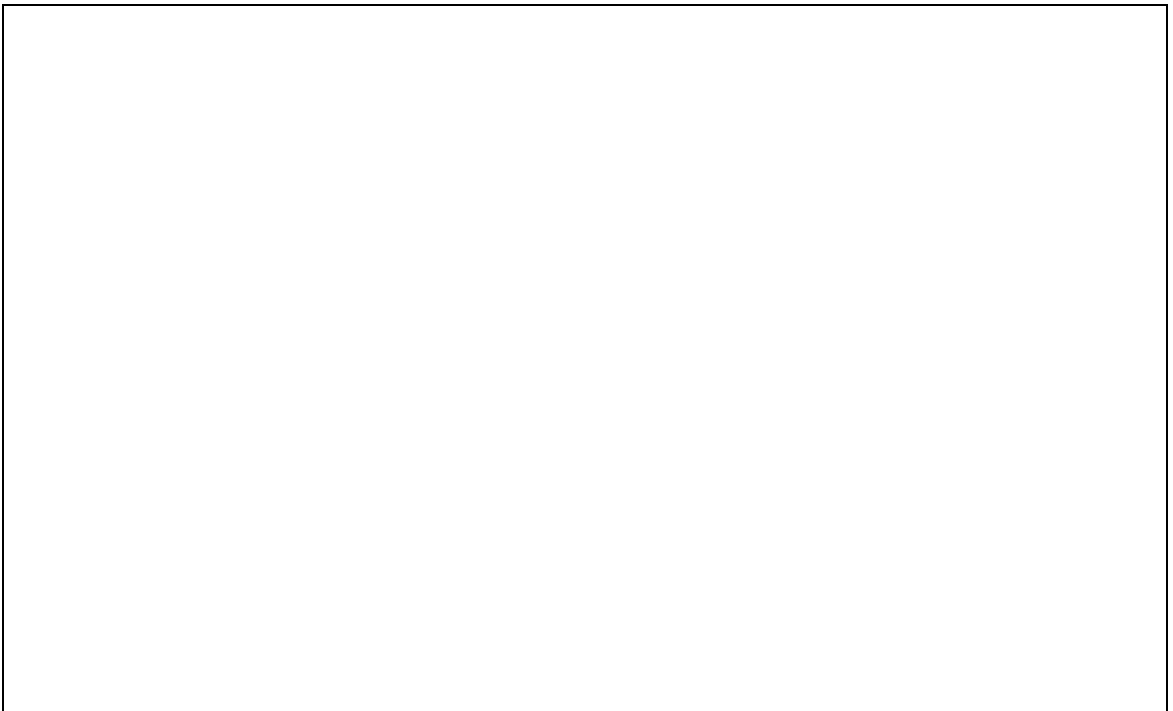
*(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)*

APPROVED

**Minor amendments required** (*for reviewer*):

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for listing minor amendments required for review.

**Major amendments required** (*for reviewer*):

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for listing major amendments required for review.

**Confirmation of making the above minor amendments (for students):**

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name (*Typed name to act as signature*):

Student number:

Date:

*(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)*

**ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER (for reviewer)**

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES / NO

Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

HIGH

Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.

MEDIUM (Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)

LOW

X

**Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).**

**Reviewer** (*Typed name to act as signature*):

Laura McGrath

**Date:** 22/1/2018

*This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research 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 Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

## Appendix R

### Example transcript with initial observations for bracketing

Bracket off initial, most striking observations from the interview:

- Was he trying to please with come up with the ‘right’ answers to ‘help improve the project’, rather than to truly explore what he made of the experience?
- Enjoys talking about topics in a more broader/existential way and that’s what led on to some more generalised musings?
- Previous experiences with the University still a big influencer on how he thought about the project?

Interview 3 – JK, 4.07.18, 10pm

I How has the project been for you so far?

R So far it’s been interesting, I’m still kind of baffled what the whole point is, but I’m slowly getting my head round it. And it’s like I still don’t get why it’s called the V- whatever it’s called-I can’t even pronounce it! I still have no idea what that word even means! But, it, it’s a new experience you know, its opened my mind up to something I said I wouldn’t do again, you know, and its changed my mind as well, you know, before I came here I said I would never re-apply for any University, you know, but, halfway through the day you know I’ve already said, you know, by tomorrow, I’ll have an application form put in. You know, so it’s, its opened my eyes, you know, just being here, you know, its learning something else, which is an added bonus in my opinion.

I Can you say a bit more about you know you said its opened your mind, your eyes?

R Just being here...observing current students, its opened my eyes to life on campus, you know. When like it was said earlier, you say University and you think a big Hogwarts building like Oxford or Cambridge, but if you look around, its nothing like that. You know, you’ve not got rich snobs looking down at you cos you’ve not got the latest sports car you know, its ordinary people that just want to do well in life. You know, that’s what I wanna do, I wanna do well in life.

I Thank you. And you know when you say it changed your mind about applying to University, what has it been that's done that?

R It's just been getting more information, and meeting people who work within the University, you know, who can give me the pointers that I weren't given first time I applied for UEL, you know, so, yeh.

I Ok, thank you. How has it felt, the project, being in the room and sharing?

R No problem at all. No problem at all. I'm used to having someone literally at the same house, near enough at the same time, like with me, you know, I've always got mates coming round to my flat to checking up, check up on me, see how I'm doing, to come round, you know, have a laugh, watch a bit of tv or play playstation with me, you know so being around people, its not a problem. You know, if there there was certain people here that if they weren't here, I wouldn't be here, you know so they also need to take a bit of credit for me being here, you know, but erm... its, it's no honestly, being in a room, no no problem, no problem at all, you know, other people don't phase me, you know, if you're an a-hole, then you will, there will be trouble, naturally, but if you're a nice, if you're a nice enough person to me, I'm a nice enough person to you. I have no problems being with other people.

I How's it felt participating? What's that been like?

R Erm, weirdly enough it's been relaxing. You know, cos, it may sound like er boring day, well it is you know, but most of the time I'm just either asleep, watching movies or tv shows on my phone, or playing on my playstation, you know, that near enough all my day, you know, so to do this, yeh its more energetic, but it's actually relaxing me you know, getting all the stuff I want to forget about, out, letting it out and just bringing in some new.

I What about the day has allowed that to happen?

R Just the fact when I've come in, I've met new people, I've spoken to people I don't even know, which in itself is a reward for me, you know cos I'm not normally a social person. You know, so , there's that and , you know, just doing what we're doing,



its, that change of pace to my normal home life. So, that in its own way is just relaxing me cos its making me feel like, there's something else out there to do, you know, rather than just be bored at home, doing nothing. You know. Which being unemployed is all you really can do, no matter how many jobs you try to apply for. You know, so yeh, but honestly that's, that's it really you know.

I How did you feel about the interviewing bit where there's the interviewing and the recording?

R Nothing, no problems, no problems my end you know. Oo not from you anyway, the only problem was that firework display it was a bit distracting!

I And what about, you know the bit in the sessions, you know where you had to answer the questions, do the interviewing...how was that bit?

R Eye-opening, cos it, it's given me views on other people from what other people see that I wouldn't see you know, I Wouldn't see what some of the people said when we done the recording and that repeating back exercise, I wouldn't of thought of any of what was said, you know, I'm very, my views are my own, you know, I wouldn't try and force my views on anyone and in return I don't want people to force views on me you know, I keep my view alone and ... but to see someone else's, it's, how can I put it, it's refreshing, you know to see that

[plane overhead]

R Yeh so, what was I saying, erm...

I You were saying refreshing...

R Oh yeh, it's refreshing to see other people's views for a change rather than just constantly thinking about mine. You know, I'm, like I said, you keep your views to yourself – I'm more than happy to hear 'em out – just don't expect me to follow them. You know, some some people are anti-gun, I'm pro-gun. You know, some people are anti-drug, anti-marijuana should I say, I'm pro, you know, so it's, I just like hearing the other side of the argument, the other side of the coin, to try and balance out, to try and come to a more informed decision. Yeh. That's me. That's me down to a tee.

I Ah it's really interesting. So if that's kind of what you enjoy, how did that fit in with this project?

R Because I'm, I'm hearing about other people's stories, I'm hearing other people's experiences, I'm hearing other people's thoughts and opinions about a number of different things, which I don't think I would've heard anywhere else, you know, so, not only will this open other people's eyes it's sort of opened my eyes as well to other things that may seem silly to me, but to some people they are serious issues, and it's helped me see that so much clearer than I used to.

I Can you give me an example from today?

R From today, er it was more of a little private chat but yeh basically some things happen to people which are very .. not nice, you know, and it's just some people have it worse than me, some people have it easier than me and I just like to, see where I fit, you know, its, I'd say its opened my eyes, it opened my ears, its opened my mind, and it's opened my heart as well, to other people. You know.

I What do you think it is about you that means you can get all of that out of this sort of thing?

R I don't know, I don't know, I'm... Can you try re-wording the question so I can...

I It's a bit of a weird question isn't it. I was just wondering what it is about you as a person that means you can see other people's points of views, that you can learn from others...

R Well you just said it! It means I can learn from others, just by seeing other people's views you know, I, I, there are some issues that I go for, some I go against, there are people out there that will oppose my views and just being here with a small group of people, who may or may not have you know similar views to me but things they say can really make people think, you know, and I'm a thinker, I like to think about things, you know, I've, reading and thinking are my hobbies, down to a tee. But, erm, you know so coming back to, thinking about how other people work, how other people

see things in the world, its ..it's a learning curve that I enjoy, I want to learn new things, you know, even if from down to pointless information, down to things like you know, I'd love to be able to comprehend the Einstein's theory of relativity, you know, there's ...

I What do you think, thinking about this project, is there anything it has done or hasn't done that helped that learning from others, sharing thing?

R It's helped me, see other people's views differently

I How?

R You can say something to me, one way, but you could, like what the exercise earlier, you could record it, and have someone else say it and I could interpret it differently, but it's sending the same message, it's the same view. (Pardon me) Yeh.

I Ok, thank you. I've got a couple more questions. Was there anything about this project you haven't liked?

R Not really, not really. No the only problem I've got its more, just, you know, personal things... you know, I'm being a tall guy the beds are too small for me, but you know there's always a flaw. Every problem has its own solution, you just got to think outside the box. You know, I, I'm , I don't think as problems as a negative thing because if we don't have problems, even if it's something simple like, a game wasn't done right on this project or something. You know, that isn't a problem, you know, that is a situation, to get new opinions, get new views. Which is essentially what a problem is you know, you're stuck on something – look at it a different way you'll find an answer. Which is everything in life, that is everything, you know... Lightbulbs not working, you can't reach it, no ladder, well use a chair, use the table, perfect example right there.

I I think I get you, thank you. Ok so last question is, what advice would you give to anyone setting up another one of these projects?

R Go for it, go for it, you're getting, the people you, if you do it right, the people that you bring on to the project will engage if you do it right.

I When you say 'do it right' ...

R Like how it is today, you want it to be engaging, you want it to be fun, but you want there to be meaning, you know, you need to have that small group. A lot of teachers, tutors, don't get that balance is right. Between the enjoyment and the actual activities...

I And the meaning did you say?

R Yeh the meaning of the course which is essentially communication you know

I How do you think they got that balance?

R Well you had the few little interesting ice-breakers in the morning, you know, it's been a joke, not in a horrible way, but it's been sooo, there's been so many jokes, that it, it doesn't feel like this is a meeting, this is just feels like a group of people who are just hanging out together to just have a good time and just do a little something on the side. You know, and that is genuinely how I feel it's gone today so far.

I How do you think that mood was created?

R Just a very positive attitude, there's been fun brought into the course, there's been communication, there's been conversations, you know and eve that can help bring out the smallest little thing. You just need to know how and I think, which I come back to, it is this project has done that well, it has brought out something in at least one person in upstairs, I'm sure, I'm sure of it.

I Is there anything else you'd like to add or anything else you think is important to know

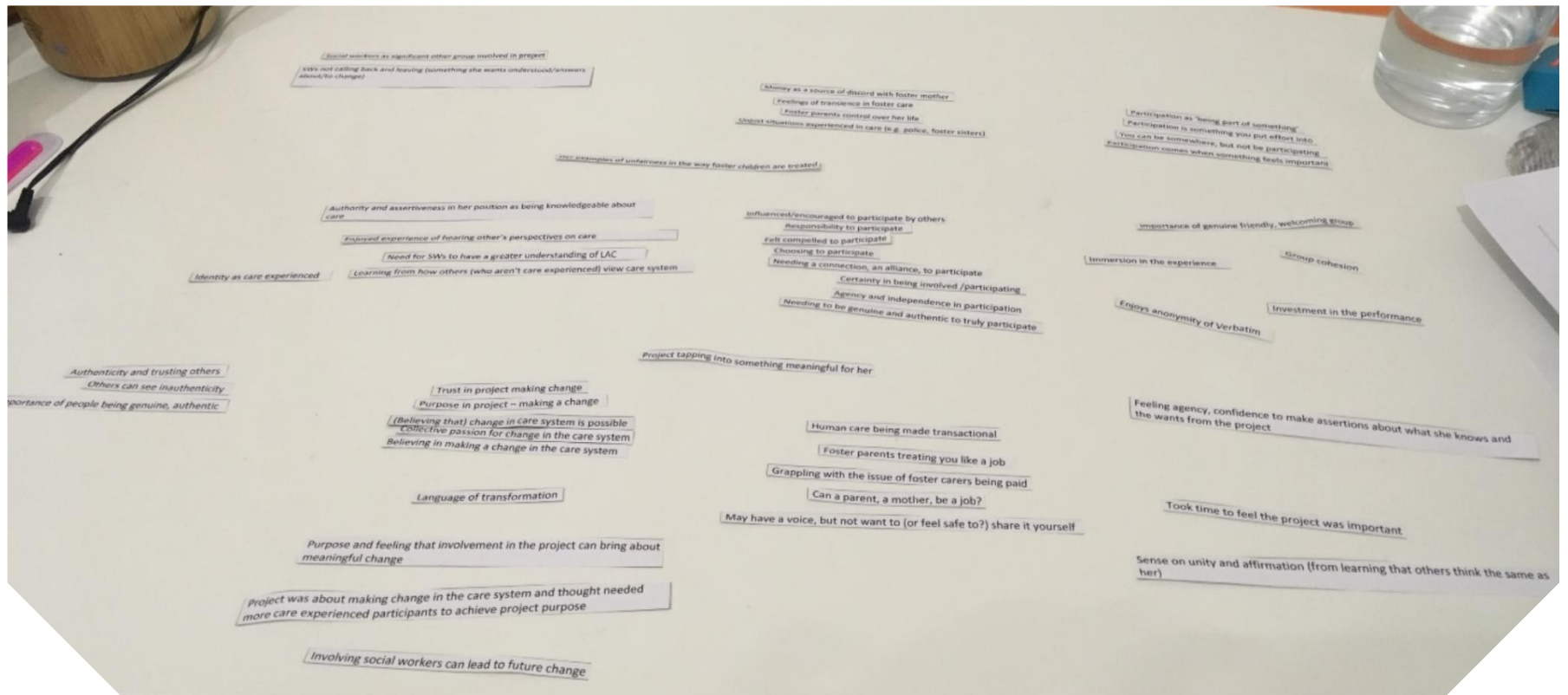
R Yeh, make stronger coffee. [Laugh together] But seriously, no there's nothing I'd like to add, apart from keep up the good work, you know I wouldn't change anything about how this project is run at the moment so keep it going as it is.

I Thank you [name]

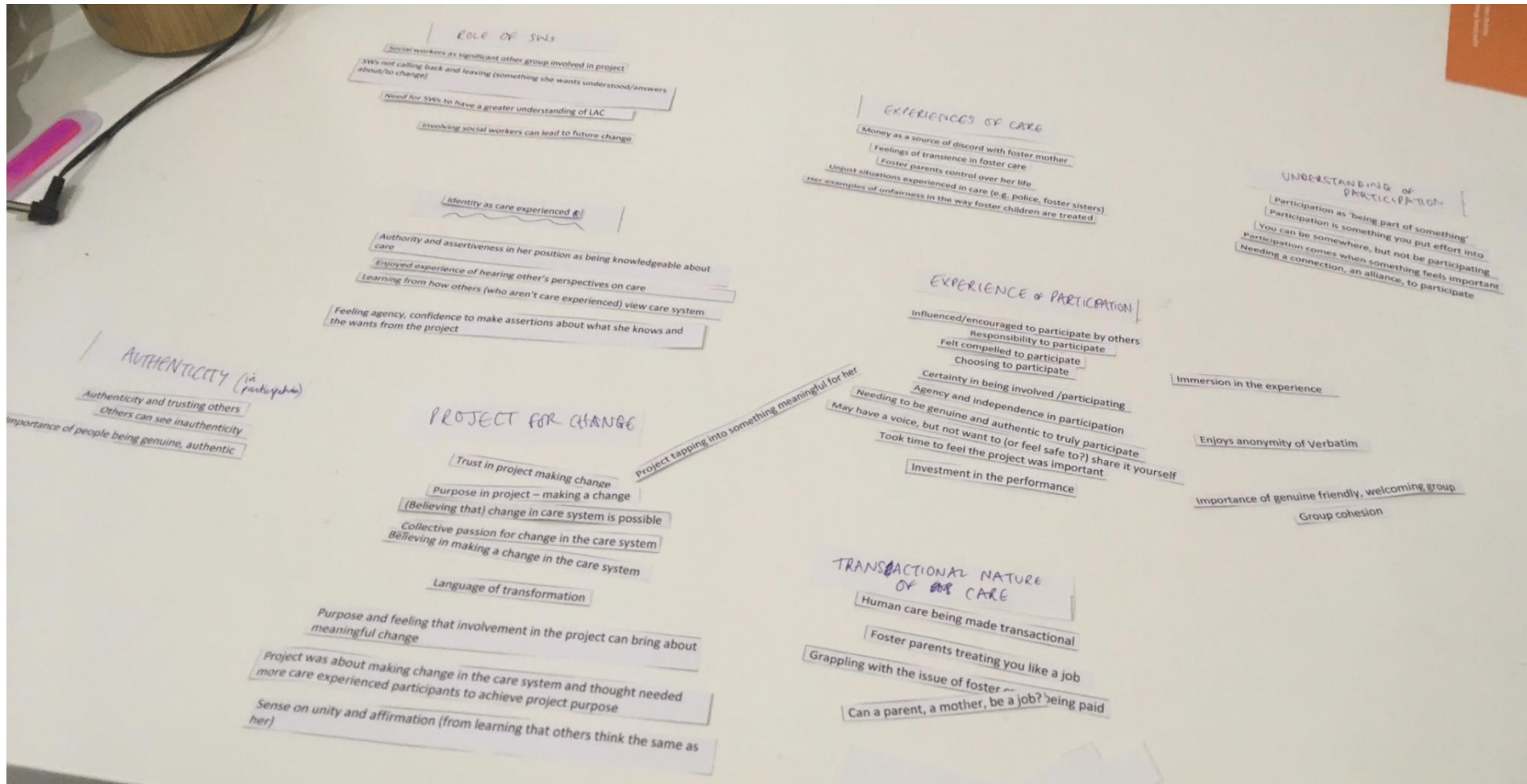
# Appendix S

## Examples of clustering emergent themes

### Stage 1



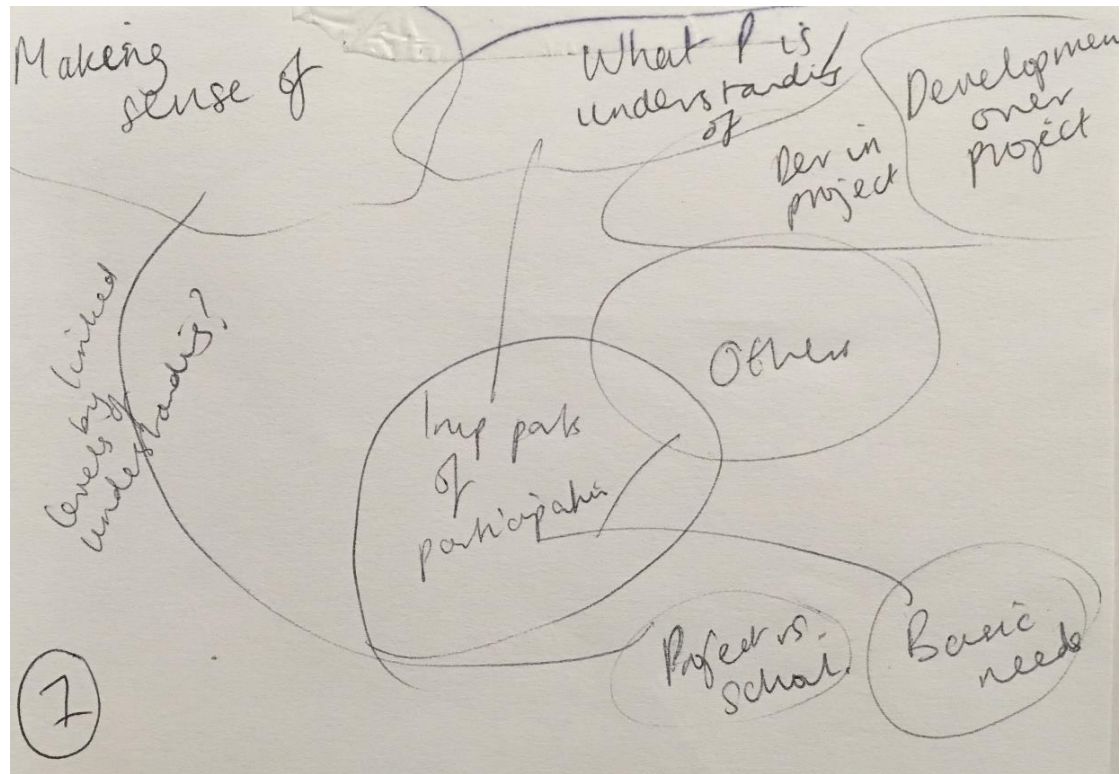
## Stage 2



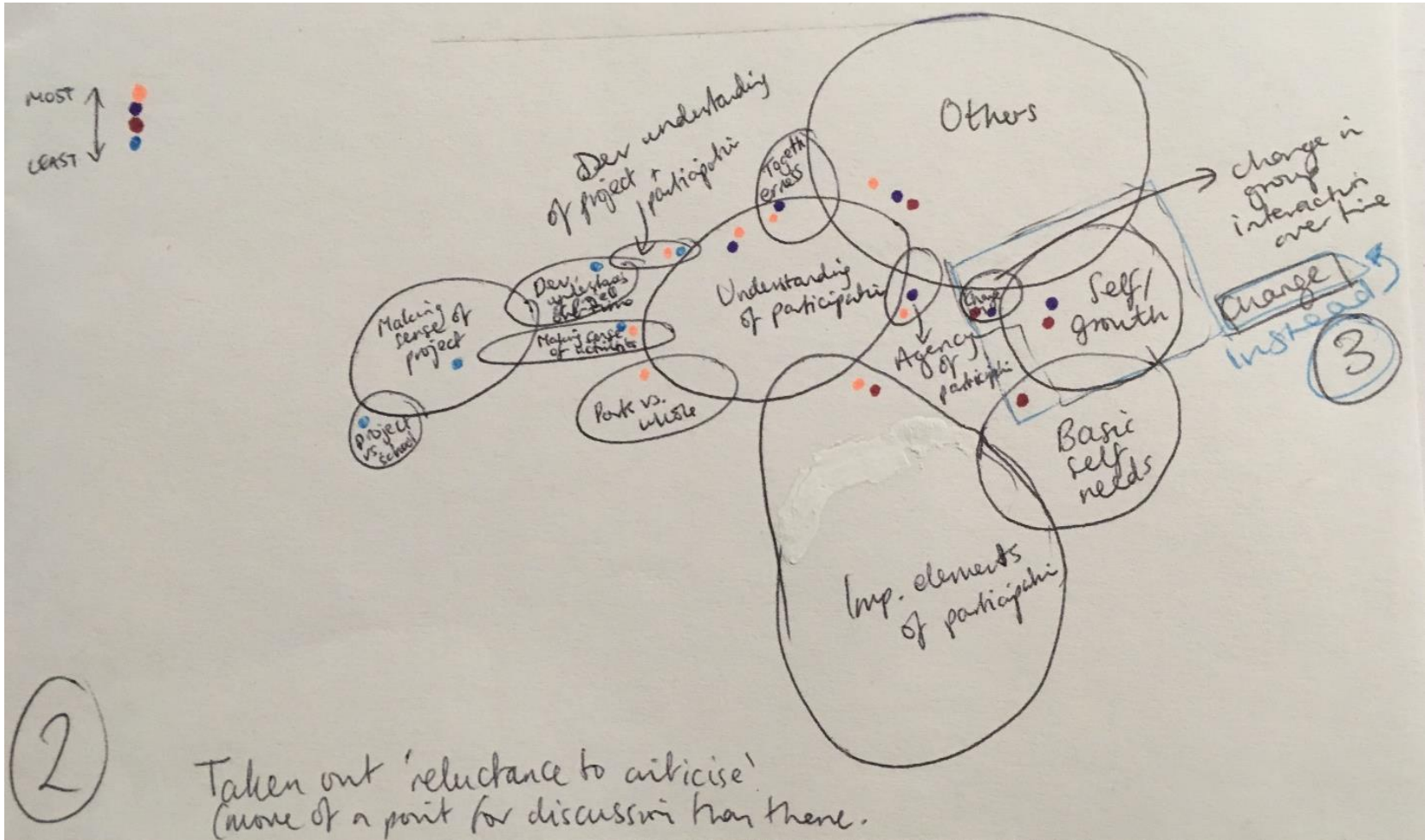
Appendix T

Examples of mapping themes

Stage 1



Stage 2





Appendix U

Table of themes to look for recurrences

<b>Subordinate theme</b>	<b>DK</b>	<b>Yusef</b>	<b>Jay</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>Jacomo</b>	<b>Present in over half?</b>
Understanding of self	Y	N	N	N	Y (identity as care experienced)	N
Exploring how project relates to life	Y	N	N	N	Y (identity as care experienced)	N
Relationships with others	Y	N	Y (connection between people)	Y (perspectives on others)	Y (experience...)	Y
Participating with others	Y	Y (understanding of others)	Y (connection between people)	Y (perspectives on others)	Y (experience...)	Y
Role of those running project	Y	N	Y (differences in groups...)	Y (lead facilitator)	N	N
Basic needs during project	Y	Y	Y (talking about accidents)	Y (Need for physical/active)	N	Y
Views and outlook as identity	Y	N	N	N	Y (identity as care experienced)	N
Understanding of participation	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y

What is important in participation	Y	Y	~	Y	Y (authenticity in participation)	Y
Experience of participation	Y	N	~ (in understanding of participation)	Y (feeling of participation)	Y	Y
Values of participatory research	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
Functions of the project	Y	N	~ (check within)	Y	Y (project for change)	Y
Agency of participation	N	Y	N	Y (choice in participation)	Y (experience...)	Y
Together ness	N	Y	~ (in connection between people)	N	Y (experience...)	Y
Developing understanding of the project	(Y not explicitly)	Y	N	Y (uncertainties)	N	Y
Difficulties with concept of participation	N	Y	N	Y/~ (uncertainties)	~ (took time)	?
Making sense of the project	(Y not explicitly)	Y	N	N/~	~	?
Difficulties making sense of the activities	N	Y	N	N	N	N
Difficulties expressing understanding of the project	N	Y	N	~ (uncertainties)	N	N

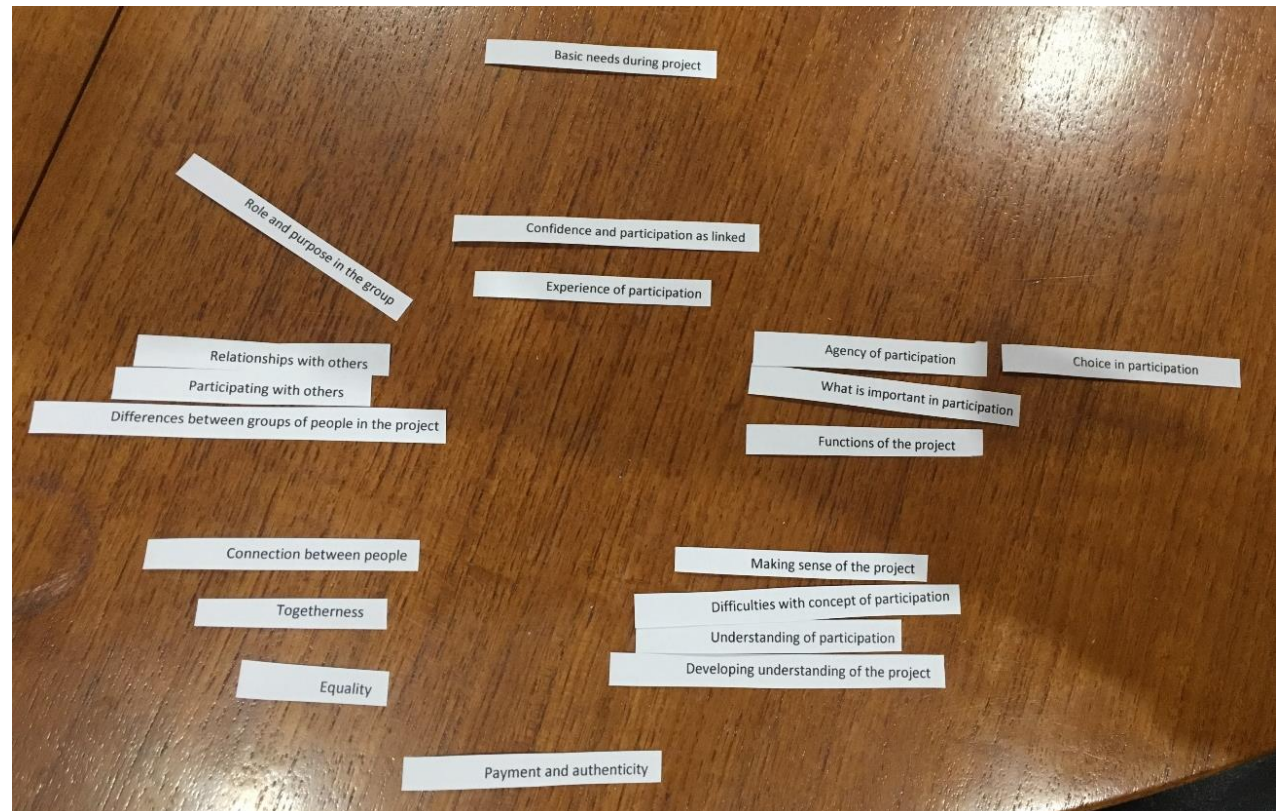
Comparison of project to school – rooted in practicalities	N	Y	N	N	~ (not rooted in practicalities though)	N
Differences between groups of people in the project	N	N	Y	Y (perspectives on others involved)	Y (role of SWs)	Y
Development of project across two days	N	N	Y	N	~	N
Equality	(Y in values)	~	Y	N	N/~	?
Vulnerability in a new situation, with new people	N	N	Y	Y (what project offered/choice in participation)	N	N
Role and purpose in the group	Y (in understanding of self)	~	Y	N	Y (experience of participation)	Y
Confidence and participation as linked	~ (understanding of participation)	~ (check within)	Y	Y (whats important in facilitation/ what project offered)	N	Y
Connection between people	Y	~ (check within)	Y	N	Y (experience of participation)	Y
Lead facilitator	~ (check in role of those running?)	N	N	Y	N	N

What is important in facilitation	N	N	N	Y	N	N
Payment and authenticity	N	N	N	Y	Y (transactional nature of care)	?
Choice in participation	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y (experience of participation)	Y
Experiences of care	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Transactional nature of care	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Role of social workers	N	N	N	N	Y	N

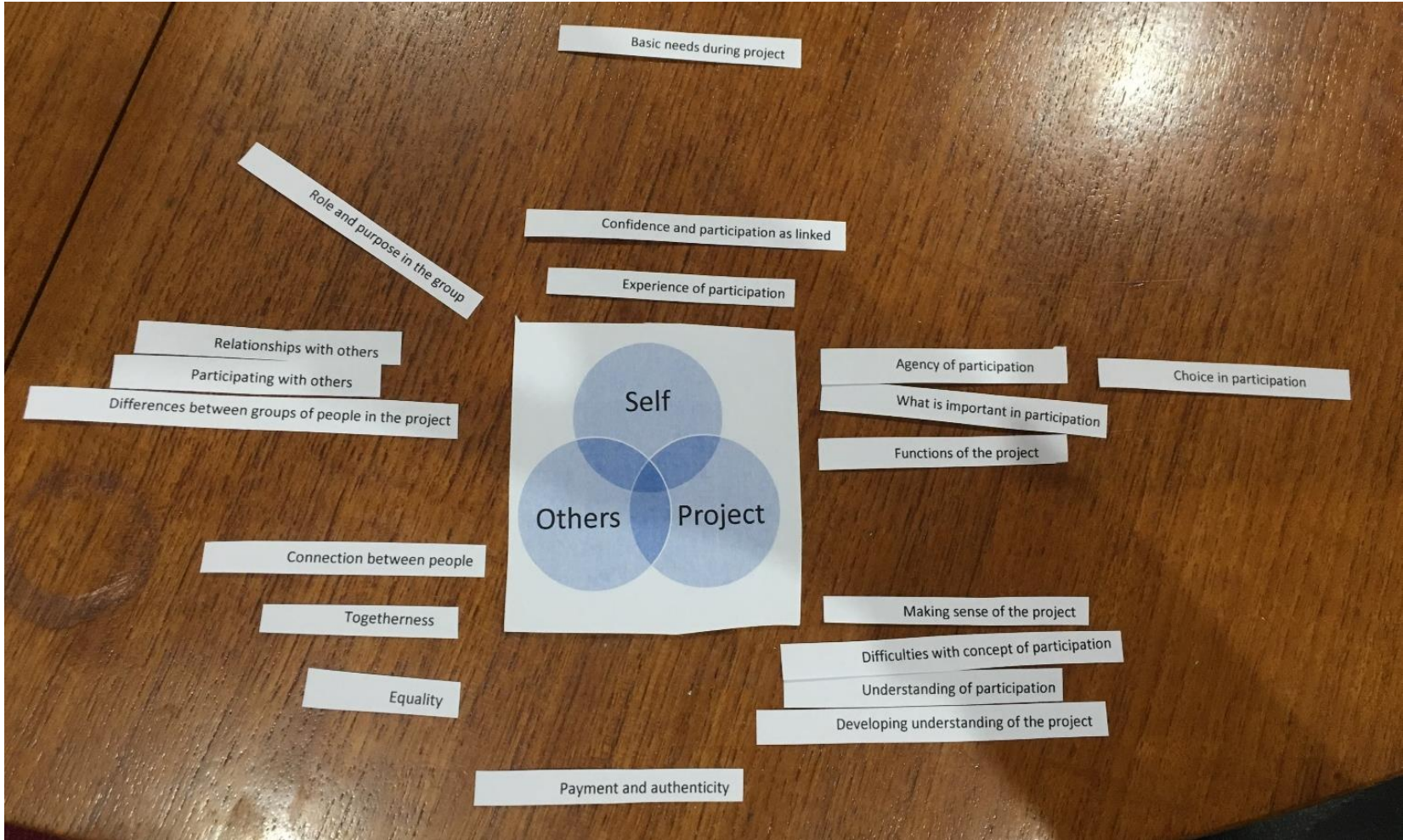
## Appendix V

### Analysis of convergent subordinate themes

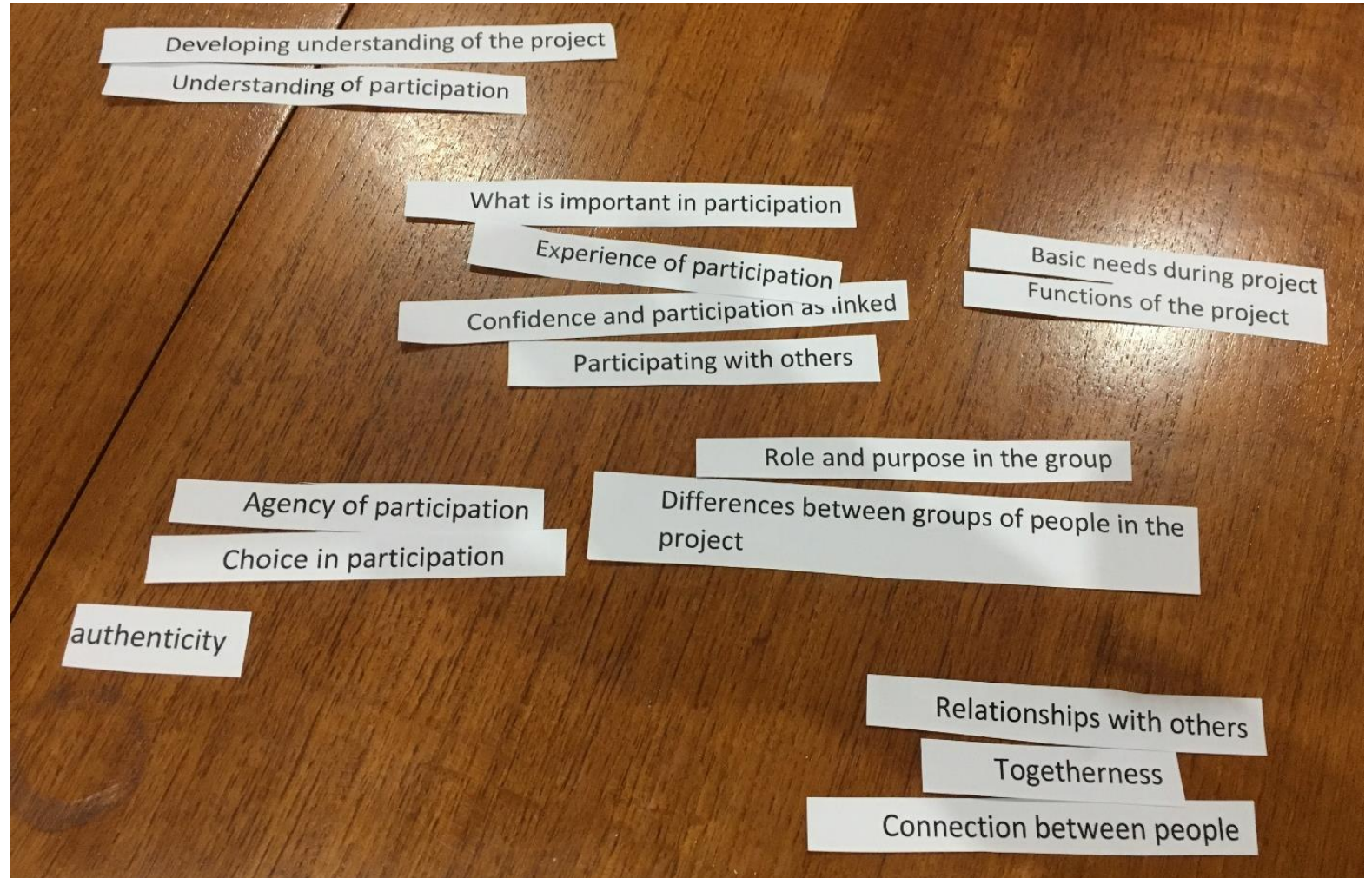
#### Stage 1



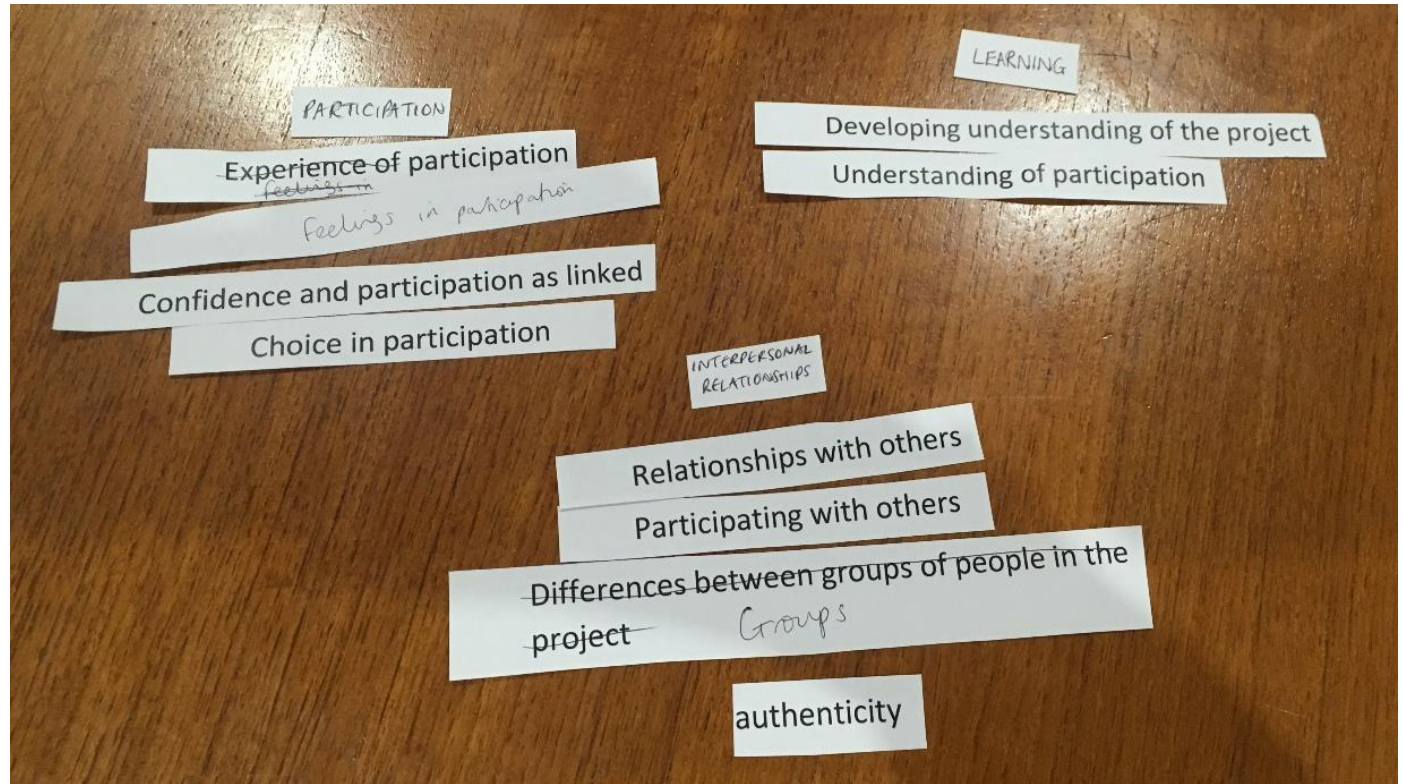
Stage 2



Stage 3



Stage 4





## Appendix W

Final summary list of cross-case superordinate and subordinate themes

### PARTICIPATING

- **Finding meaning in participation** (elements from experience of participation, explicit/implicit, different for each participant)
- **Feelings in participation** (elements from experience of participation, feelings, mood)
- **Confidence and participation** (how these were linked, not prevalent for all participants)
- **Choice in participating** (incorporating ideas from agency in participation)

### LEARNING

- **Developing understanding of the project** (basic needs from project, functions of project, understanding developing over time)
- **Understanding of participation** (also elements from what is important in participation)

### INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- **Relationships with others** (in the project/group and in general, how these are built, how these feel, connection with others)
- **Participating with others** (make clear distinction between this and previous, role and purpose, togetherness)
- **Groups** (differences between groups, age, status, roles, in-group, out-group)
- **Authenticity** (between people and others in project, payment and authenticity)

Appendix X

Example document with evidence for subordinate theme

Subordinate theme – participating with others

Jay

<b><u>Other people</u></b>		
<b>Relationships with others</b>		
Relations with others	1/30	other people don't phase me
Issues around being with others	1/24	No problem at all. No problem at all.
Being with others	1/30	other people don't phase me,/ I have no problems being w
	1/32	other people.
		I just like to, see where I fit, you know
Belonging (x2)	2/79	if you're an a-hole, then you will, there will be trouble, na
Personal barriers to relationships with others	1/31	but if you're a nice, if you're a nice enough person to me, I'm
	1/32	enough person to you
<b>Participating with others</b>		
Unique contribution of others	2/72	I'm hearing other people's thoughts and opinions about a of different things, which I don't think I would've heard anyw else
	2/71	I'm hearing about other peoples stories, I'm hearing other people's experiences, I'm hearing other people's thoughts and opinions

Sharing and listening with others	2/78	some people have it worse than me, some people have it e than me
The sharing of personal experiences/	1/31	a-hole/nice example
Comparison of experiences	2/79	I just like to, see where I fit, ...and it's helped me see that soo much clearer than I used
Equality and respect between people	2/75	its refreshing to see other people's views for a change
Self development	2/63	
Understanding others	2/71	I'm hearing about other peoples stories, I'm hearing other people's experiences, I'm hearing other people's thoughts and opinions about a number of different things, which I don't thi would've heard anywhere else
Others as fundamental to participation	2/54	its given me views on other people from what other people that I wouldn't see  but to see someone else's [views], it's, how can I put it, it' refreshing, you know to see that
Hearing views of others	2/58	. A lot of teachers, tutors, don't get that balance right and one thing I've gotta say has been done well with this course.
Perspectives' of others	3/119	
Learning from others		

<b>Role of those running the project</b>		
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**Yusef**

<p><b>Understanding others in the project</b></p> <p>Exploring differences between adults and YP</p> <p>Distinctions between groups involved in the project ('old people' and 'kids')</p> <p>Thinking about how to make things work between different groups?</p> <p><i>View of adults in project</i></p> <p>Seeing the adults in a positive light</p> <p>Adults were supportive</p> <p>Appreciation of mentor role</p> <p>Feeling welcomed at the beginning</p>	<p>kids are more like, old people can't do it, its cos like too much mov</p> <p>say its good for, certain kids to do it but then at the same time, old didn't do it... I don't even know...</p> <p>Actually I don't even know how they can improve that but... cos you really tell if they're doing it properly or not... I don't even know... Do p do different exercises in the morning, activities, yeh?</p> <p>Erm, to be honest I would say they're both the same, they're all supportive.</p> <p>No...nah I just found the thing, the...the one I don't even know the mentors, they were useful and they were supportive and that</p> <p>When I first came in I felt like I was proper welcomed like, there w food ready and everything, yeh.</p>
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**Jay**

Erm, usually, within like, it takes me a week to get used to people.

Participation means to me where you, means like, when you join in with the group, so you're not sitting there doing nothing,

in with the group, so you're not sitting there doing nothing

you're always within the communication systems with everyone, no matter what, erm, playing games, just being there. It's participating within, your, erm, activity.

**Tim**

<p><b>Lead facilitator (importance of/as key to experience)</b></p> <p>Lead facilitator as key to project and participation</p> <p>Importance of the energy of lead facilitator</p> <p>Lead facilitator enabled interactivity</p> <p>Lead facilitator as who made it comfortable for everyone, and made it enjoyable</p> <p>Lead facilitator made the project feel easy-going, relaxed, and participation easier</p>	<p>um, its been like an eye-opening experience, um, the guy, what's his name?</p> <p>xxxx, he made i- .. his energy made it really good,</p> <p>um, he he made it very interactive with each other</p> <p>and the person hasn't made it like as he hasn't made it comfortable for everyone if that makes sense? Made it more like a chore if that makes sense.</p> <p>the way he like ran ran like the project I think I think it made it a lot more easier, I think, a lot more easy-going</p>
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<p>Lead facilitator and non-judgemental people made it easier to do some activities</p> <p>Able to get involved because of lead facilitator</p>	<p>I dunno I just feel like xxxx just made it a lot more easier I just feel like everyone around which is just very non-judgemental if that makes sense, like I dunno I just found it quite easy-going.</p> <p>the way he like ran ran like the project I think I think it made it a lot more easier, I think, a lot more easy-going</p>
<p><b>What is important in facilitation</b></p> <p>Importance of facilitators and their enthusiasm/approach in projects</p> <p>Importance of the authenticity of facilitators</p> <p>Good facilitation - something unexplainable, a vibe, motivation, enthusiasm</p>	<p>I've done projects before and its not..., I think the people running it haven't been as enthusiastic,</p> <p>like xxxx, he was very, you could tell his heart's in it,</p> <p>it was just everything, it was I think its unexplainable, it was just the vibe he gave off,</p> <p>so I can actually feel that energy with him</p>

**Jacomo**

Its like we all want the same thing.

So it's pressuring but it's also fun

There's lots of pressure because you have to think about it

Yeh, I like how um I can say stuff but then I'm not the one performing it, cos like, I wou-I wouldn't want people to know that I think that because, I don't really like, like the sound of my voice and people just know it's me, so I like that its anonymous.

So then they get to know how we feel and they can make a change because they're not social workers yet.

And people don't like, haven't had experiences in care. But I think we need to include social workers in the project. So cos, they can tell us why they don't always call us back or like, why they're leaving and stuff.

## Appendix Y

### Research diary extracts (in chronological order)

#### **Extract 1: 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

Even just the act of reading about participatory research, its principles, aims, I'm feeling uncomfortable about not using this approach in my own research. I know it's because I wouldn't have enough time, that it wouldn't fit with TVF project that is already planned and that I need to generate novel data for my doctoral requirements... I'll just need to ensure I can align every possible part of the research to the values of participatory research.

#### **Extract 2: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

...still getting my head around the idea of research being my choice and contemplating the best way to collect data...

#### **Extract 3: 13<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

Today I called [Queen Mary University London researcher] from The Verbatim Formula Project to ask about the possibility of a pilot project with one of the other TVF projects that is happening before the UEL project. This triggered an emotional response from me. I felt the way I had phrased the request made it sound selfish, or not in the best interests of the young people (more for me than for them, which I guess it is). I was worrying that I didn't portray myself as embodying the participatory research approach as much as I do.

#### **Extract 4: 4<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

One other thing I noticed was the young people did seem to act differently when the recorder was turned on. I noticed with one, even his voice seemed to change as if he was trying to pronounce words more fully. I of course explained only I would be listening back to these and that I'm recording so that I can remember and have a record of what they said, but this must still influence how this is seen as something different to a normal conversation that we might have had at another point during the day.



Then I wondered, was I acting or speaking differently after the recorder was turned on. Instead of a natural flow of conversation, when the recorder was turned on I did turn in my head to the questions I had learnt and pre-prepared and although they still included unprepared prompt questions and the direction the interview took would be in part guided by the participants, this is still a change in interaction and therefore probably influential.

So if this affect is unavoidable, it is about minimisation and I hope that this came through my explanation about anonymisation (although how easy is this for young people to envision and understand if they've not experienced a research context before?), by saying there is no right or wrong answer and by asking about negative feelings to try and normalise this. This should definitely be taken into account as a limitation though and kept in mind in the findings.

#### **Extract 5: 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

I worried that the young people might have thought of me more as a project evaluator, rather than a researcher. I know I did explain to them, first at the briefing, then at the start of the residential and then before each interview that my research was about something more than that... but the context of evaluation is probably something they're so much more familiar with, makes more sense and fits with the notion of saying which bits you liked and didn't (which came out in most interviews). If so, does this matter? Did it prevent the 'going deeper' that I hoped to achieve through IPA interviews?

I think it could have done. Perhaps this could be prevented if interviews happened after the project, or if there was a second interview after the project. Or if participatory research was talked about more explicitly by the lead facilitator as had been planned.

Or is what I'm doing some form or interpretation of evaluation anyway and what that word means?

### **Extract 6: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

During the first game I had noticed that Yusef seemed to want to take a lead naturally and also appeared keen to win. I wondered if in the next game he was then uncomfortable to be paired with a particular adult who seemed unable to follow or understand the rules. Or if because lots of pairs weren't following the rules exactly and weren't getting noticed/pulled up for it maybe this made him uncomfortable? I wonder how I would have interpreted this comment if I hadn't been present at the game? I probably wouldn't have been able to read into it as much. But does this also mean I'm putting more weight on my interpretation? I could see it as triangulation to further justify the interpretation. Either way, it is important that it is recognised. Something to follow up with him specifically in feedback?