A Heuristic Inquiry exploring the experience of Inclusive Student Voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education.

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Declaration

The work presented in this thesis is original, except where explicitly quoted, cited and referenced. No part of this work has been submitted for any other academic degree and/or at any other university other than the PGCert in Research Methods in preparation for this PhD, an expectation of the course.

As a diverse learner, software has been used to support my spelling, grammar and punctuation as part of my entitlement to extra support. However, the software tends to use American spelling or make inaccurate corrections. My supervisors have advised me to write this additional declaration to ensure external examiners and other readers are aware of this.

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Thank you also to all the co-researchers who took the time to take part in this work. I am forever grateful for your involvement and bravery in using your voice to tell me your story.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for understanding when this work took priority over our time together. I appreciate the patience and kindness that you have shown me. A special thanks would need to go to my two children: Tyler and Rory, because I would not have achieved this award without the sacrifices we made as a family.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all diverse students in education and to my two children, Tyler and Rory. I hope you find your voice and dare to be authentic. May you always be surrounded by those who encourage you, inspire you and respect you.

Abstract

Higher Education institutions within the United Kingdom endeavour to gather the student voice using a variety of partnership and non-partnership approaches, such as surveys, student representatives, and student co-creation projects, to improve Higher Education practice. However, challenges can arise when including diverse learners, particularly in relation to power and hierarchy. Using heuristic inquiry, this research explores and conceptualises an approach for inclusive student voice, as without voice, there is no inclusion of diverse students. A strategy is proposed by utilising the researcher's own past experiences of voice in various educational institutions and by using introspection to guide the exploration of literature. The research involved an analysis of 14 individual conversational interviews with nine co-researchers, who shared their experiences of student voice in Higher Education. Their expertise is used to conceptualise an inclusive student voice approach in Higher Education.

The findings of this research elicited five key themes: these are: (1) Establishing a trauma-informed safe-space to regulate emotions, (2) implement trauma-informed practice to remove judgement, (3) embracing understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction, (4) removing fear by humanising those in positions of power and, (5) providing an environment to enable choice and autonomy. These themes illuminate the diverse needs of learners and students' experiences in using their voice, particularly in relation to the challenges experienced in childhood. It was found that co-researchers would use silence to mask their voice as a coping mechanism. Co-researchers expressed the desire to

cease masking their voice through undertaking individuation healing to become more self-authored and authentic within student voice approaches. To achieve this, co-researchers further desired a safe environment in which their tutors utilised person-centred approaches within Trauma-informed Higher Education institutions. The findings also suggested that all stakeholders could utilise the new Universal Design for Learning framework within their practice to improve inclusive practice for all students. This research also yielded unanticipated transformational findings for me, particularly regarding my own healing and finding my voice.

Implications for Higher Education include the opportunity to become a safe space where diverse students can learn, heal, and self-develop. However, practicalities regarding funding, training, and tutors' time capacity may present a challenge in the current economic climate. However, if Higher Education institutions continue to widen access to diverse students, then the inclusion of students' voices is a moral duty that needs to take priority.

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(Source: Author, 2025, for inclusion in this thesis)

List of acronyms, abbreviations and glossary

Abbreviations	Term	Description
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	A condition in which a person struggles to maintain concentration through inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity (NHS, 2021a)
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy	CBT involves highlighting the negative thought patterns that a person might have, the ways this impacts the person's feelings and behaviours, to encourage change in the way someone thinks about themselves (Blagys & Hilsenroth, 2002)
DES	Department for Education and Science	A government department responsible for education and science
DfBIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	A government department responsible for business and skills.
DfES	Department for Education and Skills	A government department responsible for education and skills
DLN	Diverse Learner Needs	This term includes (but is not limited to) students who consider themselves non-traditional, with/without a language difference, experiencing social/cultural differences, and mature students with or without parental or financial responsibilities (Samuels-Peretz & Powers, 2014).
FE	Further Education	Post-16 institutions that do not include universities
HE	Higher Education	This term refers to university education.
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England	Non-departmental body that is responsible for distributing funding to post-16 institutions.

HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency	Collects and distributes statistical data from universities.
HI	Heuristic Inquiry	A qualitative methodology created by Moustakas (1990)
ISV	Inclusive Student Voice	A term created in this work to describe the collection of student voice by using inclusive methods and/or approaches.
KIS	Key Information Sets	Key information collected from universities.
NHS	National Health Service	The UK's health service.
NSS	National Student Survey	Surveys that gather the students' views regarding their university education.
OfS	Office for Students	An independent body responsible for regulating universities
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder	The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2024) specifies that PTSD involves re-living a traumatising experience in our thoughts, leading to avoidance of similar situations in which trauma was felt.
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency	The Agency responsible for ensuring quality education is provided in universities (National Committee of Inquiry, 1997)
SR	Student representative	Student spokespersons, known as student representatives who compile the collective experience of the student cohort and feed the information to staff members during designated committee meetings (Carey, 2013a; Carey, 2013b; Young & Jerome, 2020)
SSS	Student Satisfaction Survey	Surveys that gather the students' views regarding their university education.

SV	Student Voice	The practice of obtaining students' views to improve practice (Seale, 2016)
TiP	Trauma-informed practice	To be aware of how trauma impacts students, their symptomology, the potential for 're-traumatisation' of students, and actively providing opportunities for students to heal from their trauma (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2014, p. 9).
USDHHS	United States Department of Health and Human Services	A government department in America who are responsible for the health of its citizens.
WHO	World Health Organisation	A worldwide organisation responsible for the health of the world.
WP	Widening participation	'Widening participation' is a term used in HE policies to describe the "access and participation of underrepresented groups" (Office for Students, OfS, 2021, p. 5).

(Source: Author, 2025, for inclusion in this thesis)

Co-researcher pseudonym names

PS	Co-researcher one
PA	Co-researcher two
RI	Co-researcher three
JA	Co-researcher four
LO	Co-researcher five
GR	Co-researcher six
BA	Co-researcher seven
SU	Co-researcher eight
RU	Co-researcher nine

(Source: Author, 2025, for inclusion in this thesis)

Chapter one: Introducing the journey to this Ph.D. project.

> "I have heard, stories that told me that my voice didn't matter, that I shouldn't rock the boat … I write to claim my voice and my space and my self" (Jones, 2009, p. 303).

Note to readers:

The contents of this thesis have been written up for publication (see Kennett, 2025) and for the PGCert in Research Methods, which formed part of my progression into the PhD.

Introduction

This chapter introduces the PhD, providing an overview of how I arrived at the concept of exploring Inclusive Student Voice (ISV) for diverse learners and the chosen approaches. The term 'Diverse Learner Needs' (DLN), as it relates to this research, is defined and justified later in this chapter. The 'initial engagement' phase, as labelled by the chosen Heuristic Inquiry (HI) methodology (Moustakas, 1990) (defined below), will provide an initial overview of the concerns that this research seeks to explicate and understand. This present time will incorporate a critical, historical, and contextual discussion of widening participation, an agenda that has enabled students with DLN to enter Higher Education

(HE). Academic literature will also be used to provide a contextualisation of student voice (SV), an agenda that has led HE to gather the opinions of students.

The initial engagement (Moustakas, 1990) is followed by a critique of SV processes in relation to students with DLN to arrive at the problem. The researcher's positionality will be explained in the sub-section labelled 'identifying with the focus of inquiry' as advised by the methodology (Moustakas, 1990). The positionality sub-section will focus on the ways my own experiences have led me to the research topic. The chapter will then explain the approaches and methods used in relation to the theoretical orientation and philosophical approaches which provide the basis for this research. I will also identify the impact that this research could potentially have on myself, other students, and HE. The chapter will conclude by providing a thesis structure that helps the reader navigate through the thesis, using key literature to support the structure that I have chosen.

As the Introduction Chapter is the first, I have explained the structure for this chapter above. However, to clarify, I have chosen to include Moustakas (1990) Heuristic Inquiry, as this methodology allows the researcher to draw on their own experiences within the topic of inquiry. I am a university student with DLN and wish to utilise my experiences and those of other students with DLN to conceptualise Inclusive Student Voice (ISV) within student voice approaches. Moustakas (1990) states that the introduction should explore the topic's underlying issues in relation to how the problem occurred to the researcher. I will complete this by studying the accessibility of the university process, including the concept of widening participation, Student Voice (SV), and the associated critiques of these

processes. Autobiographical accounts are permitted to be explored in relation to the topic of inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) and the impact of new knowledge on myself, others, and HE as an institution will also be identified. Moustakas (1990) also states that the introduction should include the research questions and an explanation of terms. To that end, the introduction will begin by defining the term 'Diverse Learner Needs.'

Defining 'Diverse Learner Needs'

As stated above, I will begin this chapter by first defining terms that have been used to conceptualise a group of students in HE who need extra support. I will use academic literature and my own reflections to justify my choice for using the term 'Diverse Learner Needs.'

This research is concerned with how individuals with DLN are understood and included in SV processes within HE. In undertaking this research, I was cautious about using terminology that I felt positioned students into categories based on their diverse needs. This is because I have multiple DLNs that have impacted my voice, and I have often felt excluded by being placed into one sub-category that does not fully explain my experience. The 'positionality of the researcher,' that is, how my position "stands in relation to 'the other'" (Merriam *et al*., 2001, p. 411) (co-researchers'), will provide more information on my experiences. The transparency of my position will highlight to the reader (and co-researchers) the ways that I identify and my motivations for conducting this study

(Bourke, 2014), such as having a personal experience of exclusion. One way the experience of exclusion can be felt is by using existing terminologies. For instance, one collective term used to describe students with diverse needs is the 'widening participation category' (Krutkowski, 2017, p. 227).

'Widening participation' (WP) is a term used in HE policies to describe the "access and participation of underrepresented groups" (Office for Students, OfS, 2021, p. 5). Group identities included in the 'underrepresented' category are, but are not limited to, students from ethnic minorities, mature students, students on low incomes, students who are carers, and students with disabilities (OfS, 2021, pp. 21 – 22). The process of WP involved the Government undertaking strategies to identify and provide activities for eligible students, encouraging them to enrol in HE to improve their employment opportunities (Krutkowski, 2017; Rizzica, 2020). To ensure WP occurred, HE institutions were incentivised through funding and the gathering of statistics by way of the Dearing (National Committee of Inquiry, 1997) and Kennedy (1997) reports. These reports led to policies aimed at highlighting that WP was occurring (Hoare & Johnston, 2011; OfS, 2021; Rizzica, 2020). A more in-depth historical account of policy developments is outlined below in the 'initial engagement' sub-section. However, in terms of inclusion, I feel excluded by these statistics, which only position me in one category, such as a mature student, without considering my multiple characteristics. I believe that the term Diverse Learner Needs (DLN) acknowledges the complexity of students' identities.

Although WP has made steps towards increasing diverse students' awareness and confidence in attending HE (Rizzica, 2020), the Government's agenda only sought to provide activities to encourage students to attend HE (such as open days, outreach visits to schools/colleges and information evenings) but failed to collect statistics in relation to students' attendance at these activities (Hoare & Johnston, 2011). Furthermore, events do little in relation to predicting students' cognitive abilities to succeed at the degree level, students' motivation, students' financial constraints and/or matters relating to the home (Hoare & Johnston, 2011; Rizzica, 2020). Krutkowski (2017, p. 227) suggests there is continued favouritism in HE towards students who sit outside the 'widening participation category'. Therefore, it can be argued that HE has yet to understand the complexity of diverse students' experiences, rendering the ability to participate as the student's fault rather than considering the oppressive university culture to be problematic (Gibson, 2015; Groenewald & le Roux, 2023) and the emancipatory benefits of SV (Groenewald & le Roux, 2023). This research wishes to explore the suitability of university environments in relation to SV once diverse students have successfully enrolled into HE.

An additional term used to describe DLN students is 'underrepresented,' as used by the Office for Students (OFS) (2021, p. 21 – 22). This term also provokes a focus on deficits and the weaknesses associated with others who are positioned within this collective term without considering changing the educational environment (see Harrison & Waller, 2018; Krutkowski, 2017). The term 'underrepresented' reflects a "pathological orientation of thought" that collectively attributes blame to groups of people considered outside the

norm of the general population and who require “treatment” from outside sources (Shyman, 2016, p. 38); in this case, such treatment is prescribed as education and is administered by the teacher (Shyman, 2016). However, students are much more diverse than being labelled as one category, and this has led me to discover the term ‘intersectionality’ as defined below, whereby all intersectional characteristics are recognised holistically (Crenshaw, 1989).

The term ‘intersectionality’ recognises that students are not just disadvantaged because of one identifying characteristic, such as race or class, but because of the student’s multiple intersecting characteristics, such as race and class, which produce a new kind of disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1989). For example, when I attended mainstream education, my identity had always been a student from a low-income family struggling with undiagnosed disabilities. This commonly experienced intersection of characteristics impacts pupils because they are given less support to perform at school based on the convergence of two identities (Holt *et al*., 2019). This could be because social class is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, and therefore, schools and HE do not have to supply students with additional support for the intersection of class and disabilities. A further in-depth exploration of my intersectional characteristics can be found in the positionality of the researcher sub-section below and throughout Chapter Two (Self-search, defined below), as I come to understand the impact of my own intersectional characteristics on the nature of my voice.

Rather than reducing students to a singular collective category, this research will consider the role that Crenshaw's (1989) 'intersectionality' plays in impacting students' voices. In recognising students' multiple characteristics, I feel more compelled to use the term DLN to explain the diversity of students' characteristics attending HE. The term DLN might include, (but is not limited to) students who consider themselves as non-traditional (cognitive and/or physical disabilities); with/without a language difference (such as a language delay or English as an additional language); experiencing social/emotional/cultural differences; social class, and mature students with or without parental or financial responsibilities (Gronseth *et al*., 2021; Samuels-Peretz & Powers, 2014). It was helpful to move away from categorising students' separate characteristics into one singular term that is often assigned by others (Shyman, 2016), enabling students to have a voice in self-identifying and exploring their own intersectional characteristics. Self-identification opens options for students who might feel as though they have more than one DLN, one that others have not considered or one that evolves.

Although the study was open to all genders, the co-researchers who came forward to be interviewed in this study were mostly women (eight out of the nine co-researchers). Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to explore the connection between voice and gender through the lens of feminist theory. Traditional feminism is a social movement that advocates for the equality of women (Hooks, 2000). In university, Hooks (2000, p. 13) observed that women "spoke less ... you could hardly hear what they were saying. Their voices lacked strength and confidence". In terms of countering oppression,

Hooks (2000) insisted that women's voices could be used to communicate their oppressed experiences.

However, traditional definitions of feminism have been critiqued for being solely focused on women (Hooks, 1984; 2000) and 'intersectionality' being solely centred on Black women (Carbado *et al*., 2013).

One strand of feminism has evolved to define itself as the removal of oppression for all marginalised groups, while acknowledging the issues of power at different and multiple intersections, such as race, gender, nationality, disability, sexuality, and class (Butler, 2004; 2006; 2016; Carbado *et al*., 2013; Hooks, 2000). For instance, women can be oppressed by men, leading them to silence themselves or to be silenced, as found in both America (Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Vaccaro, 2017) and the UK (Luke, 1994) higher education systems. Males who find themselves in lower sets in British secondary schools may also use silence as a mask (Hanna, 2021), although in general, males are more talkative than females in education (Hooks, 1994). Mazzei (2011, p. 661) states that students of colour are silenced by White educators who do not observe their own positionality and privilege. Students who have a disability or learning difference can also be silenced in university through ablism (Leonhardt, 2024). Students who are non-White and working-class are more likely to experience challenges related to conformity, silence and talking often influenced by power (Hooks, 1994), as found in a UK secondary school context (Jaworski & Sahdev, 1998). White undergraduate women attending an American university may be silenced through other characteristics, but are unlikely to discuss their silencing because

they considered their oppressive experiences as less important compared to Black undergraduate women's experiences (Vaccaro, 2017). Therefore, the "intersectionality" of more than one diverse characteristic (Crenshaw, 1989) can lead to a more pronounced silence (Hooks, 1994; Vaccaro, 2017).

As my own (and my co-researchers') multiple characteristics will be explored in relation to the impact on our student voice, such as nationality, gender, disability, age, and sexuality, I will utilise this contemporary feminist (Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004a) theoretical orientation for this research. I have outlined the specific feminist approach that I will be using in the theoretical orientation section under the sub-heading "Feminist Standpoint Theory and Intersectionality" (as identified on p. 40).

The following Self-search Chapter (Chapter Two - defined below) explores the impact that my self-identifying characteristics have had on my voice throughout tertiary education, college and HE. This self-knowledge will increase my understanding of the co-researcher's experiences in relation to their identities.

Initial engagement: Identifying with the focus of inquiry.

The 'initial engagement' phase, as defined by Moustakas (1990), allows the researcher to immerse oneself in the topic of inquiry to identify a problem, question, and/or gap that, if studied, will drive new knowledge. All HI phases and core processes can be used with a degree of flexibility, meaning that there is no strict framework to follow (Sultan, 2019).

This research will attempt to minimise potential reader confusion by highlighting when and how a phase or core process is being used. The initial engagement phase, used here in the introduction, will outline the development of Widening Participation (WP) in relation to increasing the number of students with DLN into HE and will later outline the way WP has led to the gathering of the SV. Through critiquing WP and SV, a problem will be illuminated that illustrates that DLN students can be excluded from SV processes in HE and that inclusive student voice (ISV) has yet to be realised (Cook-Sather, 2022; Lygo-Baker *et al*., 2019; McLeod, 2011). HE has yet to understand the experience of students with DLN in relation to the inclusion of students' learner voice and how students with DLN utilise their voice (McLeod, 2011). The initial engagement phase will begin by contextualising the historical developments of WP to increase access to HE for diverse students.

Widening participation in Higher Education: Setting the scene of the problem

It could be argued that between the 1950's – 1960's, HE was designed to potentially exclude the vast majority of students, such that only one in every 20 students, mostly white males from wealthy families attended a HE institution (see Novak & Bracken, 2019; Hurst, 2012; Lathe, 2018; Tomlinson, 2005; Vignoles & Murray, 2016). This disparity in gender and class, as discussed in the literature (see Novak and Bracken, 2019; Hurst, 2012; Lathe, 2018; Vignoles & Murray, 2016), was a contributing factor that led to the Robbins Report in 1963 which stated that "higher education should be available for all those who

are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so" (Committee on Higher Education, 1963, p. 8). The report also stated that the United Kingdom would not be able to economically compete with other international countries without progressing towards equality in HE (Committee on Higher Education, 1963, pp. 8-10). The 'guiding principles' of the Robbins report also included "the recognition of individuals' achievement" rather than only accounting for "the status of institutions" that students previously attended; the "opportunities to transfer" between institutions; and the 'freedom' for institutions to make their own decisions whilst maintaining high standards of education (Committee on Higher Education, 1963, pp. 8 - 10). However, these principles were delayed until the 1990s because universities were not big enough to manage an increased intake of students, nor did universities want to lose their control over existing policies (Scott, 2014).

Two further reports, published in the 1990s, pushed the principles of the Robbins report (Committee on Higher Education, 1963): the Dearing report (National Committee of Inquiry, 1997) and the Kennedy (1997) report. The Dearing report (National Committee of Inquiry, 1997) remained concerned with international economic competition. Although improvements had been made to the number of students attending HE (including an increase in mature students, women from middle-class backgrounds and men from lower socio-economic groups), the report continued to insist that the sector had a 'moral obligation' to allow more students to attend HE after finding that the students' location continued to directly impact on whether the students attended or not (National

Committee of Inquiry, 1997, p. 102). The report stated that HE should "demonstrate a commitment to widening participation" for 'underrepresented' groups (National Committee of Inquiry, 1997, pp. 106 - 107). It also stated that whilst this is an objective for HE, it noted that pupils' prior achievement is pivotal to academic success (National Committee of Inquiry, 1997). The Dearing Report led to the creation of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to ensure quality education is provided as the number of diverse students increased (National Committee of Inquiry, 1997). This is when there is a policy reorientation away from the traditionally held notion of institutional autonomy towards institutional competition, leading many institutions to introduce student evaluation forms that can be used to monitor students' perspectives and to market themselves accordingly (Tapper & Salter, 1998).

Access to HE now began shifting away from the notion of "entitlement based on prior school attainment" in privileged schools towards students engaging in 'competition' for university places based on students' academic outcomes (Hoare & Johnston, 2011p. 23). Gorard *et al*. (2006) states that exam performance in school/college was related to whether Widening Participation (WP) was successful in students progressing into HE. However, colleges and schools were also coming under critical commentary, with the Kennedy report (1997) stating that places in further education (FE) had increased for some. However, the idea of widening the intake of students from various 'underrepresented' groups, such as women, students of colour, students with disabilities, and working-class students, was still inadequate (Kennedy, 1997). A report stated that

competition to enrol successful students in FE was contributing to this inadequacy because students succeeding with high qualifications enabled the FE institution to receive extra funding (awarded based on grade results), turning FE into a business focused on economic profit (Further Education Funding Council, 1997, p.3). The report concluded that due to persistent inequalities, FE "must widen participation not simply increase it" (Kennedy, 1997, p. 15).

The WP agenda has increased attendance of diverse students in FE and HE during the 1990s, but they remained underrepresented compared to those from more privileged backgrounds (Blanden & Machin, 2004; Tomlinson, 2005). Furthermore, WP has also led to an increasing divide of students' characteristics between pre-1992 universities, which often enrolled more middle-class students, and post-1992 universities, which often enrolled more students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Blanden & Machin, 2004; Power *et al*., 2003; Reay *et al*., 2010; Sutton Trust, 2000). Middle-class students still received much more support and displayed more confidence compared to poorer students who had "to develop strategies to cope to survive" (Crozier *et al*., 2008, p. 174). This shows that WP strategies for accessing HE were somewhat inadequate in supporting diverse students and that equal attention needs to be given to the experiences of diverse students once enrolled in university (Crozier *et al*., 2008).

This brings this discussion to the 2000's, when a documentation entitled 'Widening Participation in Higher Education' (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2003a), argued that WP in all educational settings should include four areas of support for

disadvantaged students, “attainment, aspirations, applications and admissions” (DfES, 2003a, p. 2) to encourage “fair access and equality of opportunity” (DfES, 2003a, p. 6). In the same year, the same department recognised that HE was under threat of ‘decline’, potentially having an impact on the United Kingdom’s economy (DfES, 2003b). To encourage sustainability of HE, the DfES (2003b) proposed increasing funding for institutions; funding for poorer students (who would now be able to defer their tuition fees); introducing foundation degrees, an AimHigher initiative (that builds links between all educational settings across the age ranges); an Access Regulator (to regulate the accessibility of students to HE); and the provision of information (to potential students through a published annual student survey).

The Higher Education Act 2004 followed, introducing student loans that could be repaid after graduation upon reaching an income threshold, a policy aimed at supporting poorer students. This positioned university education as being “based on merit, not wealth” (Bailey, 2012, p. 9). The Higher Education Act 2004 also introduced means-tested maintenance grants, repayment loans from the Government, and bursaries to be paid to students by institutions to support low-income students’ entrance into universities, but some students were unaware of these options (Bailey, 2012; Mangan *et al*., 2010). For most students, this type of deferred payment for tuition fees and loans led to debt following their engagement in HE (Jones & Thomas, 2005), which consequently led poorer students to avoid attending university due to the fear of eventual debt (Callender & Mason, 2017). This meant that Widening Participation (WP) strategies were also unlikely

to be successful due to the fears students have regarding accumulated debt (Callender & Mason, 2017; Mangan *et al*., 2010).

The Higher Education Act 2004 also established the Office for Fair Access (2004) to ensure that equality of opportunity was regulated in respect of the cost of tuition fees to ensure fairness; however, universities and colleges were not obliged to provide evidence of implementing WP strategies (DfES, 2003a; Jones & Thomas, 2005). At the same time, a national initiative, Aimhigher (Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), 2006), began implementing WP strategies focused on providing information, advice, and motivation to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students from the global majority ethnic groups, and students with disabilities (HEFCE, 2006). Jones and Thomas (2005) suggest that the changes made by the Act appeared to point students towards a deficit model by focusing on their identities as being problematic but does little to consider changing the overall structure of HE institutions or to consider other barriers influencing access to HE that students may be experiencing, such as within the home environment, students' personal self-development, and their diverse characteristics.

The Browne report (Browne, 2010) added to the complexity of the HE landscape by encouraging universities to compete to maintain the quality of HE by enrolling the highest achieving students. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DfBIS) (2011) found that the number of students entering university from disadvantaged backgrounds had risen by 30% in five years and 50% in the past 15 years, revealing that widening participation was successful in increasing the population of diverse students entering HE.

However, more still needed to be done because this had only resulted in “one in five young people from the most disadvantaged areas enter[ing] higher education” showing a gap in participation “compared to more than one in two for the most advantaged areas” (DfBIS, 2011, p. 55). As a result, the ‘Students at the Heart of the System’ white paper policy (DfBIS, 2011) proposed a range of actions, such that tuition fees should be deferred, more governmental control over admissions (using a ‘minimum tariff score’), students’ eligibility for financial support, for universities to contextualise students’ abilities and to assess the success rate of Widening Participation (WP) strategies (DfBIS, 2011, p. 49). Although there had been an increase in diverse students’ participation in HE, the Sutton Report (Sutton Trust, 2018) later found that class segregation still existed, whereby eight of the top-most successful schools had more students accepted into pre-1992 universities than the combined totals of 2894 other institutions stating that private school students were more likely to achieve better grades and are therefore seven times more likely to attend a top university (Sutton Trust, 2018). This reveals the continued problematic hierarchisation of universities that is deeply entrenched in a system that continues to attribute inequities in English HE.

In more contemporary policy, there has been a shift away from individual institutional autonomy towards a process of accountability regarding the ‘monitoring of performance,’ ‘state influence’ and the positioning of the ‘students as a consumer’ (Bailey, 2012, pp. 17 - 19). The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 established the OfS, whose key role was to regulate and publicise students’ opportunities to access and participate in HE.

Contemporary statistics suggest that WP has been somewhat successful with more diverse students enrolling in universities (Higher Education Statistics Agency, HESA, 2022). HESA (2022) reports that in 2020/2021 the student cohort enrolled into university was more diverse, comprising all genders, with 57% being females and 43% being males; students younger than 20 (38%), mature students (aged 21 years and over) at 62%; students with a disability that includes Specific Learning Difficulties and mental health (15%); ethnic minority students (26%) and white students (74%). Because of this diversity, a more updated term is needed to encompass the complex diversity of students because “fair access and widening participation … terms remain ambiguous” (Jones & Thomas, 2005, p. 615).

This section has shown that the term WP has been synonymous with students' access into HE, showing that the Government’s “focus is on the early stages of the student lifecycle … thus excluding many aspects of the ‘student experience’” (Jones & Thomas, 2005, p. 626). This research has so far explored the historical and contextual underpinnings of WP and has shown that WP has been successful at increasing the number of diverse students attending HE. However, simply including more diverse students “does not redress structural inequalities” (Clegg, 2011, p. 103) once the student has entered university. This research will now consider SV as a method of improving the quality of the HE experiences in response to WP.

The development of student voice in response to widening participation.

To arrive at the topic of inquiry later in this chapter, SV will now be conceptualised and explored as a conduit for improving the quality of students' HE experiences. I will chart the historical developments of SV and will discuss various methods used to collect SV. I will end this section by discussing that the current methods of obtaining SV do not account for all students, particularly those with DLN who may communicate in diverse ways. This section will begin with the historical development of SV in HE.

The OfS, in addition to promoting diverse participation in HE, was also tasked by the Government in 2005 with the responsibility of regulating and holding institutions accountable for the quality of students' HE experiences (OfS, 2023a). This is achieved by students completing the OfS National Student Survey (NSS) (OfS, 2023b), which has been implemented since 2005 and has become a vehicle for students' voices (Ipsos, 2023). The Browne Report (Browne, 2010) outlined that competition should be encouraged between institutions to improve the quality of HE. The White Paper entitled 'Students at the Heart of the System' (DfBIS, 2011) stated that to improve practice, the HE sector should publish Key Information Sets (KIS) relating to quality (DfBIS, 2011). This data was intended to be published on a national league table, enabling students to compare universities and courses before deciding which to attend (Canning, 2017; Carey, 2013a; Darwin, 2021; Sabri, 2011; Thiel, 2019).

The White Paper, 'Students at the heart of the System' (DfBIS, 2011) outlined the need to maintain HE quality by establishing "a learning community where engagement of students is encouraged, their feedback valued and complaints resolved quickly and transparently" (DfBIS, 2011, p. 33). To achieve this, universities began collecting their own data regarding students' opinions and using these to improve practice (Canning, 2017). The SV has thus become a powerful tool for influencing the "league tables, National Student Survey (NSS), and Key Information Set (KIS)" (Hall, 2017, p. 182). An assumption here is that responses to SV will improve NSS results. However, the NSS uses positivist and numerical questions to enable students to communicate their level of satisfaction regarding their HE experiences (Darwin, 2021; Hamshire *et al*., 2017; Holligan & Shah, 2017). A process that places students' responses within a collective group but does little to elaborate on students' individual subjective experiences (Darwin, 2021; Holligan & Shah, 2017). Therefore, the survey does little to capture "the authentic voice of the student" (Holligan & Shah, 2017, p. 120), nor is it possible for students to determine fully the experience that they want or need without the knowledge gained from completing the course in the first instance (Holligan & Shah, 2017). Furthermore, the questions are set by the Office for Students (OfS, 2023b) rather than the students themselves.

Methods of obtaining SV in HE have also utilised evaluation forms, surveys (Bennett & Kane, 2014; Canning, 2017; Seale, 2016; Thiel, 2019; Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007) and student spokespersons, known as student representatives (Young & Jerome, 2020). HE uses these methods to produce questions for students to answer, whereby the

answers provided will help universities to improve their practice (and arguably their national position) by positioning students as 'change-makers' of their educational experience (Dunne & Zandstra, 2011; Sabri, 2011; Seale, 2016). A further SV approach is student participation projects (referred to subsequently throughout this thesis as co-creation) (Canning, 2017; Seale, 2010). However, these approaches mostly reveal the predominantly 'teacher-centric' approach that HE has taken in SV collection methods (Seale, 2010). Canning (2017, p. 525) agrees, stating that educators generally are responsible for setting the parameters that dictate "how, where and when the student voice is heard", ignoring the requests made by some students. However, there is an argument that, while considerable focus is on collecting the SV, other voices are silenced, such as those of staff members whose voices are considered less valuable in national league tables (Sabri, 2011).

Although these methods for collecting students' feedback are varied to enable "different ways of talking, different voices" and different "points of view", Hall states that this is no longer fit for purpose because not all voices should be interpreted in the same way (Hall, 2017, p. 182). Hall (2017), drawing on SV literature in schools, says that SV should not be interpreted in a way that only serves the purpose of the institution (Garby-Czerniawski, 2012; Roberts & Nash, 2009) but that it should be "something that enables learners, individually and collectively, to contribute in a new way; as something that enables them to talk" (Hall, 2017, p. 189) in an empowering and inclusive way.

This is because not all students can participate in making choices due to the limitations put on them by their diverse social, cultural, and financial situations (Sabri, 2011). Using Heuristic Inquiry (HI) (as explained in Chapter Three), I reflected on these points. I also believe that my identity as a student with DLN has influenced the way I experience and utilise my SV in HE, and an in-depth discussion of this can be found in Chapter Two, my Self-Search. The self-search (defined below) will draw on my own experiences of using my SV and will be supplemented with academic literature. However, before I embark on this self-discovery, the following sub-section will further interrogate and critique the notion of SV practices to illuminate a problem that this initial engagement seeks to find with respect to conceptualising a more inclusive approach to SV in HE.

Critiquing student voice practices

This section will critique SV processes in HE and highlight the need for a more inclusive approach in SV processes suitable for all HE students, particularly for those with DLN.

Common SV approaches have yet to incorporate adaptations towards enabling ISV for students with DLN (McLeod, 2011). Not only does this mean that the voice of students with DLN is lost (Batchelor, 2006; 2014; Lygo-Baker *et al*., 2019), but also that there has been no research (at the time of this writing) in HE to explore or rectify this phenomenon (Bovill *et al*., 2016; Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014; Seale, 2010; Tuhkala *et al*., 2021). This exclusion within the SV process and research is unlikely to lead to a voice for DLN students

because, as Messiou (2019) states, voice and inclusion co-exist, meaning that one concept cannot exist without the other. Therefore, where there is no inclusion, there is no voice, and where there is no voice, there is likely no inclusion (Messiou, 2019). It is suggested that inclusion is unlikely to occur if HE continues to ignore students' individual identities and the unique voices that diverse students bring, in favour of one homogenised voice (Lygo-Baker *et al*., 2019). Therefore, the lack of inclusion could be the cause of students with DLN being left unheard (Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lygo-Baker *et al*., 2019).

It is possible, then, that HE could be considered ableist because HE assumes that all students communicate in the same way (Hehir, 2002). This means that HE institutions have the potential, although inadvertently, to 'other' students with DLN where inclusion of their voice is not being accommodated for (McLeod, 2011), such as Muslim students, for example (see Olusola, in press). This has led to criticism that HE favours privileged students who are typically "male, heterosexual, white, middle-class and [with] able-bodies," leading to silenced voices from those students who sit outside this hegemonic position (Gibson, 2015, p. 881). Whilst those within the hegemonic position maintain their power and control through silencing and silenced voices (Allen, 2004).

Fricker (2010) states that there is 'epistemic injustice' in the silencing of marginalised voices by more powerful ones; for instance, 'testimonial injustice' occurs when a person's concerns are not received with the same level of seriousness due to a diverse characteristic they have. Furthermore, 'hermeneutic injustice' occurs when a diverse person's experience is not recognised or brought into view (Fricker, 2010). See Olusola (in

press) for insights regarding the epistemic impact on Muslim students in HE. To address these types of institutional oppressions, the voices of students with DLN must be understood by looking at the whole student (Jones, 2009). To achieve this, HE needs to become more aware of each student's individual identities and how these identities are impacted by institutional oppression and privilege (Perez, 2019), as well as the unique circumstances that have informed the nature of individuals and group identities. This is because all students should be entrusted to utilise their voice without fear of power (Hooks, 1994) and control from people in hierarchical positions (Dewey, 2011).

This section has explored and argued that HE has yet to incorporate more inclusive SV methods for students with DLN to redress the communication problems discussed above. This research intends to explore the voices of students with DLN in HE to ascertain a more inclusive student voice (ISV) approach to SV processes in HE, and the section below will highlight the purpose of this study in more depth.

Purpose statement

In Heuristic Inquiry (HI), a purpose statement follows the identification of a problem and describes the reason for the study and its main aim and objectives (Sultan, 2019).

The purpose of this PhD research is to explore the experiences of SV for students with DLN and how students with DLN utilise their ISV in HE. To achieve this, existing academic literature will be explored about my individual experience and the inclusion of my learner

voice in Chapter Two: Self-search (defined below) (Sela-Smith, 2002). The research will reveal heuristic knowledge (explored in the Methodology Chapter) of how other students with DLN experience ISV in HE and how these students utilise their voice (as shown in the Analysis Chapter). Although students had the option to bring artefacts to the interview to aid their communication, a final creative artefact will be designed by me that will illuminate ISV to help the readers understand the students' experiences of using their voice in HE (presented in the Analysis Chapter) and recommendations for improving HE practices will be provided in the Summary Chapter.

The purpose is to elicit empathic understanding from the reader of the subjective and intersubjective realities of students with DLN, to show that each student with DLN is an individual with a valid voice (Koro-Ljungberg, 2007). To that end, the research questions are articulated below.

Research questions

This research will explore ISV with students with DLN and the ways that these students utilise their voice. It is hoped that the findings of this research will increase HE's understanding of the impact of students' DLN on the student voice processes, enabling HE to be more inclusive of students' individual voices.

The research seeks to address the following questions:

Research question one - What does academic literature report about the experience of students with diverse learner needs in relation to the inclusion of their learner voice?

Research question two - What is the reported experience of inclusive learner voice for students (the co-researchers) with diverse learner needs?

Research question three - In what ways do students with diverse needs in Higher Education utilise their voice?

Research question four - What creative output can be developed through the analysis of student depictions that will represent the experiences of students with DLN?

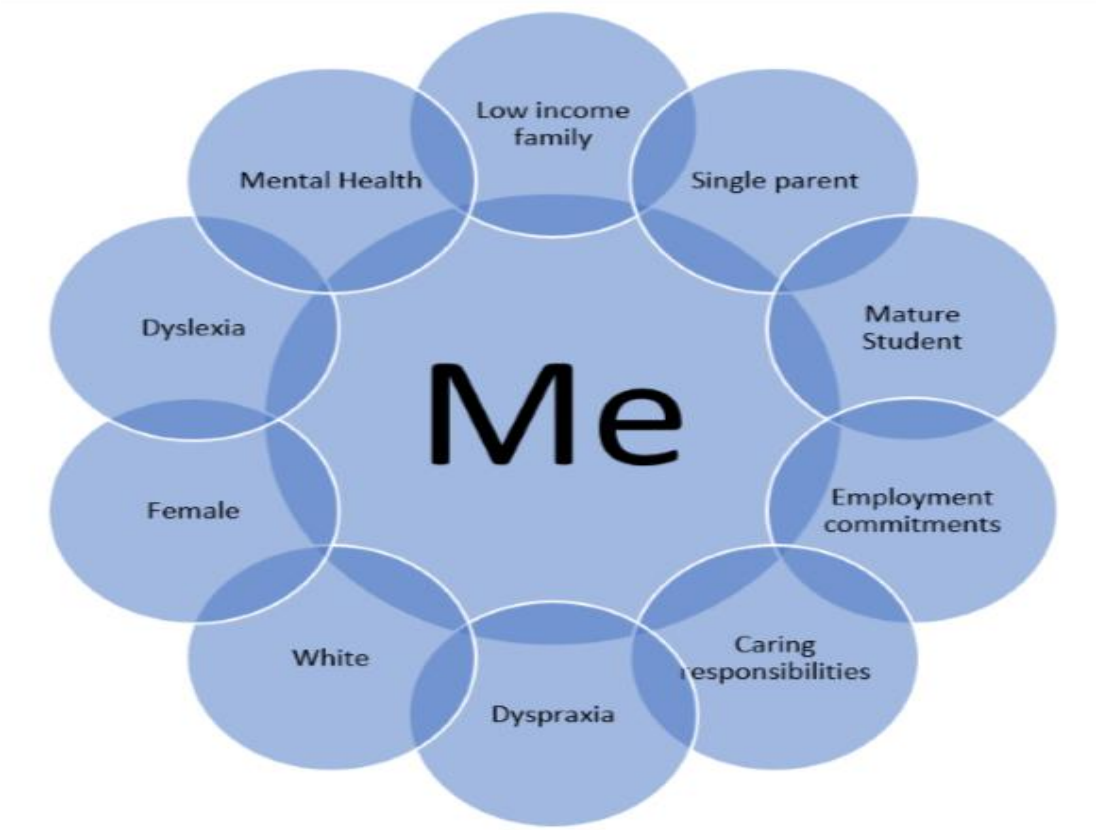
Researcher's

Positionality

'Positionality' is "determined by where one stands in relation to 'the other'" (Merriam *et al.*, 2001, p. 411) and this process requires reflexivity defined as "a continuing mode of self-analysis" (Callaway, 1992, p. 33). Further discussion of positionality can be found in Chapter Three: Methodology but for this introduction, I want to recognise that my experiences of being a student with DLN and my voice are integral to the designing and facilitation of this research and as such, "I will be shaped by it, and by those with whom I interact" (Bourke, 2014, p. 7). It is imperative, then, that I am transparent about those experiences (Bourke, 2014) as this will enable research truthfulness (Jafar, 2018). This section will now discuss the reasons for disclosing my positionality.

I came to this HI research with my own experience of DLN in secondary, tertiary, and HE. Heuristic Inquiry uses the term 'living experience' to explain that the past is just as significant to the research as the present and that all human experiences across the ages of a person can continue to impact the present (Sultan, 2015; 2019; 2020). I have experiences of an 'ascribed status' (a group of characteristics that are consequences of my birth) and 'achieved status' (a group of characteristics that I have taken or have been given to me by others after birth) (Linton, 1936, pp. 115 - 131) that contribute to my DLN. I took a moment to reflect on Linton's (1936) work and began compiling all my 'ascribed' and 'achieved' labels. Please view Artefact 1.1 below for more details of those characteristics. Therefore, I argue here that I have 'insider' knowledge that may be shared with my co-researchers based on 'ascribed' or 'achieved' characteristics and that this shared knowledge can be used to increase understanding of the 'insiders' group experience (Merton, 1972, pp. 11 - 13).

Artefact 1.1 – The interconnected elements of my DLN whilst attending university.



(Source: Author, 2022 – created for inclusion in this thesis)

To facilitate understanding, I will take an active role throughout this research process by being transparent about my own experiences (Bukamal, 2022, pp. 327–328). However, I also recognise that the diversity of humans and their experiences is complex, and it is almost impossible to know and share someone's complete characteristics (Merton, 1972). I hope to utilise my positionality as a student with DLN to aid the research process by being approachable and establishing a rapport with the research co-researchers, which

will add credibility to the research (Bukamal, 2022, pp. 327 - 328). In the following section, I will outline and review my DLN experiences in relation to SV and the ways this has impacted my positionality as a researcher.

When I considered my own experiences, I came to realise that I have felt excluded from the SV process in HE, and I also felt that I was unable to communicate my needs effectively. I have often wondered whether my inability to articulate my wants and needs was the influence of my DLN. I took some time to concentrate on my DLN characteristics that I believed impeded my voice in HE and creatively composed artefact 1:1 above. Moustakas (1990) states that both the researcher and co-researchers can bring artefacts to the research process. Artefacts can be varied to include (but are not limited to) stories, artwork, photographs, journal entries, and poetry to illuminate rich data that words struggle to articulate (Sultan, 2019). I used my ability to create an artefact to illustrate all my self-identifying characteristics when I entered HE and input them into intersecting circles to present visually the extent of my intersecting diverse characteristics. Artefact 1.1 above was created on Wednesday, 31st August 2022, to support the discussion above regarding my researcher positionality, which is outlined in the following paragraph.

As shown by the above artefact, I am a student with DLN in HE myself, with substantial personal autoethnographic experiences of SV that collectively contribute to my positionality as both a researcher and a student with DLN. For instance, I have personal experience with the injustice of silence due to my own DLN that has impacted my voice, and I wish to draw on my own experiences for this research. Moustakas (1990, pp. 11 - 13)

says that the researcher must conduct a 'self-search', defined as looking within oneself, "introspectively, meditatively, and reflectively into its nature and meaning" to explore the question, knowing that "the initial 'data' is within me" (p. 11). More details on this process can be found in the Self-search Chapter, where I explore the inclusion and exclusion of SV processes from my own perspective as a student with DLN. The Self-search chapter (Chapter Two) includes my own autobiographical experiences, artefacts and academic literature used to support or critique my statements, just as Moustakas (1990) suggests. I will take the reader on a journey that follows my own personal self-discovery, exploring the causes of my own lost voice, the impact of my DLN on current SV processes and how inclusive communication is or is not experienced. The self-search will also explore possible ways in which ISV can be achieved.

Often labelled as 'self-relevant' research (Devendorf, 2022) or 'me-search' (Altenmüller *et al.*, 2021, p. 2), this type of research "is idiosyncratically relevant for the individual researcher" (Altenmüller *et al.*, 2021, p. 2). Conducting 'me-search' requires disclosing personal identity and experiences in research, and this is shown to elicit 'epistemic trustworthiness' and 'credibility' when viewed by others who hold positive regard for the topic (Altenmüller *et al*., 2021, p. 13). I hope that my firsthand experiences will humanise a common human experience (Moustakas, 1990) from the positionality of a student with DLN. My positionality as both a researcher and a student has the potential to eliminate hierarchy and create empathy when my experiences are paired with other students' experiences (who I will later involve in the study once my own experiences have been

explored) (Gardner *et al*., 2017). This approach will be used in this research rather than the study being led by academics who do not share or understand the experience itself (Altenmüller *et al*., 2021). This research will challenge the power, control, and privilege that currently 'gives voice' (Gardner *et al*., 2017) to students (including those with DLN) and instead situates the voices of students with DLN throughout the work, including my own. It is hoped that this research will provide a non-hierarchical space in which a deeper sense of understanding of students' experiences can be achieved. The following subheading will inform the reader of my own transition to university, enabling complete transparency regarding my positionality as a student with DLN.

Personal reflections about voice and widening participation.

As a student with DLN, I experienced difficulties entering HE at the normal age of 18. These challenges led me to abandon education for two decades. However, as strategies towards Widening Participation WP) increased, I was able to navigate a pathway that enabled me to enrol into HE. This section will take you through that journey to highlight my position and experiences as a student with DLN entering HE. As I reflected on the policies of WP, briefly outlined above, I became increasingly aware of my own identity. Do I consider myself underrepresented? Was my enrolment in HE a successful example of WP?

In mainstream education, I always struggled with Mathematics and English lessons. My academic underachievement in these areas meant that I did not achieve the required entry requirements for university. I realised that successful admission to university was largely based on entry requirements, arguably used to encourage competition between students and universities (Scott, 2014). As a student with DLN, I was unable to compete with other students who were more capable than I, so I chose to enter the workforce instead. The focus I had placed on developing myself and my career had begun to decline.

As I searched the literature, I came across research from Pop *et al.* (2016) that explores the impact of student's underachievement on identity formation utilising discussion by Erikson (1968) who described identity formation as the way a person unconsciously develops their sense of self over time through judging others and having others judge them, the process of which hits a crisis in adolescents. Pop *et al.* (2016) also refer to the work by Marcia (1966), who, through research, found three forms of identity: 'identity achievement' (independence and commitment); 'moratorium' (in crisis), 'foreclosure' (following the commitments of others), and 'identity diffusion' (undecided about decisions). Using identity theory to research adolescents' commitment to education, Pop *et al*. (2016) found that adolescents began the school year committed to their education, labelled as 'identity synthesis', but as the year progressed, the work became harder to understand. Students' grades declined, which led students to question their commitment to education, labelled as 'identity confusion' (Pop *et al*., 2016, pp. 141 - 142). Perhaps my

inability to enter HE had led me to 'identity confusion' (Pop *et al*., 2016, p.142), contributing to my decision to enter the job market.

Two decades later, my personal circumstances had changed, giving me more time to pursue my own career, so I decided to give college another try. This time, I was a mature student, contributing to further intersections of my identity, including being a single parent to two children with disabilities, as noted in Artefact 1.1 above. Having previously underachieved in other educational settings, I decided to explore alternative ways of accessing HE courses. One pathway that enabled this was an Access Course (Reay *et al*., 2002). Access Courses were introduced by the White Paper, 'Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge' (Department for Education and Science, DES, 1987) and offered mature students with low income an alternative WP pathway into HE (Carter, 2000). Access courses were particularly supportive of those students who may not have traditionally achieved the entry requirements for HE (Carter, 2000).

Carter (2000) recognises that adults attending Access Courses are individuals with unique experiences and requirements that need to be accommodated for, such as delivering lessons when children are at school and/or providing childcare support (Wakeford, 1993). In the late 1990s, these adults were also allowed to have their voices heard through participation in various participatory elements, including surveys and student representation (Carter, 2000). The aim for institutions regarding student participation in this initiative is to improve retention (Carter,2000). I took on the position of a student representative during my time on the Access course, and I saw the role as an example

whereby intersectional characteristics can be used as a powerful tool within educational settings to hear SV. Highlighting to students their strengths and abilities in a successful and meaningful way (Krutkowski, 2017).

However, when the time came to decide on a university course, I recall pondering over the palette of choices available in a university prospectus and knew instinctively that not all the courses were available to me because of the sociocultural environment I was born into (Harrison, 2018, p. 11). This made me reflect on the theory outlined by Markus and Nurius (1986), who state that individuals distinguish their identity between who they would 'like-to-be' and what they would 'like-to-avoid'. For instance, I felt forced to make restricted decisions on who I would 'like-to-be' because of constraining outside forces (Harrison, 2018), such as entry requirements. An example of this occurred when I began tearing the pages from a prospectus of the courses that I felt emotionally interested in, deciding between my "like-to-be and like-to-avoid selves" (Harrison, 2018, p. 11). Once I had finished, I went back through the pile of torn-out pages to find the entry requirements and methods of assessment. Because I struggled with Mathematics and exams, any courses that needed Mathematics and/or exams were disregarded by my 'like-to-avoid self' (Harrison, 2018). This process left only two courses out of an original pile of 180.

I feel that HE limited my choice by using entry requirements to exclude me from accessing courses (Scott, 2014). Even though the White Paper, 'Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge', stated that more leniency on entry requirements could be taken for mature

students (DES, 1987). However, I feel that my career pathway into HE was not selected 'naturally' from my own choice or voice, but instead was decided for me (Rainford, 2021) without considering the 'value' and 'commitment' that I could bring to those other courses (DES, 1987). My experience highlighted the limitations still placed on listening to students' voices in course admissions (Harrison & Waller, 2018; Vignoles & Murray, 2016). Perhaps my voice and commitment would have been heard/seen more if I had been interviewed for each course for which I had applied. For admissions to be inclusive, HE needs to provide diverse students with more choice and a platform to voice their concerns, rather than repeating inequalities (Liveley & Walrdrop, 2020) that force students to make choices that do not fully represent their 'like-to-be self' (Harrison, 2018; Harrison & Waller, 2018; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Once in HE, I was apprehensive that my experience of voice would be reduced because my interconnected elements of identity had multiplied (see artefact 1:1 above). I used Linton's (1936) ideas to state that I was 'ascribed' (at birth) as a white female in a low-income family coping with undiagnosed dyslexia and dyspraxia. However, I had later 'achieved' the 'status' (Linton, 1936) of being a single parent caring for two children with diagnosed disabilities, a mature student managing employment whilst also experiencing difficulties with my mental health. The interplay of these characteristics will be expanded on in Chapter Two, the Self-search. However, my experience of voice juxtaposed my experience in school and college because I felt HE gave me more opportunities and

methods to use my voice. This made me reflect on the differences between schools, colleges, and HE.

Early education begins by teaching children the dualistic notion of being correct and incorrect, which then shifts as the child grows older and begins to think for themselves, recognising that there is no dualism to responses, only opinions (Perry, 1970, reprinted in 1999). Perry (1970, reprinted in 1999) then states that with maturity, arguably in HE, a student can commit to a viewpoint. Since I have been attending HE, I have had numerous opportunities to express my student voice and take action to make it heard, such as becoming a student representative and completing surveys. However, I also feel that my voice is still not being heard in its entirety, and my intuition tells me that my DLN is a contributing factor. My intuition has led me to complete this research to explore my own voice and DLN, and the DLN of others, to conceptualise what is meant by ISV.

In summary, it is through my acknowledgement of my positionality as both a researcher and a student with DLN in HE that has led me to my PhD topic. My positionality and experiences have also informed the theoretical orientation of this research. This will now be explored below.

Theoretical orientation

This section provides an overview of the theoretical orientation that guided the development of the research by reviewing the guiding philosophical perspectives that

influenced me when defining the research problem and developing the aims and questions. Here, I explain the relationship between theoretical orientation and methodology and how my chosen philosophical perspectives and assumptions led me to HI (Moustakas, 1990). The chosen theoretical orientation, philosophical perspectives, and HI methodology, as outlined by Moustakas (1990), are explored in more depth in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter Three). However, this introduction will provide an overview of the approaches chosen in relation to SV and students with DLN. I expand my theoretical orientation to include a feminist perspective, particularly focusing on Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST, Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004a) and the ways this can enrich and add greater depth to Heuristic Inquiry (Moustakas, 1990).

Seale (2010) states that although SV is consulted in HE, it is rarely put into action. It appears that students do have a voice in education. However, it is often used only to improve the educational service provided, rather than genuinely empowering or fostering students' own independent voice (Dewey, 2011). Maslow (1971) states that educators are highly successful at 'extrinsic learning' but have yet to support students 'intrinsic learning', encourages students to make independent choices, to listen to their own unconscious voice and to self-actualise (an ongoing process that defines an individual who is true to their values and are absent of pathologies) (Jourard, 1968; Maslow, 1971). Jourard (1968) says that people must disclose their thoughts and experiences to themselves and others to seek out the answers to their problems from within, otherwise known as 'self-disclosure'. However, I recognise, as does Stoller (2018), that students with DLN

encounter a marked difference in their HE experiences compared with students with no identified DLN that may prevent their voice from being heard. A voice that is experienced by students without DLN and a voice that students with DLN experience (Stoller, 2018)

Individuals with DLN who enter HE may have been oppressed by past educators who provided 'prescribed' lessons, and any choices that were available to them were often constructed by staff members (Freire, 1993). The student can choose "between speaking out or being silent", but very often the students' experience remains unchanged (Freire, 1993, p. 22). It is likely, then, that before starting HE, DLN students' voices have already been oppressed in favour of the educator's voice, which only serves to continue the hierarchical order (Dewey, 2011; Freire, 1993). This research draws on my own experiences throughout to enable a 'shared understanding' of treatment and identity formation experienced by students with DLN, an experience that will not be easily understood by those without DLN (Gergen, 1999, p. 81).

This research will focus on the experiences of students with DLN and the ways they utilise their voice. It is recognised that people use language to make sense of their world and their existence within it, a concept known as ontology (Trownsell, 2022). Therefore, co-researchers' language will be the focus of the data collected in ascertaining students' experiences. Language, disabilities, and education are all said to be constructed within the social world we live in (Burr, 2015). This research, therefore, recognises that multiple perceptions of the world exist (relativist ontology) (Crotty, 1998). A more in-depth

discussion of ontology as it pertains to this study can be found in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter Three).

This research also aligns with the philosophical epistemological underpinnings of social constructionism, which states that knowledge is constructed or learnt through the language and interactions we have with others (Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 2009). Further discussions on epistemology can be found in Chapter Three. This study will require the researcher to interpret co-researchers' language to explore their perceptions of their experiences with voice and/or the phenomenon of ISV, and therefore, will employ an interpretivist theoretical perspective (Bhattacharya, 2017; Crotty, 1998; Goldkuhl, 2012; Klein & Myers, 1999). Interpretivism could be used to highlight my experiences of being silenced as a child to understanding the ways my silence has impacted me in HE. This information could also help me to gain insight into what constitutes as ISV.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics as an interpretive methodology "seeks to uncover the meaning and central structures, or essences, of a participant's lived experience with a phenomenon" (Bynum & Varpio, 2017, p. 252). To choose a qualitative methodology, such as hermeneutics, is to accept that the retrieval of data based on experience cannot be easily acquired through more objective methodologies; instead, it places importance on language, open dialogue in relationships, reflexivity, and interpretation (McCaffrey *et al*., 2012). Hermeneutics is interested in finding justice for those voices that see the world differently (McCaffrey *et*

al., 2012) and would therefore align and will be used for this research (see Chapter Three for more details).

Moustakas' (1990) HI is one methodology that utilises the many tools and concepts valued by the conceptual framework for this research, as discussed above, and can be explored in more depth in Chapter Three. HI enables the researcher to respond to their own personal question relating to their own personal 'human experiences' (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). Moustakas (1990) developed this qualitative, humanistic, and counselling methodology (Mihalache, 2019; Sultan, 2020) while conducting research exploring his personal experience of 'loneliness' during his child's operation, positioning himself as a participant (Moustakas, 1961; 1972; 1975). He then explored the experiences and creative pursuits of loneliness with others, positioned as co-researchers, to identify similarities and differences with the aim of mutually discovering new knowledge that would transform the self (see Moustakas, 1961; 1972; 1975; Sultan, 2019; 2020). The ideal outcome of the research is for the researcher and co-researchers to develop greater "self-awareness and self-knowledge" that will illuminate "new images and meanings regarding human phenomena, but also to realisations relevant to their own experiences and lives" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9).

In developing the methodology, Moustakas (1990, pp. 10 - 15) states that he first immersed himself with the question through 'self-directed search', using 'open-ended inquiry' to collect academic literature whilst analysing his own writings, creative designs, and autobiographical life. Moustakas embarked on a journey with the self, 'self-searching'

past and present experiences and engaging in 'self-dialogue' to make meaning, a process otherwise known as 'self-inquiry', believing that the self would view the experience as truth (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). For this research, this process of self-directed search and self-dialogues will be in Chapter Two.

In HI, the researcher uses first-person inquiry to draw on the researcher's 'living experience' (Sultan, 2015; 2019; 2020) relating to their own past and present autobiographical experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1968; Moustakas, 1990), creative pursuits and researcher's diary throughout this thesis (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2020). For this methodology, a reflective diary will be used as a reference. The researcher and co-researchers undertake an HI 'experiential' process (Sultan, 2020, p. 159) to gain or regain one's voice based on the assumptions that HI "gives voice to those who have been silenced" through being marginalised or oppressed (such as students with DLN) (Sultan, 2020, p. 167).

A phenomenological and therapeutic conceptual framework, such as HI (Moustakas, 1990) is drawn on to explore students' 'tacit knowing' (Polanyi, 1966), 'embodied knowledge' (Gendlin, 2003) and 'interpersonal knowing' (Rogers, 1969) in a 'I-Thou' space (Buber, translated in 2010), supported by 'indwelling' (Polanyi, 1966) and 'focusing' (Gendlin, 2003). All of which will be explained in Chapter Three. These concepts will be incorporated into the exploration of students' 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1989) through a Feminist Standpoint theoretical lens (FST, Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004a) as discussed below.

Feminist Standpoint Theory and intersectionality

This research builds on previous discussions on 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1989) by utilising Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST, Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004a). This will be explained below regarding the ways this lens will be applied to this research.

Hartsock (1998a; 1998b) draws on Marxist understanding to discuss how specific identities (such as that of women) are forced to conduct themselves socially in very different ways to those in powerful positions. The reality of this experience can only be fully understood by the oppressed individual, known as a "feminist standpoint" (Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b). Collins (2000) stated that marginalised groups are only heard when spoken in the language of the privileged, but posited that Black American women are "situated" knowers from their own standpoint (p. 19), which provided a platform for these women to have their unique voices heard. Although Collins (2000) states that this approach may be critiqued as unscientific, they concluded that further work should consider other intersectional characteristics of an individual, such as class, race, gender, and sexuality, to fully observe the depth of oppression experienced and called this the "matrix of domination" (p. 18). By unpacking the confluence of identity, I have been able to identify that silenced voices may exist across several identity markers (Kennett, 2025). Thereby illustrating the importance of intersectionality, as outlined by Crenshaw (1989), in recognising the complex experiences of marginalised students throughout education, leading to their silence (Kennett, 2025). Silence is the outcome of not being heard (Cook-Sather, 2006), to maintain the status quo and a place in which diverse learners can

regulate their bodies in the perceived comfort of hierarchy and privilege (Clarke, 2021; Finke, 1993; Hanna, 2022; 2021; Hooks, 1994; Mazzei, 2011).

Harding (1991) expanded the lens of FST to express that power structures significant influence knowledge, but that the process of which is challenging to see for those in hierarchical positions. Therefore, Harding (1991) states that knowledge gained from the standpoint of the oppressed provides data that is more rigorous and reliable, labelling this as “strong objectivity” (p. 138) because it enables an in-depth exploration of “hidden” (p. 127) experiences that are only apparent to marginalised individuals. A more insightful knowledge production would be better produced through accessing the voices in which the experience occurs (Smith, 1999). Given our diverse positions, co-researchers and I possess an “epistemic advantage” (Wylie, 2004, p. 344) that enables us to provide a clearer perspective on reality than those in positions of privilege and power (Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b). Marginalised people can see the “codes or rules” situated within a “culture of power” that those in power cannot (Delpit, 2006; 1988). This new understanding makes FST an important theoretical orientation for this research, which seeks to understand the experiences of co-researchers' complex, intersectional, diverse identities, the impact on their voice and the role of power. Notably, in the context of this research, eight out of nine co-researchers who came forward to participate in the study are women.

I have discovered that ‘intersectionality’ (as explained above, Crenshaw, 1989) has been created and evolved through a feminist lens and that feminist theory itself has evolved to

acknowledge multiple characteristics in relation to power and privilege (Collins, 2000). Therefore, I will utilise an intersectional feminist lens in this research, acknowledging the impact of gender while also considering the complex ways in which multiple characteristics can influence the voices of marginalised students in relation to power. In conjunction with Heuristic Inquiry (HI, Moustakas, 1990), I intend to position marginalised student voices as central to this research, acknowledging the depth and transformation that can illuminate through the sharing of our differing standpoints (Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b; Smith, 1999) (from myself and my co-researchers) in the exploration of power and co-creation of new knowledge. Further discussion regarding FST and the ways it supports HI (Moustakas, 1990) can be found in Chapter Three: Methodology. However, more details on the process are discussed below.

Throughout the research, students will embark on an 'intrinsic learning' and 'self-actualising' process (Maslow, 1971) that is hoped will highlight and activate students' needs in relation to using their own voice in HE. The potential outcome is 'epistemic justice' (Clegg, 2011) in the form of ISV for all students. All these terms and their application to this study are fully explored in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter Three).

In HI, these voices will be gathered from several diverse sources, such as the researcher, co-researchers, academic and non-academic literature, artefacts, and creative sources (Moustakas, 1990). Making HI research more holistic in design because it sees the 'whole' person in different forms rather than using other methods of analysis that only require the line-by-line coding of transcripts (Mihalache, 2019; Sultan, 2019). A creative artefact will

be produced as dictated by the chosen methodology (Moustakas, 1990) and will be based on the findings from this research. This artefact will be used to inform HE's understanding of ISV, and this will be further explored in the Methodology Chapter. To that end, I now wish to consider the potential research impact of this study.

Research impact

Epistemic justice can be achieved in understanding the epistemological knowledge and experiences that students with DLN can bring to HE (Clegg, 2011). This research will explore students with DLN experiences of SV and the ways those students utilise their ISV. HI (Moustakas, 1990) is the chosen methodology, as it provides a holistic approach to obtaining co-researchers' voices (Mihalache, 2019; Sultan, 2019) and enables the separate research of voice and feelings (Nettifee, 2020, p. 297).

It is intended that any new knowledge created by this research will:

- Enable HE institutions to increase their understanding of the ways students with DLN are represented in SV processes.
- Provide suggestions for improving inclusive voice practice.
- Enable myself, the co-researchers, and other students with DLN with a process by which they can uncover their own experiences and self-discover more inclusive ways to use their own individualised voices.

Being inclusive of students' individuality in SV work and research will enable the true realisation of the world to be noticed from complex, diverse narratives and identities that reflect the world we live in (Kinchin & Kinchin, 2019). I will end this conceptual framework by using Julie's words (a research participant in Jones, 2009); she said: "I have heard, stories that told me that my voice didn't matter", she continues, "I write to claim my voice and my space and my self" (Jones, 2009, p. 303).

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has explored the intention of this research to explore students' DLN in relation to the impact this has had on their experiences of voice in HE. The research will highlight ways in which students utilise their voice to develop a new conceptualisation of ISV. This research utilises HI (Moustakas, 1990) methodology, which follows the researcher (see Chapter Two for more details) and co-researchers as they attempt to conceptualise ISV. The creation of this thesis and its structure are unique, and therefore, the thesis structure is outlined below.

Thesis structure

In this section, existing HI (Moustakas, 1990) research is referenced to highlight the differences and similarities amongst work conducted in this way. These cited pieces are drawn upon to illuminate the structure that this HI (Moustakas, 1990) work will follow.

This thesis will use personal pronouns throughout and as seen in previous HI work (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Haertl, 2014; Kumar, 2017; Moustakas, 1961; 1972; 1975; Ockuly, 2019) they are used because "the self of the researcher is present throughout the process" through autobiographical examples of experiences and creative artefacts (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). My experiences are also combined with academic literature throughout the thesis to portray the potential universal applicability of the experiences to other students (see, for example, the process taken by Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Huxtable & Solomon, 2020; Kumar, 2017; Mandzuk, 1997; Moustakas, 1990; Ockuly, 2019; Scott & Brown, 2008). The following outlines the thesis structure using the HI conceptual framework (Moustakas, 1990) and the structural examples from previous HI research. As the introduction was first, the structure for this has been placed at the start of this chapter.

Chapter two, traditionally titled the literature review, is instead called the 'Self-search' (Sela-Smith, 2002). This chapter includes an immersion and engagement with literature, utilising my autobiographical experiences and creative pursuits to provide a visual representation of my thoughts and feelings (Norton, 2017). This chapter continues to use the phases of HI as a guidance and a structure to my autobiographical self-search experiences informed by the HI concepts (see, for example, Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Haertl, 2014; Huxtable & Solomon, 2020; Kumar, 2017; Mundzak, 1997; Norton, 2017; Ockuly, 2019; Scott & Brown, 2008). The chapter also introduces literature that was found using 'intuition' that guides the literature search process and is then personalised with my

own autobiographical experiences (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). The analysis and development of themes from my own self-search are the focus of the chapter, following an initial self-search (see, for example, Haertl, 2014; Kumar, 2017; Mundzak, 1997) before a conclusion is drawn. The process of using literature in the self-search will enable me to discover discrepancies in my own pre-existing knowledge (Moustakas, 1990).

Chapter Three is the methodology and methods chapter. This chapter introduces a critique and rationale for the theoretical framework of HI (Moustakas, 1990), focusing on the methods of data collection and the analysis process used to present the data from the co-researchers. Co-researchers' involvement is explained using the HI phases outlined by Moustakas (1990). These phases will form a structure to the processes that I undertook with each co-researcher (see Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Haertl, 2014; Mundzak, 1997; Norton, 2017; Ockuly, 2019). Discussions about credibility, data management, data collection and ethics follow before concluding the chapter (Moustakas, 1990).

In Chapter Four, I undertake the phases of HI once more to outline the themes generated by me from the co-researchers' interviews using example quotes and depictions generated for each co-researcher (Moustakas, 1990). Data is presented in the way that Moustakas (1990) suggests, using HI core phrases to create "depictions of the experience as a whole ... individual depictions, a comprehensive depiction, two or three exemplary individual portraits, and a creative synthesis" (p. 54). I will utilise the phases of 'immersion', 'incubation', 'illumination', 'explication' and 'creative synthesis' to present

the data (Moustakas, 1990). A creative synthesis can be seen in previous research (see Kumar, 2017; Norton, 2017; Scott & Brown, 2008).

Chapter Five provides a summary of the findings. For example, describing the differences between the conclusions by the co-researchers and my original self-search (Moustakas, 1990). In this chapter, I will return to 'the internal frame of reference' by considering and answering the following questions proposed by Moustakas (1990): what have I learnt about myself? What changes have been made because of this research? And what epiphanies have I experienced? The discussion will also address the research questions and the research impact outlined above. This chapter will also include a concise summary and evaluation of the research, whereby the implications for stakeholders (HE, Lecturers, co-researchers, and myself) are discussed (Moustakas, 1990). The chapter concludes by making recommendations for pedagogical practice in HE and for future research.

Chapter Six will include a summary of the research and the findings. In addition, the chapter draws on the ideas generated by co-researchers to formulate a list of practical steps that students, university staff members and university management can take to support ISV. I now wish to turn my attention to the next chapter in this thesis, my self-search.

Chapter Two: Self-search

Introduction

> He discovers how much of his life is guided by what he thinks he should be, not by what he is (Rogers, 1961, p. 110).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine existing literature in relation to the research topic. Systematic exploration of existing literature is a common foundation of PhD research in the social sciences tradition (Walker, 2010). However, this chapter has not been given the traditional title of literature review, as Moustakas (1990) suggested. This is because I was drawn to the structure of previous work, whereby a self-search (Sela-Smith, 2002) was conducted and discussed by Sela-Smith (2002) regarding the similarity between the self-search and Moustakas' (1990) HI core phases. This approach situates this research as starting from the position of the marginalised (Smith, 1999) as directed by Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST, Harding, 2004a), providing “strong objectivity” (Harding, 2004b). Therefore, a self-search will be implemented incorporating a feminist lens, utilising Moustakas' (1990) HI phases.

Literature was only included if the researcher felt intuitively connected to the topic with respect to the literature portraying either the researcher’s personal experience and/or potentially revealing the universal experience (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Haertl, 2014; Huxtable & Solomon, 2020; Kumar, 2017; Mundzak, 1997; Norton, 2017; Ockuly, 2019; Scott & Brown, 2008). This approach to literature review and engagement aligns with me

being positioned as the initial subject of inquiry, with other students becoming involved later (as explained in Chapter Three). This is because in HI there is a strong emphasis on introspection as the primary method of knowing (Moustakas, 1990).

The self-search chapter was conducted before I undertook interviews with co-researchers in May 2022 and contains discussions on my own 'frame of reference' (Moustakas, 1990) and biases relating to the experience of ISV at a given time frame, this is considered a normal part of inquiry whereby my existing thoughts and perceptions will be used later to assess whether actual self-development had taken place (Moustakas, 1990; Ozertugrul, 2017). Hence, my exploration of existing literature occurred to further the personal transformative journey central to HI (Brisola & Cury, 2016; Hiles, 2001; Sultan, 2019), and therefore, may not adhere to the standard academic style. To achieve this, the researcher initially solely focuses on the self by engaging in a comprehensive self-search to discover themes centred around the topic of inquiry (Brisola & Cury, 2016). I will further complement the chapter by utilising an FST lens to identify the role of structural power in society. It is only later that additional data is gathered from others whose experiences are understood in relation to the researcher's own experience of a topic (Brisola & Cury, 2016). More information regarding each stage of the process is explained in bullet points below. However, see Table 2.1 below to review the process visually.

Table 2.1**:** The process of this research using self-search (Sela-Smith, 2002) and Heuristic Inquiry (Moustakas, 1990).

Phases of Heuristic Inquiry (Moustakas, 1990)	Self-search process (Sela-Smith, 2002)
Initial engagement	Moustakas (1990) begins with the initial engagement section that outlines my autobiographical life before starting HE and explores the silencing I had experienced during tertiary education that led me to be motivated to conduct this study (Brisola & Cury, 2016; Moustakas, 1990).
Immersion	Following the initial engagement, an immersion phase of self-search is presented, which discusses the impact of my DLN on my voice in HE, such as my participation as a student representative, in surveys, and co-creation projects. Almost anything can be pulled into the immersion phase that relates to my experience of the topic, such as "nature, places, literature, professional life" (Brisola & Cury, 2016, p. 99), and I would enrich this with reflections from my personal life too.

Incubation	I follow this phase by taking moments of incubation, in which rest is taken away from the intense search (Brisola & Cury, 2016; Moustakas, 1990), such as undertaking meditation and colouring (Sultan, 2019). During these moments of rest and distraction, my unconscious mind continued to make sense of my learning (Dijksterhuis, 2025). I have the motivation to acquire knowledge, the expertise from my own personal experiences to seek it and the capacity to select the appropriate activity until my unconscious mind can provide me with the answers (Dijksterhuis, 2025).
Illumination	Following the process as articulated by Moustakas (1990), I will embrace this withdrawal until enough time has passed for my intuition to enter the illumination phase, whereby I will begin to form themes relating to my personal experience of ISV, for instance, the impact of trauma on my mental health.
Explication	As the themes begin to formulate in my mind, I will enter the explication phase. This phase will identify themes relating to ISV as new knowledge.

Creative Synthesis	As suggested by Moustakas (1990), I will develop a creative synthesis based on my learning from my experience. This creative artefact could be “a poem, story or drawing” (Brisola & Cury, 2016, p. 101). This concept map is presented in this research.
Interview co-researchers	The process is completed individually before incorporating co-researchers and is then repeated during the data collection phase, taking into account the co-researchers' experiences.

(Source: Table created by Author (2025) for inclusion in this thesis, but information describes the ideas and processes of self-search (by Sela-Smith, 2002) and Heuristic Inquiry (by Moustakas, 1990)).

The table above illustrates how the process of HI is used to form the self-search (Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2002). However, it is worth noting that the process is repeated with co-researchers and therefore, contributes to the whole study. I have discussed this in more detail later in the thesis (p. 150). As stated above, I wish to follow Moustakas' (1990) stipulation that the researcher starts with an initial engagement.

Initial engagement: Past experiences of student voice in education

Initial engagement enables the researcher to look within themselves to discover a question of extreme autobiographical interest and societal influence (Moustakas, 1990). To achieve this, the researcher "lives the question in waking, sleeping, and even dream states" using self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, and hunches (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). Explanations of each term can be found in the methodology chapter. I used the initial engagement phase to explore whether my DLN has had an impact on my voice before entering HE, because my intuition tells me that the answers to my lost voice can be found in the past. This information will then be used later to ascertain whether ISV was achieved whilst I was attending HE. I will take the reader through my autobiographical life, starting from my home life, through to primary school, secondary school and college, providing the reader with an insight into my sense of being on voice before entering HE. I have chosen this format as it is assumed that the relationship between students and educators is complex, not just by the relationship alone, but also by the influence of other external relationships, such as with family and friends who create an "ecology" centred around each individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Harding, 2004a; Toshalis & Nikkula, 2012). Students with a positive past experience of home and school tend to move through education feeling 'safe' and secure (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Whereas for others with DLN, they are treated as peripheral to others (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Referring to students with DLN (but using female pronouns), the below quote states that students with DLN move into HE where:

> Staff rarely look or speak like her [them], curricula seldom reflects her [their] ways of knowing or her [their] people's history, behavioural expectations do not respect

> her [their] ways of interacting, and the espoused or implicit values of the school may conflict with what she [they] has [have] learned at home (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012, p. 4).

For me, my younger self remembers being disciplined harshly for making mistakes both at home and at school. Although my perception may or may not reflect actual reality, in those moments, my younger self felt scared. I would carefully observe other people's comments, body language and tone of voice to seek to understand their moods and behaviour. Little did I know back then that my preoccupation with other people's behaviour was called 'hypervigilance', caused by perceived threats within my environment (Herman, 2010; Richards *et al*., 2014). One long stare or elevated voice would be enough for me to realise that I had done something wrong, but I was not always aware of what that was. In time, I used this information to internalise further blame and discipline myself. I began anticipating taking the blame for everything through my fear of making mistakes and the associated feelings of guilt and shame. I tried desperately to keep everyone happy (to be good). I focused my attention on giving other people what I felt they wanted or needed, and their verbal and/or non-verbal cues confirmed their appreciation. If I gave them what they wanted, perhaps they would relinquish some of their anger. However, by giving myself to everyone, I sacrificed my own voice and stopped speaking up for my own wants and needs. An extract from my researcher's diary expresses this experience:

> I did not use my voice to say no, nor did I use my voice to offer another suggestion. I simply did what they said out of fear of reprisals ... I felt trapped in the chair, and I froze into silence. It felt like I had been punched in the chest, my heart began to do cartwheels, and my lungs felt pushed upon by a heavy force like someone was sitting

> on my chest ... I thought that this must be what death feels like and that I was going to die (Researcher's diary, Friday 26th August 2022).

Associating the inner turmoil of my feelings with death signifies the fear that my younger self felt during those moments. However, my older self can rationalise that I was not going to die and that I was experiencing a panic attack from anxiety, like the anxiety experienced by Hooks (2014). My younger self thought that dying was a very real prospect. I experienced many panic attacks as a child from the age of 9 years old, and they stayed with me for many years, of which my above reflection recalls just one of those occasions. My body was internally trying to communicate to me, through panic attacks, that something did not feel right or that something needed saying, but as my above reflection notes, I just froze into silence. I now see from the literature that the hypervigilance that I experienced was an early indication of anxiety and that both my hypervigilance and anxiety were protecting me from perceived threats (Herman, 2010; Wermes *et al*., 2018; Wessing *et al*., 2017).

My older self can see that at the time, I must have been struggling with undiagnosed DLN with the accompanying diverse characteristics and symptoms. However, at the time, this information was not available to me. I recall being chosen in my primary school class to answer questions that I did not know the answers to. The teacher would give me a disappointing look, and I recall the other children laughing at me. Not only did I now dread being selected in class to answer questions, but I also stopped asking for help (Herman, 2010) because I did not want to look stupid to others (as suggested by Mazzei, 2008). This avoidance has been found in the literature, which found that students avoided asking

educators for support because they did not want to be labelled as ill-equipped (Turner *et al*., 2002) or disciplined (Hanna, 2022). An extract from my researcher's diary expresses this experience:

> I would sit in the classroom hoping not to be seen, anxiously hoping to avoid the firing questions. When questions were asked, my heart felt like it dropped to the floor, I knew instinctively that I was going to get it wrong ... I looked down to the table as the class erupted into a mummer of laughter ... I just sunk further into my chair silently trying to complete my work to the very best of my ability, which was always not good enough (Researcher's diary, Friday 26th August 2022).

The fear I felt in primary school evolved into something physical: anxiety and hypervigilance. Feminists would argue that this 'embodied knowledge' (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) was a manifestation of the oppression and harm that I felt as a marginalised student (Harding, 2004b) through harsh discipline and/or responses. My diverse experiences were not recognised nor brought into view, leading to 'hermeneutic injustice' (Fricker, 2010). The knowledge I had about my experiences was 'subjugated' (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) because of my "intersectional" characteristics (Crenshaw, 1989) within the 'matrix of domination' (Collins, 2000) in which my diverse standpoint existed (Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b; Smith, 1999) and manifested in my silence. As Hao (2011), Boler (1999) and Hanna (2021) express, the process of silencing is a performance due to the constructed nature of education, as not being a safe place for diverse learners (see Butler, 1990; 1988; Ellsworth, 1997; 1992; Hooks, 1994). I found myself present in the school, but never truly feeling included in its culture; I was an 'outsider within' (Collins, 1986).

Mainstream secondary education also felt disheartening, and by this age, I had also begun to avoid difficult and challenging situations. This concurs with literature, which states that adolescent-aged children are more likely to practice avoidance as a self-protection technique, which educators may consider a sign of students' indifference in schoolwork rather than a sign of students struggling (Turner *et al*., 2002). I illustrate my avoidance below:

> In high school, I remember vividly getting answers wrong in class and the eruption of laughter that was once displayed as a murmur in primary school was now louder ... Children would bully me in the playground and outside the school. So, I stayed in my bedroom when most children were allowed to go to the park on their own. Instead, I found the joy of books and listening to music. This was my escape. From the safety of my own room, I could close the door and visit the places in my books (Researcher's diary, Friday 26th August 2022).

My bedroom is a place in which I can truly be myself. Hooks (1989) would say that I moved into the 'margin' of 'repression' and 'resistance,' a place in which I resisted participating in a world that did not understand me.

My intuition leads me to believe that my underachievement at school confirmed the thoughts I had that I was not good enough, which in turn compounded my desire to remain silent. Each time I tried to speak up, the voice inside my head grew louder, telling me that I was going to be in trouble even if I had not done anything wrong. Whilst my external voice grew quieter and quieter, I began anticipating blame that resulted in me becoming silent, unable to express my wants and needs. As Torralba *et al.* (2020) stated, I would complete this by "not offering ideas, staying quiet, not asking questions, or by withholding from

challenging the status quo" (Torralba *et al*., 2020, p. 668). In the end, I just gave up on speaking. My DLN made me feel, as expressed by the following authors, that my diverse characteristics were somehow flawed, unintelligent, and incapable of succeeding (Humphrey & Mullins, 2002). The following passage from my researcher's diary creatively highlights this:

> What is clear is that my diverse needs contributed to my silence, but not directly as one might think. My diverse characteristics are like 'vulnerable' hospital doors into my soul. How vulnerable they are is dependent on the number of diverse characteristics I have. These doors have allowed other potential complications to sit in the waiting room like bacteria. The more diverse characteristics I have and the more setbacks in life I have experienced, the longer the symptom from the bacteria embeds itself deeply within me (Researcher's diary, Saturday 4th September 2022).

This reflection shows that the oppression felt by students can be compounded by 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1989) and the 'matrix of domination' (Collins, 2000). The more diverse my characteristics were, the more silent and alienated I became.

The combination of embodied feelings, internal dialogue, and other people's reactions led to my silence and avoidance. I believe these reactions were a protective response to prevent myself from making further mistakes and appearing stupid (as suggested by Mazzei, 2008) because of my undiagnosed DLN. Silence is an avoidance action in which students can seek 'refuge' from the embarrassment felt from the punishment received (Hanna, 2022). Literature exploring hypervigilance to threats also found that this behaviour was linked to avoidance as later signs of anxiety symptomology (Wessing *et al*., 2017). For instance, in my Mathematics and English lessons in primary school, I wanted so badly to have the voice to

ask the teacher to slow down, repeat something or explain something in more detail as outlined in the literature (Klingner & Vaughn, 1999). However, I felt silenced, and the longer I left it without speaking, the more alienated I became (as also found by Baroutsis *et al*., 2016). 'Masking' my words because I have learnt that my truth must be left unspoken (Hanna, 2021; Mazzei, 2011). Educators may 'desire' silence to indicate authoritative power and maintain privilege through students' silence (Mazzei, 2011). However, silence is often attributed to the fault of the individual student as not being engaged in learning; but both oppression and reflective engagement can also be silent (Delpit, 1988; Hanna, 2022; Su *et al*., 2023; Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004). "From the margins" (Smith, 1997, p. 113), I could see whose voice mattered and whose voices were silenced; therefore, educators need to recognise that "language is also a place of struggle" for marginalised students (Hooks, 1989, p. 16).

Although school was engulfed in silence and avoidance, my determination to succeed in education was high, so I enrolled at college at the age of 15. A positive step forward at this time was through a referral from a tutor, which led to me being diagnosed and receiving support for both my dyslexia and mental health (Dyspraxia diagnosed later). Dyslexia impacted my learning through difficulties with letter sounds, auditory memory difficulties and challenges in processing new information (Rose, 2009, p. 9). Mental health also contributed to my "emotional, psychological, and social well-being" (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). My Dyspraxia (which was not diagnosed until university) was already impacting my studies through difficulties in movement, speech and language,

organisation and planning in relation to thoughts, attention, memory, and time (Dyspraxia Foundation, 2022). After the diagnosis of dyslexia and mental health, my grades began to improve, and in turn, I was able to accept and talk openly about my DLN and how they made me who I am. The diagnosis of each condition did not just give me a label; it provided me with 'hermeneutical resources,' in the form of language, which enabled me to understand myself more, communicate how I had been feeling (Ferguson, 2025), and to heal (Herman, 2010). This new realisation gave me situated (Harding, 2004a) and subjugated knowledge (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) of the ways education and society situates students into groups based on ability and how the knowledge of the diagnostic assessor was taken as truth over my experience, revealing an 'epistemic preference' (Harding, 2004c) in education that prevented me from 'talking back' (Hooks, 2014). However, the challenges remained, and I did not reach the required grades to gain entry to HE; therefore, I decided to join the workplace instead.

After a long break from education, I decided to return to college as a mature student to enter university. A choice that I had voiced myself, illustrating the improvements I had made post-diagnosis and support:

> The first goal I set myself was to go back to college and try again to become a teacher ... I was finally making choices that put my wants and needs first. And it paid off. To my surprise, I was achieving top grades for my work. I felt so confused. How was it possible that I failed throughout school, just passing at college the first time around and getting top grades this time around? (Researcher's diary, Tuesday 30th August 2022).

My experience with voice in college contrasts highly with my experience of voice in primary and secondary education, and I appear to be using my voice to make choices for myself, which, through 'epistemic advantage' (Wylie, 2000), could have improved my educational attainment. I felt a shift towards becoming more confident in using my own voice, and it occurred to me during a reflection that, although I had made progress, I had a hunch that I was still learning those skills that I needed to use my voice when I entered HE. The reflection below highlights my inner dialogue about the hunches I had regarding the impact of DLN on my voice in HE:

> Perhaps, students like me are still disadvantaged by the past. Perhaps, we are still trying to navigate university life, the rules and expectations, whilst also trying to process who we are, what our needs are and how to ask for them (Researcher's diary, Tuesday 23rd August 2022).

Upon consulting the literature, I found that the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015, p. 33) recognises that young adults with DLN may be struggling to communicate and explains that "young people may be finding their voice for the first time ... and may need support in exercising choice and control over the support they receive." However, my late diagnosis of Dyslexia and Dyspraxia meant that I was older than the required age limit of 25 years old (or younger) to receive support under this guidance when I started HE (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015). I have illustrated that personal experience and policy have shown that some students, such as myself, are still trying to find their voice when they enter HE. It is for this reason that my initial engagement comes to an end, as I discover a question

of extreme focus: what is the experience of student voice for diverse students, and in what ways do students utilise their ISV? This question is deeply personal to my own experiences as outlined above and provides societal influence in HE regarding SV approaches.

I was able to recognise that the time was right for the immersion phase when my initial engagement, exploring my childhood and voice, had been completed. I began spontaneously exploring my experiences of voice in HE, and I soon realised that the depth of my exploration indicated that I had moved into the immersion phase. During the immersion period, I wish to explore in greater depth the reasons behind my silence regarding my DLN. At this point, my intuition directed me to further my knowledge and engagement by incorporating literature to action a further exploration of my silence and the reasons why my voice had begun to emerge.

Immersion:

The immersion phase enables the researcher to use “self-dialogue,” “self-search,” “tacit knowing”, and “intuition” to fully immerse themselves in the experience (Moustakas, 1990). For instance, the researcher could use focusing to explore the use of words, dreams, creativity, and/or nature to discuss autobiographical experiences (Moustakas, 1990). I intend to use the immersion phase to explore my DLN. As I delved deeper into my thoughts, I first revealed the emotionally traumatic experiences that led me to my lost voice. This is then followed by Brewer and Gardner’s (1996) theory of self-representation that incorporates voice as a central component in the social world across three relational focus

points: the “individual-self”, the “relational self” and the “collective self”. I reflected on the theory to identify whether my voice is used more or less in either of these three relational experiences (presented below). The “immersion” phase (Moustakas, 1990) is crucial for establishing the cause and reasoning behind my lost voice, an immersion of which will later illuminate potential ISV opportunities and recommendations.

Firstly, my initial engagement highlighted my fear of making mistakes, an emotion that has silenced my voice and shifted my ability to express myself. Although externally silenced to others, I have always been aware of an internal voice. I will now use self-dialogue to speak to my internal voice regarding the experience, questioning and examining it until I have assessed its meaning on me (Moustakas, 1990). To that end, I will explore my relationship with a fear of making mistakes or appearing bad and the impact this has had on my voice and on my silence. An interpretation of this is presented in artefact 2.1 below. Note that the writing in bold is me asking myself questions as the researcher, and the italicised writing is me responding as a co-researcher. Due to the sensitive nature of this topic and the self-search, counselling was being received as suggested by Sultan (2019) to support my mental health and, more importantly, to comply with ethics (discussed in more detail in later chapters).

Artefact 2.1: Self-dialogue – Trauma, fear, and my silenced voice created using self-dialogue (Researcher’s diary, Wednesday 24th August 2022).

What is it about mistakes that I fear the most?
I fear what they might say and how they might say it. I guess you could say that I fear the consequences. As a child, punishment felt very scary. I hated the look on people's faces when their anger was fuelled with loud aggression. Or people who would go on and on without creating a space for discussion, because then their words would just mash up into one in my head, the more they spoke. They would get louder as I sat silently waiting for them to pause for breath. They were mad at me, and even as I write this, anxiety fills my body, my heart wishing to escape from my chest as tears roll down my face. *I remember the first time that I was ignored for days. I do not even recall what I did wrong, but ignoring me pushed me into searching for new ways to be seen, to be heard. I would try anything. As a child, I tried to grapple with the feelings of emptiness in place of the feelings of love and the easiness of others to rip it away from me. The pain ached in my chest; I never knew that emotional pain could be felt so physically before, but since then, this is a feeling that I have become so familiar with. They were angry, but something was different this time. This was something new, and I was hooked on finding ways to get them to talk to me again. I wanted to say, "Listen to me, please listen to me. If you will not listen to me, then please at least look at me, notice me, see me," but I didn't. Instead, I remained silent.*
That does sound very scary for you. How did you manage that situation?
I tried to stay quiet at first, but I could not hold on to this for very long, and eventually I gave them what they wanted. They then left the room, whilst I was left to cry alone. It was not even my fault. They punished me for things that were not even my fault. I learnt at such a young age that everyone's mistakes were mine, and I did everything that I could to make things better: people-pleasing, problem-solving, and perfectionism to stop making mistakes. I learnt that I did not have a voice to tell them to stop. I would not dare for fear of the consequences. I learnt to make them happy, through solving their problems or taking responsibility for everyone else's problems, whilst I was left feeling unimportant and unworthy of any kind of positive attention. And I guess I was always seeking validation from them that never came. So, I learnt to take validation from all the things that I did for them instead.
How does this make you feel now, as an adult and as a student reflecting on that experience?
I *am devastated. I am shocked to see that my voice was lost this way, and I am upset to see that my traumatic experiences from my childhood are still impacting on me and my voice now. When it comes to speaking up for me, I am still coming from the place of that little girl wishing not to upset anyone. Perhaps I am still living in fear of that now. For instance, when I make mistakes now, I am quite rightly challenged about them, but when it is my fault or I feel that I will be blamed for it, I cannot help but cry like a child, apologise excessively and/or look for validation that the people involved are not angry with me. I still fear the anger and the silent treatment even now, and although I am beginning to use my voice more, sometimes I still feel like that little girl who is too scared to take on one more blame for a mistake that is not mine*

to take. As I write this, the fear overwhelms me, and tears start rolling down my face. This unhealthy cycle has become my identity now, and the fear of making mistakes still burns within me. And although I am beginning to make strides to regain my voice now, I still do not know how to do it appropriately and/or without impending self-doubt because I was never taught to use my voice to ask for help, wants and needs without the fear of reprisals.

(Source: created by Author, 2022, for inclusion in this thesis)

Trauma and voice

From my self-dialogue above, I became aware that I experienced emotional childhood trauma due to people's reactions to my mistakes, which has resulted in me responding with silence and avoidance (Herman, 2010) to seek "refuge" (Hanna, 2022). Hooks (2014; 1994) discusses how oppressive distress in childhood can lead to silence and the intense strength and determination it takes to continue utilising voice in such environments. My self-search led me to Austin (2001, p. 22), who defined childhood trauma as "any experience that causes the infant or child unbearable psychic [psychological] pain and/or anxiety". Anxiety that I was later diagnosed with when it became more pervasive, and one that was also experienced by Hooks (2014). Although trauma could be critically explored in other PhD research, this new revelation in my self-search left me eagerly encouraged to consult literature on the relationship between DLN and trauma. I discovered research exploring the life stories of people living with a learning difference, in which they discussed the emotional trauma felt by making mistakes at school that was misunderstood by others who fed back criticism in a 'harsh,' 'negative' manner (McNulty, 2003, p. 371). Trauma created by the way interactions are received increases students' levels of shame and internal self-criticism, based on what they perceive others think of them, leading them to utilise avoidant behaviours (Herman, 2010; McNulty, 2003). Education was not a safe place for me (Hooks,

1994); my self-search shows the deeply embedded structures run by those in power and those who are subjected to the outcomes of that power, confirming Smith's (1993) ideas that education is 'problematic'. All humans make mistakes or have specific weaknesses in society that lead them to hide/avoid them, hoping to be seen as 'normal', but hiding and avoidance have an expiration date, after which others will eventually identify the weaknesses, resulting in feelings of shame (Nussbaum, 2004). I began avoiding the feelings of shame by silencing myself, a process that is also evident in the literature (Gilbert, 2014; Herman, 2010; McNulty, 2003; Torralba *et al*., 2020).

Nussbaum (2004, p. 174) states that the society in which we live creates segregation of individuals, such as those who are more shamed than others, such as "people with visible diseases or so-called deformities, the mentally and physically handicapped". This is achieved through "social ostracism and disapproval ... thus shame has been throughout history a pervasive part of practices of punishment" (Nussbaum, 2004, p. 174). This is education "converting students to becoming white, middle-class and able-bodied" through discipline (Clarke *et al*., 2021, p. 197). Over time, diverse and marginalised students are subjugated by those in positions of power (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) through repeated discipline or ostracisation, eventually accepting our place in the margins (Hooks, 1989).

FST provides a perspective whereby researchers can uncover that all marginalised groups (for example, women, disabled, Black students) and those who have multiple characteristics (such as intersecting social class, race, gender and others) (crenshaw, 1989) in the 'matrix

of domination' (Collins, 2000) can be oppressed into silence (Crenshaw, 1989; Harding, 2004b; Hill Collins, 2000; Hooks, 2000). Silence is achieved by uncomfortable and authoritative questioning, body language, gestures and eye contact (Delpit, 1988). Failing to conform may lead to being labelled as naughty, disordered (Delpit, 1988) or disrespectful (Hanna, 2022).

I have realised that I have been influenced by the suppositions of others (through my people pleasing, problem solving, and perfectionism). Again, this was a performance enacted to keep me safe (Boler, 1999; Butler, 1988; 1990 Hanna, 2021; Hao, 2011). This introspection led me to the words of Rogers (1961) (the creator of person-centred counselling), who said that as his clients healed their trauma:

> He discovers how much of his life is guided by what he thinks he should be, not by what he is. Often he discovers that he exists only in response to the demands of others, that he seems to have no self of his own, that he is only trying to think, and feel, and behave in the way that others believe he ought to think, and feel and behave (Rogers, 1961, p. 110).

Further literature exploring voice and trauma was Austin (2001), who states that silence can mean wholly or partly withdrawing into one's own mind or expressing trauma through being loud. However, either choice leads the child to give up their "own voice", leading to their silence (Austin, 2001, p. 23). However, it is difficult to know which voice (loud or anxious) is the result of trauma (Van Der Kolk, 2014). However, these potential outcomes of trauma resonated with me in that I am cautious when using my voice for fear of upsetting others. Nettifee (2020, p. 294) spoke of this same phenomenon, calling it the "subconscious

association of danger with expression, learned from traumatising incidents or traumatically silencing environments" in which the voice (in those people who had previously experienced trauma) could sense feelings of danger.

Van Der Kolk (2014) states that, although the initial trauma has passed, the trauma can repeat itself for the individual, impacting their nervous system, resulting in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Those who experienced PTSD from one event, such as soldiers returning from war, may experience a heightened state of fear known as "hyperarousal", inescapable effects of the event known as "instruction", and numbness known as "constriction", but these symptoms tend to decrease within a few months (Herman, 2010, p. 35). However, in agreement with Van Der Kolk (2014), those who received inescapable fear and defensiveness from those in authority across many years, such as those kept in captivity may find that the feelings of being unsafe, difficulties in remembering the trauma (known as "dissociation"), emotional avoidance, "disconnection" from the self and relationships with others to persist for many years and this has been labelled as "Complex post-traumatic stress disorder" (CPTSD, Cloitre *et al*., 2009; Herman, 2010; 1992; Herman & Harvey, 1997). Herman (2010) argued that this new diagnosis exposed the impact of prolonged systematic abuse of power, leading to silence, distrust of those in positions of power, and a mix of seeking connection and avoidant behaviours. If educational institutions have become a place where diverse students experience trauma, this trauma would be inescapable and perhaps indefensible (Herman, 2010; 1992). These are the conditions that

many marginalised groups experience, heavily influenced by the power instilled by the "relations of ruling" in the guise of educational structures (Smith, 1999, pp. 14 - 53).

This replicates the sense of danger and repeated trauma I felt in my childhood from those in positions of power, concurring with feminist theorists who state that marginalised individuals are often oppressed by those in authority (Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004). It could have contributed to the diversity of factors that have led to my voice being silenced, and if this is the case, then my silenced voice would have an impact on SV processes in HE; therefore, further discussion of trauma and trauma recovery will continue throughout this work.

As I reflect on speaking up in class, for instance, I am reminded of the time when I am about to speak up, in those few minutes before, when I fear, like Hockings says, "making mistakes, being wrong, appearing stupid or not feeling it appropriate" as a result of my DLN (Hockings, 2011, p. 195). A similar embodied experience was felt by Hooks (2014), who was always concerned about making mistakes in their communication. Mazzei (2011) adds that silence is enacted from "fear of offending ... and fear of being marginalised" (Mazzei, 2011; 2008). Artefact 2.2 below expresses my internal thoughts when I am about to speak in class.

Artefact 2.2: Poem: Shut up! (Researcher's diary, Wednesday 24th August 2022).

> My heart.
> Swirling, whirling, hitting the floor.
> Something wrong is coming.
> Swirling, whirling, hitting the floor.

Shut up, shut up!
Think before you talk.

The noise in my head,
Telling me that I am useless.
Telling me that I am stupid.
Telling me that I am going to be wrong.
Shut up, shut up!
Think before you talk.

At these times, my voice would become shaky, breathy and accompanied by tears. However, it was not until this immersion phase (on or around the 24th August 2022) that I realised through my self-dialogue and associated academic literature that these were significant indicators of past trauma (Monti *et al*., 2021) and the lack of 'psychological safety' (Clark, 2020). However, Van Der Kolk (2014, pp. 189 - 190) says children who experience trauma are often given behavioural labels that do not adequately explain the person's symptoms and instead argues for the new diagnosis of "Developmental Trauma Disorder", describing the symptoms as the "pervasive pattern of dysregulation, problems with attention and concentration, and difficulties getting along with themselves and others ... with language processing". This sounds accurate for me because in those moments where I would want to speak, I would cognitively determine the impact of what I was about to say on myself and others, and whether the risks outweighed the gains, I would often decide to remain silent (Torralba *et al*., 2020).

However, Hockings (2011) states that the challenges students face regarding using their voice are related to the way their voice is delivered rather than the topic of conversation itself, which I find accurate, as I am more fearful of what I might say, rather than the conversation itself. For example, when I do speak, my voice does not always come out of my mouth as I planned in my head. Sometimes I am horrified with myself for interrupting others, not knowing when the person before me has finished speaking. Sometimes I become embarrassed as I stumble over my words, unable to think of the correct response quickly enough, or when my brain goes blank. This is because making conversational mistakes when answering in-class questions has often resulted in me being bullied, ridiculed, or disciplined by those in positions of power, depicting the hierarchical structures inherent in education (Belenky *et al*., 1986; Collins, 2000; Harding, 1991). I silenced myself to avoid further confrontation (Hanna, 2022) and have self-censored my emotions out of fear (Hanna, 2022; Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004). I internalised the negativity and subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) that I received from others because I believed them without question and internalised their reactions, as Esdale *et al*. suggest, into the form of an inner critic (Esdale *et al*., 2015). Van Der Kolk (2016, p. 2) added to this, stating that "survivors of trauma often begin to fear that they are damaged to the core and beyond redemption".

My reflections also concurred with McNulty's (2003, p. 371) in that they found that the other individuals in school questioned their DLN students, such as questioning their level of "intelligence, emotional state, and work ethic", simply because they made regular mistakes in education, such as in whole class reading lessons. Diverse students' credibility as a

knower is slowly diminished through experiencing 'epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2010), the process of which goes unnoticed by those in authority (Delpit, 2006; 1988; Harding, 1991). Diverse students learn to be the 'outsider within' (Collins, 2000; 1986), present in the room, but questions arise about our ability to be there.

Shame and voice

Clapton *et al*. (2018) agree, stating that students with learning differences are more likely to make mistakes in education and are therefore constantly subjected to feelings of shame. Shame can be attributed to being preoccupied with the negative feelings that others might think of us and/or internalised in relation to the negative thoughts that we hold about ourselves (Clapton *et al.*, 2018; Gilbert, 1997; 1998; 2003; Marriott *et al*., 2020). As Fricker (2010) pointed out, the more a diverse student is discredited, the more they internalise and question their own knowledge. Therefore, as mistakes multiply, the feelings of embarrassment and shame increase and the higher the risk of students developing lifelong trauma (McNulty, 2003). See artefact 2.3 below for a poem relating to shame.

Artefact 2.3: Poem: Silence, guilt, blame and shame (Researcher's diary, Wednesday 24th August 2022).

> Silence is the guilt I felt all those years ago
> Silence is the blame I received when I had no voice to say no.
> Silence is the fear of the reaction of others
> Silence is my protection, like a bed full of covers
> Silence is the shame that I felt within my inner child
> Silence is the action that prevents me from going wild

Silence is the clue that demonstrates my inner turmoil
Like steam rising from roasted chicken covered in foil
Inside, I am roasting, getting hotter and hotter
Not knowing how to say what I want in order to get better.

As the discussion and artefact 2.3 shows, "shame is a significant barrier to inclusion and contributes towards poor psychological health" for people with DLN (Marriott *et al*., 2020, p. 498) and to silencing in SV (McNulty, 2003). Lygo-Baker *et al.* (2019) state that hierarchy can create competitive voices whereby the loudest are heard and the marginal voices are lost, potentially leading to isolation and oppression of marginalised voices (Collins, 2000; Lygo-Baker *et al*., 2019; Smith, 1987). However, before I move on to reflecting on my time in HE, I would first like to reflect on whether my silenced voice is consistent in all areas of my life. To achieve this, I needed a theory that breaks down the voice into smaller, separate parts.

I came across Brewer and Gardner's (1996) theory of self-representation in the literature when searching for voice theories. This theory intrigued me because it suggests that people use their voice differently in various situations, including when speaking to themselves. They identified that we use our voice differently in three distinctive parts:

- the 'Individual self' (the way we view ourselves and our character)
- 'Relational self' (the way we interact with others)
- 'Collective self' (the way we recognise and interact as groups)

(Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

This theory is significant in researching SV in HE because I have found that I use my individual voice both internally, in my own thoughts, and externally, when interacting with others, such as in classroom contributions, assignments, presentations, group work, and conversations with tutors and peers (Canning, 2017). I used Brewer and Gardner's (1996) theory as a framework for an immersive experiential activity to identify the ways I self-represented in the three distinct parts. I wanted to determine whether I was more comfortable using my voice in some situations than others, to see if this information could support the conceptualisation of ISV. Table 2.2 (below) illustrates what I have uncovered, and I follow this table with implications for the research.

Table 2.2: Adapted Brewer and Gardner's (1996) self-representation theory to include my own voice. (Researcher's diary, Wednesday 24th August 2022).

Individual-self (The way we view ourselves)	**Relational self** (The way we interact with others)	**Collective self** (The way we recognise and interact as groups)
• Reflective • Always making mistakes • Stupid • Unimportant • Humorous • Unworthy of success • Not good enough **Voice -** • Negative self-talk • Internal dialogue • Self-doubt • Catastrophising	• Accommodating/ helpful • Problem-solver • Seeks validation from others • Gives lots of praise and reassurance to others • Fear upsetting others **Voice –** • Seeking external validation • Others' voices hold more weight	• Perfectionism to reduce risk of making mistakes • Accommodating/helping others to seek external validation • Independent to reduce appearing stupid • Inner negative dialogue that repeats concerns of the past **Voice –** • Not asking for help, wants or needs • Risk aversion • Externally motivated • Internal negative dialogue.

(Table created by Author, 2022, for inclusion in this thesis. Column headings derived from the work of Brewer and Gardner's (1996) self-representation theory. Content in each column represents the author's own interpretation and application of the theory.

Completing Table 2.2 required me to reflect on how I viewed myself and others in relation to my voice. I found that I represented my individual self with an internalised negative self-dialogue. In contrast, my relational and collective self-representation is much more externalised, as I accommodate others' wants and needs. My independence also limits my ability to ask others for support when I need it, presumably to prevent myself from confirming that I am bad or stupid; instead, I remain silent, hoping someone will notice. My sense of being in education became a performance (see Butler, 1988; 1990) of accommodating others' wants and needs above my own, to protect myself from further emotional pain that I had previously experienced due to discipline (Hanna, 2022). Arguably, humans place more importance on the 'individual self' and the "relational self" rather than the 'collective self', whereas the 'collective self' is unlikely to provide the individual with any direct benefits (Nehrlich *et al*., 2019). However, the 'relational self' and 'collective self' become important when society fails to meet the individual's needs (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Sedikides *et al*., 2011). It is through the collective group that advocacy is acquired; shifting back to the individual self when the requirements from society have been met (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Sedikides *et al*., 2011). This shows that both individual voice and collective voice are essential in SV processes in HE (Lygo-Baker *et al*, 2019). Brewer and Gardner's (1996) theory in relation to student voice processes in higher education is explored in more depth as I incubated my new knowledge below.

The implication for this research could mean that my silence has resulted in me not being able to use my own voice to direct my own education, for instance, to have the ability to

choose the course that I would like to do, rather than doing a course that was suggested to me by others, such as a careers advisor. This silence could also indicate that there may be other students with DLN who have faced similar challenges in SV processes, where they have also been unable to discuss their own student needs, such as with a student representative or through a survey. As Canning (2017) suggests, many of these personal concerns are discussed in university corridors and canteens with peers, or the student decides to keep their concerns to themselves. Silenced diverse learners may still be performing silence (see Butler, 1988) that has been learnt in previous educational settings from the oppressive structures that permeate education (Collins, 2000; Smith, 1987). A further implication could be that the SV becomes louder or stronger only when the collective group of students require support. FST offers a supportive lens, among other considerations, where individual and "collective consciousness" from diverse students' standpoints can be understood (Jameson, 2004). Once the experiences are shared, the co-researchers and I will be undertaking "consciousness-raising" (Sarachild, 1978). All these considerations and reflections will be conducted throughout this research. More specifically, these reflections could be helpful when discussing my firsthand experiences of HE SV processes, which I undertake in the following incubation phase.

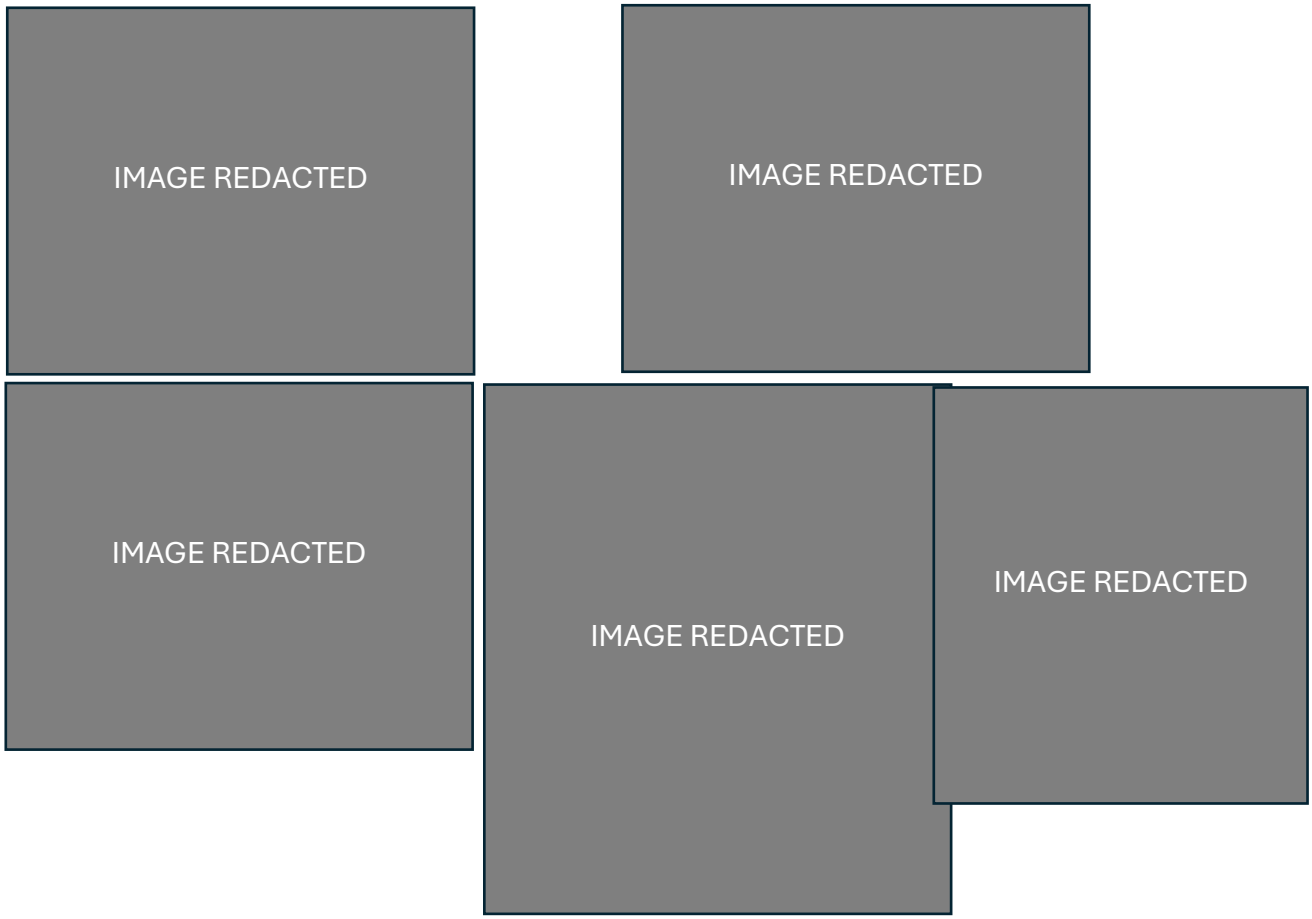
Incubation

Incubation is a phase in which the researcher withdraws from the "intense, concentrated focus on the question" to allow intuition and "the inner tacit dimension to reach its full

possibilities” that will lead to a new, insightful understanding of the experience (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28).

At first, I followed my body's desire for calmness, using meditation, colouring, poetry, and walking to distract my mind. Below in artefact 2.4 provides examples of my colouring:

Artefact 2.4: Colouring to incubate the knowledge I have gained (images from Mademoiselle, 2015) (Researcher's diary, Wednesday 25th August 2022).



(Source: Image redacted due to copyright restrictions. Original drawings adapted from Mademoiselle (2015); colour added by the Author (2022) for inclusion in this thesis. The redacted images included drawings from the colouring book. The author added colour to engage in a reflective, creative exercise.

Throughout the initial engagement and immersion phases, I have utilised literature and my own experience to present what my experience is in relation to being a student with DLN in HE and have provided a discussion relating to how I utilise my voice. However, it occurred to me during the "incubation" phase (Moustakas, 1990) that Sedikides *et al*. (2011) says that it is primarily the 'individual self' that is or should be more motivated to use their voice to seek out support. However, it has occurred to me that throughout my education, I have been silenced by the structures of hierarchy and the privileges afforded to some, allowing their voices to be heard, while mine was silenced in the margins (Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004a; Hooks, 1989). Therefore, before I can ascertain ISV for myself, I first need to incubate this thought further using introspection to identify the separate parts of exclusionary and inclusionary Student Voice (SV) practices currently being used in HE and the ways I have utilised my voice within them to identify potential areas of ISV.

When I enrolled in HE, I found myself preoccupied with searching for the right way to use my voice after remaining silent in education for so long. I tried a variety of SV activities by internally saying yes to myself for things that I would typically say no to, to see if the SV activities could amplify my confidence to use my voice. Activities such as student representatives (SR), surveys, and student co-creation projects are all examples of activities I tried. These student voice processes exist within institutions characterised by hierarchical structures that may marginalise diverse students' voices (Hooks, 1989). Therefore, this research will now take you through each of these activities to discuss my experiences in relation to amplifying my voice, whilst making links to academic literature on voice, but

more specifically to Fricker's (2010) "epistemic injustice", Brewer and Gardner's (1996) self-relational theory and Feminist Standpoint Theory (Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004a).

Student representatives

My first experience of SV was becoming a SR (first in college and second in HE). Having had trouble expressing my voice in previous educational settings, I felt that being a SR would enable me to find and become more confident in using my voice because the role is primarily controlled by students for students (Bovill *et al*., 2016). SR's main task is to compile the collective experience of the student cohort and share the information with staff members during designated committee meetings (Carey, 2013a; Carey, 2013b; Young & Jerome, 2020), thereby impacting "internal decision-making processes" (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013, p.1442). Information is then relayed back to students to create a "feedback loop" (Young & Jerome, 2020).

SR seeks the views of the collective cohort to impact change, indicating that the collective self is in action (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Carey, 2013a; Carey, 2013b; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). However, I would also argue that I was enacting the relational self when I built relationships between myself, peers, and staff members (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Carey, 2013a; Carey, 2013b) as I learnt to use my voice effectively. Therefore, intuitively, I believe speaking on behalf of others was the enabler in me applying for the position, as I was considerably less confident speaking up on behalf of myself at the time, potentially due to my self-doubt, and was potentially seeking validation from others, as can be seen in artefact

2:4. Revealing that the 'relational self' is more significant to me, just as Nehrlich *et al*. (2019) said. It was the experience of speaking for and with others that increased my confidence and heightened my interest in curriculum design and voice (Krutkowski, 2017). In taking on the role of SR, I regained some confidence in using my own voice that began changing the way I viewed my 'individual self' (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). See my reflection below regarding the ways being a SR impacted my individual self.

> There was also an emphasis on student voice, which I had never seen before, and as a result, the class needed to appoint a student representative. I thought for a moment about the way I was beginning to find my own voice and the ways that becoming a student representative might have helped me along my journey. I was still apprehensive about it, though, but I took on the role well, collected the feedback from my peers and reported this back to staff members, whose response I then fed back to the students. It was exciting to watch as my confidence to use my voice grew. I might still be learning to use my voice to speak up on behalf of myself, but I was very able to speak up on behalf of others. I learnt so much in respect of building my own confidence and self-esteem during this year, and becoming a student representative became a pivotal moment where my own voice developed exponentially. My confidence began to grow so much that I was able to speak in class, answer questions and suggest alternatives without feeling like I would be ridiculed. I felt that people respected what I had to say, and this changed the way I interacted and viewed my voice. Within that first year back at college, I had become an active member of college life through participating in class and across the college as a student representative. It felt so good (Researcher's diary, Tuesday 30th August 2022).

Having previously viewed my helping others as an unhealthy relational act, such as people pleasing. As a SR, I was beginning to question whether there were negatives to speaking up on behalf of others. Alcoff (1991, p.6) explains that speaking on behalf of others is "unethical, and politically illegitimate" because a person's identity and social differences mean that they may view the world differently than the people they are speaking for, and

thus, may give a different account. This may only create a 'partial perspective' (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) whereby students who are diverse and/or have experienced trauma may find this action distressing and/or performative (see Butler, 1988). Therefore, SV processes that focus on "releasing voices" and/or "rescuing voices" by methods of "speaking for, or on behalf of, others" can be misconstrued without the use of more inclusive methods (McLeod, 2011, pp. 182 - 183). However, I would disagree with McLeod (2011) in that ISV could be witnessed from the perspective of some students, particularly those students who are less confident in having their voices heard (Carey, 2013a; Carey, 2013b), such as students with DLN who "might lack the confidence, willingness or ability to speak up for themselves" (Carey, 2013a, p. 78). For instance, research suggests that students with autism find communicating with others a constant challenge, yet as this self-search unfolded, it became clear to me that it is not just students with autism who experience discomfort in communicating (Bovill *et al*., 2011; Gillespie-Lynch *et al*., 2017). I, too, have often wondered whether the combination of power, my own trauma and co-occurring learning needs silenced my voice.

Student representatives and the role of power

In SR, power can be seen from staff members in their ability to choose questions for students to answer, making it more challenging for me to feedback negative responses because I perceived that negative responses would result in me receiving a lower grade as the staff members who I communicated with still marked my assessments, potentially resulting in incomplete feedback (Canning, 2017; Carey, 2013b; Cook-Sather, 2020). In

addition, suggestions made by students were unlikely to be implemented without the agreement of staff members, proving that staff members still hold much of the control (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013; Carey, 2013a). Staff can then prevent elements of change from occurring, which means that the collection of SV becomes a tokenistic gesture dictated by policy and does not necessarily imply that the SV will be listened to or actioned (Carey, 2013a; Carey, 2013b). Therefore, according to Collins (2000; 1986), the students become the 'outsider within' who advise staff on required changes, but these are not always actioned because members of the hierarchy have the final say, subjugating the knowledge of students (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004).

Fricker's (2010) ideas state that SR take on the role of "informant", imparting information to another. However, changes cannot occur when the other (in this case, staff members) only see the speaker as an "objectified" "source of information" that staff members want to hear without involving students in further discussion, leading to "testimonial injustice" (Fricker, 2010, pp. 132 – 133). "Testimonial injustice might, in some social contexts, take the form of silencing" (Fricker, 2010, p. 140). This indicates that staff members are also included within the collective group, arguably to ensure that SV engagement is actively supported. However, more needs to be done to provide students with greater control, such as placing them at the heart of the decision-making process (Carey, 2013b; Trowler, 2010). As Harding (2004a) notes, all knowledge must start from those who are marginalised, such as diverse students, rather than those who are privileged, as they often see systems more clearly. I had implemented one such idea with colleagues (see Sewell *et al*., 2020, p. 81),

whereby we used 'solution-focused circles' with staff members and SR to collaboratively develop solutions to problems experienced by the student cohort, which received positive feedback from participants. I was also involved in the solution-focused discussions when I later became a SR myself and was supported by the instruction for others to remain silent whilst I was speaking (see Sewell *et al*., 2020). This enabled me to say all I had to say without being distracted.

Student surveys

Another student voice method that I tried was completing surveys during and at the end of my modules/courses, these were "student satisfaction surveys" (SSS) and the "National Student Survey" (NSS) that focused on consulting large numbers of students to obtain their views that is hoped will improve practice (Bennett & Kane, 2014; Carey, 2013a; Harvey *et al*., 1997; Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007). These surveys situate the student as 'consumers' of education with the ability to complain when the service of education is not delivered with satisfaction so that university practice can be adapted (Bennett & Kane, 2014; Canning, 2017; Carey, 2013a; Carey, 2013b; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013; Lygo-Baker *et al*., 2019; Seale, 2010; Sewell *et al*., 2020; Winstone *et al*., 2021).

I can understand HE needs to use surveys, because surveys can be sent out to large numbers of students; however, a low response rate is now somewhat expected (Boerkamp, 2023; Williams & Brennan, 2003). My self-search revealed that men and minority ethnic groups are less likely to complete surveys due to biased experiences and feedback (Porter &

Umbach, 2006). However, it is unclear whether this remains the case, as I was unable to find more recent research in this area. A further concern is that there are too many surveys; for example, the NSS roll-out might coincide with the SSS, which has been found to cause confusion and 'fatigue' (Canning, 2017; Seale *et al*., 2015; Sewell *et al*., 2020; Williams & Brennan, 2003; Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007). I also felt that the many surveys were accompanied by pressure from staff to complete them, and sometimes, I did not want to, or my memory would fail, and I would forget.

Despite surveys avowed "student-centred approaches" (Maunder *et al*., 2013, p. 141) and 'inclusivity' (Williams & Brennan, 2003, p. 61), at times, I was reluctant to complete surveys as these presented challenges to me when trying to understand the complexity of words used, questions formulated and potential responses (Bennett & Kane, 2014; Canning, 2017; Furedi, 2010; Mann, 2008; McIntyre *et al*., 2005; Race, 2004; Robinson & Taylor, 2007). My Researcher's diary expresses this:

> I also panicked that I filled it out wrong. What if I read a question wrong? Or did not understand it completely? ... when the surveys moved from the paper format to now being online. I really wish I had someone explain to me the new format ... unable to ask for help because I do not want to look stupid or incapable. However, I can also see that from not asking for help, I am making mistakes anyway, and therefore, I am looking incapable either way (Researcher's diary, Thursday 1st September 2022).

I remember struggling when the university shifted from using paper surveys to online versions. My lack of organisational skills meant that I needed time and support to be shown how to complete the new format, but this was not accommodated for. Therefore, accuracy

and validity can only be proclaimed when students' individual differences and qualitative voices are also accounted for (Bennett & Kane, 2014; Grebennikov & Shah, 2013; Hamshire *et al*., 2017; Lerer & Talley, 2010). I also found that the quantitative surveys, particularly those that required boxes to be ticked or scales to be generated, did not fully elicit the full extent and depth of my experiences.

Surveys like the SSS and NSS have also been found in the past to be exclusive of students with DLN, as they tend not to ask questions relating to services which provide students with academic and emotional support; meaning that these students' satisfaction results are likely to be lower in comparison to other students (Lerer & Talley, 2010). This was certainly my experience when completing the surveys, as I was not asked any questions relating to the 1:1 support I had received, the inclusivity of the environment, or the teacher. This presents the 'god trick' as outlined by Haraway (2004) in which data is not gathered by anyone nor from nowhere in relation to students' diverse experiences, as there is a biased preconception that all students understand the survey in the same way and have the same experiences. The outcome from the surveys appears to exclude diverse students' situated knowledge (Collins, 2000) whilst preferring more generalised data.

Surveys and the role of power

Fricker's (2010, p. 153) ideas suggest that this inequality and exclusion, resulting in being misunderstood, means that students with DLN are "hermeneutically marginalised," a phenomenon that can affect one aspect of our identity or multiple identities. Thus,

endorsing that the validity, accuracy, and inclusivity of surveys can be contested (Bennett & Kane, 2014; McLeod, 2011).

My intuition tells me that students with DLN may have a diverse set of individual experiences in HE that quantitative surveys, often used in the past to gather the collective SV, have yet to discover (Darwin, 2021; Hamshire *et al*., 2017). Suggesting that the collective voice of students is being heard (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). The individual student does not interact with staff to develop solutions; therefore, students are positioned as passive learners with little control over changes made to the institution (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Nehrlich *et al*., 2019; Winstone *et al*., 2021). If students are included in surveys but are not part of real change, students will begin to accept that their feedback is subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) in a process that is symbolic and performative (see Butler, 1988) in a hierarchical system rather than leading to real change. However, Nehrlich *et al*. (2019) suggest that the individual self is considered more important in identity work than the collective group. Therefore, the individual needs of students need to be addressed.

Student co-creation projects

The final student voice method that this thesis will cover is co-creation (Bovill *et al*., 2016). Definitions of co-creation situate 'students as partners' (Seale, 2016), which emphasises a "collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally" in developing curriculum design and pedagogy (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014, pp. 6 - 7). Thereby, positioning co-creation partnerships as utilising Brewer and Gardner's (1996) 'relational self' and Gergen's (2009) theory of 'relativism' to socially construct new

knowledge through equal participation between staff and students (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014). Co-creation then becomes a HE pedagogy that enables students to become 'active agents' in their educational experience (Bovill *et al*., 2016) whilst potentially actively breaking down power relations between students and staff (Felten *et al*., 2019; Kehler *et al*., 2017). Certainly, this was the case for me when I was able to explore the impact of "solution-focused approaches" with SR and influence future practice (see Sewell *et al*., 2020). I reflect on my experiences of using my voice within the co-creation project below:

> My voice is often wrong and unpredictable. It is not reciprocal in its efforts to join the conversation. It just continues to interrupt the flow of conversations. I never know when someone is about to finish their turn, and I always forget what I am going to say, so I try my best to get it out of my mouth as quickly as possible. It is this repetition of being wrong, of being bad, that feeds on the power of not feeling good enough ... Other times, I remained silent. I did not completely project my voice to make my inner thoughts known, even though I had recognised my mistakes, but rather I just kept them to myself, furthering my self-doubt and inner critic. Are these examples of equal voice? Probably. Equity of voice, perhaps, is needed here (Research dairy, Saturday 3rd September 2022).

However, later conceptualisations of co-creation drop the notions of 'reciprocity' and 'equality' (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014) to say that partnership "occurs when staff and students work collaboratively with one another to create components of curricula and/or pedagogical approaches" (Bovill *et al*., 2016, p. 196). Perhaps in this definition of partnership, reciprocity can be exchanged for the idea of togetherness and collaboration. However, the absence of equality, particularly in relation to students with DLN, needs further investigation. This could be because, as de Bie (2020) states, power is so clearly defined between the hierarchical positions of student and staff members within the

university. However, for those who are diverse or have experienced trauma, participating may simply become another performance (Butler, 1988). To 'do' what we have been conditioned to do (Butler, 1988). To remove fear by being silent (Mazzei, 2008) and to conform to the 'desires' of educators in ways that maintain educators' authoritative power (Mazzei, 2011). However, this does not consider students' emotions, sense of self, and individuality (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004). When I discuss equity of voice above, what I mean is that HE actively diversifies SV processes to enable students to express their individual, authentic voices, rather than creating a culture of hierarchy (Carey, 2013a).

However, I cannot discredit the advancement that co-creation projects have made for students with DLN and their voices. For instance, situating DLN students in partnerships has been shown to increase their voice when speaking on behalf of their intersectional characteristics against inequalities and exclusions (Cook-Sather, 2020), which adds to a stronger, more accepting, and relational identity (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014). When I worked on a research project exploring mature students' mental health, I could identify myself and my experience (as a mature student) within the findings of the research (see Sewell *et al*., 2023). Therefore, it is in my view that students with DLN are better placed than students without DLN to respond to co-creation projects, particularly so when those projects relate to students with DLN, given that being a student with DLN is an experience with which they will be familiar (Bovill *et al*., 2016).

However, staff might debate involving students with DLN in co-creation (Bovill *et al*., 2016). Moreover, if involved, staff may not always provide inclusive practice for individual students'

diverse characteristics (Bovill *et al*., 2016; Mercer-Mapstone *et al*., 2021). On the other hand, staff members who actively seek out students with DLN for co-creation projects risk co-creation becoming tokenistic rather than genuinely involving students who have yet to experience the same positivity and inclusion as other students (de Bie, 2020), perhaps due to conjecture. Students with DLN are explicitly looking for staff to be relaxed and flexible in co-creation projects (Mercer-Mapstone, 2021), whereby the true complexity of the experiences of students with DLN can be shared (de Bie, 2020). An example of this was conducted by Cook-Sather *et al*. (2019), who positioned students with DLN as observers of exclusionary practices within classrooms, empowering students with DLN to speak up from their diverse experiences and prowess. "This example epitomises how partnership becomes a space within which gaps of miscommunication between multiple identities can be spanned" (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2019, p. 25).

My experience with co-creation projects was very positive, as I felt I had a voice and was heard regarding the projects themselves. However, I do remember struggling with the organisation required due to my dyspraxia and not fully understanding how much work I should do/not do in relation to the tasks required. For example, I moved through the data analysis process much too early compared to my research partners (see Sewell *et al*., 2020). Why did I move so quickly? Why did I not clarify this with my lead research partner? Perhaps the hierarchical power dynamic between student and staff prevented me from seeking more clarity, or possibly my resistance stemmed from the fear of being labelled as "ill-equipped" (Seale *et al*., 2015, p. 547). This shows that, despite methods for collecting

students' voices, students with DLN continue to experience inequalities in HE in terms of using their voice (Canning, 2017; Hockings, 2011). Therefore, continuing to replicate the silencing of DLN students.

Co-creation projects and the role of power

These inequalities of voice could be the result of "systematic hermeneutic injustice" that is perpetuated by "structural inequalities of power" (Fricker, 2010, p. 156). If co-creation projects primarily serve to improve the university, the impact of "intersectionality" (Crenshaw, 1989) within the 'matrix of domination' (Collins, 2000) continues to shape the diverse experiences of students. However, if universities work to improve the situated and embodied experiences (Collins, 2000; Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) that diverse students feel, then student voice projects can be more inclusively reimagined. As I reflect on this idea and on the other topics I have explored in my initial engagement and immersion phase, I feel that I have experienced trauma from hierarchical figures (who may be unaware of this trauma) in conjunction with my DLN that has silenced my voice, such as from caregivers in the home environment, educators and peers. Therefore, it is possible that the issues relating to my silencing could be a result of both power and/or my own past insecurities. In either case, I have illustrated that the use of hierarchical approaches for obtaining SV, as discussed above, may be reproducing this trauma and, in turn, reproducing the inequalities that students with DLN have experienced throughout their educational journey (Clegg, 2011). I reflect on this below and on HE's ability to understand my experiences:

> Hierarchical power can encourage action and participation. Such as encouraging me to take part in co-creation projects, but ultimately, empathy for the ways I use

> my voice can only be held by others who sit within my perspective, and understanding can only be understood from the individuals that have had the courage to voice their experiences (Researcher's diary, Saturday 3rd September 2022).

The impact of student voice processes in providing Inclusive Student Voice

Findings from my critical analysis above indicate that staff members continue to retain significant power (Bovill & Bully, 2011; Carey, 2013a; Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). Despite efforts to gather the student voice, the standpoint (Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b; Smith, 1999) of diverse students continues to be excluded, reproducing the 'matrix of domination' whereby diverse and "intersectional" characteristics (Crenshaw, 1989), such as class, ethnicity, gender, and disability, continue to be marginalised and silenced (Collins, 2000). Seale (2010) states that little research has been conducted to understand the impacts of power in SV work, and ten years later, Cook-Sather (2020) continues to agree, stating that power imbalances are difficult to remove from students' participation because staff members are the persons responsible for marking students' assessments and for maintaining quality. Therefore, students' experiences with DLN are ignored, silenced, or spoken for them (Alcoff, 1991). As a result, some students' voices are 'lost' through low response rates, the filtering of experiences and through a reluctance from staff members to position them as co-creators (Bovill *et al*., 2016; Williams & Brennan, 2003; Young & Jerome, 2020). Therefore, it can be surmised that

diverse voices are included in the theoretical space but have yet to be enacted in practice, illuminating that diverse voices continue to be subjugated in education (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) to the safety of silence (Hanna, 2021; Mazzei, 2011). Therefore, HE needs to become a safe place for students with DLN by providing students with the opportunity to build confidence in voicing their own preferences (Mann, 2001). Hooks (2014) outlined the healing properties of 'talking back' in a safe capacity, and therefore, it is essential to establish an inclusive student voice approach. If students with DLN are to be positioned in SV approaches, such as co-creation projects, then identifying and understanding the impact of silencing on the DLN student cohort would also need to be recognised (de Bie, 2020).

All students and staff need to understand the "complex interplay of various factors" affecting student voice (Thiel, 2019, p. 548), particularly in relation to students with DLN and the ways their individual voice is processed through the methods described above (a discovery that this research aims to find). For instance, many of the methods for collecting SV in HE involves the gathering of the universal student experience from the collective and relational student cohort, instead of focusing attention on the individual student (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Kinchin & Kinchin, 2019; Swain & French, 1998), but as stated previously, students with accompanying DLN are likely to experience the world differently than students without additional needs (Stoller, 2018). I have gleaned some insights about this through my discussions on trauma above. The challenge, therefore, is to develop feedback processes in HE that recognise all singular voices instead of focusing only on the collective

group (Lygo-Baker *et al*., 2019; Messiou, 2019) to enable all students to cease performing silence and instead utilise their “authentic self-expression" (Butler, 2011, p. 129).

Swain and French (1998) propose that SV can be interpreted in two ways: one that can be attributed to the collective group, and the other that can be attributed to the individual. It is, therefore, imperative that individual students are afforded the capacity and tools to position themselves as experts in their own learning journeys (McLeod, 2011) so that a community is built upon valuing individual characteristics and voice (Clegg, 2011). HE also needs to understand that SV processes are much more nuanced than simply giving voice to students as a whole group; they should, in fact, utilise a more pluralistic terminology (Clegg, 2011), such as ‘students’ voices’ (Canning, 2017; Lygo-Baker *et al*., 2019). Furthermore, Lygo-Baker *et al.* (2019, pp. 1-3) stated that “voice” is represented by more than “noises made” and can include such things as students' “actions”, “participation, and even through their silence”. I am also aware, through my autoethnographic research above, that a much more informative voice can be present within the student's inner thoughts or perhaps during an informal conversation with peers and staff; yet, these are often not captured (Canning, 2017).

Personal and collective inclusive student voice strategies

Student Voice can be beneficial to students who have experienced trauma by ‘talking back’ (Hooks, 2014). Nettiffee (2020, p. 294) says that to move through feelings associated with trauma, a person needs to be able to bring their uncomfortable feelings to the surface of ‘consciousness’ through dialogue with others whom they consider to be safe. However,

Nettiffee (2020) suggests that voice has the capacity to detect when a person is safe or unsafe to progress healing with, such as in a therapeutic environment. However, if I have come to perceive those in hierarchical positions as unsafe due to my trauma (Herman, 2010), this fear from my childhood may extend to HE staff. Austin (2001) states that building trusting collaborative partnerships is one way to move through trauma. Therefore, collaborative HE co-creation projects could be one solution to addressing the lost voice of diverse students if they can provide a transformational space in which students can 'talk back' (Hooks, 2014).

A further solution for students who have experienced shame could benefit from learning self-compassionate techniques, such as recognising their own strengths, building resilience, reducing the feelings of judgement from bullying, and to reduce the need to compare themselves to others all within a supportive and safe community (Clapton *et al*., 2018; Esdale *et al*., 2015; Gilbert, 2009; 2010, 2014; Gilbert & Irons, 2005). Staff can go further by removing the shame felt from making mistakes and ridicule by positioning those experiences as opportunities to learn and for students to question their own thoughts as part of an internal dialogue with themselves and/or staff members without the fear of judgement (Brown, 2016; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Praise can also provide students with the reassurance that achieving small tasks after failure and speaking up, even if you are wrong, is also commendable (Esdale *et al*., 2015). Staff can provide students with empathic 'psychological safety' that results in students who can "take risks, raise problems, disagree, ask questions, and admit mistakes" knowing that they will not be negatively judged for

speaking up (Torralba *et al*., 2020, p. 668). With the support of staff, students can begin to understand that the traumatic experiences and fear that they feel in the body and mind could be due to the lack of support received as a child (Austin, 2001; Hooks, 2014; Van Der Kolk, 2014).

As my reading into exploring students' mental health and trauma comes to an end. I now move on to illuminating and providing a critical discussion for a further cause for students' lost voice, which will become known as "individuation" (Herman, 2010; Jung, 1971, reprinted 2014).

Illumination

The next phase of "illumination" considers a theme that comes into the researcher's awareness through "tacit knowing" and "reflectiveness," which produces new knowledge and/or challenges that contradict previous knowledge (Moustakas, 1990). My illumination phase begins to illuminate another potential challenging process regarding the inclusive voice of diverse students, known as individuation. This closer inspection leads me to explore existing literature further.

Batchelor (2006, 2014) states that students with diverse characteristics have a limited capacity to use their own individual voice for independent gains, preferring to follow the thoughts and feelings of others rather than taking a stand on their own. Jung says that the "individual" is what exists within us that has been influenced by the collective awareness

(labelled as our “identity”) (Jung, 1971, reprinted 2014). Feminists call this the “collective consciousness”, meaning the shared experiences and injustices gained from the systems of power that influence the formation of diverse students' standpoint (Jameson, 2004). It is also acknowledged that the phenomenon is explored in Critical Race Theory, which has examined the shared experiences of racial discrimination (Clay & Lalas, 2023); therefore, it may have implications for other marginalised groups. Once these shared experiences are shared in dialogue with another, they become a form of “consciousness-raising” that liberates voices (Sarachild, 1978). Although there is considerable literature regarding identity development, my introspection led me to explore Jung’s definition of “identity”, which, in its simplest form, refers to the way a person conforms to society (Jung, 1971, reprinted 2014). In discussing conformity, I will illuminate the “hidden” parts of a structural system run by power (Harding, 1991). “Conformity” is often unconscious but is responsible for the way groups of people are treated similarly, such as through collective reasons for disciplining a child/person (Jung, 1971, reprinted 2014). On reflection, this could mean that collective methods of collecting the SV, therefore, would only be obtaining the voice of the ‘collective unconscious’ from a student who could still potentially be conforming to society (Jung, 1971, reprinted 2014). I have acknowledged previously that diverse students have learnt to conform (Hooks, 1994) through silence by “masking” their words (Hanna, 2021; Mazzei, 2011) because if they had not, students would be at risk of being labelled as naughty (Delpit, 1988) or disrespectful (Hanna, 2022). Highlighting the performative action being enacted in education as a response to structural power (Boler, 1999; Butler, 1990; Ellsworth,

1997; 1992; Hao, 2011). This piece of work has already argued for moving away from the collective SV methods towards the voice of the individual.

This led me to explore literature that suggests that students experience a lack of individuality (Dewey, 2011; Perry, 1970, reprinted in 1999). Jung (1971, reprinted 2014) also refers to the term 'Individuality' which includes how our conscious identity is different to others who sit within the "collective unconscious", a move away from conformity (Hooks, 1994) to one of "talking back" (Hooks, 2014) in a system that "desires" silence from marginalised groups (Mazzei, 2011). Diverse students are the "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986), in which we are present but expected to be silent, "seen and not heard" (Hanna, 2022, p. 24). To heal from silence is "problematic" (Smith, 1987) because education has normalised the silencing and conformity of marginalised students.

However, one such approach could include "separating from primary dependence on parents to reliance on self" and has sometimes been referred to as the "individuation" stage (DiTommaso *et al.,* 2003, p. 303). For individuation to occur, individuals must become truly independent in mind and emotions from others without the potential consequences of complete "detachment" (Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002). Students whose parents provided more comfort during the individuation stage were better adjusted for building relationships in post-16 education (Lapsley & Edgerton, 2002; Rice *et al*., 1990), as these young adults had healthily mastered autonomy and emotional regulation (Herman, 2010). DiTommaso *et al*. (2003, p. 310) found that "social and emotional expressivity ... indicated that these

individuals were more comfortable with verbally expressing their feelings, beliefs, and attitudes", enabling students with high expressive skills to individuate securely.

Those students who independently individuated from their parents were more likely to succeed in education because their need for individuation was encouraged by parents who provided good emotional reassurance and role modelling (Hoffman, 1984; Quintana & Kerr, 1993). However, the opposite occurs in students with insecure individuation types who, because of their determined desire and longing to gain emotional recognition from their parents, lack the necessary social skills to form meaningful relationships with others, impacting their mental health and educational attainment (DiTommaso *et al*., 2003; Herman, 2010; Hoffman, 1984; Teyber, 1983). This confirms Dewey's (2011) suggestion that gaining one's own independent voice involves suffering because it requires the individual to move away from their parents' thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Fraser and Tucker (1997) found that students who experienced difficulties in individuating also experienced difficulties in solving their own problems, leading to poor mental health. In contrast, students who individuated successfully were given the necessary space by their parents to gain confidence in solving their own problems.

However, when Jung (1971, reprinted 2014; 1953, reprinted 2010; 1959, reprinted with new material 2014) referred to 'individuation', he described a process of revisiting one's own childhood as seeking to heal the emotions of the child within, and in doing so, all childhood behaviours, such as conforming to a persona, will decrease. I feel more intuitively connected to this definition because my childhood behaviours of silence and conforming

cannot simply be rectified by emotionally separating from my parents; instead, I do feel as though my inner child needs healing from within. Although healing the child within can be a challenging and painful process because it requires an intense self-understanding, Jung does not say how this can be achieved (Jung, 1971, reprinted with new material in 2014).

It is therefore recommended that HE staff familiarise themselves with the impact of individuation on these students (suggestions below), to teach students the techniques required for successful problem-solving, and to allow them to voice their own preferences regarding their education (Fraser & Tucker, 1997). To achieve this, students need options to practice utilising their voice by 'talking back' (Hooks, 2014), whether independently or with the support of another, to fully individuate (Dewey, 2011). The 'epistemic advantage' (Wylie, 2004) that diverse students have acquired can provide universities with a unique perspective, one that can create a space for healing and learning. However, this would mean moving away from the notion of the 'god trick' (Haraway, 2004) to accepting the voices and standpoints of diverse learners as a source of knowledge (Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b; Smith, 1999). This could be facilitated in the form of workshops, potentially being run by specialist HE staff, whereby feelings associated with separateness from parents are worked through, providing students with alternative coping strategies to university stressors, and to make independent choices that do not reflect those of their parents (Fraser & Tucker, 1997; Rice *et al*., 1990). Although, I am unsure whether this is the role of the university, the suggestions made could help to support students struggling with their mental health, such as depression, anxiety, denial and the fear of rejection can be moderated whilst maintaining relationships

with parents to provide the necessary modelling and emotional reassurance that students need to increase their confidence in using their own voice (Geuzaine *et al*., 2000; Rice *et al*., 1990; Quintana & Kerr, 1993). It is possible that the suggested approaches discussed here may not apply to all DLN students; therefore, exploring DLN students' perspectives within or past this assumed stage could illuminate the degree to which their voice is their own and not influenced by others.

Baxter Magolda (2008) states that to use one's own voice does not require a person to separate from others, but rather for individuals to construct their own authentic self. Baxter Magolda (2008) discusses an approach called “self-authorship” throughout their work, which intrigued me as a concept because this could be used as another approach (and a possible solution) to supporting diverse students in gaining their voice (discussed in more detail below). I will continue my self-search through an explication of this new approach and the ways it can support students in using their voice in HE.

Explication

The “explication” phase explains the insights gained in the “illumination” phase above, and makes use of “focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure" in the development of new potential themes (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). As stated above, I wish to use the explication stage to discuss Baxter Magolda's (2008) “self-authorship” to encourage diverse students to use their voice.

I argue now for students to have more individual autonomy and voice over their HE journeys. That is to begin ‘talking back’ (Hooks, 2014) and to remove the internalised subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) enacted because of students' “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989) inside the ‘matrix of domination’ (Collins, 2000). This oppression has led to the silence, masking, and conforming of diverse students (Hanna, 2021; Herman, 2010; Hooks, 1994; Mazzei, 2011). However, through my self-discovery, in the same way as Bovill *et al*. (2016) say, I am not advocating that students should have complete control over all university processes, as there is a benefit to lecturers having subject expertise. I am, however, arguing for the removal of ‘epistemic injustice’ (Fricker, 2010) that enables students to have the tools, ‘hermeneutical resources or approaches needed to make suggestions when navigating their own educational pathway in areas that affect them (Ferguson, 2025). For instance, students can select, through ‘talking back’ (Hooks, 2014), the learning outcomes of an assignment or participate in small-group (or individual) investigative work activities that can be used to teach their peers and/or for assessments (Bovill *et al*., 2016). Baxter Magolda (1999b, p. 630) states, “Higher Education has a responsibility to help young adults make the transition from being shaped by society to shaping society”. One such pedagogical approach that incorporates students finding their voice is called “self-authorship,” a concept initially developed by Kegan (1994) to explain the process by which students internally and externally assemble their individual thoughts and feelings to make their own decisions.

Baxter Magolda (1999a; 2001; 2008) uses “self-authorship” to create a pedagogy for post-16 education, whereby students are encouraged to cognitively (epistemologically and knowledge-wise) learn the process of making sense of their world using their own thoughts within an exchange of “intrapersonal” relational activities with others. Baxter Magolda (1999a, pp. 7–8) stated that self-authorship involves “creating the developmental conditions that allow them [students] to generate their own views ... their minds, their voices” and make decisions to manage the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of becoming a fully functional adult (Kegan, 1994). An approach that moves away from a subjugated voice (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) towards an authentic voice (Hooks, 2014).

Baxter Magolda (2001) developed a theory of self-authorship that typically occurs between the ages of 20 and 29 years and becomes more secure between 30 and 39 years old, which coincides with the period of university education and the decision to attend. Baxter Magolda (2008, pp. 279–281) identified three phases, which are illustrated in Diagram 2:2 below. However, these phases were later expanded on by Baxter Magolda and King (2012) to show more phases in which self-authoring becomes possible; these can be found in Table 2.3 below:

Table 2.3 – The process of “self-authorship” (Baxter Magolda, 2001; 2008; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012).

Name of the phase	How the individual implements it	Stages within the phase
Following external formulas	Seeking validation from authority figures	Trusting the internal voice - making sense of and reacting to the world, whereby support is required until confidence is achieved in using one's internal voice
Entering the crossroads	The student questions authority and uses internal voice in negotiations, but becomes silent when negative feelings are felt.	Building an internal foundation – a guiding set of personal principles and beliefs whereby a transition is experienced between being aware of principles and consciously behaving by them.
Leaving the crossroads or “becoming the author of one’s life”	Trusts their own internal voice and starts to build an internal foundation of values	
Internal foundation	Commits to live by one's own beliefs, values and voice	Securing internal commitments – behaving by one’s own principles and authority unconsciously, whereby students felt free from the fear of uncontrollable circumstances and became more likely to use their own voice in making decisions.

(Source: Table created by the Author (2022) based on ideas from the self-authorship literature (Baxter Magolda, 2001; 2008; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012).

Research exploring postgraduate students found that self-authorship meant searching for and establishing a personal approach to life and engagement with learning and mastery of their discipline which for some students required them to work through elements of dissonance using reflection and relational support to navigate their academic journey (Barber & King, 2014; Barber *et al*., 2013; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; Pizzolato & Olson, 2016; Torres & Hernandez, 2007; du Toit & Naudé, 2020). Furthermore, support gained from friends, family and university staff enabled students to differentiate themselves from others and begin making decisions independently (Barber & King, 2014; Baxter Magolda, 2001; 2008; Pizzolato & Olson, 2016; du Toit & Naudé, 2020). Conversely, Perez (2019) found that postgraduate student participants who were not self-authored experienced intense pressure to conform to external voices, while experiencing dissonance with little support across multiple areas of their lives. Therefore, not providing the correct support for each diverse student caused them to halt or regress in their self-authorship journey because, in most cases, students' diversity added further provocation to their ability to tackle specific challenges on their own (Pizzolato & Olson, 2016).

Students' characteristics and life experiences, such as ethnicity, were found to delay or interrupt the pathway towards self-authorship (Barber *et al*., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2001; 2008). du Toit and Naudé (2020, p. 96) stated that "social, cultural, and spiritual backgrounds affected each participant's experiences". Furthermore, Perez (2019) states that self-authorship research does not explicitly explore racial oppression and associated privilege, suggesting favouritism towards white people in a USA-based study. Barber *et al*.

(2013), although not explicitly seeking to understand racial oppression in self-authorship, noted that 9 out of a possible 30 students (30%) who experienced growth towards self-authorship were from ethnic minority groups and concluded that ethic minority groups may be self-authoring before their white peers. It is, therefore, essential to explore DLN in more detail. Research exploring self-authorship in Latino/a students (23 participants were USA-born and six born abroad) revealed a distrust towards staff members, with only a few following the "formulas" (guidance) of family and friends (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). It was the racism experienced at the "crossroads" that led students towards self-authorship, whereby they could accept other perspectives while being true to their own characteristics and backgrounds (Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

Furthermore, diverse students, which could include first-generation students and lesbian students, were found to be self-authoring before attending HE (Abes & Jones, 2004; Carpenter & Peña, 2017; Pizzolato, 2003; 2004). They suggested that diverse students' experiences led to increased conflict or dissonance, however, they did not receive support for from family, peers and educators meaning that these students were able to develop self-authorship at a much earlier age than non-marginalised students who did not experience challenging upbringings (Abes & Jones, 2004; Barber & King, 2014; Carpenter & Peña, 2017; Pizzolato, 2003; du Toit & Naudé, 2020). Diverse students spent longer lingering in the "crossroads" experiencing multiple choices suggested by external others (peers, family or educators) (such as entering the workplace rather than going to university) before

finally finding a choice that best suited the student and/or their advisors (peers, family and educators) (Pizzolato, 2003; 2005).

Diverse students (35 in total) who received support during admission to HE found themselves struggling to understand university processes once support ended, resulting in them regularly putting in too much effort to develop new skills (Pizzolato, 2003). Those who did not receive support during admissions were found to self-author nearly all personal decisions before entering HE because there were very few people to ask for or give them help (Pizzolato, 2003). Furthermore, diverse students begin university experiencing negative pressure to understand university life and its rules, resulting in feelings of alienation when faced with challenges they struggle to overcome (dissonance), which can lead to regression or stagnation in their self-authorship journey (Pizzolato, 2004). Their personal struggles could be attributed to students adapting to old "formulas" (guidance) provided to them in previous settings, such as home and school, a process that proved beneficial for students whose parents had low incomes (Pizzolato, 2003; Pizzolato & Olson, 2016). Students who were able to draw on their own voice to dictate their own lives found that their relationships with others improved (Baxter Magolda, 2008), illuminating the importance of "talking back" (Hooks, 2014).

Exploring the literature above has made me reflect on whether my DLN and experiences of trauma have played a part in limiting my ability to gain my own independent voice, as I recall a conversation I had with one of my supervisors, whereby I said, "I don't think I can find my academic voice until I have found my voice", highlighting to me that I cannot use

my internal voice within education as freely as Baxter Magolda (2008) explains, which could account for the small two per cent of students who reached self-authorship by graduation (Baxter Magolda, 1999a). SV should not be limited to a university agenda but rather to a moral obligation to increase students' personal voice that can be used outside university walls.

In the Barber *et al.* (2013) study, HE "staff expected students to question authority, learn how to critique information, craft their own views, and take responsibility in academic work," but this only took place within assignment work with little emotional support to meet the challenges associated with self-authoring (Barber *et al*., 2013, p. 878). Diverse students have had their voices subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) in several educational institutions by the time they reach university. Therefore, diverse learners experience "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010) due to being excluded from accessing "hermeneutical resources" that support their communication (Ferguson, 2025). This exposes the "god trick" (Haraway, 2004) inherent in HE that expects all students to communicate without acknowledging the silencing of marginalised groups from hierarchical systems in education (Harding, 2004a; Hooks, 2014).

To achieve "self-authorship", students require HE to build trust with diverse students to counteract the distrust they feel in authority figures (Torres & Hernandez, 2007). HE can then challenge students' existing knowledge, assumptions, and experiences for self-authorship to emerge, which some HE institutions have struggled to provide (Barber *et al*., 2013; Baxter-Magolda, 1999a). Students need staff "to help students to recognise both the

challenges and support offered" (Barber & King, 2014, p. 448). HE can help students become self-authored by creating a space where students' characteristics are supported in reflecting on, trusting in, and putting into practice the principles based on their own internal dialogue and that of others, to collaboratively communicate choices and decisions (Baxter Magolda, 1998, 2008). Staff could ask carefully scaffolded questions to students that challenge their pre-existing thinking and support them as they begin developing, listening to, and living by their own internal voice rather than having the process done for them (Pizzolato, 2003; du Toit & Naudé, 2020). A method that could be implemented within the curriculum or within external co-curricular activities (Carpenter & Peña, 2017). As noted by Barber *et al*. (2013), students who became self-authored were more likely to take on experiences, roles and positions that required them to use their internal voice. Moving from a silenced voice to one that is "talking back" (Hooks, 2014).

Classroom discussions and assignments can be created to encourage students to use their own reflective, evaluative, and democratic voice, instead of limiting their writing to include other people's words (Letizia, 2016; du Toit & Naudé, 2020). Students can also be involved in conversations related to university life, such as examinations and studying, to ensure their choices and voice are heard, thereby encouraging self-authorship development (Pizzolato, 2004).

> "Staff can affirm students' voices and work with them to implement curriculum, policies, and practices that centre those who have been marginalised" (Perez, 2019, p. 83).

One could argue that opportunities are already being created, such as within classrooms, co-curricular activities, student representatives and surveys. However, through the critical discussion above, I have shown that students with DLN and their voice continue to be excluded from student voice practices, perhaps because there is no expectation from universities that students stay true to their own principles and values; instead, they take on the principles and values of HE (Barber *et al*., 2013). Replicating the silencing experienced in previous educational institutions in which diverse students are expected to "mask" their words to survive (Hanna, 2021; Mazzei, 2011) and which is made worse by students' multiple intersecting identities (Crenshaw, 1989) inside the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000).

However, one must also consider that some students may be experiencing a crisis outside of university, such as financial concerns or family matters, without support, which can cause them to remain silent (Pizzolato & Olson, 2016). HE should help students understand the effects of their DLN, and the complexities of "intersectionality" (Crenshaw, 1989) can contribute to self-authorship, choice, and voice, highlighting the impact of silenced voices on students' personal development (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes *et al*., 2007). According to Pizzolato *et al*. (2012), the university cannot be viewed in isolation because many of the challenges diverse students face are a result of constructs that have been psychologically embedded and carried through from one institution to another, such as from family, mainstream education, and into university. Once students become aware of schemas, they are better placed to become self-authored (Pizzolato *et al*., 2012). Therefore, university

staff, particularly those with high intakes of Widening Participation students, need to move away from seeing themselves as simply imparting information to also including supporting students psychologically and socially (Letizia, 2016; du Toit & Naudé, 2020) to help them find their voice. See Artefact 2.5 below for a short poem to represent this:

Artefact 2.5: Help me! (Researcher's diary, Wednesday 22nd November 2022).

> Know me as a person and not just a student
> See me as an individual with all my intersections
> Provide me with the compassion to help me learn to grow
> Help me find the voice that I was never allowed to know.

In my exploration of my own experiences and of the literature, I have come to recognise that ISV is as individual as the students themselves. For me, I have found that my voice was lost through trauma related to making multiple mistakes throughout my childhood education. Trauma had made me fearful of authority figures, leading to my silenced voice. I was, however, able to regain parts of my voice through undertaking SV processes, such as surveys, SR, and co-creation projects during my time at university. However, I still felt that parts of my voice were missing, and this research hopes to fully explore my lost voice with other DLN students to share our "collective consciousness" (Jameson, 2004) to elicit "consciousness-raising" (Sarachild, 1978) and to discover whether I can fully gain/regain my lost voice. This chapter will conclude with a creative synthesis that indicates how I envision regaining my lost voice.

Creative synthesis.

The “creative synthesis” is an artefact created using “tacit knowing,” “intuition”, and “self-search” (Moustakas, 1990). The creative artefact (2.3) below presents my self-search in an innovative format, aiming to understand my lost voice in education and how I might regain it. This is a creative presentation of a feminist standpoint (Hartsock, 1983a; 1998b; Smith, 1999) created using my “epistemic advantage” (Wylie, 2004) as a marginalised student with a disability. In presenting this artefact, I am providing “strong objectivity” in this research (Harding, 2004b) because it has been created by a student who has had the experiences being explored (Smith, 1999).

My introspective journey took me from identifying myself in the focus of inquiry, using the skills of focusing to illuminate my experience of trauma and anxiety that occurred in my past experiences of education. I was able to deduce that I did not feel safe around teachers and those in hierarchical positions because this experience emulated the feelings I had in childhood. This ‘embodied knowledge’ (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) allowed me to see the impact of the oppression I felt as a marginalised student (Harding, 2004b) and the subjugation of my knowledge (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). A feeling that followed me to HE. I realised that in those moments where I felt unsafe to “talk back” (Hooks, 2014) due to the “epistemic injustice” experienced (Fricker, 2010), I could be supported through my anxiety by using self-compassion and “psychological safety” (Torralba *et al*., 2020, p. 668). It was these methods that I felt would lead me to “individuation,” a process whereby I could

use my own voice independently of others (Hoffman, 1984, p. 176) to "self-author" my own educational journey (Baxter Magolda, 2008). My voice does not have to be perfect, nor does it have to speak for everyone; it just needs to be my partial, authentic voice (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hooks, 2014). The creative artefact includes the approaches above as "hermeneutical resources" that can support my communication (Fergusion, 2025) and can be found in artefact 2.6 below:

Artefact 2.6: Inclusive Student Voice fingerprint (Researcher's diary, Thursday 22nd December 2022)

(Source: Created by Author, 2022, for inclusion in this thesis)

Conclusion

Using Sela-Smith's (2002) concept of “self-search”, this chapter delved into a search of the self to illuminate and explicate my experiences of SV and the ways ISV could be conceptualised in HE. I summarise the core findings above and have displayed them in Creative Artefact 2.6 above. This research contrasts existing SV literature in that HI has been used to explore my own “frame of reference” (Moustakas, 1990) before exploring whether my thoughts and perceptions changed after interviewing others. I wish to interview other diverse learners because I have realised that the silencing I have experienced also speaks to other diverse characteristics and their individual “intersectional” identities (Crenshaw, 1989) within the “matrix of domination” (Collins, 2000). This self-search has influenced the way I will empathically interview co-researchers, knowing that they could have potentially experienced a similar trauma. I hope to use my existing knowledge gained here to explore students' reasons for their lost voice in education before attending university, their experiences of SV whilst attending university and finally, to co-construct with the co-researchers to establish ISV and what that might look like in HE. However, before I begin recruiting students to participate in this research, I wish to outline the methodology and theoretical perspectives used, which are explained in the following chapter.

Chapter three: Theoretical framework and methodology

> I begin the heuristic investigation with my own self-awareness and explicate that awareness with reference to a question or problem until an essential insight is achieved, one that will throw a beginning light onto a critical human experience (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11)

Introduction

This chapter introduces the theoretical components of ontology, epistemology and axiology chosen for the research design to justify the chosen methodology of Heuristic Inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) and Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST, Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004a). Links will be made with the literature in relation to the construction of students' Higher Education (HE) identities as diverse learners, SV, co-creation, and inclusion. All of which are pertinent, not just in relation to what the research seeks to find, but also to the research design, because it was vital for me to embed much of my own educational values within the whole research process.

I will discuss the phenomenological philosophical underpinnings and the therapeutic style in which this research will be grounded before justifying the chosen HI (Moustakas, 1990) methodology. The phases and core processes used will be outlined to identify how the research questions were formulated and in what ways the data will be collected and analysed. This chapter will conclude by outlining how I will consider ethical issues, particularly relating to those of Moustakas (1990) HI, and the ways that I maintained

credibility throughout this qualitative research design. As stated above, I will begin this chapter by exploring ontology, epistemology, and axiology in relation to this research project.

Ontology, epistemology and axiology

Ontology

"Ontology is concerned with the nature of being, of what it means to somebody, or something, to be–to exist" (Hyde, 2021, p. 378), and humans exist in a world where we make meaning of our experiences in nature. Humans also exist in a world in which they interact with each other and materials to create and classify items around them (Crotty, 1998; O'Leary, 2010). To explore a person's understanding in a world that consistently uses language to label and categorise already suggests that ontology is created through the language we have attributed to objects and concepts (Trownsell, 2022). Language has been used to both explain and create an ontological experience of the world (Burr, 2015). For instance, the co-researchers in this study were all HE students who had used language to identify themselves as having DLN. As such, this research identified the shared and unique perspectives of co-researchers with DLN when using their voice in HE. I aligned with this explanation of ontology as it did not make sense to me to explore co-researchers' experiences, such as having a label of DLN and the ways their needs impacted their voice, without considering an ontological position that also depended on the collection of co-researchers' language. Therefore, the data collected for this research

analysed diverse students' experiences and the ways these had informed their ontological perceptions and lived experiences using co-researchers' language (van Manen, 2017).

Furthermore, following the suggestion from Mills (2004) and Trownsell (2022), I also concluded that my research will be informed by the work of Searle (2006, p. 12-29), who theorised that human ontology exists with both materials that are already present in the world and those materials that are created with 'functions' and labels in the form of language. Humans then created social 'collective intentionality' and 'constitutive rules' for its uses within society, thereby theorising that ontology is nothing more than social constructivism consisting of both material properties and language (Searle, 2006, pp. 12 - 29). As such, this research provided co-researchers with the means to use language and both naturalistic and constructed materials to explain their reality using creative artefacts (Moustakas, 1990).

This experience was likely different from that of students without DLN (Stoller, 2018). Feminist theorists posited that diverse students had a unique "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004, p. 344) in seeing reality that others who are not diverse are unlikely to see (Hartsock, 1998a' 1998b), such as the "codes or rules" within the "culture of power" (Delpit, 2006; 1988) and it is their ontological standpoint (Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b; Smith, 1999) from their unique location and time that I sought to understand (Harding, 2003). This "generates an ontology of relations and of continual process ... [that is] a clearer and more trustworthy understanding of the world" (Jagger, 2004, pp. 59 - 62). It was primarily

the student's individual experience that I wished to interpret rather than explore the collective experience (Patel, 2015).

The reason behind this decision was discussed in the previous chapter, where it was found that a student is more likely to utilise their 'individual self' to voice their concerns (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Nehrlich *et al.*, 2019; Sedikides *et al*., 2011). Accessing the learner's sense of being and experiences for this research (rather than through the voice of the educator) was labelled as constructivism because it focused on the learner's own role in socially constructing their own interpretation of reality rather than on educators who are unlikely to share the student's perspective (Papert & Harel, 1991). It is also worth noting that Burr (2015) also suggested that both education and disabilities are socially constructed. Disabilities is a term used to refer to individuals who struggle to undertake everyday activities, however, according to Oliver and Barnes (2010), the social model of disability stated that it is not the individual themselves that is the cause of the struggle, it is the way the environment (such as education) is constructed that impairs the individual's ability to participate. The European Commission of the European Communities (2003) concurred that the socially constructed barriers need to be removed to ensure everyone can participate equally. Thereby introducing the new term of inclusion (Oliver & Barnes, 2010), which is evident in previous chapters where policies and legislation have continually been constructed towards introducing widening participation as an educational agenda (Committee on Higher Education, 1963; Office for Students, 2021). This research, therefore, paid attention to SV experiences in relation to the people and

processes within and around the individual student in HE, which in turn, arguably, informed the student's ontological positioning. It is for this reason that this research employed a constructivist ontological positioning to gain insight into students' own experiences, interpretations, and meaning-making of their socially constructed world (Crotty, 1998; Sultan, 2019).

Epistemology

As I discussed ontology above, I began to question the formation of knowledge itself. The ways humans obtained knowledge are theorised in various paradigms (see Crotty, 2019). As a methodology that maintained a certain degree of influence over the nature of students' transformative learning, including my own, I was, in essence, suggesting that students transformed (constructed) their lives through the knowledge they gained through interactions with others (Hyde, 2021). Therefore, since ontology is constructivist, I also considered that the epistemology for this research was also constructivist (Sultan, 2019). I realised that ontology and epistemology can occur concurrently with each other (Crotty, 1998; Hyde, 2021; O'Leary, 2010), known as 'onto-epistemology' (Hyde, 2021). This was further explored below.

Traditional conceptualisations of constructivist ontology and epistemology had centred around two main types, such as whether our knowledge of existence is constructed through resources that already existed around us (Foucault, 2002) or whether, in fact, our constructed thought processes and language contributed to our knowledge of constructed

commodities (Crotty, 1998; Mills, 2004). Mills (2004) concluded that isolating both explanations was extremely limited in respect of there being multiple ways of explaining ontology and the ways of knowing. Therefore, an improved approach was to consider utilising various ontological and epistemological positions or combining positions to create a new one (Mills, 2004; 2004; Trownsell, 2022). For instance, using only individual language and artefacts did not thoroughly consider the 'relational' element in epistemology, which was said to be fundamental in identity formation of the 'relational self' as discussed earlier (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Nehrlich *et al*., 2019). This element of the research was supported by Gergen (2009), who elaborated on the constructivist theory to include social constructionism, whereby 'relational' elements were incorporated into an individual's ontology and epistemology through the interpretation of others' language. Therefore, Gergen's (2009) idea of 'relationism' insisted that knowledge was co-constructed in a relative context through interactions between multiple realities, facilitated by the language people chose to use during those interactions with each other. In a similar vein, I also drew on the feminist epistemological idea of "strong objectivity", that which ensured that the researcher be, and have experience of, the subject of inquiry, and be analysed under the same scrutiny (Harding, 2004b, p. 136). Together, we multiplied the "epistemic advantage" whilst creating new knowledge (Wylie, 2004, p. 344) on issues of power and relationships (Rolin, 2009). Consequently, this research also took a relative constructivist approach by co-creating knowledge, utilising the meaning-making of an experience from multiple individuals' perspectives within data collection (Moustakas,

1990), such as taking data from myself and co-researchers, sharing the subjective and relational dimensions of an ontological experience (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). This is because, as Damasio (2000) stated, perspectives are unique to the individual's own visual stimuli and brain interactions. Individual perspectives influenced our emotions and behaviours, which could be self-reflective or analysed by others (Damasio, 2000). It was imperative, therefore, to ensure that data of the experience was gathered and interpreted from the perspectives of the individual through "individual depictions," the group through "collective depictions", and returning to the individual in the form of "exemplary portraits" (Moustakas, 1990) as can be seen in the Analysis Chapter. These are discussed in more detail later in the chapter; However, I now turn my attention to axiology.

Axiology

Axiology means to consider the researcher's value positioning and the ways these can be ameliorated through ethics, which may be challenging to obtain in its entirety (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sultan, 2019) as many researchers' personal values within their research are highlighted when a research topic is chosen and this is said to be true, irrespective of the paradigm positioning (Abram, 1996; Sultan, 2019). HI was open to expressing the researcher's values as central to the work by including the researcher's biases and experiences from the outset (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019), which enabled me to write about my own individual experiences within the self-search chapter. This was a process that, in conjunction with the epistemological foundations of Feminist Standpoint Theory (Harding, 2004b), allowed for the exploration of my own values regarding ISV, a topic that

I considered valuable to study for myself, co-researchers, and HE. I wished to expand on this to explore the idea further, particularly in relation to education, DLN and voice research.

Education (all institutions) has been an ever-changing societal expression of a political institution dictated in the main by a political agenda that has sought for education to become more inclusive, starting from the Education Act 1981, right through to the Equality Act 2010, in accepting students with DLNs. Furthermore, education has traditionally focused on developing independent learners; however, the focus has now shifted towards developing collegiate partnerships, not only between peers but also with staff, as shown in the self-search chapter (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014). As this research was conducted within HE, it was essential to recognise the value of collegiate SV partnerships (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014). HI was chosen because it included the researcher as a participant, whereby the researcher identified themselves within the research as shown in Chapter Two, the Self-search (Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2002) and was then expected to work in inclusive partnership with co-researchers to co-construct data (Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019), in this case, to co-construct ISV.

Voice

Voice, particularly within the education of diverse learners, has also been influenced by policies that highlighted the importance of listening to the voices of adult learners (Department for Education & Department of Health, 2015), and it has become pivotal to HE feedback systems and collaborative work (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014). Therefore, the

methodological choice of HI was chosen because it enabled these 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' values to be utilised through the researcher obtaining the perspectives of students with DLNs using the concept of voice (Braud, 1998; Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Hiles, 2001; Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990).

Furthermore, voice research is exclusive of students with DLN's (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014) in that exploring students with DLN's had often been conducted with powerful others positioned as the lead researcher (Dyson, 1998). This research challenges power imbalances in voice research (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014) by situating the lead researcher (myself) as a student participant within the study due to my shared characteristics with the co-researchers (Hiles, 2001; Moustakas, 1990), as I also identified as a student with DLNs that had impacted my experiences of SV. Following feminist theorists, I listened to marginalised voices through the lens of a researcher (myself), who is also marginalised, and this enabled me to begin the research from the position of the marginalised (Smith, 1999). Known as "strong objectivity", this approach was used to assess the values and assumptions of power in knowledge creation (Harding, 1991, p. 138). I then turned my attention to the chosen theoretical perspective, which included feminist theory.

Phenomenology as a theoretical perspective

As the discussions above show, this research aimed to focus on and be undertaken within the constructivist and interpretive perspective, as it took an approach of subjectivity,

whereby experience is based on the variety of life, constructed by past and present experiences (Gendlin, 2003). One aspect of the constructivist approach is interpretivism, within which phenomenology serves as a theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998). Phenomenology seeks to understand and interpret an experience from the perspective of others (Smith *et al*., 2009; van Manen, 2017), such as DLN students. This chapter also considered the different theoretical perspectives on phenomenology in relation to this research.

Husserl's phenomenology

One approach to interpretivism explored was Husserl's (1931; 1970) phenomenological concept of 'intentionality', which was to collect meaning-making data (both subjective and objective) that focused on the 'essence' of an experience in the 'lifeworld' (Vagle, 2018). This approach could have captured the experiences of voice for students with DLN in HE to conceptualise what is meant by ISV. However, Husserl (1970) insisted that researchers should undertake a bias 'reduction' process, whereby the researcher removes their own biased pre-conceived ideas from the research using a process termed 'bracketing', but this explanation provided by Husserl was underdeveloped and challenging to undertake in its entirety (Bhattacharya, 2017; Hermberg, 2007). HI differed from this process because it did not require 'reduction' as Husserl (1970) discussed; instead, there was an emphasis on building relationships with co-researchers through a shared personal experience (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Mihalache, 2019) and creating our own meaning of experience through our internal thoughts and our external stimuli (Sultan, 2019).

Heidegger's phenomenology

Heidegger (1962) critiqued Husserl's phenomenological ideas by outlining that the phenomena did not simply show itself to be understood, but that the language relating to the phenomena was worked with, analysed, and interpreted for the phenomena to be understood (Gadamer, 1989). This process of analysing language led to the birth of a new interpretive approach, termed hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1989), whereby it was believed that 'bracketing' the world was unachievable (Bhattacharya, 2017). For Heidegger (1962), phenomenology was a way of being (ontology) whereby the research sought "to unfold that pre-understanding, make explicit what is implicit, and grasp the meaning of Being itself" using language (Heidegger 1962 cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 97) within what Heidegger (1962) called the 'hermeneutic circle'. The 'Hermeneutic circle' was defined as the ability to view a phenomenon not just by its whole, but by the many parts that make up that whole (Heidegger, 1962).

Although hermeneutics provided the researcher with a sound philosophical theoretical perspective, I was not convinced this was wholly appropriate for this research, mainly because of the existence of 'hermeneutic injustice' (not recognising or bringing into view DLN students' experiences) and the existence of power dynamics (Fricker, 2010) that can be viewed in my self-search chapter. Therefore, I sought an alternative approach that could address the sensitive collection of SV through more inclusive means. A theoretical perspective was desired to build connection and presence between co-researcher and

others rather than utilising a phenomenological separation between myself and others (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). I had personal experience with the phenomenon in question, which contributed to this research. I did not feel that I could separate these experiences from the research, nor did I want to do the research solely about me. I have outlined an alternative approach below, which I considered for this research and explained why this approach was not chosen.

Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology

Moustakas (1994) developed transcendental phenomenology, which shares similarities with Husserl's (1970) approach in that the researcher undertook an 'epoche', which can be described as a recognition and a setting aside of personal positions (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). The researcher then listened to the experiences of the phenomenon in its entirety, labelled as the 'transcendental-phenomenological reduction' and finally, 'the imaginative variation', in which intuition guided the researcher to the true interpretation of the experience (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 34 –35). The difference with this phenomenological approach is that the researcher's original 'epoche' returned to the research to be synthesised together with the experiences of others (Moustakas, 1994). Although I had discussed Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology as being situated within phenomenology, his earlier work regarding Heuristic Inquiry (HI) (Moustakas, 1990) was less concerned with "lived experience" as the word lived positioned the experience within the past, whereas HI explored the interconnectedness of past and present by positioning the topic of inquiry as a "living experience" (Moss, 2015; Sultan, 2015; 2019). Instead, HI

shared many facets with humanistic therapeutic counselling, with one key difference in that the researcher was highly involved in the process (Hiles, 2001; Mihalache, 2019; Sultan, 2019; 2020). This was explored below.

Heuristic Inquiry in humanistic therapeutic counselling

Wilkinson (2022a) stated that humanistic therapeutic counselling emerged from phenomenology to incorporate experiential learning and first-person self-awareness about an experience that is discovered through subjective introspection (Wilkinson, 2022b). Given that I had firsthand experience as a DLN student and had previously struggled with using my voice, it was appropriate to apply this theoretical perspective to ensure that my voice became part of the process. The researcher moved away from simply listening and analysing 'disclosed' data relating to the topic towards experiencing and thematically reflecting on it, leading to further depth (Gendlin *et al.*, 2018; Wilkinson, 2022b). Wilkinson (2022b) stated that the humanistic approach could help support diverse students in areas of prejudice and activism, further identifying this theoretical perspective as suitable for this research. Two key humanistic academics are Merleau-Ponty (1945, reprinted in 2013) and Gadamer (1989). I discussed their ideas below.

Merleau-Ponty phenomenology

Merleau-Ponty (1945, reprinted in 2013) emphasised that people's perceptions of life created personal knowledge, and that knowledge became an individual's truth. Merleau-Ponty (1945, reprinted 2013) also stated that humans live through the emotions we feel

through the physical body, known as 'embodiment'. This approach aligned with this research because it enabled me and each co-researcher to discuss our internal perceptions and emotions relating to the same experience, and we worked together to co-create new meaning to the experience within the interview space (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Sultan, 2019). Co-creating new meaning is the reason participants were given the name "co-researchers" (Moustakas, 1990). However, challenges may have arisen due to the interviews being audio recorded, which likely hid embodied emotions (emotions felt in the body) unless the research team expressed their feelings aloud (Sultan, 2019). Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty (1945, reprinted in 2013; 1968) stated that our present experience is influenced by experiences formed throughout our lives and these all add up to create our knowledge as we age; therefore, it was impossible to suggest that our past has no relevance to our current situations and/or emotions. In Chapter Two, you can see that my past trauma has impacted my voice and provided a rationale for using a therapeutic paradigm for this research, not only for myself but also for the other students who participated in this research. The ethical implications of which were discussed later in this chapter.

Gadamer's phenomenology with a therapeutic interpretation

Chang (2010) presented an interesting case for using hermeneutics in conjunction with a therapeutic approach. Given the sensitivity of this research, I was interested in this as a possible methodological option, particularly considering the use of intersubjectivity. Chang

(2010) discussed Gadamer's (1989) hermeneutic phenomenology, which stated that knowledge to be understood is discovered when the researcher's own subjective ideas about the phenomena interact with the subjective ideas of others, labelled as intersubjectivity. The past and present experiences were voiced within a collaborative endeavour as the researcher weaved through the hermeneutic circle, being careful to accept that each person's interpretation was just that: an individual's interpretation or perspective with no suggestion that the perspective was true for all people (Chang, 2010; Parry & Doan, 1994).

Chang (2010) discussed a research approach in which the researcher first engaged with the topic (literature, observations), worked collaboratively with participants, kept a diary of reflections as data, followed by an immersion in the participant interview transcripts before writing up the research. What was interesting in Chang's (2010) research was the use of 'loops' in undertaking the research with no direct line of inquiry, often moving forwards and backwards as the process of investigation took Chang to different areas. Additionally, Chang (2010, p. 27) included a 'counsellor development' sub-section in their write-up that discussed their self-discovery as a counsellor conducting the research. I considered a similar approach for this research to ascertain whether I developed my own voice or not, and/or whether I was able to conceptualise ISV during the study. This approach concurred with HI being a 'transpersonal' experience that employed the researcher's own intuitive musings, experiences, and self-development (Mihalache, 2019). The various approaches to HI are

discussed below; however, I first wanted to strengthen the theoretical perspective by introducing and incorporating feminist theory.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

This section outlines the rationale for incorporating a feminist theoretical perspective, the ways feminist theory was applied in this research, and the connection with Heuristic Inquiry (HI; Moustakas, 1990).

This research not only required the gathering of embodied experience as lived by the student, as is the case in phenomenology, but also a need to understand the students' interconnected social world from their situated spaces in society (Zeiler, 2020). FST ensured that marginalised students' "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) was utilised to provide details on their unique experiences that those in more privileged positions may not have been able to articulate in its entirety (Harding, 2004a). FST illuminated students' wider societal experiences from students' own diverse standpoints (Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b; Smith, 1999), whilst valuing students' diverse perspectives (Smith, 1999) and providing "strong objectivity" (Harding, 2004b, p. 127). Feminist theory, in conjunction with phenomenology, ensured that gaps in experience were not excluded, thereby providing additional critical insight (Oksala, 2004).

Phenomenology has been critiqued for being developed and implemented heavily by able-bodied men and, in doing so, may have missed opportunities to understand women (Oksala, 2004) and other marginalised groups (Harding, 2004a). As stated in previous chapters, it

was not my intention to focus on one marginalised group, but to accommodate the complexity of diversity within humans, as identified by the feminist term of 'intersectionality' (Crenshaw, 1989). However, I also recognised that it was impossible to cover all intersectional characteristics; therefore, this research did not suggest that the findings could be generalised but does, in fact, provide a snapshot of experiences in which possible commonalities in "discrimination, marginalisation, and privilege" could be seen (Carbado *et al*., 2013, p. 306). This research provides a particular exploration of the experiences of students who were disabled and female, in addition to (at times) their experiences of socio-economic marginalisation.

Although there were no stages or phases to follow to include feminist theory, Stanley and Wise (1993) provided some key expectations, these included removing hierarchy, having an awareness of power, acceptance to involve emotions, the integration of "objectivity" and "subjectivity", removing any practices that separate the researchers' own biography, and the acceptance of multiple "realities" whilst also being aware of the power held by the researcher (p. 173 – 174). Power can silence, "conceal or distort relevant evidence" (Rolin, 2009, p. 219), and therefore, this research promoted the opportunity of empowerment by removing power through the sharing of experiences with a researcher who also had diverse needs as outlined in the Heuristic Inquiry (HI) methodology (Moustakas, 1990). In alignment with Rolin (2009), power was explored in the Self-search Chapter using the work of Fricker (2010) as I reflected on my own positionality and experiences as directed by Moustakas HI

(1990) and Harding (2004b), who said that marginalised research was expected to begin with marginalised individuals' positionality in a world driven by power structures.

To that end, HI (Moustakas, 1990) was employed as a methodology to gather diverse students' experiences (including my own), while FST (Harding, 2004a) was utilised to complement an exploration of power structures impacting student voice. I explored HI in more detail below, specifically focusing on processes, key concepts, and the role of therapeutic interpretation.

Heuristic Inquiry: processes, key concepts, and a therapeutic interpretation

HI is not a scientific positivistic methodology in which hypotheses can be measured, challenged, or found; instead, it seeks to illuminate the phenomenon as humans experienced the topic of inquiry (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). To achieve this, HI retains the voice of the researchers and co-researchers by using the key concepts and core processes of HI (Moustakas, 1990). This section discusses voice in relation to the key concepts and core processes employed throughout this research to provide new knowledge in the topic area of SV.

Douglass and Moustakas (1985, p. 39) labelled HI as the "internal search to know" that discovers the essence of the experience, using intuition and hunches, and is rooted in a therapeutic counselling topic related to the self, staying clear of scientific hypotheses (Hiles, 2001). Intuition enabled the researcher to use "an internal capacity to make

inferences and arrive at a knowledge possible without the intervening steps of logic and reasoning" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23), meaning that knowledge was discovered through a new gaze (Polanyi, 1969). It is for this reason that HI secured the researcher's own voice and firsthand experiences of the topic throughout the research by "identifying with the focus of inquiry", starting with a "self-directed search" using a reflexive diary to support my search (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). The reflexive diary provided an:

> opportunity to develop and identify one's voice (the ability to question, to speak out, to share and tell) and the creation of critical voice, one that starts to question the truths that come from our stories (Norton, 2017, p. 8).

The outcome of this search is presented in Chapter Two. Bermúdez *et al.* (2014) used HI but lacked personal experience with the topic and were unable to depict the co-researcher's experience fully. It was for this reason that Chapter Two was made a priority in this thesis.

One concept that placed great significance on retaining the researcher's voice was 'self-dialogue' in which the researcher begins the process through "self-discoveries, awareness, and understandings ... of a phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 16). Buber (translated in 2010) stated that there were two distinct ways to interact with others: 'I-It', whereby the individual only sees from their own frame of reference, objectifies the experience, and separates themselves from it. Ozertugrul (2017) used only themselves in their research, fearing rejection by academics and believing this was the driving force behind other researchers' inclusion of participants. However, this was not the case for me. I felt that

relying solely on my own singular viewpoint reduced my ability to see the whole social experience as witnessed by others.

The other way to interact with others is through the 'I-Thou' approach, described as a space in which two or more people come together for the mutual experiential sharing of communication with those who have the same goals or experiences, unifying each person as an individual, authentic human being (otherwise known as 'mutuality') (Buber, translated in 2010). This research positioned the researcher within the 'I-Thou' space with others who had a similar 'I-It' experience to me (Buber, translated in 2010). In this space, I utilised 'self-disclosure', a process of disclosing my own experiences throughout this research, which was found to elicit trust and more substantial data from others than would be given without the researcher's disclosure (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Jourard, 1968; Jourard & Friedman, 1970). This type of interaction, known as 'intersubjectivity,' provided an honest review of the unified experience for both the researcher and co-researchers, resulting in more openness of the experience (Buber, 1965; Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). However, I was careful not to misunderstand or misconstrue co-researchers' own frame of reference with my own (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010). I used my reflective researcher's diary and the self-search chapter to retain my own thoughts and experiences before eliciting the voice of co-researchers.

These techniques were employed to help the reader establish a connection and gain an understanding of the researcher and co-researchers' firsthand experiences and feelings regarding the phenomenon in question (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Sultan, 2020). To

that end, this research utilised a subjective approach by using the researcher's own personal experiences, internal reflections, hunches, intuition, and feelings (Moustakas, 1990) to provide an objective approach that would be used to test problems through observing others who had undertaken a similar experience to the researcher (Rogers, 1969). For this reason, individuals who participated in this research identified themselves as having DLN, had undertaken a similar university degree course to the researcher, and had some experience with SV processes in HE. This ensured inclusivity, replication, and the safety of disclosure when knowledge was exchanged within each person's 'internal frame of reference' (Rogers, 1969), the place in which an individual's perception of an experience was held (Moustakas, 1990). Though one was careful not to confuse one person's experiences and values with another's (Djuaskovic & Arthur, 2010).

To ensure that the 'meaning' (Gendlin, 1962) behind students' communication of their experiences was gathered accurately, person-centred therapeutic care was also provided using empathy, 'unconditional positive regard', and regular check-ins with co-researchers, otherwise known as interpersonal knowing (Rogers, 1969). When I listened to the co-researchers, I provided "sensitive, empathic, concentrated listening", hoping that the co-researchers felt listened to and understood; otherwise, this could have led to withdrawal (Rogers, 1980, p. 13).

Buber (translated in 2010) outlined the means to establish 'genuine dialogue' whereby exchanges of communication are made (either verbally or silently) in the 'I-Thou' space. Verbal communication involves the exchange of words, whereas silent communication can

be observed in the body, such as when a pet disregards our need to pet them or in the way our internal voice speaks to us (Buber, translated in 2010). Frankenstein (1968) noted that Buber did not identify the internal dialogue that one might have with oneself and stated that exchanging dialogue with our internal self before progressing towards an interchangeable togetherness of similar minds (I-Thou) had the potential for empathic understanding and healing (Frankenstein & Drury, 1968). Considering my own experience as a DLN student and the implications this has had on my voice, it felt appropriate to explore myself before meeting with others who shared similar experiences, an approach that was outlined by Moustakas (1990). This approach was employed in this research by me, the researcher, as well as during interviews with co-researchers.

Gendlin (2003, pp. vii - 39) calls this the 'embodied knowledge' (knowledge found through the body) extracted through the 'felt sense' (a physical awareness felt through the body that is 'wordless', hard to explain or know why the feeling is present) that could be captured and worked through to create a 'body shift' by using 'focusing'. 'Focusing' entailed removing all unnecessary musings, thoughts, and feelings to fully view the perception of the experience exactly as it is; in this way, themes and changes to the researcher were highlighted, and the true meaning of the experience was seen for the first time (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). I began by interpreting the body, allowing the body's sense to speak to me through physical sensations, and asked or answered questions using my internal voice until both words and feelings correlated,

creating a shift in understanding (Gendlin, 2003). For instance, the removal or suppression of voice did not necessarily mean the removal of thought, feelings and thinking.

This also led me to consider Polanyi's (1966; 1969) ideas of 'tacit knowing' (a process of knowing "more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1966, p. 4) as this was advised by Moustakas (1990), for example, some people can tell how someone was feeling emotionally without knowing how and might be able to name the emotions. However, language was used here only as a directional process to make connections between the body and the experience. To extract and recover tacit knowledge relating to a problem (such as that of ISV), I first needed to explore its multiple parts to realise the subject's whole, known as 'indwelling' (Polanyi, 1966; 1969). This tool enabled the researcher to follow their own unconscious "hunches and vague, formless insights" experientially in conversation with the self and co-researchers to discover the true meaning of the experience (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 49). In time, one's "perception, sense, intuition, or knowledge" exposed themes in parts that when put together made up the whole of the experience (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 10 – 11 and p. 23).

This research utilised 'indwelling' to conceptualise ISV by myself and others who were entering into the 'tacit' as Polanyi (1966; 1969) advised, to reveal the parts and whole of the experience to ascertain the true meaning insofar as the experience became understood and explainable (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). In exploring my own 'tacit' knowledge, I came to observe the same experiences in others. I felt their emotions, never needing to explain the reason for it because I had already recognised

them within myself. This is known as 'signitive-symbolic representation' (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 51). This was used to ascertain the reason for DLN-silenced voices, the experience of their silenced voices in HE and in what ways students with DLN utilised their voice. This philosophy was invaluable for this research because many of the students involved in this study may have been silenced for so long that speaking out initially may have been difficult. However, information could still be gained using Polanyi's (1966) 'indwelling' (to dwell on a topic until tacit awareness was illuminated) and Gendlin's (2003, p. ix) 'focusing' (becoming aware of the body's own voice, such as through intuition and feelings).

Moustakas' (1990) HI emphasised the importance of the researcher having prior physical and emotional experience of the topic before exploring the "self- and other-awareness and the relational dimensions of interaction" (Sultan, 2020, p. 159). In this respect, a variety of ideas and techniques were discussed in the interviews to see whether voice was obtained. Those techniques that were effective would become the 'right thing' to do in relation to students with DLN developing an ISV, and this was then considered true knowledge (Sela-Smith, 2002).

Moustakas (1990) stated that HI enabled the researcher to experience a self-development process as influenced by Humanist features (discussed previously in the chapter), such as Maslow's (1943; 1971) discussions of 'self-actualisation'. Sultan (2019) agreed and continued to say that, if conducted correctly, co-researchers who decided to take part in the study would also experience 'self-actualising' effects. Maslow (1971, p. 43), however,

confessed that it was difficult to define what was meant by ‘self-actualisation’ but said that it was a constant life continuum whereby the people who had ‘self-actualised’ possessed a need to work towards a value driven desire, such as truth and uniqueness but where these needs were absent, a person could develop a ‘sickness of the soul’. In more depth, “self-actualisation” required a selfless motivation devoid of ‘self-consciousness’, childhood defence mechanisms, to move away from the authority of others, to listen to our own internal voice, begin bravely making our own choices, to view the positive moments in life, and to be truthful (Maslow, 1971). Interestingly, many of these elements were discussed in Chapter Two (my self-search) and provided another reason why this methodology was suitably chosen for this study. Moustakas (1990) stated that the self-development elements identified in the research (from the researcher and co-researchers) were used to form a creative synthesis. A creative artefact that represented the experience found in the analysis (Moustakas, 1990). This was discussed further below.

I had presented above an introduction and discussion regarding the use of Moustakas’ (1990) HI. I then made a comparison between HI as explained by Moustakas (1990) and other methodological choices, such as autoethnography and narrative inquiry, to highlight the benefits of using HI in this study. This is found below.

Methodology

Autoethnography and Heuristic Inquiry as a methodology

One methodological approach that could have been used to encapsulate an exploration of ISV from the researcher's perspective is autoethnography. Autoethnography is a

methodology that enables the researcher to have their voice heard through the personal experiences of the researcher, but it also requires the researcher to discuss others using the limited capacity of a singular voice of the phenomenon (Norton, 2017; Wall, 2008). Although it was desirable to use my own voice within the research, I recognised that my voice is only one small part of the whole experience, and to establish this, I required the ability to listen to other SV (Haertl, 2014; Mihalache, 2019; Sultan, 2019).

HI enabled the researcher to focus on one individual (the researcher) first and foremost, but the methodology later allowed for a greater depth of discovery through the involvement of 10–15 others within the process (Moustakas, 1968; 1990). However, Sela-Smith (2002) stated that the two halves of this methodology (those involving internal reflections and those involving external others) confuse researchers who, the author says, move away from an internal focus to becoming much more externally motivated, leading to the loss of self-discovery. To address this critique, I employed a similar approach to Chang's (2010) idea of a researcher development section, as presented in Chapter Five of this thesis, to differentiate my own self-discovery from that of co-researchers. This section was titled: 'Returning to my self-search.' A further section on self-development was also included in the summary chapter, focusing on the changes that had occurred since completing the interviews with co-researchers.

Narrative Inquiry and Heuristic Inquiry as a methodology

Narrative inquiry involved gathering the verbal 'story' from participants; the researcher would analyse the data to identify themes or areas of the 'story' with high significance (Sultan, 2019; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). As the researcher developed the 'restorying' accounts of the participants' experiences, they worked in collaboration to ensure accuracy (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). However, collaboration diminished whilst analysis was taking place, and this creates a 'new story' that would inevitably consist of information embedded by the researcher (Byrne, 2017), creating a power dynamic in which the researcher has ultimate control (Sultan, 2019). However, I believed that the participants' own narratives were not my "story to tell" (Grenier & Collins, 2016, p. 260) because I thought this might remove 'equity' (Sultan, 2019). Therefore, this research sought to find equity of voice.

Consequently, Byrne (2017) suggested that researchers should provide participants with the space to explore their experiences in an environment where hierarchy is removed, and the researcher is open regarding their involvement. It is for these reasons that I sought closer involvement with those who joined me in the research. In HI, the data were co-constructed with co-researchers throughout the research process, including during interviews, the development of depictions, data analysis, and the creation of new knowledge (Sultan, 2019). The involvement of Co-researchers at each stage was discussed below.

Through my discussions of autoethnography, narrative inquiry and HI, I found myself being pulled towards the use of Moustakas' (1968; 1990) HI as I believed this methodology could retain the individual voices of both the researcher and co-researchers (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010) as separate individuals with their own perceptions, emotions, and knowledge coming together to create new meaning. The quote below highlights this:

> "The in-depth study of an individual student in this way will demonstrate a richness and complexity to the[ir] voice that is not captured by more superficial, quantitative tools" (Kinchin & Kinchin, 2019, p. 22).

In using HI, the research provided a rich perspective on individual students' experience (Moustakas, 1990). I then discussed the phases of HI (Moustakas, 1990) and how this methodology could be used in voice research.

Phases of Heuristic Inquiry

Moustakas (1990) explained that it was essential that the researcher used their own 'intuition' when employing the HI concepts and only provided guidance for the researcher under six guided phases in which he recommended utilising, or at least having the desire to utilise, the concepts discussed above under the heading processes, key concepts and a therapeutic interpretation.. These phases are discussed in Table 3.1 below, and each phase will be used for this study.

Table 3.1: The phases of Heuristic Inquiry (Moustakas, 1990)

Phases of Heuristic Inquiry (Moustakas, 1990)	How the phases were implemented in this study.
Initial engagement	As a guide, Moustakas (1990, pp. 27 -32) stated that the first phase begins with an 'initial engagement' whereby the researcher is compelled to explore a topic with significant personal meaning; to find it, the researcher used 'self-dialogue', 'self-search', 'tacit knowing' and 'intuition' in the autobiographical domain. This can be seen in Chapter One, in which I developed an intense personal interest after exploring the historical development of HE in accepting more DLN students like me, the development of SV in response to this, and the critiques surrounding the potential for ISV. I continued my initial search with the 'self' (Hiles, 2001; Moustakas, 1968) in Chapter Two, whereby I used my reflexive diary to help discuss my own personal engagement with the topic of inquiry, exploring my early and later experiences in education (Moustakas, 1968), and the impact those experiences had on my voice, see Chapter Two for more details.

Immersion	The second phase involved 'immersion,' whereby the researcher (using all the concepts listed above) fully immersed themselves in the experience, for example, every word, dream, creativity, and/or nature was involved in the research (Moustakas, 1990). It required the researcher to fully disclose their own 'frame of reference' (their own perceptions) freely, without fear of judgement (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). It could be an "experience of both joy and pain" (Haertl, 2014, p. 59) "between a younger 'she' and older' me'" (Norton, 2017, p. 9). However, the experience did enable me to understand myself and my co-researchers on a deeper level (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Ozertugrul, 2017). This phase can be seen in Chapter Two, where I explored my identity as a DLN student and the potential of trauma in relation to my lost voice in tertiary education.
Incubation	The third phase was 'incubation,' during which the researcher took time away from 'immersion' to continue developing 'tacit knowing' and 'intuition' that led to new insightful understandings of the experience (Moustakas, 1990). Chapter Two delved into this phase and discussed the various forms of distraction activities

	that I undertook, while concurrently exploring the impact of my DLN on SV processes in HE.
Illumination	The process of incubation was followed by the fourth phase of 'illumination,' whereby themes came into the researcher's awareness through 'tacit knowing' and 'reflectiveness' from new knowledge and/or challenges that contradicted previous knowledge (Moustakas, 1990). In Chapter Two, I illuminated the themes of my own mental health (in relation to needing focusing, safety and self-compassion) and the need for individuation through self-authorship as the route towards regaining my lost voice. Just as Haertl (2014) stated, I also found it beneficial to establish my own themes before recruiting co-researchers, as I wanted to reveal my own self-development from beginning to end. To achieve this, I needed to express my starting position, my positionality, and my experiences.
Explication	'Explication' was the fifth phase in which the knowledge 'illuminated' above was explained in respect of the elements that were missing in consciousness; this involved "focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure" in the development of new potential themes (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). This phase enabled me

	to explore my need to author my own life, as can be seen in Chapter Two.
Creative synthesis	The final phase was 'creative synthesis', whereby I utilised 'tacit knowing,' 'intuition' and 'self-search' to develop a creative output based on examples from the data to fully explain the experience (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). The creative synthesis could be presented in a narrative style or a creative portrayal of the themes themselves (Hiles, 2001; Moustakas, 1990). An example of this can be seen in Chapter Two, where I created an ISV fingerprint to express what ISV means to me. A similar ISV fingerprint was created for each co-researcher to ensure that each co-researcher's individual ISV fingerprint was not lost. A final creative synthesis was created at the conclusion of the study to express the universal findings (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990).

(Source: Table created by the Author (2025), illustrating the process of Heuristic Inquiry (Moustakas, 1990))

Although Sela-Smith (2002) argued that all phases needed to be completed before moving on to the next, others have stated that there is no right way or process to follow for HI (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Sultan, 2020).

After using the above concepts to explore the self, the researcher then proceeded to use the same concepts, processes, and phases to explore the co-researcher's experience as they navigated through the same experience of 'self-discovery' (Moustakas, 1990). The researcher moved between each co-researcher's data and their own to discover the true meaning of the experience (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990) using concepts of intuition, internal self-dialogue, and the tacit knowledge as described above to guide the analysis of co-researchers' data (Sultan, 2019; 2020). This provided the researcher with greater knowledge of the experience before arriving back to the 'self' to observe the changes that had occurred in the researcher's own self and/or perception, labelled as the 'internal frame of reference' (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 12 - 13), leaving space to determine whether transformational change had occurred for the researcher (Hiles, 2001; Moustakas, 1990). This is evident in the summary chapter.

I now turn my attention to the way this research was designed based on the guidance and stipulations of Moustakas' (1990) HI.

Research design

Positioning the researcher at the heart of the research

In academia, traditional forms of research and academic writing "can constrain voices and what may be researched and expressed;" in comparison, writing using first-person inquiry was "often associated with finding a voice" (Marshall, 2016, p.98). This research moves beyond the limitations of traditional research methods to utilise both my voice and the

voice of co-researchers to present multiple voices, multiple ways of communicating and multiple ways of thinking (Bigger, 2021; Ellis *et al*., 2011), as this aligned with the aim of this study to include student voice throughout. In acknowledging my own personal experience of being a DLN student attending HE had led me to conclude that a first-person inquiry, such as HI (Moustakas, 1990), was required for this study, this approach humanised my experience by utilising a self-search approach to illuminate the hidden, tacit realities of the experience (Lumma & Weger, 2021; Moustakas, 1990). A first-person inquiry, such as a self-search, is involved:

> "reflecting on oneself and one's performance, in dialogue with one's self, interviewing oneself about oneself as it were, in dialogue with others ... that understanding is discussed and validated with others, so it is co-constructed knowledge ... making is personally meaningful and emancipatory" (Bigger, 2021, pp. 69 - 70).

HI positioned the researcher as the first data source (Mandzuk, 1997; Moustakas, 1990). This type of research takes many forms, often including subjective, autobiographical, qualitative, and creative content relating to the researcher's own experiences or identity (Gardner *et al*., 2017; Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990). Reflexivity and first-person language are used in this research. Reflexivity is defined as "coming to an understanding of how one's actions are formed by and from the world and others" (Gilbert & Sliep, 2009, p. 468). I also employed self-awareness to critically examine the potential influence that my own positioning might have had on this study (Pillow, 2003). Therefore, I used reflexivity to

understand how my voice had been informed by my experiences, to show that the perceptions written were from my own personal accounts of the phenomenon.

Others, in the form of co-researchers, later joined me for conversational interviews, as directed by Moustakas (1990). My personal experiences were used to build trust, empathy and safety when collaborating relationally, authentically and without hierarchy with co-researchers, an approach that empowers marginalised individuals to have a voice that may not have been established with more traditional methods (Bigger, 2021; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Gardner *et al*., 2017; Herman; 2023; 2010; Pillow, 2003).

However, this type of research has been heavily critiqued, for instance, Devendorf (2022, p. 50) was instructed to 'conceal' their firsthand experiences of mental ill-health from their research from a committee member responsible for assigning scholarships because this was perceived as putting biased reflections into an objective scientific space. The author construed this to be a form of "stigma," or "discrimination," and concluded that some researchers are likely to hide their firsthand experiences in research because of this stigma (Devendorf, 2022). This type of research, often labelled as 'Me-search', is frequently considered to be 'self-focused,' 'overly self-referential', 'self-serving', 'self-indulgent' (Gardener *et al*., 2017, pp.93-105) and narcissistic (Ellis *et al*., 2011; Hooks, 1994). However, Narcissism (and similar terminology) are likely to be rooted in the fantastical belief of personal perfection rather than within the need to deeply reflect on oneself to improve relationship dynamics (Pańkowska, 2022). Through actively participating in the research, I

may have uncovered information that could help liberate and heal myself and/or other diverse students (Hooks, 1994). Therefore, the self has been used as a vehicle to understand how historical relationships impact/explain broader culture and society in which we live (Ellis, 2004; Chang, 2008; Pańkowska, 2022). Furthermore, no research is entirely objective because researchers inevitably influence the research when deciding on the questions, methods, theories, and interpretations; therefore, it is impossible to eliminate researcher bias unless researchers openly disclose it (Bigger, 2021; Gardner *et al*., 2017).

By self-disclosing my experiences, this research can distinguish my voice from those of co-researchers (Pillow, 2003, drawing on Peshkin, 1988), thereby retaining credibility and trustworthiness (Altenmüller *et al*., 2021). Therefore, as articulated previously, and in keeping with the approach advocated by Moustakas (1990), involving the researcher within the study is what I intended to do to capture the emotionally complex living experience of DLN students throughout and present heuristically whether any researcher self-development took place (Lumma & Weger, 2021; Moustakas, 1990). Self-development fluctuates within a state of change, often influenced by our past, the reading of literature, and through our interactions with others (Bigger, 2021). Therefore, as Pillow (2003) writes, by knowing myself more, I could better understand others, and in knowing others, I gained a better understanding of myself. Therefore, my personal experiences could have provided students, staff, and institutions with recommended strategies to improve their circumstances (Ellis *et al*., 2011).

Researchers, such as myself, are using their personal experiences and the experiences of others to speak for itself (Pillow, 2003), to act as a motivator to actively reduce stigma, inequalities of power, and the oppression of underrepresented silenced groups (Bigger, 2021; Devendorf, 2022; Gardener *et al*., 2017); or in my case, to use my personal experiences and identity to help increase the understanding (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) of institutional oppression in ISV for students with DLN where care had been taken to remove any identifying information to ensure the privacy of myself and others included in my experiences (Ellis *et al*., 2011; Lumma & Weger, 2021). Presenting my insider knowledge could have increased co-researchers' openness, enabling the depth of the experience to be explored and, in turn, improved the accuracy of the data collected (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 59).

Although my study was central to my thoughts, feelings, and ideas, literature was also used to support or challenge my claims (Lumma & Weger, 2021). I now discuss the unique approach taken in finding literature and how it was used in this research.

The use of literature within this thesis

Moustakas (1968) discussed literature in relation to his HI study of loneliness, suggesting that it can negatively impact the researcher's own self-search, influencing and directing the illumination of themes rather than the themes being illuminated from the researchers' own thoughts and feelings. It is for this reason that I began the research with my pre-

existing knowledge of SV literature, through my previous study conducted in this area (see Sewell *et al*., 2020) and incorporated additional literature that my self-search led me to discover as part of the HI process, as suggested by Sultan (2019). Upon starting the study, I commenced compiling my own words within a reflexive researcher's diary (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Mihalache, 2019), which I used to explore my autobiographical experiences, followed by the introduction of my pre-existing literature and a secondary literature compilation that explored the topic more precisely (Sultan, 2019). This method was employed throughout the thesis, particularly in Chapter Two, whereby my own self-search and internal motivation illuminated new revelations within me (as seen in my verbatim excerpts), and this new knowledge guided me to the literature (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). My reading in Chapter Two consisted of other autobiographical stories, journal articles, and creative elements (Moustakas, 1968). The next step was to incubate my self-search and literature (Sultan, 2019) before hearing and listening to the voices of co-researchers (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). Sultan (2019) stated that a return to the literature was necessary, but only after the analysis stage was complete, to limit 'contamination', but also to see whether additional literature could be found that supported or disagreed with the themes from the analysis stage.

Upon reflection, embarking on Chapter Two before assessing the literature and interviewing co-researchers was a necessary element of the study. Firstly, it provided the research with my initial 'frame of reference,' which could then be compared with the return to my self-search section later in the thesis (Moustakas, 1990). It became apparent

to me after interviewing co-researchers that the self-search had given me a greater awareness of "the person who has had, is having, or will have the experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26). This sense of awareness and understanding of myself and others enabled me to converse with co-researchers compassionately and empathetically, arguably increasing the therapeutic benefits that many co-researchers had reported feeling in this research. My own self-search and choice of literature became the basis for my questions, which are discussed in more depth below.

Research questions

The research question for this study has arguably been in a state of gestation for several years, beginning when I was a child sitting uncomfortably in my classroom, and continuing through my university experience, which was vastly different. The university provided me with many ways to use my voice, as my reflections in Chapter Two have shown; however, my experience as a DLN student somewhat impacted my ability to use my voice in many ways, most notably the co-occurring trauma associated with my needs. My firsthand experiences, in addition to my intense interest in SV and inclusion, increased my desire to explore this very 'human experience' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 42). This methodology was concerned with experience; therefore, the overarching question for this research is:

> What is the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learner needs and the ways in which students with diverse learner needs utilise their inclusive student voice in higher education?

This overarching question was further broken down into four sub-questions, which are presented in Chapter One. These questions focused on the reported literature, the co-researcher's experiences, the co-researcher's modality of using their voice, and the creative output. It was essential for me to cover all four elements of this research within these four questions, while also allowing for areas or aspects for questioning that I had not presented as questions to answer the overarching research question outlined in the introduction chapter. A draft interview schedule of semi-structured questions was drawn up (Appendix 11) based on the discussions and literature presented in Chapters One and Two. These included questions about co-researchers' past personal experiences of SV, their present experiences of voice, particularly in relation to university feedback systems, as well as inclusive or exclusive experiences of feedback systems, and the opportunity to explore ISV.

The co-researchers

As stated earlier, co-researchers could only participate in the study if they were HE students who had experience of SV and who self-identified themselves as having DLN. This was because the research focus was on the experiences of HE DLN students and SV, and Moustakas (1990) insisted that co-researchers must have experience of the topic in similar circumstances to the researcher. Therefore, the same university that the researcher had attended was used, and the courses that the researcher had previously undertaken were also chosen. I obtained the consent of gatekeepers from each course leader, as advised

by Punch (2014), and contacted the module tutors to arrange a day and time to present my research to potential co-researchers within their mandatory modules. I explained the inclusion criteria to potential students, their involvement as co-researchers and handed them a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (PIS). Anyone who wanted to participate in the study could do so voluntarily by contacting the researcher via email to express their interest. The researcher explained the co-researchers' ability to bring artefacts, and any questions they had were answered. Students who wished to participate in the research as co-researchers were sent a consent form, which they signed before the interviews. The form explained the research process and their rights to withdraw (Punch, 2014; Sultan, 2019). The first co-researcher who expressed interest became the pilot study, and this process was explained to them before their interview, as outlined below.

All other students who contacted the researcher became co-researchers, and their data management is explained in a separate section below. Moustakas (1990) stated that co-researcher recruitment could range from 10 to 15 individuals, but smaller numbers could be used because of the ability to conduct multiple interviews with one co-researcher. The initial co-researcher recruitment did not provide a successful number of co-researchers (only five and one pilot), and a change in ethics enabled a further recruitment agenda, which was successful. In total, the co-researcher numbers reached nine individuals, in addition to one pilot co-researcher. The process of seeking ethical approval, some of the challenges experienced, and additional changes to ethics are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Method choice for data collection

Moustakas suggested that co-researchers should undertake an interview in which they could bring artefacts (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). Artefacts encompassed a degree of inclusivity for the research (Mihalache, 2019) because "artefacts can tell stories that words cannot possibly tell" (Sultan, 2019, p. 134). Moustakas (1990) also discussed three types of interviews recommended for HI by Patton (1980), ranging from employing a relaxed conversational dialogue to using a flexible interview structure or a set of structured questions. Initially, this research developed a flexible set of questions, allowing me to ask additional questions while remaining within the established themes. However, I felt that the interview structure, although flexible, provided me with a sense of security and safety, knowing that I had a framework to rely on should I need support during the interview process. This could largely be attributed to my inexperience with this methodology. I felt that a pilot study was needed to explore the suitability of the interview structure and questions. The discovery of this is discussed below.

Pilot interview

A pilot study is a 'small-scale' replication of the intended larger-scale research project to explore and adjust potential planning pitfalls (Jairath *et al*., 2000; Kim, 2010; Prescott & Soeken, 1989). The pilot study, in this case, was conducted between the researcher and one co-researcher to familiarise myself with the interview process as I was unfamiliar with the

use of HI as a data collection tool (Kim, 2010; Moustakas, 1990). The pilot co-researcher was sent a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (Appendix 1) and a consent form (Appendix 2) prior to the interview being arranged. The consent form was signed prior to the co-researcher's undertaking the interview.

The co-researcher arrived, and it was explained to them that their interview was being used as a pilot study, as this is considered best practice (Arain *et al*., 2010). The co-researcher was informed that the pilot was being conducted to ensure that the interview schedule was fit for purpose and that I had the space to become familiar with the HI interview techniques. The interview began with the co-researchers and me undertaking a breathing technique to elicit a calming and welcoming atmosphere as preparation for the interview (Moustakas, 1990). The interview lasted one hour and was recorded and transcribed (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Sultan, 2019). The pilot co-researcher also contributed an artefact to the research, which can be found in the appendix (Appendix 3). Additional consent was gained from the co-researcher to use their artefact in this thesis (Appendix 4).

As Kim (2010) recommended, member checking was conducted following the interview to ascertain the co-researcher’s experience of the interview and to ask the co-researcher whether any changes needed to be made to the interviewing process. The co-researcher stated that they found the experience to be helpful, that the interview questions flowed and that they felt listened to. The co-researcher's only suggestion was that they would have preferred a list of topics to be covered in the interview beforehand, so they could see what

items they needed to discuss. This change was facilitated for all future co-researchers in this project, in that a sheet of paper was given at the start of each interview that listed the following items:

- Diverse Learner Needs
- Student voice in education
- Student voice in higher education
- Inclusion/exclusion in education
- Inclusive Student Voice.

The co-researcher's feedback highlighted the need to be more inclusive in my interviews. Although the co-researcher was not impacted by not having a step-by-step guide, they did state that they thought it would be helpful for others who may have diverse needs. The pilot study highlighted opportunities for inclusion that I had previously overlooked, but it also provided a chance to utilise the concepts and processes of HI (Moustakas, 1990).

The co-researcher also found my questioning to be sensitive to their needs, whereas for me, I had learnt that it was challenging to focus solely on the semi-structured interview questions that I had pre-prepared. Instead, I instantly found myself asking a variety of questions that were focused on the co-researcher as an individual, allowing the co-researcher to lead the flow of the interview rather than using my generic questions that placed me in a position of power (Sultan, 2019).

This type of questioning lends itself to the open conversational interviews that Moustakas (1990) stated were the most effective form of interviewing for HI researcher projects. I had learnt through the pilot study that open conversational interviews were the best form of interviewing because co-researchers were free to explore their experiences in a way that was not forced or directed by me. However, additional questions were asked, and these remained in line with the co-researchers' current discussion (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010). I continued to use this style of interviewing for all future co-researchers. It is understood that spontaneous changes, such as these, are expected to help illuminate the phenomenon in HI research (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985).

As this was a pilot study, the co-researcher's data were used as an 'external pilot' and were, therefore, not used in the main findings (Arain *et al*., 2010). I now discuss the data gathering and data management of the remaining co-researchers below.

Data gathering and data management

Following the pilot study, all consecutive students who had expressed interest in participating were contacted by email and provided with a PIS (Appendix 5). The PIS form aimed to explain the research process and the expectations required from the co-researchers. For instance, potential co-researchers could only participate in the study if they self-identified as having DLN, had attended a relevant university degree course and had experience of the topic (Moustakas, 1990). In this research, co-researchers were

required to have experience with SV processes. The PIS form also informed potential co-researchers of their commitment to a recorded interview, a photograph taken of any artefacts intended for use in the research, and their involvement in the analysis process (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Sultan, 2019).

A consent form (Appendix 6) was also sent to the students at the same time as the PIS, co-researchers signed this to provide informed consent before an interview took place, this ensured that they knew their rights (Punch, 2014; Sultan, 2019; Thomas, 2017), were happy to take part and a pseudonym name was chosen by the co-researchers to maintain confidentiality and anonymity (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Sultan, 2016; Thomas, 2017). However, only the first two letters of the pseudonyms were used to enhance confidentiality. The consent form also included the co-researcher's consent to use an audio recorder in the interviews, and an additional consent form was also signed to allow the researcher to use the images of each artefact within the thesis (Appendix 7). Artefacts could include any items that the co-researcher felt could add value to the meaning of their experiences, such as art, written documents, poetry and/or diary entries (Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2016). Two out of nine co-researchers used and brought artefacts to their interviews, and images of these can be found in Appendices 8 and 9. Other communication involved arranging interviews, checking the accuracy of transcripts, and throughout the analysis stage (Hiles, 2001; Sultan, 2016).

I interviewed co-researchers one at a time to allow myself to fully immerse in each co-researcher's experience (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). The interviews began with a

brief breathing activity, as this aligned with Moustakas' (1990) idea that the interview should be a relaxed space. Students were asked if they wanted to join in, but this was not compulsory. Where co-researchers did not wish to participate in the breathing activity, I undertook the process alone. Some students joined in, while others did not. For some interviews, the breathing exercise occurred before the recording commenced, whereas for others, it was included within the recording. I allowed for the difference to provide the option for the co-researcher to choose whether to be recorded, ensuring they were comfortable. It is also possible that some students were so passionate about relaying their experiences that the commencement of the interview occurred instantly without allowing for the application of breathing techniques. However, I sensed that the co-researchers wanted to get started, and therefore, following Moustakas' (1990) guidance, I followed my informed intuition.

The interviews involved engaging in a two-way conversation between myself and the co-researchers to allow depth and meaning to be fully explored; this is because “genuine dialogue” between two people, as explained by Buber, as a meeting of two similar I-Its forming an I-Thou dialogue, provided empathy and understanding (translated in 2010). Spaces such as this “cannot be planned” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 47). Interviews lasted no longer than an hour and were held in a private room at the researcher's and co-researcher’s university (Sultan, 2019). Co-researchers were asked about their SV experiences, the ways their DLN impacted them in HE, and were also asked to co-construct or conceptualise what ISV meant to them in line with Moustakas (1990)

acknowledgement that co-researchers should be allowed to provide their own 'evidence'. Co-researchers had truly become "active agents in the creation of meaning ... in that vein, heuristic inquiry is an emancipatory methodology" (Sultan, 2019, p. 27) in which co-researchers co-created new knowledge with the researcher in the interview space (Moustakas, 1990).

Furthermore, I found myself self-disclosing my experiences to co-researchers only when they had disclosed a similar experience, a process identified by Jourard (1968) as a means to elicit more trust in dialogue with others and a fundamental part of Heuristic Inquiry (Moustakas, 1990). I found that I started to feel safe in the knowledge that the co-researcher understood me, and at times this made me curious to know more about my co-researcher (Sultan, 2019). Although conversational interviews have their benefits, Djuraskovic and Arthur (2010) observed challenges when co-researchers deviated from the topic, potentially resulting in lost data.

After the interviews, the co-researchers were asked whether they would find it beneficial to have a further interview to allow them to elaborate on their experiences until they naturally came to an end (Moustakas, 1990). Four out of nine co-researchers requested a follow-up interview, and of these four, all but one decided to cease interviews after the second. The final co-researcher ended our meetings after the third interview. This has resulted in 14 interviews, each lasting around one hour. Following each interview, I returned to my researcher's diary to record my thoughts and feelings about the interview, which informed my understanding of subsequent co-researchers and helped support the

experiential process (Mihalache, 2019; Sultan, 2019). The decision to continue to reflect within the diary throughout the interviews with co-researchers minimised the criticism given by Sela-Smith (2002) that self-searching ceases when co-researchers become involved. This was not the case in this research, and the findings were presented in the discussion chapter, where I refer to the processes I undertook for my own self-discovery and self-transformation, as documented in my researcher's diary (Hiles, 2001). Interviews were transcribed (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010) and sent to the co-researcher for verification to check for accuracy of the recording (Hiles, 2001). Co-researchers were given seven days to sign off on the transcript, make any edits to the transcript, and/or remove their participation from the study without reprisals. Once signed off, the transcript and any artefacts were used to analyse the co-researcher's data, and the analysis was also sent to the co-researcher throughout each stage of the analysis process to continue to check for accuracy (Hiles, 2001). I now discuss the stages of analysis.

Analysis process

Moustakas' (1990) HI outlined several stages of analysis, and this can be seen in Table 3.2 below alongside an explanation of each stage.

Table 3.2: Process of analysis using Moustakas' (1990) Heuristic Inquiry

Stage of analysis (Moustakas, 1990)	How this stage was implemented in this research
Gather data from the first co-researcher.	The analysis involved analysing each co-researcher's data in turn.
Distraction, immersion, themes established and create individual depiction.	The researcher embarks on an immersion, distraction, and re-immersion process into each co-researcher's recordings, transcripts and artefacts until the researcher can illuminate and explicate themes (Mihalache, 2019). Each transcript was analysed line by line to identify and colour-code sections of data that related to the question (Moustakas, 1990). The data discovered was used to create the co-researcher's 'individual depictions '; these depicted the co-researcher's experiences maintaining their own words (as far as possible) (Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990), their artefacts and their own individual ISV fingerprint that reflected a smaller version of my own in the self-search (Chapter Two). Once the depiction was created, I reviewed the co-researcher's data to ensure that all themes had been adequately explicated.

Review data for accuracy and share with co-researchers.	After the final depiction was formulated, the co-researchers were sent the depiction to verify its accuracy (Hiles, 2001; Moustakas, 1990).
Repeat for each co-researcher. Gather all individual depictions together	Upon approval from the co-researcher, I then proceeded to undertake the same process with the next co-researcher and the subsequent ones, until all individual co-researchers' themes had been identified and approved by them.
Immersion, distraction, themes established and create a composite depiction.	I subsequently undertook a process of immersion, distraction, and immersion again. However, this time, the process was used to explore all co-researchers' individual depictions to identify and explicate the 'universal experience,' thereby developing a 'composite depiction' that maintained the co-researcher's original language and voice (Moustakas, 1990). Developing a composite depiction also prevented students from being individually identified (Punch, 2014). Once the composite depiction was created, I verified its accuracy by reviewing the original transcripts and individual depictions (Hiles, 2001).
Review of data, choose three co-researchers who exemplify	A small number of co-researchers who represented the overall experiences of co-researchers were chosen and adapted to form 'exemplary portraits' for the research

experience and create individual portraits.	(Moustakas, 1990). Again, these portraits included the co-researcher's own language as it was essential for me to ensure SV was kept at the forefront of this research.
Develop a creative synthesis.	The final stage involved creating a 'creative synthesis,' a process that pulls together the illuminated and explicated new knowledge that has been incubated over the course of the study and expressed in a unique and creative format, such as writing poetry or stories (Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990). Stories and poetry can have therapeutic, self-healing and developmental benefits for the writer (Haertl, 2014).

(Source: Table created by the Author (2025), illustrating the processes of Heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990))

In this research, the researcher and the co-researchers' voices were used in a manner that maintains their individual themes and the themes of the group (Moustakas, 1990). The researcher's voice was taken from the researcher's diary to form the self-search.

This type of research requires a high degree of ethical practice for both the researcher and the co-researchers. Therefore, I now turn my attention to the ethical considerations of this research and how they were attended to.

Ethics

Ethical application process

Ethics are concerned with the "right and wrong" of research procedures (Thomas, 2017, p. 37). To comply with the moral obligations of research ethics, a legalised code of practice, principles, and processes has been established in university institutions, requiring researchers to obtain ethical approval and comply with the instructions agreed upon by the ethics committee (Punch, 2014). Ethics are concerned with the potential benefits and harm that could be caused by the research being undertaken, particularly as this research recruits co-researchers with diverse needs (Thomas, 2017). It was for this reason that ethical approval was obtained for this research, the process of which is outlined below. Due to its applicability to qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) discussions on qualitative research ethics have guided this study. Furthermore, the discussions of ethics relating to HI have also mainly been followed and discussed, such as relevant advice provided by Moustakas (1990) and Sultan (2019), who offer an extensive chapter on the topic, the contents of which were used to further my learning of the ethical implications of conducting a HI research methodology. I now discuss the ethical considerations for the co-researchers and the researcher, as well as the strategies this research undertook to ensure trust was gained within the research design.

Ethical considerations for the co-researcher

Informed consent was gained from each co-researcher, including the pilot before interviews took place "to observe the principle of respect for autonomous agents" (McNamee & Bridges, 2002, p. 7) and to ensure that co-researchers knew their rights to participation including the right to withdraw (Punch, 2014; Sultan, 2019) (see Appendix 6 for a copy of the consent form that was sent out to co-researchers). This was accompanied by a PIS (copy in Appendix 5) to ensure that co-researchers were fully informed of the research, were able to ask the researcher questions before the interview and to choose their own pseudonym name to enable confidentiality, although, it was explained that this would be wavered if I felt there was risk of harm to the co-researcher or others (McNamee & Bridges, 2002; Punch, 2014; Sultan, 2019). However, one must consider the issues related to autonomous consent when powerful others are conducting the research (McNamee & Bridges, 2002). It is for this reason that I have positioned myself as a student exploring students' perceptions to identify and address potential issues related to power and hierarchy.

Another issue raised by McNamee and Bridges (2002, p. 2) was to ensure that consent included the "right not to be harmed". It is for this reason that I became aware of the term 'transference' as an ethical consideration by Sultan (2019), who stated that the co-researcher could view the researcher as a person from their experience or, conversely, the researcher could view the client, or co-researcher, as someone from their experience. Although I often shared empathy and emotions with the co-researchers due to our shared

experiences, which were used as data, I do not recall this effect taking place; however, I was aware of it. If this were to happen, I would have discussed this with the co-researcher to minimise its impact on the research (Sultan, 2019).

Given the sensitivity of this research, co-researchers were directed to counselling if they felt they needed therapy as a result of the discussion they had in the interview space, and all co-researchers had the opportunity to withdraw from the research up until seven days after receiving the transcripts (Punch, 2014; Sultan, 2019; Thomas, 2017). Transcripts were created in such a way that all personal data that identified the co-researcher or others was redacted, and at times, this meant redacting a significant amount of data (Punch, 2014; Sultan, 2019). All co-researchers chose a pseudonym to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of their experiences, to ensure trustworthiness (McNamee & Bridge, 2002; Thomas, 2017).

Ethical considerations for the researcher

Due to the very nature of including the researcher's own personal history, this research had to consider the challenges felt in disclosing my own story, my ability to undertake reflexive practice and the challenges relating to the researcher's confidentiality and the confidentiality of others implied within the text because I do not have anonymity (Mihalache, 2019; Thomas, 2017). In this regard, I had concerns about how my story would be received and whether there would be risks associated with this, particularly relating to whether I would be judged or misunderstood, which made me wonder whether

it would be better to ignore my own voice in this research. Perhaps it was for this reason that many HI researchers avoided disclosing themselves within the research (Sela-Smith, 2002). Sela-Smith's (2002) criticism of HI researchers led me to deduce that I wanted to avoid this criticism by being open about my experiences with others who, due to their DLN, also felt voiceless and unheard. I thought that if the co-researchers were brave enough to share their experiences and innermost thoughts, then I should do that too. However, ethically, I held back any identifying information, such as names and gender, to ensure confidentiality and anonymity when referencing people in my life, which was further supported by the role of the supervisor.

Mihalache (2019) also believed that researchers' stories can dominate the interviews, resulting in a role reversal from researchers to therapists, whereby the co-researcher becomes the therapist's client. To mitigate this, any researcher disclosures that were found to be similar to the co-researcher's experience were appropriately delivered after the co-researcher had already spoken of themselves (Sultan, 2019). This is because I wanted to show co-researchers that their conversations with me regarding their voice were a crucial step to moving away from silence, which I also had to navigate. However, I also realised how similar, yet different, our experiences were, and that it was impossible for me to use my voice to speak on their behalf (Norton, 2017). This enabled the co-researcher's individuality and experiences to be valued for the uniqueness of their own stories. After disclosing my experiences and thoughts, the conversation then swiftly

shifted back to focusing on the co-researcher's experiences and any further thoughts I had were recorded in the researcher's diary.

I recognised that including my own experiences comes with confidentiality concerns for me as the researcher. To mitigate this, I granted myself the same rights as the co-researchers to edit, revoke and change any data collected during my self-search. This was an ongoing process and was used to protect myself from disclosing very private information. Furthermore, the process of HI can be an emotional task. Therefore, as advised by Moustakas (1990), to mitigate this, I undertook distraction techniques, such as undertaking incubation periods between interviews to process the co-researcher's experiences. Ideas for distraction were drawn from Sultan (2019), which included walking, journaling, colouring, meditation, debriefing with doctoral supervisors, and receiving counselling.

Now that I have discussed the ethics followed by the co-researchers and the researcher. I now explore the ethical considerations that I followed for the whole research to ensure "trustworthiness" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Trustworthiness in qualitative research

"Trustworthiness" in qualitative research refers to the ability to supply evidence for each conclusive point made in the study (McNamee & Bridges, 2002). However, qualitative research, such as this, presents many similar and distinct ethical considerations to those of

other qualitative studies. To illustrate this, I drew on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp 301 - 331) identified four crucial elements to ensure that trustworthiness could be gained within qualitative research; these are 'credibility' relating to the design of the study; 'transferability' of the findings; 'dependability' on the methodology; and 'confirmability' of the discussions had by the researcher in respect of the findings. I now discuss each of these elements and how this research implemented them in Table 3.3 below.

The left column of Table 3.3 below indicates which element of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness I implemented. The middle column identifies and explains the strategy I employed to ensure trust within the research, and finally, the right column discusses how the plan was implemented in this research.

Table 3.3: Trustworthiness in this research created for this research from the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)	**Strategies used in this research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)**	**Application to Heuristic Inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) and this research.**
Credibility **Transferability** **Dependability** **Confirmability**	**Triangulation** – using more than one data source.	This research employed a triangulation of data sources, including as interviews, artefacts and the researcher's reflexive diary, which enabled both the researcher and the co-researchers to be positioned as co-researchers (Haertl, 2014; Sultan, 2019). The addition of the researcher's experience provided greater depth and improved understanding of the phenomena (Mihalache, 2019). Using a variety of student voices through multiple methods of data sources, it is argued, produced rich data (Braud, 1998; Mihalache, 2019).
Credibility **Transferability** **Dependability** **Confirmability**	**Thick description** – data was presented with a high degree of descriptive content.	Thick description presented as depictions and portraits, and this enabled readers to understand and empathise with co-researchers' experiences (Moustakas, 1990) and through their reading, readers could decide whether the thick description can be transferred to their own or other experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)
Credibility **Transferability** **Dependability** **Confirmability**	**External audit/review by knowledgeable others –** assessments were made of the research at various intervals to ensure accuracy of the research process.	This PhD was reviewed at various intervals and by multiple individuals. Supervisors oversee the research process; course leaders check progress annually throughout the four-year research programme, and it is also externally examined after completion by professionals knowledgeable about the topic area and/or about research (Sultan, 2019).

Credibility **Transferability** **Dependability** **Confirmability**	**The reflexive journal** – discussions relating to the research were compiled in a diary.	A researcher's diary was kept as part of the HI methodology (Moustakas, 1990). The diary included pivotal points of reflection relating to the study from start to finish, including my experiences and thoughts about my self-search, as well as my thoughts and feelings after each co-researcher. It was also crucial to the study that, as themes for myself and co-researchers were incubating within me, I addressed these in my diary (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1990).
Credibility **Confirmability**	**Member checking** – checking the accuracy of the data with the original contributors.	Enabling co-researchers to have a consistent voice within the whole research process, including during and after the interview, ensured the accuracy of the transcripts and analysis process (otherwise known as member checking) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019).
Credibility **Transferability**	**Prolonged engagement** – a high degree of engagement was had with co-researchers and their data.	Prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with co-researchers (using multiple interviews) and immersion into their data ensured that I understood the various realities of the co-researchers (Moustakas, 1990). For instance, co-researchers were given the option to have multiple interviews; their data was analysed with periods of re-checking, and co-researchers were contacted at each stage of the analysis process to ensure that their depictions were an accurate representation of the experience (Moustakas, 1990).

(Source: Table created by the Author (2025), illustrating the ideas and processes of Lincoln and Guba (1985))

However, it is worth noting here that there was no direct route to ensuring validity in qualitative research because this was a quantitative term. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) insisted that their directions for strategies in relation to trustworthiness served as a guide to support both the researcher and the readers of the research.

Ethical approval

As directed by Thomas (2017), this research received ethical approval from the University in which the study was conducted, and the ethical principles outlined by the university have been upheld throughout (see Appendix 10, 11, 12 and 13). The first ethical form was requested to approach students in levels 5 and 6 of two university undergraduate courses. During this time, one pilot and five co-researchers emailed to request to participate in the study. However, this did not secure the minimum of 10 co-researchers that Moustakas (1990) recommended. Therefore, an amendment to ethics was applied to gain further permission to conduct a second round of co-researcher recruitment in levels 5 and 6 of the same two courses above, with a further addition of level 4 students in the same two courses (see Appendices 14, 15, 16, and 17 for details). This second round of recruitment was positive, and one pilot and 10 co-researchers were gained. However, only one pilot and nine researchers participated in the study, as one person withdrew from the research before being interviewed. More information regarding the co-researchers and the findings can be found in the analysis chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the ontology, epistemology and axiology relating to this study, whereby an interpretive social constructivist approach was chosen due to the relational nature of shared experiences. I had discussed a variety of paradigms, choosing to align this

research with a humanistic counselling methodological choice, specifically heuristic inquiry, as opposed to narrative inquiry and autoethnography. I also sought to include a feminist theoretical perspective. I then discussed the core concepts and phrases associated with this methodology and explained how they relate to a study of voice. I have also discussed the research design and the evolution of this study. I conclude the chapter by discussing the ethical considerations necessary to undertake this research and the strategies I employed to ensure its trustworthiness in SV research. The next chapter presents my analysis of the co-researchers' data.

Chapter four: Analysis

> Neither of us anticipated having conversations about how we endured trauma, but the process of recounting our stories was transformative (Pérez II & Vicente, 2022, p. 60)

Introduction

This chapter will present the process of analysis, and the new knowledge extrapolated from co-researchers' depictions (both individual and composite), and develop individual portraits for three co-researchers using the phases of ‘immersion’, ‘incubation’, ‘illumination’, ‘explication’ and ‘creative synthesis’ as suggested by Moustakas (1990). The creative synthesis that follows the written format of findings will artistically present the themes gained throughout the process (Moustakas, 1990). The chapter will respond to the purpose statement, which focuses on discovering heuristic knowledge (outlined in the methodology chapter) through an exploration of how DLN students utilise their voice and how they experience ISV in HE. This chapter will also include Feminist Standpoint Theory (Harding, 2004a) and address the research questions outlined in the introduction chapter. This outlines the required elements of this chapter as directed by Moustakas (1990).

However, Sultan (2019 states that little guidance is given by Moustakas (1990) regarding the presentation and structure of this chapter. Therefore, I will follow Sultan (2019), who suggests that the analysis section can be presented with flexibility. To this end, I felt it necessary to explore previous research that had employed a heuristic approach to

examine how other researchers had presented their data. O'Connor (2015), who did not involve co-researchers, presented themes extracted from the researchers' diary, their own reflective and colloquial commentary, followed by a creative artistic synthesis developed based on the themes discovered. This approach was disregarded because the researcher did not use co-researchers, unlike in this research. Quinley (2019) discusses the themes extracted from each co-researcher, integrated with the researchers' own reflections, followed by a composite depiction of the themes across co-researchers, and finally, a creative synthesis in the form of a song. This approach closely resembles Moustakas' (1990) directions but did not include exemplary portraits. Hosseini (2020), however, discussed the individual depictions for each co-researcher, followed by a composite for each theme found across all co-researchers. Three exemplary portraits of co-researchers who best represented the themes were presented, and finally, a creative synthesis was developed in the form of a musical composition (Hosseini, 2020). This closely resembles the outline provided by Moustakas (1990); therefore, I intend to structure this chapter.

The structure will analyse data gathered from each co-researcher by outlining the self-identified demographic characteristics of each co-researcher, followed by verbatim extracts taken from the co-researcher's individual depictions (Appendices 18 - 26) to present each co-researcher's personal experience as directed by Sultan (2015). The individual depictions for all co-researchers were gathered and reduced to formulate noticeable themes relevant to the experience, known as 'composite depictions'

(Moustakas, 1990). The five themes identified from co-researchers' individual depictions were:

- The experience of needing a trauma-informed safe space to regulate emotions
- The experience of removing judgement through implementing trauma-informed practice
- The experience of understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction
- The experience of removing fear by humanising those in positions of power
- The experience of needing choice and autonomy

The composites for each theme will follow the individual depictions. Furthermore, as directed by Moustakas (1990), I will select three co-researchers (who best represent the themes above) and present their experience as individual portraits in this chapter. I will revisit the existing literature discovered in this thesis, and each of these themes will be considered in this chapter, whilst also finding and reviewing new literature that could be used to support or counteract the themes discovered in this study (as advised by Sultan, 2019). Connections to my own experience, self-development, and feminist theory will also be utilised to maintain the researcher's position throughout the research, as suggested by Moustakas (1990). A creative artefact will then highlight the new knowledge developed from this research, which can be found below as the last phase of analysis (Moustakas, 1990). In the next chapter, I will suggest the potential impact of this new knowledge on

key stakeholders and make recommendations for HE practice. However, first, as suggested by Sultan (2015), I wish to outline and discuss the “intersectional” (Crenshaw, 1989) demographics of each co-researcher within the “matrix of domination” (Collins, 2000), as well as the individual themes extracted from their respective depictions.

Immersion: Individual depictions

As stated above, a HI analysis chapter is required to include verbatim from the co-researcher's individual depictions (Moustakas, 1990). Therefore, this section of the chapter will extract the personal themes relevant to each co-researcher, using their own voice, which presents the standpoint (Harding, 2004a; Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b; Smith, 1999) of each co-researcher. The first two letters of their chosen pseudonym were used to enhance confidentiality, and they/them pronouns were used to provide an additional layer of privacy. However, the co-researchers included eight females and one male. Perhaps contributing to an understanding of how women may be silenced more than men (Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Luke, 1994; Vaccaro, 2017). Therefore, it is recognised that the overwhelming females within the research could have influenced the findings and highlights the need for more male-focused research in this area. The co-researchers were all education students from one university. This may also have influenced the findings; therefore, further research could be conducted across multiple courses and institutions to assess the accuracy of the findings. Furthermore, as the SV is used throughout this chapter, conjunctions in words are used when co-researchers utilised them, for example,

the words “can’t” and “don’t”. I have also addressed grammar in students’ extracts. I will endeavour to illuminate the causes of students' lost voice; the ways they utilise their voice in HE, and their reported personal experience of ISV. As directed by Moustakas’ (1990) methodology, the co-researchers drew on their past, present and possible futures to discuss their experiences. Literature will also be used to confirm or contest the perspectives expressed by co-researchers, and a feminist lens will also be included. The experiences of the co-researchers are presented in the order they were interviewed. During the interviews, I immersed myself in their experiences and took time after each interview to incubate and illuminate the data (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019), drawing on the knowledge gained from their insights. Later, the extracted themes of ISV found across all co-researchers will be discussed. However, for now, I will begin illuminating the themes for each co-researcher and the literature about their experiences.

Individual depiction: PS

> I am a mature student, part of the LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer] community, parent to two kids, and I have also been flagged as potentially having ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder]. [Whilst reflecting on their experience, PS also recalls struggling with anxiety] (PS individual depiction, Appendix 18)

PS saw voice as being able to identify feelings, a skill they are still learning to develop as an adult, because it was not practised and developed as a child.

> I have a parent who has Aspergers, so they are very good when you have a cause to fight for, but we never had conversations about feelings ... I now realise that I never got those skills needed to manage my emotions because they weren't

> modeled at home. I never knew that it was okay to express my feelings, so I bottled them up and didn't talk to anybody. I couldn't cope with those feelings because I couldn't identify them, I didn't know what they were and it really impacted my life, in and out of education ... I am now taking up counselling as an adult to be able to identify the feelings that I am having because I never got that as a child (PS individual depiction, Appendix 18).

Asperger's was a diagnostic term used to categorise someone who has autism without learning difficulties; however, in recognition that autism is a spectrum, this diagnosis has since been removed from all diagnostic literature, resulting in all patients now receiving a diagnosis of autism (McPartland *et al*., 2012; National Autistic Society, 2024a). People with autism can struggle communicating with others; they may not understand conversational turns or misunderstand spoken language (such as tonality of voice or by taking language literally), body language, and/or emotional recognition of self and others, requiring additional time to process information (National Autistic Society, 2024b). PS was unable to access the skills associated with identifying and communicating feelings because their parent also found this skill challenging. PS is further subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) by not being taught emotional literacy at school. As I reflected on the co-researchers experience, as directed by Moustakas (1990), I realised that PS's experience mirrors my experience (in artefact 2.1, Chapter Two) whereby I mentioned "the feelings of emptiness in place of the feelings of love" (researcher's diary, Wednesday 24th August 2022) that I perceived to have experienced with an adult in my life. Both PS and I realised that the way we managed our emotions mirrored that of the adults in our lives. We both seek alternative coping strategies different from those of others around us

(Dewey, 2011), and now that PS is receiving support, they discuss being able to “access my own feelings and sit with them” and “develop that emotional literacy” to express their emotions (PS individual depiction, Appendix 18). Highlighting the importance of learning “embodied knowledge” (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004), not simply as a personal endeavour but also as a pedagogical “hermeneutical resource” to support student voice (Ferguson, 2025).

A recommendation to listen to our emotions was put forward by Rogers (1961), who says that we should listen to and trust our feelings without making judgements about them. So, to embrace this new skill, PS says that “it would be good to have a survey at the end of the year of your thoughts and feelings” as opposed to "just one about the module” and this would help them to utilise ISV (PS individual depiction, Appendix 18) in the form of “embodied” (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) and “situated” knowledge (Collins, 2000). PS also began reflecting on their educational experiences from when they were growing up and the ways this might have led to their silenced voice:

> If you’ve been told that you are wrong or not listened to in education, you stop talking and develop a lack of self-worth. You think to yourself, what’s the point in talking if I am wrong? I became aware of that constant self-doubt of: if I say this, am I wrong? Is somebody going to tell me that I am wrong? That internal battle all the time of wanting to say no or to disagree, or to say this is how I feel compared to this, but there is just no point. I am wrong. I don’t want to feel that shame that comes with that (PS individual depiction, Appendix 18).

This also mirrors my experience in the classroom, as discussed in Chapter Two, where I explore the fear of making mistakes or being wrong in some way, which leads me to be

disciplined and/or labelled as stupid (as seen by Mazzei, 2011; 2008). Illuminating the "everyday world as problematic" (Smith, 1987) whereby failure is treated as defiance by those in positions of power, leading to "testimonial injustice" (Fricker, 2010). Students learn to weigh up the opportunity to contribute against the potential for harmful teacher responses, which ultimately leads to students' silence (Clark, 2020). PS views being wrong as a shame-inducing label that fuels their self-doubt. Nussbaum (2004) suggests that shame is used as a form of 'punishment' for not conforming to social norms. Education itself may have become an institution that focuses on judging students' capabilities by using certification/grades to reproduce 'social control' and 'social rank' (Illich, 1970, p. 21). However, those students who perceive themselves to be wrong learn to avoid feelings of shame (McNulty, 2003), replicating the avoidance of trauma (Herman, 2010). It is for this reason that ISV, in PS's view, is being able to have "discussions in a safe way" that is "non-judgemental" or without "fear of being criticised or even being told that you're wrong" (PS individual depiction, Appendix 18). However, there may be occasions when a person is wrong and may need guidance to support them. However, in PS's view, judgement and criticism, as well as being told that you are wrong, are shame-inducing feedback that PS tries to avoid. PS also saw every student as having their own individual values (see quote below). However, PS was unsure whether other students' personal values had an impact on their own personal Student Voice (SV) processes in HE:

> I have felt in the past that those people who are representing my voice as reps will only take that as far as they feel comfortable, I don't know whether that's because of infringement of my personal rights or the information they are sharing or

> whether their values and opinions align with what I'm saying, I don't know but you have to trust that person to have the confidence to speak out on your views and your opinions ... I know the student rep that I go to well because we are friends, and they have very strong roots in politics and education that benefits and promotes power in students and an opinionated, strong voice. They are taught about their power and their values, and although I would consider myself in a different social class to them, my values have always been that you stand up and shout loud for what you believe in, but that hasn't come through my education; that is from home (PS individual depiction, Appendix 18).

The differences in social class, power and voice highlight the "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986) who is present in education but is not taught the necessary skills to participate fully in it. When PS reflected on their home environment, they said, "I was allowed to disagree and stand up for what I believed in" (PS individual depiction, Appendix 18). Living by your values in this way positions PS within the 'internal foundation' of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) as explained in Chapter Two. Suggesting a similar quest to mine in becoming more autonomous. However, filtering PS's voice through another who may not share the same values or experiences as them could enact the "god trick" in which dominant voices are heard above those who are marginalised (Haraway, 2004). PS, therefore, is looking for an ISV process whereby "you are free to be who you are and to stand up for your own morals and values" (PS individual depiction, Appendix 18) in the form of "talking back" (Hooks, 2014).

Individual depiction: PA

> I am a person with a health condition who moved to the United Kingdom as a child. So, English is not my first language (PA individual depiction, Appendix 19).

PA was often preoccupied with the fear of rejection that they might receive from others, choosing to remain silent and conform to others. These two points were made together, illuminating the relationship between the two behaviours. They discuss the ways this has led to their silence in the classroom whilst attending school and during their HE experiences below:

> In secondary school, there was stigma to certain groups of people because of how they were perceived, and we called them 'outcasts' because no one talked to them or wanted to be seen as one of them. So, I did try and conform to others; I would get the same haircut as people and wear the same things because I felt like if I didn't, they would pick on me. I stopped conforming [in year 9 ... I didn't feel like I needed to conform, and that's because I felt like I had built a good reputation for myself. I felt comfortable speaking to anyone in my year and the teachers because I was good academically. I didn't feel like I needed to pretend I was stupid or really smart ... Though, I still feel like I am conforming sometimes ... because of how other people might perceive me and how I want them to perceive me. I would be thinking ahead of what I can say and what I should refrain from saying if I am around certain people, because I know certain topics are controversial ... I feel anxious to think that I might not fit in or find any friendship groups, that I must really watch what I am saying. It's definitely about giving and betraying a character in a way. So, I decided I preferred to sit by myself (PA individual depiction, Appendix 19).

London *et al.* (2007) conducted longitudinal research with 150 participants, finding that previous experiences of rejection led students to fear that rejection would be repeated, resulting in either anxiety or anger when they perceived rejection was about to occur. A link is being expressed here between the "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) experienced in school and that which is experienced in university, showing the repetition of oppression felt in the body. Although students who felt rejected

had an increased likelihood of feeling lonely, it was found that building students' sense of belonging reduced the anxiety they felt (London *et al*., 2007). PA's example indicates the "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986) in which they were present in the classroom but subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) by conforming to others (as stated by Hooks, 2004 and Jung, 1971 reprinted 2014) to reduce chances of rejection, which was found to be especially evident when topics discussed in class were political in nature (Renström *et al*., 2018; Ouwerkerk *et al*., 2005). Students who had yet to undergo self-authorship (as previously discussed in the self-search chapter) were more likely to conform (Perez, 2019) to a performance expectation (Butler, 1988), and perhaps, on reflection, this is what I have been doing for most of my childhood. PA says to support 'vulnerable' students with DLN, to achieve ISV, staff need to recognise that students may not want:

> People know[ing] too much about you, more than you would like them to know, that information could be used against you ... For instance, if I will stand out and stop conforming, that can be used against me (PA individual depiction, Appendix 19).

Undergraduate students who hold a negative view of themselves and of what others might think about them are more likely to remain silent in the classroom due to the fear of saying something wrong (Yue *et al*., 2022). This reflects a fear of "testimonial injustice" (Fricker, 2010). Illuminating one potential reason for students' silence in the classroom. PA also discussed their experiences of SV processes as a positive one, although at times, this can become overwhelming:

> You get treated more like an adult in higher education, and it feels more normal to have a voice. As far as the surveys are concerned, there are too many of them, so if you do try and make a difference and contribute, you'll end up completing two or three of them every week, and it does get exhausting. So, I've done the first couple, and then when I realised that I was getting too many, I just stopped doing them. It just became a burden and something that I felt I had to do, which I didn't like ... The student rep is really good. I think about two weeks ago, we had a problem on our course, so we spoke to them about it, they had a meeting arranged, and after an hour and a half conversation, we came to a conclusion. So, I liked that we were able to sort that out so quickly, and I think the course rep did an amazing job communicating with us because I did get emails every day until that meeting to let us know what was going on (PA individual depiction, Appendix 19).

The experience of becoming or feeling overwhelmed in the SV process has been identified in previous SV work, which colleagues and I completed with Student Representative (SR); we labelled this feeling as 'feedback fatigue' (Sewell *et al*., 2020). Showing how everyday practices can be "problematic" (Smith, 1987). Although PA noted the exhaustion relating to survey completion, they were also very complimentary towards having a voice in HE, highlighting this as potential for ISV:

> I feel like having a voice makes it easier for me to have an experience as a person without diverse learning needs because those barriers can be, maybe not levelled, but they can be brought down (PA individual depiction, Appendix 19).

SV processes in HE provide DLN students with the opportunity to practice using their voice (Dewey, 2011) and in doing so, the barriers PA experienced due to their DLN were reduced. Silenced voices in education do little to reduce the obstacles to learning, underscoring the importance of encouraging students with DLN to use their voice (Lorde, 1984).

Individual depiction: RI

> I am a mature student and a parent to three children. I commute to university, and I have struggled with my mental health, often manifesting as anxiety (RI individual depiction, Appendix 20)

RI reflects on a time when they learnt the importance of emotions, emotional support and emotional regulation and draws on an experience within a student tutorial:

> My [parent] never believed mental health existed ... and I remember being like, that's not right but we sat down and spoke about it and it was a really really hard conversation but ... [they] understand it a bit more now ... It has helped me to grow and realise when I am having an off day and when I need to speak to my partner, to my [parent], or to a friend. I now know it's normal to feel like that, whereas in the past, I'd be like, 'Why am I feeling like this?' I have no reason to be. My [parent] would say to me, [they] would say, 'Why are you depressed?' ... I do now know when it is happening, and I know how to address it because I know myself better now ... Tutorials are only half an hour, there is only so much you can fit into half an hour. Normally, it's about work rather than how are you? How are you feeling? ... Or about how they can address my issues? ... It's not something I can deal with for you. You need to speak to der der der der. But again, you're a mature student, parent; you haven't got the time to be chasing people, and it's 48 hours before you get a reply, and then you've got to repeat yourself ... My anxiety makes my brain explode, like there are extra tabs to think of, and I am just like oh God, this is overwhelming (RI individual depiction, Appendix 20)

RI's wishes to discuss emotions at home and at university show how diverse students' "embodied knowledge" is subjugated (Collins, 2000; Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b), highlighting the impact of "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010). In research undertaken by Cahill *et al*. (2014) and Walsh *et al*. (2009), students who sought

pastoral support via tutorials hoped to receive support from their own tutors and/or their peers. McChlery and Wilkie (2009) believed the reason DLN students might prefer to seek out support from their known tutor rather than through other services within the university was because of the 'impersonal' nature of speaking to an unknown person. However, RI referenced their own lack of time for not being able to seek support from outside of the tutor relationships, but still wanted the support from their tutor. This could be the reason why, for RI, ISV would require tutors to ask "how's things? You know, offering that pastoral support, rather than just academically" (RI individual depiction, Appendix 20). Thomas (2012) stated that the importance of students requiring both academic and non-academic (pastoral) support in achieving successful outcomes in higher education cannot be understated. Although tutor specialism, empathy, and lack of time were given as reasons why pastoral support was not facilitated (Cahill *et al*., 2014; Mackinnon, 2004; McChlery & Wilkie, 2009). The reasons illuminate why pastoral support was often signposted to other services.

RI also struggled communicating because of the demographic differences and experiences between themselves and other people on campus, such as the SR and the Students' Union:

> When I spoke to the Students' Union, I realised they don't actually have anybody in my position. The people that I am talking to are lovely and very, very helpful, but none of which can relate or understand what I am saying. They would try and tell me they understood my needs, saying things like, "I haven't got children myself, but I know where you're coming from," but I'm like, but you don't ... The student course reps in my group are not approachable. For the first year, I felt this person did not like me, and then the second year, I didn't have any reason to speak to

> them. They are very, very young, live on site or nearby, so have no travelling. So, I've actually never gone to them with an issue because they will know it's me because I am the only person in that group that's older, mature, got children, so I've never bothered ... The group is lovely, and everyone seems to get along, but they haven't got the same experiences (RI individual depiction, Appendix 20).

Mature students in post-16 education contend and cope with many more responsibilities than younger students, such as finances, household chores, and childcare (Reay *et al*., 2002), a level of commitment that I share with this co-researcher. As an "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986), this exclusion as a mature student is often accompanied by a decrease in a student's well-being that they find challenging to navigate alongside university work (Sewell *et al.*, 2023). Further research may be necessary to determine whether these findings are representative of a broader trend. RI discusses how they view the challenges they noted as a "learner need" (RI individual depiction, Appendix 20), in which ISV would consist of being listened to by tutors when their challenges are getting too much to manage:

> Maybe they [the tutors] try to keep it inclusive by treating me like everybody else, but that's not really what you want either. I don't want to be treated like everyone else; I am not like anybody else. I never thought it was a learner need until recently. I am juggling that many balls at uni and at home, and people are just launching more at me (RI individual depiction, Appendix 20).

This exemplifies the "everyday world as problematic" (Smith, 1987) in which diverse students have the burden of navigating institutional processes without those in power recognising the emotional impact this might have. Due to the variable and changing support needs required by students throughout their time at university, an individualised

approach is recommended (Cahill *et al*., 2014) that considers students' "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000). Peer support could become a viable alternative to traditional support options (Bracken *et al*., in press; Cahill *et al*., 2014; Thomas, 2012). Research suggests that employing student mentors to support students with similar life experiences and/or characteristics, such as race or educational backgrounds, provides a commonality of experience that enables students to disclose more of themselves to the student mentors (Stefancic *et al*., 2019). Stefancic *et al*. (2019) also discuss how universities could use strategies of commonality and mentors to build friendship groups in HE. However, it is also noted that these student mentors may not have the level of employment or training that would otherwise be expected from other university support services (Stefancic *et al*., 2019).

Individual depiction: JA

> I have struggled with bad anxiety, and I was diagnosed with social anxiety a while back, but my main struggle is depression. I have also been diagnosed with dyslexia and dyspraxia (JA individual depiction, Appendix 21).

JA discusses the way their diagnosis of dyslexia and dyspraxia helped them to understand themselves better. My own level of self-understanding increased after my own diagnosis in college, and since then, I have been able to focus on how I think and how I communicate, which has helped improve my mental health. However, before the diagnosis, JA felt different to their peers and perceived them to be making judgements about the way they behaved:

> For me, a diagnosis has helped. I quite like it, not in a weird way, I quite like being put in that box because then I was like, oh, okay, so now I know what I need to do to move forward in education ... [before diagnosis] I never felt like I fitted in. That was when my mental health really declined ... I started to think, those students over there are laughing about me ... judging me ... I guess I just always felt judged because I was different. I was the kind of person who used to just sit and read my book at lunchtime and everyone else just thought I was weird ... and I just struggled to be around them all the time because I felt very different ... I am glad of the diagnosis of that because I think it allows me to get more support ... that I would have never had before diagnosis ... I am really excited about that because it really frustrates me when I am looking at something and I can't put the words together or the sounds together and I'm like ugh (JA individual depiction, Appendix 21).

Before their diagnosis, JA experienced judgement from peers through bullying in the form of name-calling (also identified by Esdale *et al.,* 2015) and isolated themselves from their peers; this isolation mirrors my own experience with avoidance caused potentially by trauma (Herman, 2010). Due to JA being perceived as different by their peers, the name-calling was used as a form of labelling to dictate expected behaviour and social engagement (Moncrieffe, 2007). The labels JA received from peers were viewed as negative judgement, whilst their own emotions were subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b). However, upon receiving a diagnosis, a different type of label, JA was relieved (Herman, 2010) to receive support that helped them better formulate their reading voice in HE:

> I am glad of the diagnosis of that [dyslexia and dyspraxia] because I think it allows me to get more support ... like software that I would have never had before diagnosis ... like a reader pen for when I am reading, and I can't understand it, or I can't pronounce words. I am really excited about that because it really frustrates me when I am looking at something and I can't put the words together or the

> sounds together, and I'm like, ugh. So, I know the diagnosis is kind of labelling, but for me, I think it's helped me to figure out what I need (JA individual depiction, Appendix 21).

Interestingly, JA found the support they needed to gain their voice through a diagnosis that enabled them to obtain software that could pronounce words for them. This is true of most reading pens, which can scan and read aloud by the pen itself (Schmitt *et al*., 2012). Another example of this is where other assistive technologies can record the students' or tutors' voices to be replayed later, supporting the student as they learn to use their voices to become fluent readers (Ok & Roa, 2017), highlighting the potential for assistive technologies and artificial intelligence to provide an avenue for ISV that could be enabled by providing multiple methods for communication through utilising the Universal Design for Learning Framework (CAST, 2024b). In this way, the label was accepted and viewed positively because JA received the help they needed to heal their difficulties (Herman, 2010).

JA also expresses how difficult it is for others to understand them because they do not share the same experiences, a common theme experienced by other co-researchers, revealing that students are individuals with their own unique experiences:

> People who haven't experienced mental health or coping mechanisms don't get it … I feel like it's harder for them [tutors] to understand my point of view ... it's harder because it is more difficult to explain to them [my tutors] or for them [tutors] to get how I feel, or how I perceive things. They just start looking at me weirdly, they [my tutors] never asked me about it, which is what I would have preferred. They [my tutors] just started walking on eggshells around me, which is worse because you almost feel like you're broken because everyone else sees you as broken (JA individual depiction, Appendix 21).

As found with RI, building connections between people who share similar experiences and/or characteristics can have a positive impact on students' disclosure (Stefancic et al., 2019), enabling them to voice their concerns more openly to others. However, JA's experience of staff not asking about their mental health made them feel "broken" (JA individual depiction, Appendix 21), enacting "testimonial injustice" (Fricker, 2010) and making them feel like an "outsider within" because their standpoint was not considered (Collins, 2000; 1986). Rogers (1980, reprinted with new material in 1995) states in his introduction to the 'person-centred approach' that everyone has an in-built knowledge of self, that when appearing disconnected, the person requires three distinct environmental conditions to bring their self-knowledge back into awareness. These are 'congruence' (the true self of others is present) suggesting the need for tutors to be fully themselves; 'unconditional positive regard' (accepting students for who they are not what others want them to be) showing the need for a non-conditional relationship and 'empathic understanding' illuminating the need for tutors to fully understand the conscious and unconscious emotions (Rogers, 1980 reprinted with new material 1995). This might explain why, for JA, ISV is created for them through the tutor's previous work experience:

> I know that the lecturers will understand so I'd still feel like talking to them because I feel like they have experience already of dealing with students like me ... I feel really comfortable going to our student rep because we have all gotten to know each other really well but I think it would be different if it was someone that I didn't know as well or if it was a big group (JA individual depiction, Appendix 21).

As with RI above, JA discusses being comfortable to seek support from peers and their own tutors (Bracken *et al*., in press; Cahill *et al*., 2014; Walsh *et al*., 2009). For JA, ISV means to use their voice with people who have previous experience and understanding of the students' needs, this could be due to concerns of stigma associated with seeking support as had been found in research that explores the potential barriers to help seeking behaviours in HE students (Hyseni Duraka *et al*., 2023) or due to the trust built between staff and students in which tutors 'curiosity' and 'trust' becomes the starting point for conversations with individual students (Rogers, 1980 reprinted with new material 1995). The last point made by JA discussed attending a meeting as a student representative, in which they mentioned an experience in which they felt their age reverted to pre-teens when speaking to the other adults in the meeting:

> sometimes I've felt anxious in meetings, having to speak to people because it wasn't just the lecturers that I knew, but also lectures from other years and other modules that I didn't know. And it was a large group to speak in front of, consisting mainly of lecturers, so it felt intimidating having all of these proper adults all looking at me, waiting for me to say something, and I am just like, 'errr'. I know that I am an adult, but like for me in my head, it splits between young adults and adults. So, like late teens, early 20s is when you're still acting like an idiot. In my head, I'm like, 'you're not mature yet, you aren't settled down with a house, pets.' Like, when I say proper adults, I'm like older adults who have got it all figured out ... when I am having those down days, it's kind of like I revert back to the age of 11 or 12. I don't feel like an adult who is paying rent, who's going to uni anymore. I kind of just feel like I'm just this little person curled up in my bed in a little bedroom. It's weird because when I say 11 and 12, I don't mean what I was like at 11 or 12. It's almost like an 11 or 12 version of me now because when I was 11 and 12, I was actually quite confident, I didn't have those issues that I have now. So, when I see my little inside 11 or 12 younger self now, it's almost like she's in there punching me in the gut when I am trying to stand up and talk about something. Like I can just feel like everything drop. Whereas, if I'd have wanted to

> speak about something when I actually was 11, I probably could have done it (JA individual depiction, Appendix 21).

JA's use of “proper adults” when referring to other people *and* “little person” (individual depiction, Appendix 21) when referring to themselves is interesting because they themselves were adults at the time of their interview. Interestingly, JA connects their emotional management to this younger version of themselves. This could be attributed to Butler’s (1988) ideas of performance, whereby JA attempts to perform the role of a confident student representative. However, the childhood trauma of being judged has disrupted this. Jung (1971, reprinted 2014) states that all humans have an internal unconscious ‘child’ that is created in childhood before we become conscious of our world and is a space in which all our childhood emotions, feelings and fears are stored; he called this phenomenon the ‘child archetype’. Lauw (2023) connected to the child within themselves through song and found that the child was lonely, scared and emotionally concerned about rejection and judgement. Jung (1959, reprinted with new material in 2014) states that the emotions, responses, and behaviours emanating from the child are uncontrollable and unconscious, requiring healing from the wounds that the adult gained in childhood, known as ‘individuation’. Staff may believe that the data they receive is comprehensive and neutral, devoid of emotional detachment, but this is simply the “god trick” (Haraway, 2004), and staff may not have accounted for the “embodied knowledge” (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) of the student representative. Perhaps, it is for this reason that, in JA's view, ISV is when staff understand:

> When I take a couple of days off because I've gotten in that place where I am questioning everything in my life. There is nothing really that anyone can do. I'm really appreciative of others' concern, but I just say, 'I'll be back in next week,' and 'thanks for the concern,' I will be okay, I just need time (JA individual depiction, Appendix 21).

Just as Lauw (2023) connected to the child within through song, JA appears to be taking time away from HE to reconnect with the child within through using their voice to question themselves. Interestingly, I also referred to my internal voice questioning myself when I referred to my 'inner turmoil,' 'inner dialogue,' 'inner critic,' and 'inner thoughts' in my self-search chapter. Unexpressed and unsupported needs in childhood are internalised as the 'inner critic' as being too needy (Kalsched, 2017). However, when the adult reconnects to the fears and emotions of the child in a process of healing, known as 'individuation,' the adult will lose all child-like qualities and behaviours that they have unconsciously lived by (Jung, 1953, reprinted 2010). However, due to the unconscious nature of this phenomenon, Jung (1971, reprinted with new material in 2014) states that our conscious parts, which we are aware of, such as our individual self and our individuality, cannot possibly delve into the depths of the unconscious mind as easily as one would hope to, as this requires extreme focus and comprehension. This highlights the "everyday world as problematic" (Smith, 1987), especially when those in positions of power only consider mental health as a crisis rather than understanding the complex emotional needs of a diverse learner as a daily endeavour. Healing could be supported through active relational "reassurance and encouragement" (Kalschad, 2017, p. 485) by academic staff. This could be supported by academic staff becoming aware of the healing

process and facilitating diverse ways of engagement through the use of the Universal Design for Learning framework (CAST, 2024b).

Individual depiction: LO

"I have dyslexia, and it causes me anxiety" (LO individual depiction, Appendix 22). LO discusses the challenges they have experienced with their voice, namely, that of processing speed and the misunderstandings of educators regarding this:

> [At school] People don't speak to me and choose not to speak to me because I always mix up my words or I don't take enough time to answer stuff ... I feel angry and embarrassed because if someone asks me a question like, 'Do you want to do this?' I'll take a couple of minutes to figure out what they are saying and then answer, but they just move on to the next person and ask them instead. And I'm just like, I wanted to do it, but you didn't give me enough time to figure it out. I was diagnosed with dyslexia in the last year of sixth form where I didn't really get much help because they were treating everyone like adults, like nothing was wrong ... [At university] I had a meeting in the first week with my personal tutor where we introduced each other but I was very stubborn and I put my walls up, they tried to push me to talk, but I was not in the right place and I was like, I am not giving you any answers (LO individual depiction, Appendix 22).

LO's experiences here are consistent with "testimonial" and "hermeneutical injustice" (Fricker, 2010) due to their communication challenges, moving on from LO's voice without providing the necessary "hermeneutical resources" to support their communication challenges (Ferguson, 2025). Challenges associated with processing speed and the remembering of verbal instructions are characteristic of dyslexia (a characteristic that I share), recognising the extra time that students require in HE classrooms to process information (Callens *et al*., 2012; Rose, 2009). Research has found that students with

dyslexia in HE valued an educational experience that enabled them to manage the flow and speed of information, particularly at times when students were expected to pay attention to the tutor's words while also note-taking, which students found particularly challenging (Pino & Mortari, 2014). LO has formulated that ISV means that lecturers are prepared to understand what "disabilities and learning difficulties are, how they affect people and what it can cause" (LO individual depiction, Appendix 22). LO links the discussions above with the challenges of having a hidden/invisible learning difficulty in higher education classrooms:

> You can't really see learning difficulties, so people are unaware when I put my hand up and say, I can't do this, it's too fast, please can you slow down or can you raise your voice because I can't hear you, it helps me to process; they are like, you don't look like you're struggling and I'm like, but I am ... then they will do it and then revert back and not do it again. And so, we would just have to listen really carefully and try and do that (LO individual depiction, Appendix 22).

Some students with a hidden disability may escape the stigma by not seeking a diagnosis, and/or they may not disclose their diagnosis to the tutors, leaving students to work at the same pace as everyone else in the classroom (Moriña, 2022). LO's "embodied knowledge" and "partial perspective" (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) concerns of struggling in the classroom were momentarily listened to and then subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) by the tutors own 'desires' (Mazzei, 2011) without considering the students emotional needs and sense of self (Zembylas & Michaelides, 2004). Illuminating the "everyday world as problematic" (Smith, 1987) for diverse learners, being situated as the "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986), present but unable to participate fully. This is

something that I found particularly challenging at school before I was diagnosed because, on the outside, people perceived me as being someone without a learning difficulty which meant that my teacher did not know I was struggling on the inside, my inner child-self wishing to speak up and ask for help, but unable to do so (as stated by Herman, 2010). The only time that I feel people will know is when I am speaking, because that is when my words become a jumble. It can be argued then that the 'one-size fits all' pedagogy does little to support students with learning differences, leaving them "feeling disempowered and voiceless" (Gow *et al*., 2020, pp. 7-8). Highlighting the need for a diverse educational instruction, such as that seen in the Universal Design for Learning framework (CAST, 2024b). LO discusses how, in those moments, they seek out the support of their peers:

> Me and my friend we will speak to each other in class because if the teacher goes too fast, we are like, 'What did they say?' ... But then the teachers are like, 'Why are you talking when I am trying to do this?' We are just trying to teach each other and educate each other, and just being told that we can't do that is *sigh* ... but if they don't have the difficulty themselves, they are like, I don't understand really, why do I have to slow down? (LO individual depiction, Appendix 22).

As with previous co-researchers, we see LO use their voice to seek support from their peers (Bracken *et al*., in press; Cahill *et al*., 2014; Walsh *et al*., 2009), but for this co-researcher, they provide a narrative about what they perceive their tutor to be thinking during a moment in which they felt misunderstood and unsupported by their tutor (Hyseni Duraka *et al*., 2023). LO appears to suggest that understanding can only be acquired by those who have personal experience of the difficulties faced by diverse students, leading to a disconnect between the tutor and the student in understanding the required needs.

Diverse individuals have an “epistemic advantage” in understanding the experiences of diverse students (Wylie, 2004), an experience that is shared by all those who are marginalised but which cannot be seen by those in privileged positions (Collins, 2000; Delpit, 1988; Harding, 2004a). LO’s reflection supports the need for HE to hire, promote, and make visible their diverse staff (Wilde, 2022). In this approach, tutors with a shared experience will exhibit ‘empathic understanding’ (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material, 1995) for students’ experiences because they would have experienced the same or similar situation themselves. In LO’s view, diverse staff would understand the need for LO to use their voice in seeking out support from their peers in class.

Individual depiction: GR

> “I was told that I had anxiety four years ago, and I got diagnosed with depression last September” (GR individual depiction, Appendix 23).

As with other co-researchers mentioned above, one of GR's parents struggled to express their emotions, an issue that GR now shares. The repeated phenomenon of experiencing difficulties managing emotions, leading to avoidance, is described below:

> Growing up, me and one parent argued a lot, ... and I just wouldn’t deal with it. I would just go to my room, and we wouldn’t talk for days ... I think it was difficult for me to process when they were not speaking to me because they are meant to be the adult. We still have arguments, and we still don’t talk to each other for a bit, but ... I don’t know whether I wasn't listened to when I was younger because I was younger, because they sort of look at you like you're a teenager, what can you be anxious about? When I first started getting anxiety, my family wouldn’t know what to do ... I would sleep like all day to shut out the emotions ... If you haven't suffered with it, you don’t understand what exactly it is to go through it ... I don’t

> think people truly understand how limiting it can be (GR individual depiction, Appendix 23).

For GR, the lack of emotional support during childhood has led to their avoidance of emotions (as noted by Herman, 2010, and Hooks, 1994). Again, we can revisit Jung (1959, reprinted with new material in 2014), in which he discusses the lack of support in childhood that leads to the abandonment of the child's emotions. Their knowledge of themselves has been subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) by their parents, but what is clear is that both the adult and the child in this instance avoid their upsetting emotions, leading to silenced voices and the inability to express their needs (Kalsched, 2017). Furthermore, we see another theme emerging regarding the lack of understanding from others. Through representation and diversifying the staff population, tutors will have more 'congruence' and 'empathic understanding' of students' circumstances and, in turn, will provide 'unconditional positive regard' towards students (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material 1995), and students, themselves, may feel more understood (Wilde, 2022). When understanding is not felt and is further subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) as "testimonial injustice" (Fricker, 2010), GR becomes sensitive to the judgement of others, and this is shown below:

> they don't feel what I felt and I think some lecturers, I don't know if they sort of get it like, I keep emailing them saying, I am not going to be in but I don't fully think they understand why I am not going to be in and I feel like they could be thinking that I am just using it as an excuse but then there are also some that are very understanding ... There are certain lecturers that you feel more comfortable with than others and I think if you know they have more understanding of how you're feeling it's easier to present or talk with them in class ... It's the not

> understanding and the feeling of judgement ... as well because I think some people are very like, oh, you've got depression, just get over it. Or it's in your head, and I think then you can feel stupid almost for having those feelings, and although they are not necessarily saying you're wrong, you can feel that they are judging you almost. If something happens where I do feel judged, it does affect my mood. I do feel like I would step back and not say as much, even though I feel like I shouldn't have to, but I struggle to express my emotions, so why should I be the one trying (GR individual depiction, Appendix 23).

As with my experience, this leads GR to avoid situations where perceived negative judgement is anticipated and felt by the student, replicating the avoidance seen in trauma survivors (Herman, 2010). Tutors may speculate that this avoidance is due to students losing interest in their education rather than understanding students' silence in class as a protective strategy to avoid the repetition of emotions felt in childhood (Turner *et al*., 2002) and the associated feelings of shame (Nussbaum, 2004). GR is situated as the "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986) as a student who is present in the classroom but who remains silent. Silence and avoidance, therefore, are internal cognitive protection mechanisms used by GR to protect themselves from unwanted negative thoughts and emotions (Kalsched, 2017) associated with the perceived judgements of others. However, whilst exploring this phenomenon in the literature, I discovered that silence rarely provides the protection that students desire (Lorde, 1984) and is often internalised as the 'inner critic' (Kalsched, 2017). Further discussions with GR revealed that their concerns, like those of other co-researchers, began at home in childhood (as discussed by Hooks, 1994); However, GR fears that this will be repeated whilst at university. Jung (1959,

reprinted with new material in 2014) would say that this fear stems from the 'child-archetype'.

GR discusses the possibility that ISV is when support is being received from lecturers who have had similar personal or academic experiences and/or previous experience of supporting students' emotions. GR explains the experience they had at home regarding being "forced to do things" (GR individual depiction, appendix 23) and links this to speaking in class at university, explaining the sense of fear that they feel, even though they know there is nothing to be fearful of:

> [At home] I sort of got forced to do things that I didn't necessarily want to do. They thought they would try things to see if they could make me feel better, but in the long run, I wasn't in the mind to do that, at that time. During secondary school when I was going through a really anxious time, my [parents] used to take me to school otherwise I wouldn't go in and sitting in a classroom around people who would say things to me, felt a bit awkward ... So, it makes you feel better when you are not forced to do something because what you're doing becomes more normal in comparison to how you're feeling so at the end of it, you're actually feeling quite accomplished ... [At university] When I am anxious, I stumble over my words or I can't really process what I am thinking to what I am saying, like it does not come out right. It doesn't always make sense ... I will fidget or I will go quiet. If I am in a situation, I sort of avoid or pull back from doing it. I think I go silent because the anxiety makes you fearful, even though there is nothing to be fearful of, so, if we are doing group work, I normally wouldn't speak out. I've gotten better at doing it now, but I wouldn't have spoken out if I had the choice not to; I would just leave it for other people to do. But even in terms of group work, presentations etcetera, I do my part even if I'm not speaking (GR individual depiction, Appendix 23)

It is possible that GR's "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) of fear can be traced back to the feelings of anxiety that they felt when they were a child (Van Der Kolk, 2014). The fear they describe and the impact of this on their voice could be a sign

that they are re-experiencing the repetition of fear from their childhood (Nettifee, 2020; Van Der Kolk, 2014). I know and recognise this experience every time I speak to someone whom I perceive to be in a hierarchical position. Students, such as myself and GR, who have experienced a marginalised education, require the support of tutors to validate their emotions and reassure them that their SV contribution is equally valuable as others (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). When GR has been unable to contribute to group work and presentations due to the uncomfortable feeling they felt, they have required the support of their peers and consider it to be ISV, whereby "in my group, there is one person who is really confident, so they do it all" (GR individual depiction, Appendix 23).

A midpoint observation: Incubation and Illumination

At this point in the interviews, the issues regarding students' experiences of losing their voice were beginning to be repeated across co-researchers, suggesting that I had potentially reached the 'universal experience' (Moustakas, 1990). I was now starting to incubate and illuminate the various causes of lost voice among DLN students and the reasons they may be positioned at the margins (Hooks, 2014; 1989). Diverse students who had "intersectional" (Crenshaw, 1989) characteristics within the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000) received trauma in childhood (Hooks, 1994) either at home and/or at school from subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010) because their "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) was not valued. I have learnt that they utilise their voice from an "outsider within" position

(Collins, 2000; 1986), which conforms to the 'desires' of educators for silence (Mazzei, 2011). This indicates the way that educational institutions are "problematic" (Smith, 1987) for diverse students who navigate the repetition of trauma daily. I recognised students' desire to heal from their childhood (as noted by Hooks, 1994), to manage their emotions (Herman, 2010), and to have their characteristics represented by staff and peers. However, I was conflicted on whether it was the educator's role to deal with students' trauma and whether HE as an institution could provide the resources for this. I further incubated the roles of the practitioner and the institution while continuing to interview the three remaining co-researchers. The next was BA.

Individual depiction: BA

> I am a mature student who grew up in poverty, and I struggle with my mental health. I have anxiety and depression. I am also in the process of trying to get a diagnosis of ADHD [attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder] (BA individual depiction, Appendix 24).

BA discusses the feeling of not feeling "good enough" and how to feel "good enough"; they have developed a "persona" of helping:

> [At home] I was made to be an adult from a very young age. I mourn for the losses I never experienced as a child. When I applied to university, they [my parents] said, 'Do you think you're academically clever enough to go?' So, I always feel guilty that I am always doing something wrong ... So, I have to pass this to prove to them that I am good enough. If I do rubbish, I'll think maybe they were right ... I said to them that I think I've got ADHD, and they were like, 'Why have you got so much wrong with you?' So, for me, I am already a walking failure ... Due to growing up in poverty, I dress in a certain conservative, more expensive way than I actually have in my bank account. Maybe it is a persona for me ... because I'm anti-being like the

> adults from my childhood ... I was always in a persona when I had to get home and do stuff for them [my parents], otherwise, I would be punished, then I'd get hurt or I would be in trouble. So maybe I used an adult persona when I was younger ... [In university] everybody sees me as a [parental] figure, so they ask me things and I'm like, don't ask me, I don't understand either, argh ... So, I feel there is a bit of pressure in that sense too (BA individual depictions, Appendix 24).

BA had developed a helping persona in childhood because of needing to be or being expected to help their parents at home; otherwise, there would be consequences. As a result of BA's disclosure, I asked BA if they were okay, whether they wanted to take a break or to stop the interview. BA stated that they were fine to continue because the events happened in the past and that they had previously undertaken therapy. However, to comply with ethics, I signposted BA to support. Jung (1959, reprinted with new material in 2014) states that when people are guided to or conform to other people's expectations and needs, as BA is with their parents, people learn to hide elements of who they are from the real world behind a persona (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material in 2014). They lose their uniqueness and the value they can bring to life (Jung, 1972, reprinted 2004), being replaced by the performance of helping others to prevent themselves from being disciplined (Butler, 1988). In BA's example, they developed a persona of helping because they so often helped their parents. Families, where there are signs of poverty, addiction, and/or disability, are more likely to position children in adult roles, such as helping with finances, providing emotional parental support, parenting of siblings, and participating in household chores (Burton, 2007). BA response and the literature have made me question whether this has happened to me. I took care of my siblings when I was a child, and now,

as an adult, I enjoy and thrive on helping others, as discussed in my self-search chapter, although I am beginning to see how 'unethical' this approach can be (Alcoff, 1991). According to Jung (1959, reprinted with new material 2014), taking on a parental role of a group situates BA as taking on the 'mother archetype' as a persona, known for the desire to protect and take care of others, whereas the 'father archetype' is more concerned with power and hierarchy that others may choose to adopt as a persona. This situates BA as an "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986), not fully present as a student but as a parent. However, for balance to emerge, the individual needs to undertake the 'individuation' process, which involves delving into the unconscious mind to resolve unconscious conflict between the 'archetypes' (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014).

BA's performative persona (Butler, 1988) has followed them into adulthood and is now being used within the university classroom with the same effect and expectations of supporting their peers as a method of ISV:

> [In university] some people don't have the confidence to speak, but because I am slightly older and have had experiences in life, I feel I have to be the one that steps up to speak in class because no one else will. I do it to help everyone. It's a persona in a way, but it does play on my mind, and then I think, do they think I am irritating, and do I know it all? ... Mine is all about judgement from others, letting everyone down, or them thinking badly of me (BA individual depiction, Appendix 24).

Notice that the helping others persona is being used to portray a particular kind of attribute to others as a protective method to avoid judgement from others. BA may be implementing an unconscious 'self-presentation' approach to conceal aspects of

themselves, to prevent others from judging them (Baumeister & Hutton, 1987; Leary & Allen, 2011). This unconscious process is used not as a means to take on a helping persona but instead, is a process of avoiding elements of oneself so they are liked by others (Hogan, 1982; Leary & Allen, 2011) and we can see this above where BA says, "I'm anti-being like the adults from my childhood" (individual depiction in Appendix 24). Alternatively, BA's 'persona' could be a 'mask' to avoid exposing their DLN's to criticism and/or is being used as an expectation to 'conform' to those without learning needs adding pressure to every social situation but which ultimately leads to further 'anxiety', 'perfectionism', a disconnection to others and to their own 'authenticity' (Clarke *et al*., 2021; Freire, 1970 translated in 2017; Herman, 2010; O'Connor, 2023). This illustrates the "everyday world as problematic" (Smith, 1987) for diverse learners who must hide their own authenticity or risk being subjugated by those in power (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b). Although authenticity can be unpacked further as a term, it is used here to describe the student's whole self, including the parts of themselves that they have learnt to hide as a child. Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) make the point that students are struggling to bring their real 'authentic' selves to education. Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) state that students often choose to conceal aspects of themselves to succeed in a competitive educational system. However, educational institutions can utilise students' authenticity as a 'resource' for motivation to achieve (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Through BA's inauthentic persona as a helper of others and putting others' needs above their own (a role that was developed in childhood), arguably, they are now unable to understand

their own emotions and find asking for help challenging (Herman, 2010) because they have so often been the helper for other people. We can also see from the quote below that BA is concerned about the criticism of others:

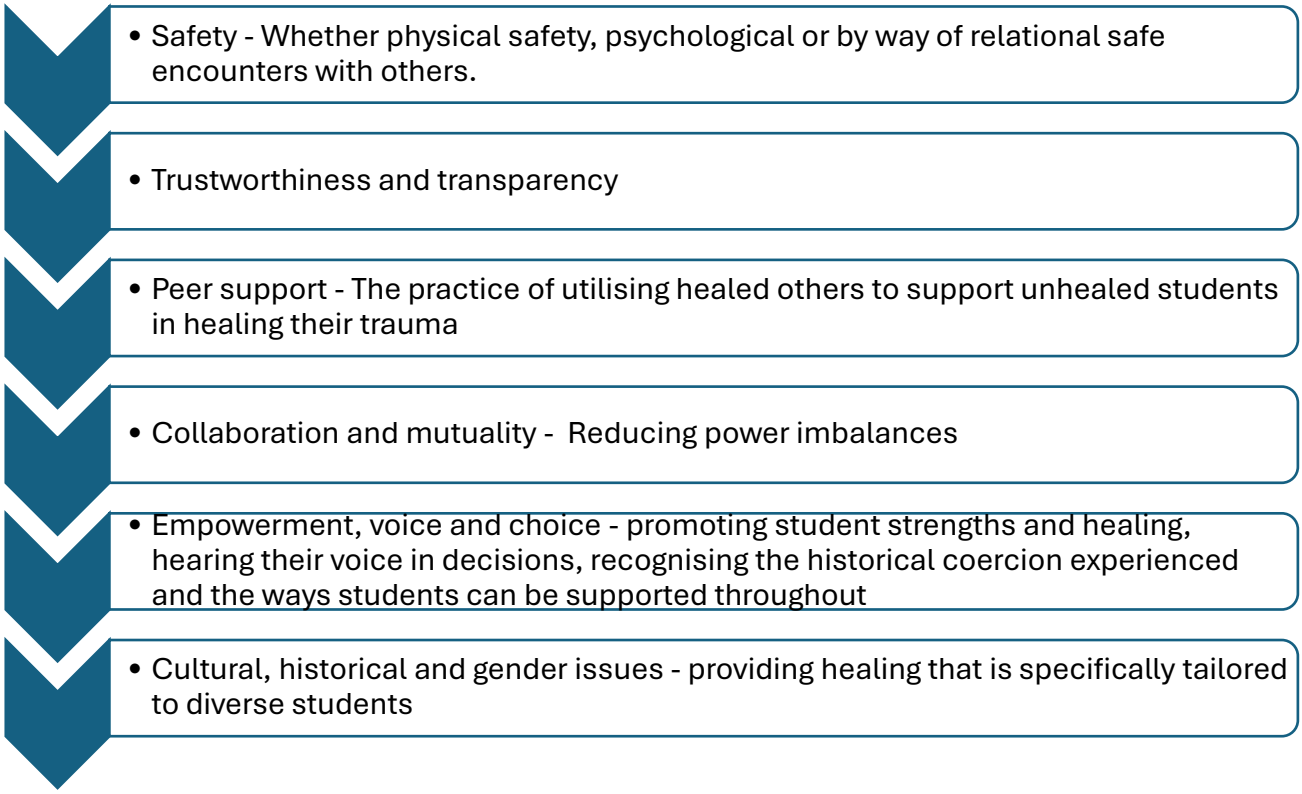
> My specialist [support] tutor is lovely, but I feel like it becomes a counselling session and don't get me wrong, it's nice to talk to someone, but I've been brave, and I've asked if we can have a planning session? A little deadline every week because if you tell me to read a couple of pages, I feel pressured to do it for them, whereas I won't do it for myself ... I don't think I could necessarily go to the student rep because I don't want to be a burden or a pain, and I don't see my needs bad enough to need help ... Sometimes, I shut down and go mute because I feel like I am being a burden, a pain or that they think the worst of me, like I am stupid or dumb. I think it is a cry for help, but I can't show it or voice it, so I just zone out. I know they are not personally criticising me, but you can't help but take it that way if you have had this trauma and they don't understand that. Even saying no to me or anything negative, I'll always feel bad and cry straight away ... I don't know how to manage my emotions; I just don't think I can (BA individual depiction, Appendix 24).

Allison (2023) states that individuals who develop a persona are more prone to being influenced by others' wants and needs rather than their own, and this can be seen above as BA describes their "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) in relation to their silence. This illustrates the profound impact that judgement and stigma can have on individuals, serving to encourage the regard (from those who work in universities) that everyone should be viewed as an individual with their own unique needs (Allison, 2023). The students themselves could also be encouraged to use their own voice to express who they are so that they are easily understood by others and not malleable to other people's needs or perceptions of who they think the student is (Allison, 2023). The realisation that they are unable to ask for help (Herman, 2010) or resolve their needs has led BA to realise

that for them, ISV consisted of receiving “positive praise, [a] reassurance approach and a trauma-informed approach” (BA, Appendix 24). The Trauma-informed approach that BA refers to will now be discussed to clarify BA’s thoughts.

I discussed my own trauma in the self-search chapter, but TiP never occurred to me during my own self-search as a potential approach for healing, showing the importance of the co-researcher's voice. A trauma-informed approach means being aware of how trauma impacts students, their symptomology, the potential for ‘re-traumatisation’ of students, and actively providing opportunities for students to heal from their trauma (United States Department of Health and Human Services, USDHHS, 2014). Six points of consideration were developed to ensure TiP, and these can be found in Diagram 4.1 below:

Diagram 4.1: Trauma-informed practice as outlined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014) and USDHHS (2014).



(Source: Diagram created by the Author (2025), illustrating the ideas and processes as described by SAMHSA (2014) and USDHHS (2014))

Although the principles written here vary amongst literature, the essential notion for adapting policies to include TiP is viewed as "'What does this person need?' rather than 'What is wrong with this person?'" (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2024).

The principles above parallel Herman's (2023; 2010) stages of recovery: establishing physical and emotional “safety”, a “remembrance and mourning” of the trauma through storytelling and “truth-telling” (voice), and lastly, a “reconnection” with self and others built on trust. Herman (2023, pp. 2 - 3) has since considered a potential fourth stage relating to having the choice to obtain “justice” for the trauma endured, although justice is being used here to mean equality. All stages explore the impact of power and control on those who are marginalised through cultural, gendered, or historical means (Herman, 2023; 2010; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014), as well as those who may be marginalised due to multiple characteristics, such as the inclusion of disability (Crenshaw, 1989). Therefore, each stage is needed to enable the victim to feel empowered by gaining personal power, control, and autonomy (Herman, 2023; 2010). These all align with the concept of “empowerment, voice and choice” in TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014).

Students who voice their experiences in mutual collaborative peer support, as outlined in TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014), have the potential to invoke “consciousness-raising” (Sarachild, 1978). By raising awareness of their experiences, students can achieve “justice” (equality), resulting in an “equal voice” (Herman, 2023, p. 40). Therefore, in utilising the stages and ideas from Herman (2023; 2010), TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) does have the potential to heal diverse students who have experienced trauma. However, care must be taken because trauma has been shown to alter the brain (Van Der Kolk, 2014), and in many cases, it is unlikely that one approach can work for all (Herman, 2010). For instance, healing has the potential to lead to further control strategies and judgements

that add pressure on trauma victims to continue to conform; therefore, many may not begin healing or may avoid disclosing their healing journeys (Herman, 2010). Now that I am aware of the theoretical underpinnings and potential weaknesses, I wish to explore TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) in more depth.

Trauma-informed practice (TIP) recognises that students can be impacted by trauma (such as in the way BA had been impacted above by creating a "persona" (BA, Appendix 24), and this is especially so for those who are traditionally marginalised (Carello & Thompson, 2022; Hunter, 2022; Perry & Winfrey, 2021). For instance, a male Latino undergraduate student participant felt that trustworthiness was established when discussions of trauma were shared mutually with the researcher and that building peer support helped empower his voice (Pérez II & Vicente, 2022). These principles concur with Herman's (2023; 2010) stages of trauma healing and have the potential to lead to a balance of power (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014). Furthermore, Hispanic students experienced success, safety and a supportive environment when TiP was utilised by HE institutions (Patton & Caffrey, 2023).

Thompson and Carello (2022) state that marginalised students, particularly those who have experienced trauma from those in hierarchy, may experience challenges in fostering trust and transparency with HE staff. Furthermore, Carello and Thompson (2022) acknowledge that staff may also have experienced trauma, posing two challenges to implementing TiP. Education systems and structures appear to be shaped by able-bodied designers who have not considered student (and staff) diversity (Fuller et al., 2004). The

limitations of which expose the lived realities of diverse students with complex "intersectional" (Crenshaw, 1989) characteristics within the "Matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000). However, upon researching the topic in more detail post-analysis (see Summary Chapter for further discussion), I found the approach to include voice, suggesting the possible need for universities to consider implementing TiP that incorporates encouraging students in "talking back" to the systems of oppression (Hooks, 2014). Therefore, TiP and trauma healing will be revisited.

Individual depiction: SU

> I am a mature student and a working-class single parent. I also have undiagnosed ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder] and autism (SU individual depiction, Appendix 25).

SU reflects on what exclusive voice practice looks like in a HE classroom:

> Exclusive is when someone doesn't understand autism and the sensory inputs. Like not being given enough time to answer a question or being picked on spontaneously, ugh, because that makes me go into fight or flight. I freeze, and then I must process or remember what they just said, even though I was listening, then I think, 'Oh, gosh, what if I answer wrong?' 'What if I look like a fool?' I am worried about what other people think of me (SU individual depiction, Appendix 25).

SU discusses their "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004), including feelings of fight, flight and freeze as possible options when being asked a question in class. By being forced to speak in class, SU's feelings are being subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b) and replaced by what staff consider as class

participation. Maack *et al*. (2015) discuss how 'flight' and 'freeze' are natural bodily responses to fear or danger and the overwhelming need to avoid the situation, where 'fight' leads a person to become guarded. This fear is often labelled as anxiety (Maack *et al*., 2015). This links to my feelings of avoidance in my self-search chapter, and again, how avoidance is linked to the fear of being wrong (Hockings, 2011; Mazzei, 2008) and trauma (Herman, 2010). For SU, ISV is when tutors understand that:

> It's not fair to force someone to contribute when they don't feel comfortable. I think it builds reluctance and self-questioning. I think if I was constantly being picked on, I wouldn't want to come to the lectures. I don't want to be forced; I'd just feel uncomfortable. They are probably scared that they've got the wrong answer, or afraid of judgement from other people (SU individual depiction, Appendix 25).

SU uses silence as a behavioural adaptation due to their fear of being wrong to avoid feeling shame. Development from past experiences of being wrong, this adaptation can lead to preventing classroom tasks and is termed 'atychiphobia' (Choi, 2021). As with GR above, SU used silence in the classroom to avoid the perceived judgements of others.

However, this behaviour is used to protect the student from the emotions they once felt in childhood (Kalsched, 2017; Turner *et al*., 2002). In my self-search, I also discussed how I had used silence and avoidance to protect myself from the trauma (Herman, 2010) of being wrong and found myself exploring 'psychological safety' from Clark (2020), whereby students feel safe to make mistakes within the classroom (Torralba *et al*., 2020). Safety is identified as the first stage of healing (Herman, 2023; 2010). SU's fear is also evident in the way they view the SR:

> The rep might have their big idea of making things great, but I don't feel like they are approachable, so I don't approach them because I think its conflict, confrontation or that I am being questioned about my opinion ... This particular person [the student representative] is from a very advantaged educational background, they are middle class whereas I'm very working class and I think a lot of people having a privileged background hasn't really opened their eyes to experiences that other people might have had ... They can only perceive it in their own way ... as this person's popularity has grown it is adding to their sense of power ... they are not just a student now, they are a rep for students, so again they are higher up on the [university] hierarchy. It's authoritative. I think even though student reps advocate for students' voices, and they don't wear a uniform, they are still viewed as authoritative to a degree, so I think maybe people are a bit reserved, like me, on saying what they really think (SU individual depiction, Appendix 25).

SU presents a fear of conflict with people whom they perceive to be in hierarchical positions (as noted by Hooks, 1994), highlighting the "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986), present as a student but not quite being included due to the difference in social class. This mirrors the knowledge I developed in the self-search chapter, as noted by Hooks (1994), where I reflected on my fear of hierarchical figures, as this was the root cause of my anxiety. In SU example, they discuss the difference in social class and privilege between themselves and the representative, and how, through stepping into what SU perceives as a power position, the relationship between themselves and the SR became hierarchical, causing their silenced voice (Clegg, 2011). "Intersectionality" (Crenshaw, 1989) across and within the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000), perpetuates the silencing experienced by marginalised students. The student representative is excluding SU's voice, potentially unconsciously causing "epistemic" and "testimonial injustice" to occur through silence (Fricker, 2010). For SU, ISV means that hierarchical figures are

sensitive to the potential that SU might fear judgement from others and the ways this can be ameliorated, such as being aware of their own body language and the ways this might be viewed as confrontational:

> I fear judgement, I think, and that can be seen in a person's body language. I mean, they might not say anything that is discriminative, but their body language or eye contact, or looking you up and down, disgusted subconsciously and facial expressions can show judgement. I think also being approached in a certain manner, like if someone came storming over to you saying, 'Can I have a word?' Again, it's body language and close proximity (SU individual depiction, Appendix 25).

SU's discussion here is akin to my discussion of hypervigilance in Chapter Two, and they, too, appear to be seeking out threats in the environment (Herman, 2010; Richards *et al*., 2014) and can be a sign of potential anxiety (Richards *et al*., 2014; Wermes *et al*., 2018; Wessing *et al*., 2017). However, as SU suggests, if people were aware of their own body language and tone of voice, SU would be less likely to interpret the person's reactions as judgement and would be more likely to use their voice because a calm body language creates a sense of safety (Herman, 2010).

Individual depictions: RU

> I am a mature student who has been diagnosed with Dyslexia. I have also experienced a previous mental health difficulty (RU individual depiction, Appendix 26).

Interestingly, RU believes that the reason other students do not have a voice is because they are younger, yet their chosen persona as the "[parent] of the group," according to

them, could be a contributing factor, as they are more forthcoming with their voice when issues arise:

> As a student rep, it was difficult communicating with students and trying to understand what they were saying. Some are like, uh and shrug their shoulders, oh that's fine, like one-word answers, but it's like come on, give us more. They don't know how to deal with it, whereas I'm like, right, we should do this, we should do that ... I think a lot of the younger students see it as oh, just another teacher that they must answer to or view it as a schooling environment and have not found their own voice yet purely through age ... My cohort is significantly younger than me. I am like the [parent] of the group, so, again, I think it is a maturity thing, an age thing ... I have noticed that I talk a lot in class and even one of the lecturers told me not to keep putting my hand up, to let somebody else ask a question. So, I just closed down and thought I shouldn't have done that, it was wrong of me to take the limelight and too much of the lecturer's time ... but I hate that ten seconds of silence when nobody is answering ... and I can see the lecturer is trying to encourage people, so I feel bad for that lecturer because nobody is engaging. So, who engages, I do (RU individual depiction, Appendix 26).

RU's role of the "[parent] of the group" and student rep closely resembles mine and BA's helping persona. Their "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004), with the silence, situates them also within the performative (Butler, 1988) act of the 'mother archetype' as discussed above (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014). However, there are differences between the two co-researchers. BA's helpful persona began when they were a child, out of fear of judgement, and yet, for RU, their helpful persona appears to be through sympathy for the lecturer, whom they perceive as struggling to engage the rest of the class. RU is happy to speak up when others are quiet, but their confidence risks silencing others in the form of "testimonial injustice" (Fricker, 2010). RU appears

frustrated by their younger peers for not being more vocal with their voice as they have done, but has surmised that ISV means to understand that:

> The other students may not be speaking because they may not know the answer, they could lack confidence, or just generally not engaging with the subject, but now I think over time they have become reliant on me (RU individual depiction, Appendix 26).

RU discussions about students becoming more reliant on them to use their voice rather than their own are an interesting reflection. I also reflected in my self-search chapter about the ways speaking on behalf of others was more comfortable than speaking on behalf of myself, which I found more challenging. However, I later found in the literature that speaking for others is highly 'unethical' because no one else can fully understand the experiences of an individual (Alcoff, 1991, p. 6) and yet, gathering SV is a specific characteristic of the role of being a SR. However, Alcoff's (1991) assumptions may not always be the case, because, as GR found, others speaking on their behalf is helpful. Uncovering the complexity of SV processes. RU also discussed how their emotions had impacted their responses to a university survey:

> [In] one survey, I really ranted. I was having a bad day, so when they told us to do the survey, I was thinking, bad timing mate *laugh*. And afterwards, I was like, I probably should have read that before submitting it. I am usually quite reserved and word things in a manner that doesn't portray anger and frustration but sometimes when I am feeling passionate about something or I have had a bad day, I am not really thinking, I am just going blaaaaa, having a rant ... We are all different and we can all deliver news or information differently; it all depends on the person interpreting it and how the other person is delivering it. I don't think it's anything personal to that person (RU individual depiction, Appendix 26).

Research by Johnson *et al.* (2020) has shown that people can act impulsively when they feel either passionate about a topic or, conversely, when they are having a difficult day, as both extremes of positive and/or negative feelings could contribute to impulsive outbursts. Although RU does not explicitly define ISV here, they contend that ISV understands that the way people deliver their voice can be different, which helps provide reassurance to those students who experience hypervigilance.

Incubation and Illumination

Following the development of the co-researcher's depictions, it was important for the researcher to "retreat[s] from the intense, concentrated focus" to allow the "inner tacit dimension to reach its full possibilities" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). I took up walking, colouring, drawing and exercise as directed by HI (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). It was during this break that my mind began to identify themes among co-researchers, and once I had exhausted all potential themes, I knew it was time to move to the 'illumination' phase (Moustakas, 1990).

Illumination: composite depictions

As stated by Moustakas (1990), the next phase of analysis involves compiling composite depictions that represent the ISV themes found across co-researchers. As stated above, I had already begun noticing common themes. However, this phase involves a closer

inspection of how the co-researchers utilise their voice and how they conceptualise ISV as a group in HE. As stated above, the themes were beginning to be formulated during the interviews, and these then became the starting point for compiling the composite depictions. The themes identified will be added to the conceptualisation of what it means to provide students with ISV in HE. Literature will not be integrated into this section to allow the co-researcher's uninterrupted voices to be heard. I will now provide a composite depiction for each of the five themes derived from the co-researchers' individual depictions. The five themes are:

- The experience of needing a trauma-informed safe space to regulate emotions.
- The experience of removing judgement through implementing trauma-informed practice.
- The experience of understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction.
- The experience of removing fear by humanising those in positions of power.
- The experience of needing choice and autonomy.

The experience of needing a trauma-informed safe space to regulate emotions

The first theme identified was that many of the co-researchers grew up in an environment where the adults around them struggled to manage their own emotions and/or struggled to manage the emotions of the co-researchers when they were children (PS; GR; BA; RI).

This resulted in co-researchers being unable to identify, articulate, and regulate their emotions, for example, PS states that:

> I never knew that it was okay to express my feelings, so I bottled them up and didn't talk to anybody. I couldn't cope with those feelings because I couldn't identify them, I didn't know what they were, and it really impacted my life, in and out of education (PS, individual depiction, Appendix 26)

This difficulty experienced in managing emotions led one co-researcher to avoid working through their feelings (GR) and another to go "chosen mute" (BA). Due to their parents not being able to provide adequate and emotional support, the child co-researcher would view their parents' reactions as ignoring them, shouting at them, becoming argumentative, forceful, and invalidating (GR). This behaviour was also considered abusive by one co-researcher who felt unlovable (BA), and other co-researchers felt as though they were not "good enough" (BA; PA; RU). For two co-researchers, school was also a place where their emotions were not listened to (PS; BA). As they grew up, the co-researchers sought a safe space. In some cases, this would be the co-researcher retreating to their bedroom (GR; JA), reading books (JA), joining clubs (PS), exercising (RI), or even being sent home from school (PS). Once in university, the co-researchers continued to require a trauma-informed approach (as explained above) (USDHHS, 2014) in the form of a safe space in which they could learn to use their voice to discuss their emotions, as can be seen in the composite depiction, which highlights how students utilise their voice in HE and how the co-researchers conceptualised ISV.

Composite depiction

When I am late for a session at university, I feel so overwhelmed and upset because I don't want to disappoint my lecturers, and I hate people thinking badly of me. So, consequently, I will go chosen mute because I'd be so upset from being overwhelmed. If I am confronted by the lecturer, I will explode into a flood of tears because I don't know how to manage my emotions; I just don't think I can. I try and block out the emotions because I'm quite an emotional person; like if I'm sad, I am really sad, and if I am angry, then I am really angry, there is no in-between. As a child, I joined a martial arts club as a coping mechanism, a fixation and a channel for my emotions, which helped. But as you grow up, you lose those coping mechanisms; it all starts to replay itself again, but you're an adult now. When I am having those down days, it's ... like I revert back to the age of 11 or 12. I don't feel like an adult who is paying rent or who's going to uni ... when I am trying to stand up and talk about something. When there are changes to my mental health, I completely close down, become more withdrawn and isolated.

Yet, tutorials are only half an hour ... normally it is about work rather than 'How are you?' 'How are you feeling?' But I need regular reassurance that I am doing well, or for someone to check in on me. This could be my poor PACT [personal academic careers tutor] because tutors need to be looking at the person as a whole and not just their academic skills, because if someone was to sit with me and explore all the emotions I was feeling, perhaps I'd have been an emotional

literate human adult. Tutors need to ask, ‘Is there anyone who wants to speak to me at the end or during the session?’ Because it is definitely therapeutic to offload and get it off your chest ... but no one has ever got the time. There have been many times that I've felt upset, and I wanted to talk to the tutor at the end, but then they’ve gone. Whereas, they could provide me with positive praise, reassurance and a trauma-informed approach. I know I need to learn more about my emotions and healthy ways to vent it because sometimes, I just sit in bed with my teddy bears ... and cry as much as I need to. I need to feel it all ... because if I try and be like, ‘No, I am fine,’ ... it gets worse. My bedroom is my safe space; it has pictures of me, my friends, my family, my partner, ... posters of my favourite book and movie and plants. The uni could create something similar with plants. I envisage “a mental health first aider hovering around in a room of dividers and bean bags whereby, I can sort my head out myself in a safe space with someone who has actually been through this trauma ... who physically feels it ... they can help them because they physically know what it feels like.

Commentary from the composite depiction

The composite depiction shows how co-researchers experience SV. It highlights their challenges in identifying, expressing, and managing their emotions due to the lack of emotional support they received as children (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014). The “embodied knowledge” (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) felt by diverse learners

was a physical response from years of silencing, but without “hermeneutical resources” (Ferguson, 2025) in which to communicate their emotions, diverse students experience “hermeneutical injustice” (Fricker, 2010). Co-researchers' genuine emotions are kept hidden in the unconscious mind to protect their attachment to their parents (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material in 2014; Maté & Maté, 2022). The analysis above shows that for some co-researchers, the unconscious child self (that which experienced trauma as a child when expressing their voice) is the part of themselves that shows up when attempting to speak up as an adult (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014). However, this would often only reproduce the emotions they felt as children (Maté & Maté, 2022; Turner *et al*., 2002). Jung (1959, reprinted with material 2014) states that the adult needs to undertake healing through the process of ‘individuation’ for the child-like qualities to be removed (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material 2014), and this was further expressed by Maté & Maté (2022). There is also evidence above that some co-researchers had attempted to seek out coping strategies alternative to their parents (Dewey, 2011), such as allowing themselves to sit with their emotions and feel them which Rogers (1961) states is a healthy approach to managing emotions, however, for most co-researchers silence and avoidance is often the outcome (Herman, 2010; Kalsched, 2017). Silence and avoidance are being used to protect co-researchers from the repetition of traumatic emotions that were once felt in childhood (Herman, 2010; Kalsched, 2017; Turner *et al*., 2002). However, this approach rarely yields the benefits that co-researchers might expect, because the feelings students have experienced are not effectively

expressed (Lorde, 1984). Instead, the emotions remain present within the body (Van Der Kolk, 2014), becoming an internal critic (Kalsched, 2017; Turner *et al*., 2002). This illuminates the "everyday world as problematic" (Smith, 1987) for diverse learners within an educational system characterised by oppressive silencing and subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). Diverse learners are "outsiders within" (Collins, 2000; 1986), occupying space within the classroom but always feeling marginalised due to their lack of emotional literacy.

Co-researchers who were struggling to communicate their emotions hoped to receive emotional support from their tutors and peers (Bracken *et al*., in press; Cahill *et al*., 2014; McChlery & Wilkie, 2009; Walsh *et al*., 2009). Any lack of need within childhood is often sought after in adulthood (Maté & Maté, 2022). Such examples expressed by co-researchers consisted of the need for emotional reassurance (Kalsched, 2017), regular praise, trauma-informed approaches (USDHHS, 2014), and all within a 'psychological' safe space (Clark, 2020), which co-researchers believed would support ISV. A trauma-informed safe space would include others who have had some understanding of trauma and the prevention of 're-traumatization' of students (USDHHS, 2014), particularly in reference to 'psychological safety' (Clark, 2020), 'peer support', shared decision-making and using the voices of those who have experience of trauma in supporting the development of policies (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014; Young & Castro Schepers, 2024). All of which will be discussed in the following chapter. Co-researchers found talking to others who had shared experiences helpful (Herman, 2023; 2010), and Maté and Maté (2022) agree, stating that

a compassionate approach could only be provided by those who have shared that experience (Delpit, 1988). This could form part of a holistic approach, regarding developing 'peer support' and/or pairing tutors with students in pastoral and/or mentoring support, to help encourage ISV (Bracken *et al*., in press; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) to establish a more balanced approach to power and perspectives (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014). This holistic four-fold approach includes a trauma-informed approach (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014), 'psychological safety' (Clark, 2020), enabling students to take the time to heal ('individuation') as directed by Jung (1959 reprinted in 2014), and 'peer support' (Bracken *et al*., in press; Cahill *et al*., 2014; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) provides a much more targeted approach to pastoral support (Walsh *et al*., 2009). The composite depiction above illustrates the various ways stakeholders can support DLN students in achieving ISV. These will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. However, one issue remained regarding the provision of ISV, and this relates to tutors' lack of time, which is not a criticism of specific staff, but rather a general characteristic of all universities (Cahill *et al*., 2014; Mackinnon, 2004; McChlery & Wilkie, 2009).

The experience of removing judgement through implementing trauma-informed practice

The second theme I identified was the concern of co-researchers about being wrong, either in terms of answering questions incorrectly (PS; SU), being percieved as wrong due to their diverse needs (BA; SU), or being wrong in respect of their coping strategies (GR).

Co-researchers who were told that they were wrong in some way felt intense shame (PS) and perceived the label of being wrong as a form of judgement (GR; PS; BA; JA; SU). Students perceived judgement from others through observing other people's body language and facial expressions, and to remove the feelings of judgement, other people need to be aware of how their body language and facial expressions are being perceived (SU). Co-researchers who were highly concerned with judgement and rejection had found ways to avoid judgements from others, such as creating a 'persona' (BA) or 'mask' (RU), being the parent of the group (BA; RU), or 'conforming to others' expectations of them (PA) and/or putting others needs before their own (BA; RU; PA). The impact of this theme often meant that co-researchers remained silent (SU; PS) to avoid judgement and any feelings of shame (PS). As these students enter HE, they seek a non-judgemental environment consisting of people with similar characteristics (PS; BA; JA; SU; PA). These students discussed how TiP could support them in gaining their ISV by removing judgement, and in doing so, would enable them to use their voice confidently. This can be seen in the composite depiction below, which shows how students utilise their voice in HE and how the co-researchers conceptualised ISV in respect of this theme.

Composite depiction

> People act differently amongst other people to try and fit in, ... they do it to feel a shared identity or a shared belonging. It's definitely about giving and betraying a character in a way. In class, I still feel like I am conforming to others because of

how other people might perceive me, such as what I can say and what I should refrain from saying, because I worry that I might not fit in. People don't want to feel different; they just want to be liked and not be wrong or labelled an outsider, so students with similar identities will sit together ... to feel safer and stronger in a way, like pack animals. I worry about the feeling of judgement, and you can feel stupid almost for having those feelings. In university, although they are not necessarily saying you're wrong, you can feel that they are judging you, and that can be seen in a person's body language, so I feel like I have to prove myself as well, like I am not their perception of me. For example, everybody sees me as a [parental] figure, which adds a bit of pressure, but some people don't have the confidence to speak, so, in class, I feel I have to be the one that steps up to speak in class because no one else will. I do it to help everyone. It's a persona in a way, but I am worried that I would be labelled a know-it-all ... mine is all about judgement from others, letting everyone down, or them thinking badly of me. Consequently, I shut down and go mute because I feel like ... a burden, a pain or that I am stupid or dumb. My silence is a cry for help, but I can't show it or voice it, so I just zone out.

Expressing your needs creates vulnerability because I feel like if people know too much about [me] ... that information could be used against [me]. As an example, if I will stand out and stop conforming, that can be used against me. It is for this reason that discussions with students need to be had in a safe way, where there is

> no judgement and where the fear of being criticised or even being told that you're wrong is removed because I know they are not personally criticising me, but ... [I] cannot help but take it that way, especially if (I) have had this trauma. When I am in a group where I have similar identities with, I know I won't be judged. Students need to be free to be who you are and to stand up for your own morals and values, and to be able to do this without fear of judgement. Yet, I am very reserved or falsely confident in lectures due to the persona that I have developed, so I need that trauma-informed practice of having a positive before ... the negative.

Commentary from the composite depiction

The composite depiction highlights the ways co-researchers experience SV. The analysis above illustrates how education has often been a place that reproduces control through punishment and reward strategies (Illich, 1970). Moreover, due to diverse students being more likely to make mistakes (Clapton *et al.*, 2018), they are more likely to receive adverse reactions and punishment from others, reproducing feelings of shame (Nussbaum, 2004). This illustrates how education is "problematic" (Smith, 1987) for diverse learners who may find themselves disciplined more because of their "intersectional" characteristics (Crenshaw, 1989) within the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000), leading to "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010). Co-researchers, in most cases, developed a fear of being wrong (Hockings, 2011; Mazzei, 2008) and felt an intense feeling of anxiety (Richards *et al*., 2014; Maack *et al.*, 2015; Wermes *et al*., 2018; Wessing *et al*., 2017) when using their voice,

which created hypervigilance to other people's responses (Richards *et al*., 2014). Where a risk was assumed, the co-researcher would remain silent (Clark, 2020) to avoid the feelings of shame (McNulty, 2003). This is a behavioural adaptation to avoid feeling the emotions they experienced as children (Herman, 2010; Kalsched, 2017; Turner *et al*., 2002). This often meant that co-researchers attempted to avoid university activities (Choi, 2021) in which they needed to use their voice, as they attempted to avoid being judged. Judgement is a reflective, intuitive sense made of an object, person or animal based on a characteristic, which becomes 'necessary' to the social order of life and encourages 'conformity' (Kant, 2009). The co-researchers in this study were particularly aware of the potential judgements others would make of them. The impact of this led co-researchers to silence their voice and conform to others (Hooks, 1994) due to the fear of rejection (Renström *et al*., 2018; Ouwerkerk *et al*., 2005). Co-researchers, after adopting self-protection strategies, developed a helping persona to hide elements of their personality to ensure they are liked by others and/or a mask that does not truly represent the co-researchers' own authentic personality (Herman, 2010; Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material in 2014; O'Connor, 2023). Diverse learners have learnt to perform to the social expectations imposed upon them repetitively by those in positions of authority (Butler, 1988). This unconscious 'self-presentation' approach helps to avoid judgement (Baumeister & Hutton, 1987; Leary & Allen, 2011) because their own perceived negative attributes are kept hidden (Hogan, 1982; Leary & Allen, 2011). However, those who develop a persona are very often easily persuaded by the voice of others rather than their

own, meaning that their individual and unique needs are never heard (Allison, 2023; Maté & Maté, 2022). Therefore, education is not neutral; it is shaped by those who are privileged and conformed by those who are marginalised (Smith, 1999), illustrating the impact of the "god trick" (Haraway, 2004). The co-researchers' "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000) presented here is the outcome of oppressive structures that "desire" their silence (Mazzei, 2011), leading to subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). Therefore, we can see that judgements of others rarely encompass all attributes of a person, such as their positive traits. I would argue, based on this research, that the hidden characteristics of a person, and judgements are subjective from one person to the next (Tajfel, 1981). Therefore, more tolerance and 'deduction' can be used alongside judgements to limit their impact (Kant, 2009).

To encourage ISV, co-researchers could be guided by their own "embodied" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) and "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000), trusting their own intuition rather than judging themselves harshly for having those feelings (Rogers, 1961). Students can be supported in following and living by their own unique values, and in doing so, students can become more autonomy with their own lives (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012; Herman, 2010) and begin healing the child archetype through 'individuation' (Jung, 1959 reprinted with new material 2014), in conjunction with the "reassurance and encouragement" from others (Kalsched, 2017, p. 485). The process of students using their unique voice (Allison, 2023) needs to be encouraged using 'psychological safety' (Clark, 2020) and to share space with others who have similar

experiences and/or characteristics in the form of 'peer support' (Bracken *et al*., in press) as provided by TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014). However, not all students are comfortable around unfamiliar peers and may absent themselves from class due to anxiety (Hunter, 2022). Research has also shown that Latino males had formed off-campus connections but had not formed 'peer support' with HE staff, thereby potentially becoming retraumatising for marginalised students (Pérez II & Vicente, 2022).

Tutors can support students in using their voice by being aware of hypervigilance and the impact that body language and facial expressions can have on diverse students (Richards *et al*., 2014; Wermes *et al*., 2018; Wessing *et al.*, 2017). A calm presence can provide students with a sense of safety (Herman, 2010). This can be achieved through the use of 'unconditional positive regard' and 'empathic understanding' (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material, 1995) in conjunction with a trauma-informed approach as explained above (USDHHS, 2014). This composite depiction highlights the same four-fold approach as the composite above, whereby students can be encouraged to become aware of their own feelings and 'individuate' (Jung, 1959 reprinted with new material 2014), peers support for students in the form of shared characteristics and experiences (Bracken *et al*., in press; Herman, 2023; 2010); staff could target pastoral support by tutors that they know to encourage students to live their lives based on their own morals and values (Cahill *et al*., 2014; McChlery & Wilkie, 2009; Walsh *et al*., 2009), and the university can employ a trauma-informed approach (USDHHS, 2014). However, a further addition that was found in this composite is 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda &

King, 2012) as an essential element required for the development of a unique and individual voice in which diverse students can begin “talking back” (Hooks, 2014).

The experience of understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction

The third theme involves understanding and representation of diverse students' experiences. The co-researchers grew up being surrounded by others who did not understand them (GR; PS; BA; LO). This lack of understanding was evident in the invalidation of their feelings (GR), the misunderstanding of their cognitive thinking regarding events (BA), and a failure to fully understand their requirements (LO). Whereas, understanding enabled co-researchers to speak to someone who has experience of the same diverse needs (GR; PS; BA; JA; SU; RI; LO), having experience of supporting others with the same diverse characteristics (JA), a relaxed friendship approach with lecturers, removal of forcing them to do things that they did not feel comfortable doing (GR) and respecting individual differences (PS). Through this understanding, co-researchers felt more comfortable discussing their experiences with others (GR). Conversely, for one co-researcher, having a different life experience added value to their SV and enabled them to view situations from other people’s perspectives (PS). However, JA states that even if others have a different but similar diverse characteristic, this is still about understanding because both have been marginalised and excluded in some way (JA). This is illustrated in the composite depiction below, which shows how students, once enrolled in university, want to be understood by others who have had a similar experience to them, revealing

the importance of diverse representation in HE. The composite also includes how students utilise their voice and the ways co-researchers conceptualised ISV with respect to this theme.

Composite depiction

> [At university], my biggest aggravation ... is that I am always relating to people who don't understand me. The people that I am talking to are lovely and very, very helpful, but none of which can relate or understand what I am saying. When I am anxious, I stumble over my words and I can't really process what I am thinking to what I am saying, like it doesn't come out right. So, when we are doing a presentation, I rely on one of my friends in my group, ... who is really confident, so they do it all. You can't really see learning difficulties, so people are unaware that when I say, 'I can't do this, it's too fast, please can you slow down, or can you raise your voice, because it helps me to process'. They are like, 'You don't look like you're struggling,' and I'm like, 'But I am.' So, me and my friend, we will speak to each other in class, saying 'What did they say?' ... then the teachers are like, 'Why are you talking when I am trying to do this?' However, if they don't have the difficulty themselves, they are like, I don't understand ... why do I have to slow down? but I just feel like people just see you as broken. If you haven't suffered with it, you don't understand what exactly it is to go through it because they don't

feel what I felt. So, it is quite nice knowing others with diverse needs because you can relate to them about your issues and problems.

If I expressed that I've got anxiety or depression, and the tutor was subtly like, I can understand why you feel like that because I have it too, then you can put your arm out there and try and feel accepted by them. But some of them don't open up, yet when they do, they know how you're feeling, and I feel like there is less judgement there ... and I could relate to that. I can offload onto them ... so, it is best to have people around who are going through it as well. It gives you that feeling of being understood, definitely and that empathy. I do find having the same sex person to talk to is better, for instance, I've got a student rep and I feel really comfortable going to them because they are our age, and they have a disability as well. When the rep had similar characteristics to me, I feel more understood ... because I know that they've shared the experiences and I would assume that they would have similar views to me, so I would feel confident in approaching them. I think them being open about being higher up, having a disability and knowing that they feel comfortable expressing themselves is a good thing. So, I too, also find having somebody who has had a similar situation definitely helps, and not feeling like you're going to be penalised for having a different opinion. There is no pressure to comply socially, I guess, just sort of be your authentic self. They know more of the true you, so you're not afraid to say something controversial. When

> they are being open ... we then feel like we can be open to them and like express our worries too.

Commentary from the composite depiction

The composite depictions reveal how co-researchers experience student voice. Co-researchers expressed that there was little understanding of their circumstances from others around them, leading to their silence (either voluntary or as suggested by others), driven by years of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and “epistemic injustice” (Fricker, 2010). However, their silence lifted when they were around other people who shared the same experiences and/or characteristics (Bracken *et al*., in press; Delpit, 1988). These findings concur with the approach of TiP and trauma healing in relation to ‘peer support’ facilitated by those who have had a shared experience (Bracken *et al*., in press; Herman, 2023; 2010; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014). When interacting with one another, diverse learners obtain an “epistemic advantage” (Wylie, 2004) that enables them to understand their experiences in ways that those in more privileged positions cannot, because they do not see reality to its fullest extent (Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b). Furthermore, as suggested by this composite, shared experience enables more ‘congruence,’ ‘unconditional positive regard’ and ‘empathic understanding’ of the person-centred approach to be felt (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material 1995) when mistakes were made, reducing co-researchers' felt judgement (Vaccaro, 2017) and criticism from others. This mirrors the importance of “embodied knowledge" (Gendlin,

2003; Haraway, 2004) and meant that co-researchers required less performance (Butler, 1988), self-preservation, and reducing the need to conform using their personas and masking behaviours enabling co-researchers to be more authentic (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material 2014; O'Connor, 2023; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). In a process of 'individuation' (Jung 1959 reprinted with new material 2014), otherwise known as healing, students can become, as Moustakas (1968) states, ' authentic'. According to Maté and Maté (2022, p. 107), authenticity is a word that describes being "the true author of and authority on our own life". Having just discovered this new literature whilst writing this chapter, I have illuminated the similarity between 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) and Maté's and Maté's (2022) 'authenticity'. Therefore, it can be stated that "without voice, there is no authenticity in the learning" (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012, p. 33). Revealing that Hooks (2014) was accurate when stating that "talking back" was healing and was a requirement for both student and educator (Hooks, 1994).

HE who provide 'authentic' teaching and learning engages students 'authentically' and encourages students to become more 'authentic' themselves (Kreber, 2014). If we take assessments as an example, students are thrust into an education that requires them to compete for the very best grades using control, punishment and reward strategies (Illich, 1970); however, this means that students must decide between being successful in education or being authentic with the risk of possible failure (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). As I reflect on this composite theme, I am once again led towards 'self-authorship' in HE as a conduit to ISV (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) that could

otherwise be referred to as ‘authenticity’ (Maté & Maté, 2022). CAST (2024a) arguably encourages voice and authorship through UDL, which supports providing multiple opportunities for ‘engagement’, ‘representation’, and ‘action and expression’. This is a framework that I have grown to appreciate and value highly, not only as an educator but also as a student. CAST (2020) has further attempted to encourage ‘authenticity’ in assessment design, more specifically, suggesting that assessments should be representative of the student (Hanesworth *et al*., 2019). It was through my reflection that I concluded that educational institutions could provide more opportunities for students to use their individual voice; that is, the voice of those who have experienced silence, the voice of diversity and the voice of understanding and representation. This research continues to illuminate the connection between diverse needs, education, loss of voice and poor mental health. Therefore, I also concur with Toshalis and Nakkula (2012, p. 33) that “for students to create new knowledge, succeed academically, and develop into healthy adults,” students’ individual voice also needs to be encouraged to enable “talking back” (Hooks, 2014). This composite will be expanded on in more detail below regarding choice and autonomy (analysed and named before becoming aware of the similarities). An aspect of trauma healing (Herman, 2010).

The experience of needing choice and autonomy

Before arriving at university, one co-researcher chose not to access specialist support for their DLN, which they considered to be due to being “stubborn or in denial”, which

ultimately could have contributed to them leaving college (RU individual depiction, Appendix 26). There was an attempt to make choices that would make their parents happy because they perceived whatever they chose would not be 'good enough' for the adults in their lives. Co-researchers felt that they were not good enough whilst caring for their parents, and any choices that they made, such as obtaining a diagnosis for ADHD, were compared to those of their siblings. Other co-researchers discussed not being listened to in school, such as when they discussed career choices (RU), made suggestions for activities (PA) or when they expressed how they felt (PS). These experiences fueled negative emotions in co-researchers. RI, however, had a childhood in which they could express their choices and had these listened to by the adults in their lives. Whereas GR was 'forced' by the adults in their life to undertake activities such as going to school when they felt they needed to work on their mental health. Their parents' lack of understanding added fuel to their anxiety and led to their silence (GR). Whereas for PS, they were able to have their own opinions at home, but were not allowed to tell people that their views were wrong. However, this value was impacted at school when they were told they were wrong, leading to self-doubt (PS). Upon starting at university, co-researchers stated that they wanted more self-determination in relation to their education. This process involves listening to students and acting upon their choices (GR). However, it was noted that lecturers get the final choice regarding what happens with student feedback. This idea is expanded on in the composite depiction below, which shows how students need to be encouraged to have more choice and autonomy in HE. The composite also includes how

co-researchers utilise their voice and the ways they conceptualised ISV with respect to this theme.

Composite depiction

> In one lesson, it feels like a school, ... teachers at the front ... going through a PowerPoint. The issue with that is that there is no real interaction with the teachers, and no one really wants to speak up, and that's because they were only looking for set answers from the PowerPoint and not for anyone's opinion. We are just fed information, and my mind just switches off, but I know that group discussions, a table activity, video ... helps me to absorb the information, recall it, and have an opinion about it rather than just being talked at. I need my lessons to be multi-sensory, visual, engaging, and active learning. I like having a conversation rather than having one correct answer, as this gives us an opportunity to hear other people's voices. I understand there are quieter students, but equally, that is their own choice, so everyone is entitled to their own preferences and choices. In another lesson, the teacher allowed us to do anything we wanted for an assignment. I struggled at first, but then, one day, I finally chose my topic, I couldn't stop ... and the free rein was a very positive thing. When we had tutorials, this one lecturer ... gave us options to have it online, and we can do other things online too, such as presentations. You had the choice of online or in front of the class, you want to pre-record or you speak live, entirely up to you, because they

are really diverse. That should be what they are all practising. In the lesson that I like, the teacher lets us choose the whole curriculum, and this allows us to make a suggestion: ... discuss it, or for them to tell us why it is not suitable. I like it when it's student-led because we get to choose what we like, need or want, where I am comfortable asking questions.

Student voice ... is agency and determining how you want to be taught, how exams and assignments are structured and the level of contribution from lecturers, like how much they can help and things like that. To feedback about the lessons, not once or twice a year, but more than that, because it helps to be able to speak to the teacher whenever and for them to adjust it straight away. For example, I had a presentation to do, and I emailed and said, I won't be able to do it in person because I was feeling anxious. After discussions with the module tutor, I agreed to do it online, but that still made me feel anxious, and ... I still felt like they weren't listening to me or how I was feeling. But, I didn't want to argue with them about it, so I just said, 'Yeah, that's fine.' I guess you get to that point where you think, I've tried to tell you, but you're not listening. In one lesson, I really struggled attending, University is more of a choice; it's not compulsory, so if you make that choice to not come in because of your mental health, then that should be your choice. But the module tutor discussed this with me, they listened to what I struggled with, why I struggled with it, and came up with a plan which I believe made me focus more, ... rather than feeling overwhelmed. The tutors could take the time to work

> out what I actually need rather than what I should be doing. If the tutors are open to the idea of us teaching them about what they can do to teach us and help us it would then mean that we will feel comfortable saying, ... 'I do not really understand this, I can't read it, I don't understand what it says.' I've spent three years to become that knowledgeable other, so there should be no reason why students can't say to university staff, this is what we've been training for ... we can help you ... to adapt this and that to become fully inclusive. For instance, I have been focusing more on myself and less on what others are telling me and I am now making my own decisions and my own path, I am now able to speak out about things that concern me more in education and I have also started to look at other areas in my personal life too where I think, you need to start doing other things for yourself, to think for yourself and have more courage and confidence to do that.

Commentary from the composite depiction

The composite depiction illuminates how co-researchers experience SV. Co-researchers stated that they were the best judges of themselves and their needs, and they were able to approach the appropriate tutor to request support, such as a co-researcher requesting accommodations for their presentation and discussing with a tutor how best to support their attendance within one module. Although some tutors were perceived to collaborate with students to seek out and negotiate possible solutions to help students, PS was concerned that it appeared lecturers had the final choice, leading to students' silence and

preventing them from healing their trauma (Herman, 2010). Jung (1972, reprinted 2004, pp. 65-66) states that throughout human life, "a certain kind of behaviour is forced on" people who encourage them to continue portraying the persona they developed in childhood, moving away from their 'own biography'. This becomes their 'identity,' defined by Jung (1959, reprinted with new material 2014, p. 441) as an unconscious 'psychological conformity' to other people's expectations and is performative in nature (Butler, 1988). This discovery links back to my self-search, where I used Rogers' (1961, p. 110) quote regarding being led by others rather than following my own path. I surmise at this point that this expectation to conform to others is an illustration of the years of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and prevents students from making their own choices and having their own voice heard because it is assumed that:

> the psychology of one man [person] is like that of another, that the same motives occur everywhere, that what is agreeable to me must obviously be pleasurable for others, that what I find immoral must also be immoral for them (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material 2014, p. 441)

This juxtaposes the student's desire to direct the curriculum and the pedagogy to become more student-led, involving more student choice and direction (PA; RU; LO; SU). Healing from trauma requires the victim to reconnect with their own personal power, whereby fearful situations are experienced in safe places to reduce the sense of fear and performance (Herman, 2010). This concurs with Baxter Magolda and King's (2012) theory that people move through listening to others rather than themselves, to silently questioning authority with an internal voice, before beginning to direct one's own life by

trusting the internal voice within and finally living by their own beliefs, values and voice, which they say occurs between 20-29 years of age before becoming secure between 30-39 years of age. This approach provides a means of "talking back" (Hooks, 2014) and starts at the age at which most students attend university. However, I have shown in this study that having a voice is challenging for most of the co-researchers involved, and I somewhat agree with the statement that DLN students struggle to use their own voice, preferring instead to adopt the voice of others (Batchelor, 2006; 2014). Therefore, there is scope to establish some initial staff-directedness before moving towards collaboration and finally "self-authorship" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012), as I have presented with academic librarian staff members (Courage *et al*., 2023; Courage *et al*., 2024).

Rogers (1961) states that we must (with pain) take off the 'mask' of conformity and become more of an individual. To achieve this, we must rely less on the "decisions and choices" of others and ask ourselves, "Am I living in a way that which is deeply satisfying to me, and which truly expresses me?" (Rogers, 1961, p. 119). This was true of one co-researcher (PA) who began using their voice in education to make choices and was then able to transfer this new skill to other areas of their life, becoming more autonomous and "self-authored" (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) and as stated above, 'authentic' (Maté's & Maté's, 2022). This supports the idea of "talking back" (Hooks, 2014) and the element of TiP, 'empowerment, voice and choice' (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014).

The composite above outlines ideas that co-researchers had in which they could use their voice safely to make choices (Herman, 2010), such as becoming 'student as consultants' in a variety of roles that have also been suggested in the literature, such as students supporting tutor training (Turner *et al*., 2024), incorporating not just assignment autonomy but also enabling assignment choice (CAST, 2024b; Tai *et al*., 2021; Young & Castro Schepers, 2024), student feedback (Cook-Sather, 2009) and/or students collaborating on the style of pedagogy (Cook-Sather & Motz-Story, 2016). Student consultants held a unique personal way of viewing the university experience that tutors are unable to see for themselves due to their "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) in the way they view hierarchical systems in education and could further the unique perspectives of students in a way that could not be seen by those in privileged positions (Hartsock, 1998a). However, collaborative endeavours are at risk of being hampered by dynamics of power, which need to be identified and discussed to lessen the impact (Cook-Sather, 2009; Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014). All of which will be further discussed in the next chapter alongside the possible implications for SV practice in HE.

The experience of removing fear by humanising those in positions of power.

This composite depiction focused on co-researchers' fear of using their voice in university, whereby their childhood experiences became a precursor to the development of this fear. For instance, whenever BA and PA attempted to express themselves, such as stating they

were going to university, their capabilities were either questioned (BA) or encouraged to achieve more (PA), leaving them feeling not 'good enough' or 'wrong.' PS could not tell their parents that their opinions were wrong, but this made them more aware of others' thinking that they were 'wrong' whenever they wanted to oppose the opinions of others. Both felt that those in positions of authority invalidated their voice, and this invalidation led them to try to prove their parents wrong. Further invalidation by authority figures could be seen by GR's parents, who 'forced' them to attend school when they did not have the emotional capacity to do so, and RU's teachers, who questioned their career choices due to their low grades, making them feel 'incapable' of achieving what they wanted. In contrast, RI's parents allowed them the freedom to make their own choices and decisions, supporting them when needed, which led to mutual respect between themselves and the authority figures in their lives. Once attending university, co-researchers developed a fear of people in hierarchical positions, perhaps due to the fear of being invalidated (PS), labelling SR as unapproachable (BA), confrontational and 'authoritative' (SU), with lecturers being perceived as critical (PS) and unapproachable (GR). Co-researchers sought ways to remove unwelcome and threatening authority to strengthen equity, with many stating that lectures sharing similar diverse characteristics were helpful to ISV because they led to closer relationships (RI: GR; LO), encouraging diverse co-researchers to contribute more to class (LO; PS). This is illustrated in the composite depiction below, which shows how co-researchers experienced fear around hierarchical figures in HE and the ways this could be mitigated. The composite also

includes how students utilise their voice and the ways co-researchers conceptualised ISV with respect to this theme.

Composite depiction

> In university, I can talk to them on an adult level; they listen to me ... calmly and try and identify what it is that's frustrating me. On the other hand, you can sometimes feel like a child because you have to answer to [the educator] all the time. This feels like they are saying I am in charge; you will do this, and do it when I say. This leads me to think that a lot of the younger students see it as 'Oh, just another teacher that they must answer to.' So, I think I go silent because the anxiety makes [me] fearful even though there is nothing to be fearful of. Perhaps it's just the fear of speaking out and being the only one talking. However, I have noticed that feedback coming from the power is easier to give out than feedback from the little people to the power, and this stems back to childhood, where you do as you're told ... everybody has got fear, and from bottom up, that's where fear grows. They [the student representative] are middle class, whereas I'm very working class, so they haven't opened their eyes to experiences that other people might have had. They were taught through their power and their values, whereas the others don't necessarily have that connection to their education. In their case, that strong voice isn't needed to be outspoken because the students are there for the teacher rather than the students exploring [our own needs]. Student representatives are

not just students now; they are a rep for students ... they are higher up [in] the hierarchy [which] is only adding to their sense of power. It's authoritative ... so I think maybe people are a bit reserved, like me, about saying what they really think. In the end, I just think I will just stick it out, it's fine. I don't want to be a burden or a pain.

I have a friend who has been a course rep ... and I am very comfortable talking to them because they are happy to shout for inclusion. However, some reps will only take that as far as they feel comfortable. As school reps, you're taking responsibility for my views, but we all have our own personal views, and some will contradict that rep's individual values. However, student reps need to accept other people's views, process them and implement the strategies that this cohort has actually suggested, instead of thinking I am still going to do it my way. However, being a student representative is very daunting because sometimes [when I have been a student rep] I've felt anxious in meetings, having to speak to people, this is because it wasn't just the lecturers that I knew but also lectures from other years and other modules. The meeting was full of proper adults all looking at me, waiting for me to say something ... I know that I am an adult, but when I say proper adults, I'm like older adults who have got it all figured out. It must be hard to question the information that the lecturers were giving out in class because going against what your lecturer says is also really nerve-wracking. I think it's because they are an authority figure, and I feel like they will know more, so I shouldn't disagree with

them. However, there are certain lecturers that you can joke around with, and then there are some that are serious who just teach you, and that's it. But I think [when they] express their experiences [that's] good because it's really nice knowing that they have been through similar things. If they are comfortable expressing themselves, it makes me feel more comfortable expressing myself. If, in the first couple of lessons, tutors were like, 'Hi, I am this person, I do this, I struggle with this,' then it would be nice knowing a little bit more about them and then building them up in your mind.

Commentary from the composite depiction

The composite depictions illustrate how co-researchers experience student voice in an environment where they fear those in authority, which aligns with Clark's (2024) findings. This indicates that "intersectional" (Crenshaw, 1989) characteristics within the "matrix of domination" serve to silence marginalised students (Collins, 2000). Co-researchers who felt heard and validated felt treated more as adults and developed mutual respect, whereas those who were invalidated and directed to do things by those in authority felt more like a child, reinforcing the power and control given to those in hierarchy and preventing students from "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). Much of the fear surrounding hierarchy can be found in co-researchers' childhood experiences (whether at home or at school), which aligns with Clark (2024), whereby co-researchers were often directed to do things by those in positions of power rather than following their own pathways. Co-

researchers navigated this theme by doing what they are told by others (conforming) (Hooks, 1994), therefore losing their voice in the process, indicating the “everyday world as problematic” (Smith, 1987) in the ways power shapes systems of education. This brings me back to the quote from Rogers (1961, p. 110) in the self-search chapter, which states that many co-researchers in this study had been “guided by what he [they] thinks he [they] should be, not by what he is [they are]”. If the co-researchers are often guided by what others think is right and wrong, how can they think for themselves and follow their own pathway in life (Perry, 1970, reprinted 1999)? For example, SV is only sought when lecturers wish to pursue it, leading to the subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and silence of diverse students' voices in the form of “epistemic injustice” (Fricker, 2010). The authors suggest that HE is required “to find a balance of participation, power, and perspective” (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014, pp. 136 - 137). However, this theme shows that hierarchy is still ever present in SV work but could be reduced by lecturers being open about their own diverse experiences, challenging the “god trick” (Haraway, 2004) whilst also enabling students to openly explore their own standpoint (Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b; Smith, 1999) and “situated” knowledge (Collins, 2000).

Rogers (1980, reprinted with new material in 1995) would refer to this as ‘congruence’, defined as the tutor being ‘transparent’ to the student about their experiences, their diverse needs and how they feel. In doing so, co-researchers thought that they could emulate these behaviours by discussing their own individual experiences, needs and how they feel similar but separate from their lecturers. This aligns with the concepts of

‘trustworthiness and transparency’ from TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) and concurs with Perry’s (1970, reprinted 1999) discussions on ‘detachment’ from other people's thoughts to developing and communicating one's own. This also links back to the ‘peer support’ approach under TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) and could explain why co-researchers gravitated towards people with similar characteristics (Bracken *et al*., in press). This also highlights the potential of ‘mutuality’ (as described in the methodology chapter by Buber, translated in 2010) as a concept for ISV and one that could reduce ‘epistemic injustice’ within SV processes (Fricker, 2010; Herman, 2023; 2010). This thereby improves power imbalances (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014). This further aligns with the elements of TiP, particularly those that refer to ‘collaboration and mutuality’ (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014). All of which will be further discussed in the next chapter alongside the possible implications for student voice practice in HE.

Explication: Exemplary portraits

Moustakas (1990) advised that exemplary portraits of three co-researchers should be used in this phase of the analysis (as explained in Chapter Three). These co-researchers should best represent the themed experiences identified in the study, specifically the five themes discussed above (Moustakas, 1990). After some consideration, BA, PS and GR were selected because their individual depictions had covered one or more of the themes discussed above, although to varying degrees. Written with only slight amendments, such as the removal of conjunctions, I will discuss each co-researcher's experiences with respect to the five themes using primarily their own voice, including how they utilise their

voice and conceptualise ISV using the five themes as headings. Each co-researcher will be presented in turn, and this will be followed by and supplemented by my own commentary and associated literature. The Exemplary portraits were written up for publication (see Kennett, 2025). See Table 4.1 below for details on the theme of needing a trauma-informed safe space to regulate emotions.

Table 4.1: The experience of needing a trauma-informed safe space to regulate emotions

Co-researcher	Exemplary portrait
PS	I have a parent who has Asperger's. We never had conversations about feelings, and I never developed those skills needed to manage my emotions because they were not modelled at home. I never knew that it was okay to express my feelings, so I bottled them up and did not talk to anybody. I could not cope with those feelings because I could not identify them; I did not know what they were, and it really impacted my life, in and out of education. I am now having counselling as an adult to be able to talk about and identify the feelings that I am having and sit with them. So, I think it would benefit me if the University could implement an approach where we are looking at the person as a whole, and not just their academic skills. If someone was to sit with me and explore all the emotions I was feeling, maybe I would have been a better emotional literate human adult.
GR	Growing up, me and one parent argued a lot, and I would sleep all day to shut out my emotions. When I was going through a really bad period whilst attending university, it made me feel worse that I had to come in, so it was easier to say I was not going in today. I think it is just that sense of dread. There have been times when I have come in [to university], but depression makes you tired, so I am not really focusing on the work. I feel exhausted, and the anxiety makes me think about lots of things, so you cannot just

	concentrate on the actual education. I am trying to calm myself down by thinking positively rather than thinking about where I am. I reached out for counselling and thought it was unhelpful; they just gave me techniques that I would not use, and I just felt ugh. Then I went through a really bad patch again, so I went back and saw a different person, and they were really helpful. they discussed techniques that I actually enjoyed doing, and I felt more listened to.
BA	My childhood was very traumatic, and for this reason, I cannot communicate how I am feeling, and no one else understands how I am feeling. I do not know how to manage my emotions. Sometimes, I would just shut down and go mute. I can get so overwhelmed [at university] that I am unable to concentrate or take anything in because my anxiety makes me overthink things. I have had counselling through the uni, but you only have five sessions, and I do not open up to start with, but then you get to the fifth session, it gets traumatic, and then it ends. I need regular reassurance or for someone to check in on me, but there is nothing. There needs to be somewhere you can go in a crisis with a mental health first aider approaching people who are upset. Somewhere, where I can sort my head out myself. If we had this safe space, someone who has been through this trauma would be there, who physically feels it, and that helps because they know what it feels like. I need that trauma-informed practice.

(Source: Author, 2024, for inclusion in this thesis)

I now recognise the impact of co-researchers' emotions on SV processes in HE. Co-researchers can struggle to identify their feelings, sit with them, and express them to themselves and others, both as children and as students (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014). The “situated” knowledge (Collins, 2000) expressed here is an “embodied” (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) response to the repetitive subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) experienced. Their silence was used to keep co-researchers safe in their childhood, but is still being used now as adults (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014; Maté & Maté, 2022). Jung (1953, reprinted 2010; 1950 reprinted with

new material 2014) states that for people to heal, they need to delve into the unconscious mind and reconnect with the child within to resolve conflict between the 'archetypes'. This persona has been shaped by students' "intersectional" (Crenshaw, 1989) characteristics within the "matrix of domination", intersecting and influencing the process of silencing within institutions (Collins, 2000). However, it is worth noting here that co-researchers may not be aware of this nor feel able to undertake this healing journey. Instead, they have come to realise that they require a safe space to express their emotions in the form of "talking back" (Hooks, 2014) as this improves their well-being (Lorde, 1984). A "margin" for "resistance" (Hooks, 1989) needs to be found where students feel safe to talk without fear of reprisals, such as their bedroom, a safe space within the university and/or a safe person who has had similar experiences, as stated by Maté and Maté (2022). This illustrates the importance of TiP, particularly the elements of 'safety' (students needing a safe space to regulate their emotions) and "peer support' (surrounded by others with similar experiences) (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014). Principles that concur with Herman's (2023; 2010) stages of healing. Without such support, the diverse students' voices will remain a "partial perspective" (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). The following, Table 4.2, examines three portraits related to the experience of removing judgement through the implementation of trauma-informed practice.

Table 4.2: The experience of removing judgement through implementing trauma-informed practice

Co-researcher	Exemplary portrait
PS	At school, I got called “you’re gay” and a “dike” as derogatory terms, so I avoided going. This was the time at which you are questioning and developing who you are; you do not need those social stigmas, labels, and stereotypes put on you, because you do not even know your own labels at that point. Whereas, at university, we have no judgement on LGBTQIA or ADHD, but it can be hard in lectures because sometimes you are receiving information from other people who have not had those experiences, and that can be quite difficult, but I am in a cohort that respects that we are all different and respect the voices from most communities. So, I think what makes it safe is that there is no judgement. You are free to be who you are and to stand up for your own morals and values.
GR	I do not like the feeling of judgement because I think some people are like, ‘Oh, you have got depression, just get over it.’ Or it is in your head, and I think then you can feel stupid almost for having those feelings, and although they are not necessarily saying you are wrong, you can feel that they are judging you almost. If something happens where I do feel judged, it does affect my mood. I do feel like I would step back and not say as much, even though I feel like I should not have to, but I struggle to express my emotions, so why should I be the one trying?
BA	I just want someone to show me they care because my parents never cared. I cannot do that to myself because I do not see myself in the same light or as severe as that, because then people will judge me. I always think everything is my fault, like everything. I feel a lot of guilt, so when I've had a conversation with someone, I will sit on my own and I will retell the whole conversation to myself to make sure that I have not said anything to offend anyone or upset anyone. So, mine is all about judgement from others, letting everyone down, or them thinking badly of me. I worry that if I am saying things to my personal tutor, who teaches me for some modules, that they will think that I am not good enough, that I am behind, that I have got issues, or that they think I am mental. This makes me think that it would be better to talk to someone you do not know. This person could be very open, welcoming, with a friendly face, non-judgemental and inclusive about everything. I want them to give me

	positive praise, reassurance, and a trauma-informed approach, which is giving me validation.

(Source: Author, 2024, for inclusion in this thesis)

In the self-search chapter, I identified that diverse learners were more likely to make mistakes in the classroom when using their voice (Hockings, 2011; Clapton *et al*., 2018). For instance, simply disclosing their disabilities and/or trauma has the potential to lead to stigma and discrimination; therefore, some students avoid disclosing their needs to staff members, as found by a survey on undergraduate students in one Australian university (Grimes *et al*., 2019). Making mistakes can lead to judgement or frightening criticism from others, leading to trauma (McNulty, 2003) and high degrees of shame (McNulty, 2003; Clapton *et al*., 2018). Praising one way of viewing the world and disciplining the other disregards diverse ways of knowing, leading to subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010). One academic participant in research exploring academics' understanding of Trauma-informed practice in HE states that "there's going to be tension in any system that at the end of it involves a judgement on performance" (Bodfield & Culshaw, 2024, p. 12). Some co-researchers and I (GR; BA) discussed not wishing to be judged because when we perceive signs of judgement, often seen in the body language of others and tone of voice has led to students' silence (Richards *et al*., 2014) steeped in "performance" (Boler, 1999; Butler, 1988; 1990 Hanna, 2021; Hao, 2011). This "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) of trauma continues

to impact students long after the initial trauma (van der Kolk, 2014). Co-researchers become hypervigilant to the body language of others, as noted in the self-search chapter, and this has also been used to keep ourselves safe from our childhood trauma, indicating the extent of students' trauma on their behaviour (Richards *et al*., 2014) because of the repeated acts of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). Safety can be provided to students when others provide calm body language (Herman, 2010). Students could be encouraged to view mistakes as a healthy, non-judgemental learning opportunity (Torralba *et al*., 2020; Brown, 2016; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012), like that expressed by PS. This way, students will feel safe in making and identifying their own mistakes with ease (Torralba *et al*., 2020). External praise, delivered by others, could support students when using their voice, even when mistakes are made (Esdale *et al*., 2015), to encourage "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). This mirrors the need for reassurance as expressed by BA. To change the way mistakes are viewed by adopting the standpoint of diverse learners (Hartsock, 1998a, 1998b; Smith, 1999) provides "strong objectivity" (Harding, 1991) because it begins the research from the position of the marginalised (Smith, 1999). Furthermore, self-compassion techniques could be used to reduce the experiences students felt from the perceived judgement from others, it can support students in building their resilience, recognising their own strengths all whilst in a supportive environment with others (Clapton *et al*., 2018; Esdale *et al*., 2015; Gilbert, 2009; 2010, 2014; Gilbert & Irons, 2005) as discovered by myself in Chapter Two. Universities could also employ the 'psychological safety' approach proposed by Clark (2020), which could

also be facilitated using Rogers' core conditions (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material, 2014). BA extended the approach to 'safety' by discussing universities implementing a trauma-informed approach and 'peer support' which can be utilised here also (Bracken *et al*., in press; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014), as this is seen to be non-judgemental due to the "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) given through the open mutual nature of the communication being shared without the need for hierarchy (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014; Herman, 2023; 2010). Many of these elements concur with Herman's (2023; 2010) stages of trauma healing. A sense of removed judgement was also felt by Pérez II when they disclosed their trauma to a participant in their research (Pérez II & Vicente, 2022). This brings me to Table 4.3 below, which explores the experience of understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction.

Table 4.3: The experience of understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction

Co-researcher	Exemplary portrait
PS	In university, when I was flagged as potentially having ADHD, I went to the disability team, who asked me if I needed support, and I answered no because it is already provided for me in my cohort and from my lecturers. Things like providing extra time with tutors if you need anything, clearing up or clarifying, so there is never anything that you feel you cannot talk about, because the course is practising what they preach. Furthermore, many of my lecturers are parents or have been parents, so they are very understanding of

	my situation. So, I am very aware that you can only understand what you have experienced, but I also think through listening to other people's experience, I have gained more knowledge. I found so much common ground with people, where, on paper, we are on opposite ends of the spectrum, so that is interesting. So, I think through discussions, we can educate each other. So maybe voice comes from collaboration. In those discussions, you can begin to really understand your own views, to be challenged by hearing opposing views and experiences, and to accept that your own views might change; mine have.
GR	I think the knowledge of mental health issues is well known, but if you have not suffered with it, you do not understand what exactly it is to go through it, and I think people find it hard to understand how limiting it can be. They do not feel what I felt. Like, I think some lecturers do not understand why I am not going in, and I feel like they could be thinking that I am just using it as an excuse, but then there are also some that are very understanding. There are lecturers you feel more comfortable with than others, and I think if you know they understand more, it is easier to present or talk with them in class. But when I am anxious, I stumble over my words or I cannot really process what I am thinking to what I am saying, like it does not come out right. It does not always make sense, and I will fidget, or I will go quiet. So, for the ones who are not as supportive, I was more likely to not show up to lectures because I did not feel as comfortable, and I also, without sounding bias to genders, but I always felt more comfortable towards females. I think I have always felt more awkward around males. But then there have also been male lecturers who have said, 'You do not have to come into lectures, I am not going to force you.' So, I think it is sort of that understanding, regardless of gender.
BA	Sometimes, I shut down and go mute because I feel like I am being a burden, a pain or that others think the worst of me, like I am stupid or dumb. I think it is a cry for help, but I cannot show it or voice it, so I just zone out. I know they are not personally criticising me, but you cannot help but take it that way if you have had this trauma and they do not understand that. Even saying no to me or anything negative, I will always feel bad and cry straight away. I think that is my biggest aggravation with everything like uni, home, everything is that I am always relating to people who do not understand me. I gravitate towards others with massive behaviour because I know how they feel. I can tell them what I was not told as a kid. I tell them they are good enough and give them reassurance when things are tough. No one gave me that approach when I needed it. So maybe if I expressed that I have got anxiety or depression to others or said what was making me anxious, and then the tutor was subtly like, I can understand why you feel like that, because I have it too, that would be helpful. Some might be ready to talk about it, and some will

	not, but it is better to put your arm out there and feel accepted by them, but the student must be the initiator because there is nothing worse than someone prying.

(Source: Author, 2024, for inclusion in this thesis)

Lack of understanding can lead to students' silenced voices (BA). This meant that co-researchers valued talking to others who had a similar experience to their own (PS; BA). Therefore, representation encourages students to feel safe expressing their ISV when people with similar identities surround them; this is their "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) and supports the importance of "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000). However, as the literature shows in the self-search chapter that discussed a similar experience in schools, whereby "staff rarely look or speak like" students who have had past experiences of trauma (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012, p. 4). The "curricula seldom reflects her [their] ways of knowing or her [their] people's history, behavioural expectations do not reflect her [their] ways of interacting" and the "values of the school may conflict with what she [they] has learned at home" (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012, p. 4). Therefore, where there is no shared experience between students and educators, educators must reflect on their approaches to ensure that they are not unintentionally excluding trauma survivor students (Carello & Thompson, 2022) and causing "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010) by excluding them from SV processes. It is essential for ISV that HE supports their DLN students using a person-centred approach (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material, 1995). This also aligns with TiP in respect of 'peer support' in ensuring students 'cultural,

historical and gender issues relating to diversity and trauma are tailored to students' specific needs (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014). In HE, this might involve collaboration with staff or peers, being aware when students become uncomfortable and/or accepting all students' emotions by normalising them (Gunderson et al., 2023). Through 'peer support', understanding can be established and worked through to improve resilience (SAMHSA, 2023), which is non-judgemental (Blanch *et al*., 2012). This brings me to Table 4.4 below, the experience of removing fear by humanising those in positions of power.

Table 4.4: The experience of removing fear by humanising those in positions of power

Co-researcher	Exemplary portrait
PS	I feel like feedback coming from power is easier to give out than feedback from the little people to the power. I think that is because of the way we are brought up. In my house, I can challenge my parents, essentially the power in the house. Whereas in school, you do as you are told. The small things are done, but the bigger things that students want are not acted on because the institution must also comply with the power, such as the government and Ofsted. Everybody has fear, and from bottom up, that is where fear grows, but when giving feedback top down, you can put that fear onto someone else. For instance, as a school rep, you are taking responsibility for my voice, my views and opinions, but when you are feeding back, you are not taking responsibility for the voices that have been made from the power because you did not make those choices. I know the student rep very well, and they have very strong roots in an education that benefits and promotes power in students, and an opinionated strong voice. They are taught about their power and their values. The other students do not necessarily have that form of education. They have more of an education where there is an element of voice, but more policy where that strong voice is not needed to be outspoken because the students are there to comply with the teacher rather than

	exploring their own things; you go to school, you learn, you come home, that is it. I think that at the end of the year, we could have a discussion rather than a survey, where you feed off each other's points. You can have that as a year group, or maybe all three-year groups, with all the staff, where you can see the similarities and differences in the year groups. You can see the content they had and where that has gone. We could then give students insights back into why things are done differently. However, people need to have those discussions in a safe way, that is, non-judgemental or in fear of being criticised or even being told that you are wrong. Set some boundaries, know the rules, know where you stand and how you can approach that because that is a life skill. So, for me, when it comes to voice, it is all about discussion, understanding and learning the skills to be able to say, 'That is a really good idea, but this, this, and this means we cannot quite go in that direction. How about we collaborate and compromise?' ?
GR	When I first started getting anxiety, my family wouldn't know what to do. They would shout at me, and I sort of got forced to do things that I didn't necessarily want to do. As an adult now, if I am ever in an uncomfortable situation, I sort of avoid, pull back, or I go silent because the anxiety makes you fearful even though there is nothing to be fearful of. So, if we are doing group work at university, I normally would not speak out if I had the choice not to; I would just leave it for other people to do, but I always write my part, even if I am not speaking. I think it is just the fear of speaking out and being the only one talking. It is intimidating. I did receive some support from a lecturer, they listened to what I struggled with, why I struggled with it and came up with a plan. So, lecturers could help by taking the time to work out what I need rather than what I should be doing and pushing me to feel uncomfortable. Obviously, they are your lecturers, and it is professional, but it is nice to have more of a friendship sort of relationship. So, I think if you are friendly with a lecturer, it is easier to be positive in lectures.
BA	My childhood was very traumatic and lonely. When I applied to university, they [my family] said, do you think you are academically clever enough to go? So, I must pass this to prove to them that I am good enough. I am the only one in the family who has disclosed my mental health issues, so I am seen as the damaged one; there is always something wrong with them. I said to my parents that I think I've got ADHD, and they were like, 'Why have you got so much wrong with you?' So, for me, I am already a walking failure. I was always in a persona when I had to get home and do stuff for them [my parents]; otherwise, I would be punished. Now, when I receive feedback [in university], I know they are not personally criticising me, but you cannot help

	but take it that way if you have had this trauma. So, for me, starting with a positive before the negative would be helpful. I need that regular reassurance that I am doing well, or for someone to check in on me, because I always ask myself, 'Am I good enough?' Like my poor personal tutor because they will know what to say to me and will know what triggers me. So maybe I have some self-doubt, but I have not spoken to anyone because I do not want to be a burden. So, again, I am thinking that I am not good enough to receive help.

(Source: Author, 2024, for inclusion in this thesis)

PS, BA, and GR discuss their fear as stemming from those in authority, such as adults in their home and/or school, and as can be seen in the literature (Clark, 2024), which is a lasting impact of repetitive subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). This was discussed in the self-search chapter, where I addressed the discipline that I received as a child from the adults in my life. Although this fear has emanated from the family home and/or school for the co-researchers, it is still being felt in SV processes, revealing the "complex interplay of various factors" impacting on SV (Thiel, 2019, p. 548) and how diverse learners have come to understand the "hidden" elements of the world (Harding, 1991). Through understanding this complexity, staff in HE can carefully navigate supporting students in understanding that the fear they feel is a direct result of the lack of support they received in childhood (Austin, 2001) and not in HE. PS describes ISV as providing safety and reducing the fear they feel from being critiqued (as noted by Herman, 2023; 2010; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014), whereas for GR, this meant removing the pressure on students to do things they feel uncomfortable with (GR). ISV also meant being sensitive to

other people's emotions when telling them that they are wrong (BA, PS), being aware of body language and how this might be perceived (BA), as these can all be retraumatising for students (BA). Students discuss a variety of ways in which fear can be removed, this includes becoming friendly with staff members and asking students what they need rather than what is necessary for HE (GR), allowing students to take part in discussions without judgement (PS), and by providing students with regular reassurance (BA) to encourage "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). This also aligns with the overarching principle of TiP, which enables those following this approach to ensure they are aware of the ways trauma can impact a person, the manifestations, and the prevention of "re-traumatisation" for those individuals (USDHHS, 2014). This brings me to the final theme, namely, the experience of needing choice and autonomy, as illustrated in Table 4.5 below, which was also identified by Herman (2010) as a stage of healing.

Table 4.5: The experience of needing choice and autonomy

Co-researcher	Exemplary portrait
PS	I have spent three years to become that knowledgeable other, and now I have got the chance in my third year to impart some knowledge and to have that self-confidence to say, I have learnt that, yes, I have got a piece of paper that says it, but I can actually impart that knowledge now because I have spent three years understanding it. There should be no reason why students cannot say, 'This is what we have been training for, we are in our third year now studying inclusion, and when you're doing this in the curriculum, we can help you by showing you how to adapt this and that to become fully inclusive.' I just do not know why we do not utilise what we have got and benefit from it for each other. I also think feedback to the student rep could

	be submitted anonymously, which would negate that idea of somebody else taking responsibility for those choices that were made by others.
GR	University is more of a choice; it is not compulsory. I think if you make that choice to not come in because of your mental health, then that should be your choice. I think it is more of, it is on you if you do not attend lectures. I think if you are doing the work, you are doing what you are meant to do, then you do not have to do in-person presentations. I think having a relaxed environment that encourages people to come in is good because, for me, I feel like I miss out on a lot because the class is so friendly, and you can come in and have a joke around. It is more helpful to come in and learn in person, but then there should also be no pressure of having to come in, which has helped me. So having a no pressured environment is good. I know in myself that it makes me feel better if I do not put that pressure on myself in terms of having to go into university so I do not really let people's opinions affect my choices because if I do not want to do something then I will not do it but then there is also that encouragement from people trying to get me out of the house which, although I do not want to do it, if it is beneficial to me, then I would listen to their opinions.
BA	I try and live for the moment, and I try not to get anxious over things I cannot control. I keep saying to myself, 'BA, I cannot control that,' but that is it, really. I usually neglect my health if I am at home doing assignments. I would not shower for days, and I would not eat. Other people need to recognise and tell me that something is not going ok because I cannot make that decision myself. I am like, ah, it is probably alright. I think I just need reassurance that it is okay to think that something is okay or that it is not. I am not the type of person to ask for counselling unless I really, really need it because I am worried that they will think I am mental or that it would affect my job or that no one would hire me. I also do not think I could go to the student rep because I do not want to be a burden or a pain, and I do not see my needs bad enough to need help. If I am asking for help, it is a big thing that I am asking, but I just feel stupid, like I am wasting their time. My specialist tutor is lovely, but I feel like it becomes a counselling session, and it is nice to talk to someone, but I have been brave, and I have asked if we can have a planning session, little deadline every week because if you tell me to read a couple of pages, I feel pressured to do it for them whereas I would not do it for myself. I have no idea why, but if they move the deadlines or I have mitigating circumstances, I will still do the work for the deadline that it should have been in for because I don't want to be seen as different to others.

(Source: Author, 2024, for inclusion in this thesis)

Co-researchers who have experience of trauma, often portray this through silenced voices (Austin, 2001), meaning that others very frequently speak for them, make choices for them or coerce them into making choices directed to them (Hooks, 1994) both at home and at school (PS; BA, GR) illuminating how diverse voices are subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b). However, Herman (2010) suggests that diverse students require "persuasion rather than coercion, ideas rather than force, mutuality rather than authoritarian control" (p. 136). In the self-search chapter, I discuss ISV as increasing my own student autonomy in education, not realising this was a stage of trauma healing (Herman, 2010). However, co-researchers positioned this as a student's choice, such as GR, who was 'forced' to go to school by their parents, found benefit in being able to choose when to attend university. However, there were occasions when co-researchers were encouraged by others to undertake SV activities, such as GR, who was encouraged to complete a presentation. Students need to be encouraged and supported to move away from others making decisions for them, enabling their own voice to be heard (Fraser & Tucker, 1997; Rice *et al*., 1990) in the form of "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). Students in this research stated that for ISV, they would like to use this skill more by making more choices. A stage required for trauma recovery (Herman, 2010). Such as having students' choice over attendance (GR) or using their new knowledge to teach others (PS). However, these suggestions may not be practical in professional courses that require complex and discipline-specific instruction. Although the "talking back" (Hooks, 2014) suggestion to ISV

is like ‘self-authorship’ in that students are provided with an environment in which they can use their voice to make their own decisions (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012; 2007; Baxter Magolda, 1999; 2001; 2008), as discussed in the self-search chapter. This approach also aligns with TiP, in which ‘empowerment, voice and choice’ is a core element (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014). Moreover, in utilising my “epistemic advantage” (Wylie, 2004), I discussed the potential role of Inclusive Student Voice (ISV) in the previous Universal Design for Learning framework (UDL, CAST, 2024b) at an international conference (Kennett, 2024) to better support diverse learners' student voice. The new UDL framework now includes the promotion of students’ voices (CAST, 2024c), which I will discuss and includes various ways to embed “hermeneutical resources” for communication (Ferguson, 2025).

Universal Design for Learning as a conduit for Inclusive Student Voice

I am now going to delve deeper into the new update (Bracken & Novak, 2019; CAST, 2024c) and update my previous conference presentation (Kennett, 2023) and new book chapter (Bracken *et al*., in press) by documenting the role that UDL can play in improving Inclusive Student Voice (ISV) in Table 4.6 below:

Table 4.6: Utilising UDL (adapted by Author, 2025, from the new CAST framework released in 2024c) to providing opportunities towards improving ISV in HE

	Opportunities for engagement	Opportunities for representation	Opportunities for action and expression
Access	• Choice • Autonomy • Authenticity • Safe from threats in the environment when taking risks • Co and self-regulation	• Authenticity • Representation of diverse voices.	• Respecting students' method of response • Assisted technologies for speech
Support	• Collaborating with diverse voices • Peer support • Importance of representation in supportive others. • Encouraging a sense of belonging amongst those who are marginalised • Importance of multiple identities and/or characteristics.	• Respect diverse languages and/or dialects • Promote the use of non-verbal communication • Awareness of oppressive and dehumanising language	• Multiple methods of communication • Scaffolding fluencies in communication • Awareness of bias and silencing of marginalised groups.
Executive function	• Support student emotions • Providing a safe space • Empathic peer support • Empathy in making mistakes	• Scaffolding • Practising new skills in communication	• Promoting lived experience • Reflect on exclusion to remove/reduce it • Healing

(Source: Table above was created by the Author (2024). Column and row entries are based on ideas from CAST (2024c) and supplemented with the Authors' (2024) own additions.)

Table 4.6 illustrates that the new UDL framework (CAST, 2024c) has been enhanced to incorporate ISV as found in this research. Due to the risk of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) from disclosing trauma, such as judgement (Grimes *et al*., 2019), the anticipatory aspect of UDL (Bracken & Novak, 2019; McChesney, 2024) will normalise adapting educational practice without the need for disclosure and will, in turn, provide trauma-informed practice (McChesney, 2024). The new framework (CAST, 2024c) has done well to include all elements of ISV discussed in this thesis and considers students' "embodied" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) and "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000). However, the criticism I discovered whilst co-authoring a paper (Sewell *et al*., 2022) from Smith and Lowrey (2017) still applies, in that the framework (even if implemented accurately) may not support all students. Therefore, Edyburn (2010) remains correct that the framework needs to address areas of measurement and evaluation to ensure student success, for instance, by deciding on ways to measure authenticity and healing. Therefore, it is vital to continue to facilitate training within educator degree programs (Vitelli, 2015), especially when new updates emerge to reduce subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) in the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000) and to enable staff to accommodate diverse learners situated at the "margins" (Hooks, 1989) in "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). Significant changes can disorientate educators (and perhaps even students); therefore, I

advise slowly integrating changes from the ground up, moving through education to incorporate institutional-wide practices.

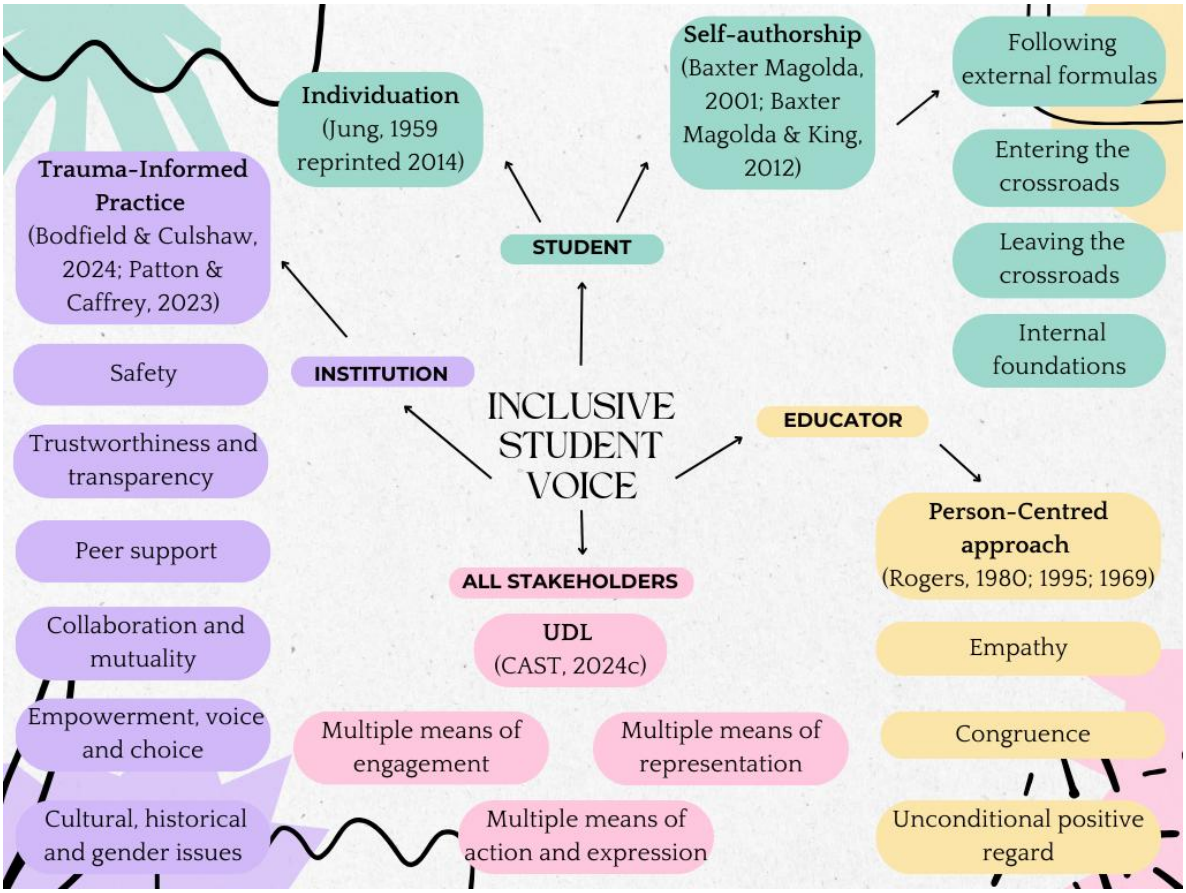
It is unclear whether my presentation (Kennett, 2023) had an impact on the new UDL framework (CAST, 2024c); however, it is a framework that I fondly believe in and hope to contribute further to its implementation with ISV in mind. Now I wish to turn to the final stage of analysis, namely, to develop a creative synthesis of the findings, as advised by Moustakas (1990).

Creative synthesis: conceptualising inclusive student voice

A HI concludes with a creative artefact that expresses, in an artistic form, the new knowledge gained as part of the self-development journey, and one which hopes to portray the 'universal' findings (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). I have discovered that for co-researchers to gain their voice in "talking back" (Hooks, 2014), a holistic approach must be provided by various stakeholders. I have discovered that students with DLN cannot rely solely on receiving counselling to gain a voice and heal from their trauma in a process of 'individuation' (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014). This is only part of the process. Students also need to gain the courage to navigate 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) to become authentic during the healing process (CASTS, 2024c; Maté & Maté, 2022). However, I have also discovered that students cannot navigate this without safety (both psychological and physical) and peer support as in a whole university-wide response (Blanch *et al*., 2012;

CAST, 2024c; Henshaw, 2022; Herman, 2023; 2010; Nelsen *et al*., 2022; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) to ensure that students are surrounded by others who have similar characteristics and experiences as supported by UDL (Bracken *et al*., in press; CAST, 2024c). Furthermore, lecturers in positions of power need to avoid subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) by supporting students as they heal through utilising UDL (CAST, 2024c) and by providing all principles of TiP (USDHHS, 2014) alongside a person-centred approach, outlined by Rogers (1980 reprinted with new material 1995) as 'congruence', 'unconditional positive regard' and 'empathic understanding' for the trauma that students may have endured in their childhood (Hooks, 1994) through subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and the "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) felt by being the "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986). The stakeholders involved can be further supported by the institution's culture, which ensures that universities deliver trauma-informed practice, specifically in relation to tailored support for diverse learners (USDHHS, 2014). The creative synthesis artefact below (4.1) provides a breakdown of the conceptualisation of ISV and the responsibilities of each stakeholder, and the contents of which have been written for publication (see Kennett, 2025).

Artefact 4.1: Conceptualising Inclusive Student Voice (Adapted from Kennett, 2025)



(Source: Image created by the Author (2024) for inclusion in this thesis and earlier publication (Kennett, 2025). Later adaptations and additions were made by the Author (2025). Concepts included in the image are cited within the figure and listed in the reference list.

Conclusion

This chapter has illuminated each co-researcher's individual experiences relating to their past experiences of voice, present experiences of voice, and the future potential of ISV in HE. Each co-researcher attempted to conceptualise ISV, as shown in the individual

depictions above, as stated by Moustakas (1990). To illuminate the ‘universal experience’ outlined by Moustakas (1990), I developed composite depictions for each theme identified to expose the co-researchers' group experience. The five themes identified were:

- The experience of needing a trauma-informed safe space to regulate emotions
- The experience of removing judgement through implementing trauma-informed practice
- The experience of understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction
- The experience of needing choice and autonomy
- The experience of removing fear by humanising those in positions of power

However, by following the traditional thematic analysis process, many students may have lost their individual, unique experiences in the process. Therefore, this was followed by a closer inspection of three co-researchers who best represented the five key themes: PS, GR, and BA, to form exemplary portraits as outlined by Moustakas (1990). I followed all elements of the process with commentary. I found many similarities in the themes discussed in my self-search chapter, such as safety, focusing on emotions and choice in the form of directing one's life (also now included in the new UDL framework, CAST, 2024c). However, I had discovered new knowledge that I had not discussed in my self-search, such as TiP (Bodfield & Culshaw, 2024; Grimes et al., 2019; Patton & Caffrey, 2023;

SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014), and this was also explored. Upon researching this approach in more detail, I realised that all the themes identified by co-researchers were also identified within TiP (USDHHS, 2014), but this was not the only approach required for ISV. This led me to the realisation that students needed space to heal their trauma, both physically (a safe space) and psychologically (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014), elements are now considered in UDL (CAST, 2024c). Therefore, UDL (CAST, 2024c) was considered. In a process of healing, students can become, as Moustakas (1973) states, 'authentic' (Moustakas, 1968). HE that provides 'authentic' teaching and learning engages students 'authentically' and encourages students to become more 'authentic' (Kreber, 2014). Similarly discussed by Hooks (1994). This self-development has further expanded my awareness of my own past trauma, the way it impacts SV and how I can facilitate TiP in my own career to enable others to use their ISV as they heal in the form of "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). Following the discussion of the creative synthesis and conclusion, Moustakas (1990) states that the researcher should return to the 'self' to observe the changes that have occurred in the researcher's own perceptions and the impact on each stakeholder. This phase of the research will be discussed in the summary chapter in addition to revisiting the research questions.

Chapter five: Summary, the internal frame of reference

> Having made a discovery, I shall never see the world again as before. My eyes have become different; I have made myself into a person seeing and thinking differently. I have crossed a gap, the heuristic gap, which lies between problem and discovery (Polanyi, 1962, p. 142).

Introduction

According to Moustakas (1990), the chapter following the analysis should be a 'summary' that includes the researcher's outcomes in relation to their 'internal frame of reference' and the potential implications for the key stakeholders. However, Sultan (2019) advises that the chapter should also include a discussion that outlines the study's limitations and a conclusion. Therefore, this chapter will incorporate elements of discussion from both Moustakas (1990) and Sultan (2019), each of which is outlined in the paragraph below with their corresponding references.

This chapter will use previously discussed and new additional literature [1] to encapsulate "the many moving parts of the study together into a cohesive whole, offering a collective, living understanding of the topic" (Sultan, 2019, p. 197). The chapter will address the research questions in relation to the research findings and explore these findings in the

[1] Although it is typically unusual to add new literature in a concluding chapter for this type of study it is required. Sultan (2019) notes that new literature can be incorporated throughout the research process as new awareness comes into the researcher's mind, demonstrating the self-development of the researcher.

context of my self-search (Sela-Smith, 2002). A common approach adopted in previous HI research (see Haertl, 2014; Pane & Salmon, 2018; Scott & Brown, 2008) and theory (Sultan, 2019). I will compare my original ISV fingerprint from the self-search chapter (Chapter Two) with the findings (reported in Chapter Three) and discuss the similarities and differences, as suggested by Moustakas (1990). The chapter will then include a discussion relating to my 'internal frame of reference' by answering the HI study questions, proposed by Moustakas (1990), as follows: What have I learnt about myself? What changes have been made because of this research? And what epiphanies have I experienced? I will then discuss recommendations for future HE practice and the potential impact of these on key stakeholders, as advised by Sultan (2019).

This is followed by a discussion on how this research may provide transferability to other settings, to support other communities, topics, individuals, and situations. This will specifically address how the findings reported might lead to change (Sultan, 2019). An evaluation of the research, including a discussion of whether any ethical considerations occurred and how I addressed them (Sultan, 2019), is undertaken. Later in the chapter, two future research suggestions are proposed to potentially further support students with DLN.

Returning to the research questions

As stated above, this chapter will address the research questions in relation to the findings. This is followed by a return to my self-search (Sela-Smith, 2002) to discuss the impact on my own self-development (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). I will discuss each research question in order.

Research question one: What does academic literature report about the experience of students with diverse learner needs in relation to the inclusion of their learner voice?

The first research question was addressed by exploring the academic literature to ascertain the experiences of DLN students in relation to their learner voice in HE. This research examined the literature using the self-search method outlined by Sela-Smith (2002) during a specific timeframe; therefore, no new literature will be included in this subheading.

My first finding within the literature identified that, since the Dearing (National Committee of Inquiry, 1997) and Kennedy (1997) reports, the student population in HE has been becoming more diverse (Hoare & Johnston, 2011; OfS, 2021; Rizzica, 2020), with more 'intersectional' characteristics (Crenshaw, 1989) situated within the "matrix of domination (Collins, 2000). Canning (2017) and Hall (2017) both report that HE institutions obtain recommendations from SV that are used to improve practice and maintain student

satisfaction. I have reflected on and gathered literature on the three SV approaches, as well as my personal experiences, which include surveys, student representatives, and student/staff co-creation research projects. However, I also acknowledge that there are other ways to gather the student voice (see, for example, Bennett & Kane, 2014; Canning, 2017; Seale, 2010; 2016; Thiel, 2019; Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007; Young & Jerome, 2020). Literature indicates that DLN students have "different ways of talking, different voices" and different "points of view" that add to the complexity of gathering SV data from this group of students, regardless of which approach is used (Hall, 2017, p. 182). Past experiences of trauma shaped diverse students' "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000), a repetition of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010). Canning (2017) states that for some students, feedback may be kept internal, with students utilising silence, or they may use their voice only with their peers rather than with staff members. Silence is the manifestation of "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) learnt from educators' "desire" for conformity and silence (Mazzei, 2011). Performing (Butler, 1988) to a role assigned to them in childhood. It is therefore unlikely that the unique individual voices of diverse students will be heard and included in SV processes (Batchelor, 2006; 2014; Gibson, 2015; Jones, 2009; Koro-Ljungberg, 2007; Lygo-Baker *et al*., 2019). Diverse students are the "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986), present but unheard, suggesting the need to challenge the "god trick" (Haraway, 2004) assumption that all data can be collected through such activities. It can only be heard and included if staff, and thus institutions, take the time to learn about

the different students in their classes and their trauma within the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000), a key feature for Trauma-informed Practice (Young & Castro Schepers, 2024). In addition, there is still no attempt in the literature and/or research to establish an improved inclusive approach to SV processes (Bovill *et al*., 2016; Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014; McLeod, 2011; Seale, 2010; Tuhkala *et al*., 2021).

The present study and literature exploration revealed that surveys rarely asked questions related to diverse students, such as those regarding specialist academic and emotional support (Lerer & Talley, 2010), which can be exemplified by experience as "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010). Co-researcher PS concurs with the literature, stating that they would like surveys to ask more questions relating to their own thoughts and feelings to recognise their "situated" (Collins, 2000) and "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004). Surveys are complex, the literature reports, and not easily understood by some diverse students such that they may not understand the questions being asked of them and/or how they should respond (Bennett & Kane, 2014; Canning, 2017; Furedi, 2010; Mann, 2008; McIntyre *et al*., 2005; Race, 2004; Robinson & Taylor, 2007) furthering the impact of "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010). Additionally, the voices of DLN students are often 'lost' due to a reluctance to complete the surveys because they do not accurately reflect their experiences (Williams & Brennan, 2003). This leads diverse students to be 'hermeneutically marginalised' (as discussed in Chapter Two) (Fricker, 2010, p. 153) due to the inequality and exclusions they may feel when participating in surveys.

Compared to surveys, student representatives offer a more relational experience, particularly for those who are not confident in having their voices heard (Bovill *et al*., 2011; Carey, 2013a; Carey, 2013b; Gillespie-Lynch *et al*., 2017). Student representatives are responsible for speaking to lecturers on behalf of other students, which can lead to issues related to not fully understanding and/or speaking from the diverse characteristics and differences (Alcoff, 1991). The relationship with student representatives can be positive, particularly when an existing friendship exists between the student representative and the co-researcher (co-researcher JA) or negatively, where no friendship is present (co-researchers RI and SU). Co-researchers RI and SU discussed not speaking with the student representative due to their demographic differences, indicating a desire to seek out others who share the same "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000). This further illuminates the complex relational dynamic between students and their representatives, as well as the ways this is influenced by student demographics and other characteristics within the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000).

Students were also concerned that lecturers might reduce their grades when negative responses were provided, making them less likely to respond (Canning, 2017; Carey, 2013b; Cook-Sather, 2020). If the lecturer receives responses, it is them who then decide which of those responses are acted upon, situating much of the control with them (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013; Canning, 2017; Carey, 2013a). A clear demonstration of the student–lecturer hegemony and process of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) from those in hierarchical positions. The influence of hierarchy is

evident in the experiences of co-researcher JA, who discusses regressing to a childlike state in student representative meetings with lecturers, and co-researcher SU viewing the student representative as hierarchically higher than a typical student. Therefore, students become an 'informant' of information to those in more senior hierarchical positions, highlighting the occurrence of 'testimonial injustice' and 'silencing' (as discussed in Chapter Two) (Fricker, 2010, pp. 132 - 140). The literature notes that diverse students need more support in communicating their preferences (in using their voice), such as being part of decision-making processes (Carey, 2013b; Mann, 2001; Trowler, 2010), particularly with those in hierarchical positions to enable "talking back" (Hooks, 2014).

Although co-researchers did not discuss co-creation projects, the literature states that lecturers are reluctant to involve DLN students in such work (Bovill *et al*., 2016; Young & Jerome, 2020). Co-creation projects that have employed diverse students have resulted in their voice being heard in moments of advocacy (see Cook-Sather *et al.,* 2019; Cook-Sather, 2020), providing an avenue in which to use their "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) and "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000). A finding that has occurred in the work that I have personally been involved with (see Bracken et al., in press; Sewell *et al*., 2020; 2023; Kennett, 2025; Gossman *et al*., in press), highlighting the importance of involving diverse learners' voices in co-creation projects that matter to them (Bovill *et al*., 2016). However, de Bie (2020) states that to ensure successful partnerships, awareness of power is essential for genuine student involvement. I would also argue from the findings of this research that an understanding of unresolved issues of power is necessary for partnership and voice, as

many of the co-researchers experienced challenges with those in positions of power before attending university, leading to their silence, highlighting the "everyday world as problematic" (Smith, 1987). The presence of power hierarchies (Bovill & Bully, 2011; Carey, 2013a; Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013) can lead to 'systematic hermeneutic injustice' (as discussed in Chapter Two) (Fricker, 2010, p. 156) and the 'silencing' of DLN students (Allen, 2004). The literature, my findings and experiences, and those of the co-researchers highlight the issues that DLN students are still experiencing regarding inequalities relating to their "intersectionality" (Crenshaw, 1989) within the "matrix of domination" (Colins, 2000) when using their voice in SV approaches (Canning, 2017; Hockings, 2011). Support for diverse students in co-creation projects could include providing a relaxed environment whereby tasks are shared when they are challenging for diverse students (Bovill *et al*., 2016; de Bie, 2020; Mercer-Mapstone *et al*., 2021) as this would provide more purposeful voice without DLN students being labelled as "ill-equipped" (Seale *et al*., 2015, p. 547) or subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b).

I came to realise, as noted in Chapter Two, that power led to 'silencing' (Fricker, 2010) due to students' diverse characteristics (Crenshaw, 1989) within the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000). However, this was, for me, closely related to how I felt regarding my own childhood trauma. I often made mistakes, got questions wrong, misinterpreted conversations and requests from others, which frequently led to being disciplined by more powerful individuals. This is a common experience, reported in the literature, for diverse learners (Clapton *et al*., 2018; Hockings, 2011). This is the experience of being subjugated

(Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b). As the mistakes (I and those reported in the literature) multiplied, the higher the chance of developing trauma (McNulty, 2003) as an outcome of repetitive subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). Artefact 2.1 in the self-search chapter utilised self-dialogue to capture the trauma I felt from being punished as a child for making mistakes and the ways this led to my silence. From this, I discovered personally and within the literature that trauma leads to shame, internal self-criticism, and avoidance through silencing oneself (see Austin, 2001; Gilbert, 2014; Herman, 2010; McNulty, 2003; Nussbaum, 2004; Torralba *et al*., 2020) because of the "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010) that occurred. The cycle of childhood trauma can then repeat itself throughout life, with people believing they are "damaged to the core and beyond redemption" (Van Der Kolk, 2014, p. 2). I have discovered that my "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004), which relates to my own fear of making mistakes and shame, has led me to avoid using my own voice, impacting SV processes. This is discussed by Batchelor (2006; 2014), who stated that DLN students are more likely to follow the voice of others and what others say rather than utilising their own voice. I learnt to perform (Butler, 1988) to the "desires" of educators by silencing myself (Mazzei, 2011) and became an "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986), present but unable to fully participate in a "problematic" world that taught me to isolate myself (Smith, 1987).

The self-reflection process used in Chapter Two found that the process of 'individuation,' although a challenging process for students to undertake, may help provide ISV through healing childhood trauma (Jung, 1971, reprinted 2014; 1953, reprinted 2010; 1959,

reprinted with new material 2014). Furthermore, a process of 'self-authorship' can help provide students with ISV, as the literature reports that students' diverse characteristics and experiences have delayed its development (Barber *et al*., 2013; Baxter Magolda, 2001; 2008). Potentially, higher education could teach students to listen to their own internal voice when making choices and decisions (Baxter Magolda, 1998; 2008) in a process of "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). This could have a positive impact on higher education because it encourages students to take on more roles and experiences that allow them to use their voice (Barber *et al*., 2013). I also discovered that ISV can be provided to students who have experienced trauma by enabling them to have a safe person to talk to about their emotions (Cook-Sather, 2022; Nettiffee, 2020). However, if I (or a diverse learner student) have deemed people in hierarchical positions as unsafe (Herman, 2010; Hooks, 1994) due to past events of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004), I am unlikely to seek support from them. A finding reported by Carello & Butler (2015) and Davidson (2017). Furthermore, they are unlikely to understand my standpoint because they do not view reality as I do (Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b; Smith, 1999), which gives me and this research "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004). Therefore, another solution for enhanced ISV is for the student to learn self-compassion, such as recognising their own positive attributes, resilience training, reducing the impact of judgement and comparisons with others (Clapton *et al*., 2018; Esdale *et al*., 2015; Gilbert, 2009; 2010, 2014; Gilbert & Irons, 2005). This could also include providing 'psychological safety' when mistakes are made (Torralba *et al*., 2020, p. 668) without the fear of judgment (Brown, 2016; Ristad *et*

al., 2024; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012) to support students' “embodied knowledge” (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004). Sadly, this is unlikely to be achieved in a highly performative institution, such as education, leading to subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and “epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2010). Furthermore, using the skills of ‘focusing’ as outlined by Gendlin (2003) can contribute to ISV through allowing emotions to be felt and worked through rather than being avoided (see the methodology chapter for more information about this skill). These self-search and literature findings led me to create artefact 2.3, in which I developed an inclusive student voice fingerprint that encompasses all the concepts I believe represent ISV for me as an individual.

This research question sought to explore academic literature within the self-search to ascertain the experiences of DLN students in relation to their learner voice in HE. However, I recognise that my voice is singular, and the findings found are my own ‘frame of reference’ (Moustakas, 1990), although this is a necessary part of HI as stated by Moustakas (1990). I further followed the process of a self-search (Sela-Smith, 2002), which was conducted within a specific timeframe, to present my self-development (Moustakas, 1990). Therefore, I understand that this research question may not encompass the most up-to-date literature, but it was a very informative part of the journey. The next phase (and research question) was to incorporate co-researchers to ascertain their experiences of SV processes and how they utilise their voice. This is explored below in relation to research question two.

Research question two: What is the reported experience of inclusive learner voice for students (the co-researchers) with diverse learner needs?

The second research question sought to obtain the experience of inclusive student voice for DLN students in higher education. The five key themes found from this research will be discussed under their corresponding sub-headings, as follows:

- The experience of needing a trauma-informed safe space to regulate emotions.
- The experience of removing judgement through implementing trauma-informed practice.
- The experience of understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction.
- The experience of removing fear by humanising those in positions of power.
- The experience of needing choice and autonomy.

The experience of needing a Trauma-Informed safe space to regulate emotions

From the interviews, the first theme identified was the experience of needing a trauma-informed safe space to regulate emotions. PS, RS, GR, and BA discussed having a childhood where their parents could not discuss, identify, and/or manage their emotions (Herman, 2010), subjugating (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) their "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004). Consequently, this led co-researchers to be unable to

manage their own emotions due to the lack of emotional support they had received during childhood (Herman, 2010; Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material in 2014) in the form of “epistemic injustice” (Fricker, 2010). Difficulties in managing emotions led to avoidant behaviours and problems in using their voice to protect themselves from repeating childhood feelings (Herman, 2010; Kalsched, 2017; Turner *et al*., 2002). This approach internalises feelings into the body as an internal critic (Kalsched, 2017; Lorde, 1984; Turner *et al*., 2002; Van der Kolk, 2014). For instance, co-researcher BA developed a persona in childhood, albeit one with an internal critical voice, to help them avoid negative reactions from their parents. The literature notes that people who hide behind a performative (Butler, 1988) persona are still conforming (Hooks, 1994) to the needs of others rather than their own (see Allison, 2023; Jung, 1959 reprinted with new material 2014), thereby losing parts of themselves, their voice, and the unique value that they could bring to life (Jung, 1972 reprinted 2004) illuminating the “everyday world as problematic” (Smith, 1987) for diverse learners. RU developed a persona as the parent of their student group, expressing that they used their voice more because their younger peers did not, something that can be a sign of past trauma (Young & Castro Schepers, 2024). This helping persona at university was also something BA developed and spoke about, but this is a performance shaped by the systems of oppression (Butler, 1988) inherent in education. Although speaking on behalf of others is ‘unethical’ (Alcoff, 1991, p. 6) because showing care is not always about ‘speaking for’ someone with diverse needs, sometimes it is to provide the environment so that they may be able to speak for

themselves (Baker & Naidoo, 2023) by “talking back” (Hooks, 2014). However, this may not always be the case, because not everyone is confident in using their voice, such as SU who experiences ‘flight,’ ‘fight’ and/or ‘freeze’ responses, due to fear and anxiety, when expected to use their voice (Maack *et al*., 2015; Stephens, 2020), specifically the fear of being wrong (as reported in the literature by Hockings, 2011 and Mazzei, 2008). Similarly, regarding a repeat personal experience like SU’s flight, JA discussed being a student representative and how, in meetings with academics, they felt their age had regressed. These two examples show “embodied knowledge” (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) as a sign of the subjugation felt in the body (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and reveal the student as an “outsider within” never fully being able to participate in student voice work (Collins, 2000; 1986). Jung (1971, reprinted 2014) outlined that all adults have an internal unconscious child where all childhood emotions are stored. It is from this inner child that JA’s anxiety emanated when trying to talk in the meetings as the feelings experienced were a repetition of emotions they felt in childhood (Jung, 1971 reprinted 2014; Maté & Maté, 2022; Turner *et al*., 2002) when they were previously subjugated by those in authority (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b). To support themselves in managing their emotions, students could begin the ‘individuation’ process of healing their childhood trauma (Jung, 1953, reprinted 2010; 1950, reprinted with new material 2014). Universities and lecturers could provide a trauma-informed environment that is conducive to healing, thereby reducing the risk of retraumatising students (USDHHS, 2014). This

could also be achieved utilising UDL (CAST, 2024c). Staff could help by positioning themselves as allies of diverse students (Baker & Naidoo, 2023; Bracken *et al*., in press).

The experience of removing judgement through implementing trauma-informed practice

Another theme highlighted in the co-researchers' experience of SV was the removal of judgement through the implementation of Trauma-Informed Practice (TiP). JA discussed the harm caused by bullying that they received in childhood as a form of judgement from the bully (also seen in Esdale *et al*., 2015) and how name calling is used as a judgemental label to control people into conforming to others (Kant, 2009; Moncrieffe, 2007), feminists would call this subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). However, this just led JA to adopt a strategy of avoiding social spaces (Herman, 2010). JA felt increased relief once they were diagnosed with mental ill-health, dyslexia, and dyspraxia because the diagnosis explained their struggles. However, it is worth noting that diagnoses are also labels, although JA found benefit in receiving these labels because the diagnoses led to more support in using their voice via the use of specialist software. Therefore, also identifies UDL (CAST, 2024c) as a potential feature for ISV. PS also discussed the harm of being told that you are wrong by educators, in the form of “testimonial injustice” (Fricker, 2010), and the shame, self-doubt and avoidance that come with that judgement (McNulty, 2003; Ristad *et al*., 2024). Making mistakes can result in subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) in the form of harsh criticism from others, resulting in shame and trauma (Clapton

et al., 2018; McNulty, 2003) and could be supported by UDL by positioning mistakes as a part of learning rather than a criticism of the student themselves, helping to become more trauma-informed (Brown, 2016; CAST, 2024c; Nelsen *et al*., 2022; Torralba *et al*., 2020; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). This suggests that education, for some, has become a site where subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) in the form of judgement is enacted when students answer questions or complete tasks incorrectly (Illich, 1970). This research shows that judgement is still being felt by pupils and students in the present education system and is a regular occurrence for those with DLN as they are potentially more likely to make mistakes leading to feelings of shame (Clapton *et al*., 2018; Hockings, 2011; Nussbaum, 2004), anxiety (Richards *et al.*, 2014; Maak *et al*., 2015; Wermes *et al*., 2018; Wessing *et al*., 2017) and a fear of being wrong (Hockings, 2011; Mazzei, 2008).

Those students who fear being wrong become hyper-aware of the body language of others (Richards et al., 2014); therefore, safety can be created through calm body language (Herman, 2010). For GR, when understanding was not felt, they became sensitive to the judgement of others, leading to avoidant behaviours to protect themselves from the recurrence of the emotions they felt as a child (Herman, 2010; Kalsched, 2017; Nussbaum, 2004; Turner *et al*., 2002), leading to their silence (Clark, 2020). This illustrates how education is “problematic” (Smith, 1987) for diverse students who become the “outsider within” (Collins, 2000; 1986) within the “matrix of domination” (Collins, 2000). In practice, higher education could be more sympathetic towards students' past experiences of judgement and the ways this may impact students' well-being (CAST,

2024c), especially where students receive a late diagnosis or in the absence of a diagnosis. Diverse students who are concerned about the risk of being judged for disclosing their diverse needs may be comforted using Trauma-informed practice (TiP) and UDL, as these promote non-judgemental peer support (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Grimes *et al*., 2019; McChesney, 2024). In addition, staff could provide 'safety' to enable students to successfully navigate making mistakes as the first stage of trauma healing (CAST, 2024c; Clark, 2020; Herman, 2023; 2010; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) without subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). However, utilising TiP may be "contradictory" in Higher Education (HE) because judgement of students is expected in "neoliberal structures" that "prioritise and demand quantifiable success" (Bodfield & Culshaw, 2024). One way to overcome this is for educators to be open about their mistakes, leading students to increase their trust in the educator when they make mistakes (Clark, 2024). An approach that will challenge the "god trick" of neutrality through critical reflection of staff members' own standpoint and their "partial perspective" of diverse students (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004).

The experience of understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction

This brings me to the next theme of understanding and representation, which enables authentic interaction. An example is that for BA, their persona serves as a protection method to hide parts of themselves and avoid judgement from others (Baumeister &

Hutton, 1987; Hogan, 1982; Leary & Allen, 2011). It is a performance (Butler, 1988) based on the "desires" of educators for silence (Mazzei, 2011). Equally, for diverse students, the persona could be a mask (Herman, 2010) to avoid showing their authentic DLNs to others who may judge them for being different (Grimes *et al*., 2019; O'Connor, 2023; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). The consequence of the mask means that BA's 'authentic voice' is not heard (Hooligan & Shah, 2017); it is subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 1998b). This experience was also mentioned by other co-researchers leading them to conform to others (Hooks, 1994) (hiding their real self behind a mask (Herman, 2010) to ensure they are liked and not rejected (Baumeister & Hutton, 1987; Jung, 1959 reprinted with new material 2014; Leary & Allen, 2011; O'Connor, 2023; Renström *et al*., 2018; Ouwerkerk *et al*., 2005). Therefore, diverse students may be performing (Butler, 1988) silence due to the repetitive nature of educators' (conscious or unconscious) subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). This 'masking', as seen, for example, in SU's interview, meant that their own voice was silenced by the judgement of others, while other voices were heard (Allison, 2023; Maté & Maté, 2022), leading to "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010). Thus, silence is an avoidant strategy used in the classroom to prevent judgement (Choi, 2021; Richards *et al*., 2014). RI, JA, GR, BA, and LO all state that they struggle using their voice with others who do not share the same characteristics and/or experiences as them (also outlined in the new UDL framework, CAST, 2024c), such as being a mature student and/or a parent, revealing the importance of "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000) gained from those who are marginalised and the "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) that

this knowledge can be achieved through eliciting voice. As Moustakas (1990) states, understanding and representation can only be gained by those who have had those characteristics and/or experiences because this provides “strong objectivity” (Harding, 2004b). In contrast, those who sit outside these personal experiences may consider the students’ behaviour as ‘irrational’ (Moustakas, 1990). That is because educators do not perceive the extent of reality as marginalised groups do (Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b), giving marginalised groups an “epistemic advantage” (Wylie, 2004) in viewing societies' “codes or rules” (Delpit, 2006; 1988). The co-researchers’ experiences and the literature illuminate the importance of appropriate representation, which can be supported by UDL (CAST, 2024c). However, as expressed by Toshalis and Nakkula (2012, p. 4), those in authority positions rarely resemble DLN students and therefore, rarely share their characteristics and/or experiences. Perhaps educators are also “outsiders within” (Collins, 1986), never fully being themselves, which may be appropriate if they too are also marginalised. This then potentially leaves diverse learners “disconnected from the support of others and have no shared connection or sense of belonging [to] the university community” (Baker & Naidoo, 2023, p. 802). Diversifying university staff could increase representation and foster a deeper institutional understanding of diverse students' experiences by listening to and working with others who have had those personal experiences (Bracken *et al*., in press; CAST, 2024c). Illuminating the importance of starting from the standpoint and “situated” knowledge of those who are marginalised within the “matrix of domination” (Collins, 2000). This research agrees with Moustakas' (1990)

supposition that Rogers' (1980, reprinted with new material, 1995) core conditions could support 'personality change' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26) and therefore, could be positioned as an approach to ISV. These suggestions would ensure that all students would benefit from peer support, in turn leading to more authentic interaction that is non-hierarchical (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Bracken *et al*., in press; CAST, 2024c; Clark, 2024; Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014; Henshaw, 2022; Nelsen *et al*., 2022; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014). I have formulated further benefits of utilising 'peer support' from a student perspective with colleagues in our latest partnership work whereby diverse students' voices were heard and included in developing modules for our Indonesian colleagues (see Bracken *et al*., in press) and performing at conferences (Richardson *et al*., 2024a; Richardson *et al.*, 2024b; Richardson *et al*., 2024c). "Talking back" (Hooks, 2014) enables more equal collaborations and engagement.

The experience of removing fear by humanising those in positions of power

It became apparent that much of the fear that existed within co-researchers could be found in their childhood (within the home and/or school environment) (Hooks, 1994) due to the oppressive subjugation of their experiences (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). An example of this is when GR was forced to attend school or when BA was forced to do housework for their parents, creating a fear of those in hierarchical positions (Hooks, 1994). The fear created by these experiences expands to become a long-lasting

“embodied knowledge” (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) of fear of people in hierarchical positions (Clark, 2024; Hooks, 1994). For instance, SU referenced their interactions with the student representative as causing them to remain silent due to their fear of the person being in a position of authority (Clark, 2024; Clegg, 2011; Hooks, 1994). SU’s hypervigilance to the student representative could be due to their scanning of threats, due to fear/anxiety (Herman, 2010; Richards *et al*., 2014; Wermes *et al*., 2018; Wessing *et al*., 2017), even when threats are not present (Pérez *et al*., 2012). Similarly, PA was fearful that others would reject them and therefore tended to conform to other people’s expectations (as noted by Hooks, 1994), a behaviour noted by Jung (1971, reprinted 2014). These examples of “embodied knowledge” (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) are all experiences of “situated” knowledge (Collins, 2000) where silence has been reinforced by the presence of hierarchy, shaped by the subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and “testimonial injustice” (Fricker, 2010) received in the past. For PA, ISV occurred when lecturers understood that students use silence to keep themselves safe from other people’s reactions to their voice because an adverse reaction could negatively impact the students' future interactions with the self, therefore, reactions need to be transparent, neutral and predictable (Bonnan-White et al., 2018; Carello & Butler, 2015; Stephens, 2020; Young & Castro Schepers, 2024). Co-researchers’ desire to conform (Hooks, 1994) to a performance (Butler, 1988) of helping meant that they would complete all the surveys presented to them by the lecturers; however, this led to survey exhaustion (as seen in Sewell *et al*., 2020). In practice, staff could actively move from ‘confrontation to care’

(Stephens, 2020). This can be achieved by staff being more open about their own experiences in a ‘congruent’ manner (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material 1995), such as expressing their own diverse needs and the impact their diverse needs have had on their educational experience, in the same way that staff might admit their mistakes (Clark, 2024). In doing so, staff can reflect the standpoint of diverse students' “situated” knowledge (Collins, 2000) and facilitate the “mutuality” element of trauma-informed practice, leading to more meaningful participation and collaboration (Herman, 2023; 2010; USDHHS, 2014). Role-modelling talking from the position of marginalised groups (Hooks, 2014; 1994).

The experience of needing choice and autonomy

The final theme is the experience of needing choice and autonomy as a form of ISV and trauma healing (Herman, 2010). PS, for example, described finally being able to live by their own values and beliefs, suggesting that they were actively implementing ‘self-authorship,’ a process often initiated in the students' twenties before utilising the approach fully in their thirties (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) and “talking back” (Hooks, 2014). For those co-researchers who were bravely able to use their voice to request support, such as completing surveys (PA, RU), approaching the student representative (PA, JA), academic and union support (BA, RI), and/or the tutors (JA, LO, GR, BA, RI), it was the lecturers who had the final choice regarding changes made to practice (Canning, 2017), potentially leading students to remain silent about future change

requests because their comments were not enacted, resulting in subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). Replicating the hegemonic experience felt in childhood, when those in hierarchical positions made decisions for them that overrode their own desires (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014; Cook-Sather, 2022; Thiel, 2019) and prevented students from healing their trauma (Herman, 2010). Jung (1972, translated in 2004, pp. 65-66) agrees, stating that society continues to push people into replicating the personas created in childhood. This is 'testimonial injustice' (Fricker, 2010) whereby diverse students' voices are undermined and shaped to either prevent or delay DLN students from gaining their own voice, thereby preventing these students from developing and implementing 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). Diverse students in higher education "may be finding their voice for the first time ... and may need support in exercising choice" (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015, p. 33). Staff can support students in making choices that matter to them by introducing limited elements of choice within HE curriculum, assessment and student voice processes, and by increasing the complexity of those choices over time as students' confidence in making choices increases, a process now supported by UDL (CAST, 2024c). Through "talking back" (Hooks, 2014), diverse students can be supported as they navigate their 'self-authorship' development (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). Self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) can be employed in a manner that replicates Bruner's (1975a;1975b) ideas of 'scaffolding,' as this enables learners to participate in the classroom (Young & Castro Schepers, 2024). UDL now supports this

approach (CAST, 2024c). However, this would rely on educators embracing the constructivist approach and being able to provide “hermeneutical resources” (Ferguson, 2025) to support “talking back” communication (Hooks, 2014).

This research has explored DLN students’ experiences of ISV in higher education and has identified five key themes outlined above; therefore, I believe I have answered the research question. However, this research only included nine co-researchers; hence, further research could be conducted on a larger scale more thoroughly to ascertain students’ experiences. This research will now outline practice recommendations based on the ways DLN higher education students utilise their ISV voice.

Research question three: In what ways do students with diverse needs in Higher Education utilise their voice?

This question refers to considering how students with DLN utilise their inclusive student voice in higher education. This will be discussed under each themed sub-heading and will include practice recommendations.

The experience of needing a trauma-informed safe space to regulate emotions

As stated by SU, being forced to use their voice caused them to experience heightened emotions because of a fear of being wrong (Hockings, 2011; Mazzei, 2008). A sign that SU has had their “situated” knowledge (Collins, 2000) subjugated (Collins, 2000; Haraway,

2004; Hartsock, 1998b) in the past. ISV, as stated by RU, refers to the understanding that not all students wish to use their voice, a concept now also adopted by UDL (CAST, 2024c). Providing 'psychological safety' can create a safe environment in which students feel empowered to express themselves without the fear of being wrong (Clark, 2020). The need for 'psychological safety' (Clark, 2020) aligns with TiP in respect of providing safety for students who have experienced trauma (Carello & Butler, 2015; Herman, 2023; 2010; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) and is now also adopted by UDL (CAST, 2024c). In conjunction with this, Jung (1959, reprinted with new material in 2014) states that healing the unconscious child is necessary to remove the persona of child-like qualities, a process called 'individuation'. The persona is a performance shaped by those in positions of power and, therefore, is not fixed (Butler, 1988). Once healing has been completed, the child-like elements within dissipate (Jung, 1953, reprinted 2010), thereby losing the need for silence and increasing the students' voice in "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). However, for students to embark on healing, ISV could be supported by lecturers who could provide regular "reassurance and encouragement" (Kalschad, 2017, p. 485) in the form of a trauma-informed approach (USDHHS, 2014) or UDL (CAST, 2024c). JA attempts to heal each time they take time off from university, during which they undertake self-dialogue with themselves, their emotions, and their internal voice. This place is a margin in which resistance can be taken (Hooks, 1989); building back confidence in "talking back" begins again (Hooks, 2014). This, Rogers (1961) suggests, is a healthy approach to working through difficult emotions. Higher Education can support DLN students by utilising the

findings of this research in lecturer training and/or continued professional development, with the hope that the guidance lecturers receive on the approaches suggested would be enacted in practice. Although I understand that lecturers are not counsellors and may also be dealing with their own trauma, Pérez II and Vicente (2022) found that opening dialogue to discuss their own and their students' trauma had a positive impact on their own healing, potentially because they were able to converse with someone who shared their experiences (Herman, 2023; 2010) and "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000). The findings suggest that the role of educators may need to be reconsidered.

PS has accessed therapy and has found a new appreciation and ability to discuss their emotions, which has led them to identify that ISV could be a survey that asks questions relating to students' emotions, rather than one that asks about module teaching, as similarly suggested by Cook-Sather (2022). Diverse students appear to require more discussion in the way of "embodied knowledge" (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004). RI, in adulthood, has become an adult who is more aware of their emotions, and this has led them to become more confident in using their voice to seek out support by "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). However, rather than seeking support from people they did not know, RI wanted the support to come from people they were comfortable with, such as peers and lecturers (Cahill *et al*., 2014; Canning, 2017; McChlery & Wilkie, 2009; Walsh *et al*., 2009) because these people provided "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) in the form of shared experiences (Herman, 2023; 2010) and "situated" knowledge within the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000). Practically, then, for RI, ISV means that lecturers check in with

them regularly to provide emotional support, such as pastoral support, which is essential for student success (Thomas, 2012). However, the literature suggests that lecturers often lack the time or skills to provide this type of support (Cahill *et al*., 2014; Mackinnon, 2004; McChlery & Wilkie, 2009), leading to "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010).

A trauma-informed approach in the form of 'peer support' whereby students form equal partnerships (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014) with others who have had a shared experience of trauma and/or shared characteristics could provide a safe space for students with DLN (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Bracken *et al*., in press; CAST, 2024c; Herman, 2023; 2010; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) because this enables them to converse from the same standpoint (Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004a; Smith, 1999). Shared experiences can enable compassion between peers that may not be present with others who have not had those experiences (Cook-Sather, 2022; Delpit, 1988; Maté & Maté, 2022; Moustakas, 1990) because those in power do not see reality in its entirety and may find it hard to understand the position of those who are marginalised (Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1998a; 1998b). This research suggests that students may be more likely to use their voice with hierarchically equal peers (CAST, 2024c; Canning, 2017). Trauma-informed practice would require instructor training and additional funding (Bodfield & Culshaw, 2024; Gunderson *et al*., 2023; Henshaw, 2022; Maib *et al*., 2022; Wells, 2023). However, given the push towards widening participation discussed in Chapter One, I believe that HE has a moral responsibility to provide diverse students with the necessary support so that they feel their voice is included.

The experience of removing judgement through implementing trauma-informed practice

PS views ISV as incorporating safety (as noted by Herman, 2023; 2010) in discussions whereby people can be encouraged to listen to their own individual values in the form of "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). However, as suggested by PS, this should be free from judgement and the fear of being wrong (Hockings, 2011; Mazzei, 2008) to ensure that students are aware that making mistakes is a normal part of learning (Brown, 2016; CAST, 2024c; Nelsen *et al*., 2022; Torralba *et al*., 2020; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012) rather than an oppressive system routed in the "desire" to silence marginalised groups (Mazzei, 2011). However, diverse students are reluctant to disclose their needs due to a fear of judgement but support can be provided using Trauma-informed practice (Grimes *et al*., 2019; McChesney, 2024), specifically peer support as this is said to be non-judgemental (Bracken *et al*., in press; CAST, 2024c; Pérez II & Vicente, 2022), possible because there is "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) to sharing another's "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000) and is positioned as the second stage of trauma healing (Herman, 2023; 2010). Sharing experiences without judgement can lead to "consciousness-raising" (Sarachild, 1978) about the experiences of marginalised groups.

It is essential to recognise that judgement is the subjective viewpoint of a person that is usually limited to one or two characteristics, rather than viewing the whole person (Tajfel, 1981) and only presents a "partial" viewpoint (Haraway, 2004), but judgement is often

expected in neoliberal HE institutions, which does contradict the concept of compassionate trauma support (Bodfield & Culshaw, 2024). For this reason, staff need to have “patience and empathy” for students "rather than judg[e]ment” (Schroeder *et al*., 2024, p. 10) with “curiosity to[wards] students’ behavio[u]r rather than judg[e]ment” (Young & Castro Schepers, 2024, p. 99). Therefore, being critical about judgement needs to be implemented (Kant, 2009). Furthermore, ISV could include providing ‘psychological safety,’ whereby students feel safe to use their voice and make mistakes (Clark, 2020; Tarrolba et al., 2020), which is now supported by UDL (CAST, 2024c). Lecturers can also support students' emotional well-being and “embodied knowledge” (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004) by implementing person-centred approaches, such as ‘congruence,’ ‘empathic understanding’ and ‘unconditional positive regard’ which could help students to feel less judged and more able to use their voice (Rogers, 1980 reprinted with new material 1995) in “talking back” (Hooks, 2014). Implementation of Rogerian core conditions was also noted by Moustakas (1990) who stated that those outside of the experience and/or characteristics may judge the person as being ‘irrational’, or (for a student) someone reluctant to ‘engage’ (Young & Castro Schepers, 2024) but that is because they do not see the “hidden” elements of diverse students reality (Harding, 1991). More empathetic understanding may support the individual in achieving authentic change (Moustakas, 1990; Schroeder *et al*., 2024; Young & Castro Schepers, 2024). Incorporating Rogers’ core conditions (1980, reprinted with new material, 1995) into trauma-informed practice could help reduce feelings of judgement, increase empathy and

improve feelings of safety (Herman, 2023; 2010; SAMHSA, 2014; Wells, 2023). I recognise that this might be challenging for some tutors, especially if they have their own trauma to work through. However, sharing trauma can be beneficial to both tutors and students' healing (Herman, 2023; 2010; Pérez II & Vicente, 2022) and can therefore support diverse students who have progressed to HE through widening participation. This research highlights the need for universities not just to accept more diverse students, but to morally accommodate their needs in "talking back" (Hooks, 2014).

The experience of understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction

The theme of understanding and representation leads me to believe that HE needs to diversify staffing to increase understanding of students' diverse needs from their standpoint (Harding, 1991; Smith, 1999). Highlighting diverse staff provides diverse students with a role model who understands them, thereby increasing their understanding and representation, and reducing the potential for subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). HE can utilise this representation as a strength (Wilde, 2022), particularly in settings where diversity is high. Lecturers who share a similar 'frame of reference' with their students and are more likely to exhibit empathy and understanding, leading students to share their experiences much more often (Moustakas, 1990). Moustakas (1990) goes further by referencing Rogers and the ability to exhibit 'empathic understanding' when discussing a shared experience. Therefore, Roger's core conditions

could enable the lecturer and the student to be true to who they are, accepted for who they are, and for how they feel (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material, 1995). ISV, therefore, as stated by JA, LO, and GR, could be created through building relationships between tutors and peers that is based on similar characteristics and/or experiences because this can increase students' feelings of comfort in using their voice by identifying themselves within the staff member (Bracken *et al*., in press; Cahill *et al*., 2014; Thomas, 2012; Stefancic *et al*., 2019; Walsh *et al*., 2009). In this way, diverse students cease being the "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986). A peer support approach that is now recommended by CAST (2024c). This theme shows that TiP (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Gunderson *et al*., 2023; Henshaw, 2022; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014), particularly in relation to being more understanding of students 'cultural, historical and gender issues' (Pérez II & Vicente, 2022) could increase understanding (SAMHSA, 2014), reduce students' potential feelings of judgement (Pérez II & Vicente, 2022), the need to conform, and the process of 'individuation', otherwise known as healing (Jung 1971 reprinted 2014). Through healing, DLN students can become more aware of who they are, develop a sense of self and become authentic (Maté & Maté, 2022; O'Connor, 2023; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). In living authentically, DLN students can come to know their own needs and (use their own voice) to direct their lives by "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). This can be achieved by using 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). In exploring this theme, I discovered the connection between authenticity (Maté & Maté, 2022) and 'self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012), both

meaning to author your own life. Therefore, DLN students need to be provided with more opportunities to use their voice in “talking back” (Hooks, 2014) in ways that matter to them, and UDL (CAST, 2024c) guides this.

The experience of removing fear by humanising those in positions of power

To remove the fear of those in hierarchy (Hooks, 1994), co-researchers discussed elements of humanising the lecturers. This parallels Cook-Sather's (2022) discussion on relationship dynamics and the importance of communication for DLN students. For instance, co-researcher SU states that ISV is, in part, a result of lecturers being aware of their own body language and the ways this can be perceived by DLN students who fear those in hierarchical positions, a manifestation of past subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). Therefore, exhibiting calm body language is paramount to students' sense of safety (Herman, 2010). However, as stated previously, hypervigilance can be ameliorated when lecturers are ‘congruent’ (Rogers, 1980) with students about their own experiences and characteristics because this involves the safety and familiarity of shared experiences (Herman, 2023; 2010) and ‘situated’ knowledge (Collins, 2000). Pérez II & Vicente (2022) discussed how beneficial their similarities were when talking about their shared trauma as Latino males, in which they felt healed by the experience. If this were enacted for SU, perhaps it would have encouraged them to use their voice more in “talking back” (Hooks, 2014). By becoming open and approachable role models, lecturers

can encourage students to adopt their openness by using their own voices more to discuss their own experiences (Young & Schepers, 2024). This idea aligns with the work of Luft and Ingham (1955), who outline the means to improve relational dynamics by using a communication approach in which each person utilises 'disclosure' from the 'self'. An approach utilised in Chapter Two and in the interviews with co-researchers. Once again, this approach lends itself to 'peer support' within TiP (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Bracken *et al*., in press; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) and now, of course, the UDL framework (CAST, 2024c). As peers who have had a shared experience (Bracken *et al*., in press; Cook-Sather, 2022; Herman, 2023; 2010), lecturers and students can "find a balance of participation, power, and perspective" (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014, pp. 136 - 137) that transcends into the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000) and accounts for all "intersectional" characteristics (Crenshaw, 1989). By providing TiP to students, staff will become more supportive of others who have had or are experiencing a similar situation, leading to an improved, equal, and reciprocal relationship (Baker & Naidoo, 2023).

The experience of needing choice and autonomy

In respect of needing choice and autonomy (Herman, 2010), I would contest the perspective provided by Batchelor (2006; 2014), who stated that DLN students prefer to follow the voices of others rather than utilising their own. Although preference to be directed by others occurred for BA and JA, other co-researchers (PA, RU, LO, SU) had a desire to use their voice in "talking back" (Hooks, 2014), such as in teaching and learning

feedback (Cook-Sather, 2009), curriculum design and pedagogy (Cook-Sather & Motz Story, 2016), tutor training (Turner *et al*., 2024) and/or student choice in assessments (CAST, 2024b), most of which can now be supported by utilising the new UDL framework (CAST, 2024c). Co-researchers expressed a desire to become increasingly 'self-authored' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) and 'authentic' (Maté & Maté, 2022), an essential stage in trauma healing (Herman, 2010). However, lecturers often had the final say in student voice processes, leading students to silence or communicating their voice in more private scenarios (Canning, 2017). Situating students as the "outsider within" (Collins, 2000; 1986) whereby their voice is not accounted for, leading to "testimonial injustice" (Fricker, 2010) and preventing their healing (Herman, 2010). Given this finding, 'self-authorship' needs to be encouraged to avoid silencing DLN students (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). This approach also aligns with TiP, particularly in relation to empowering students to use their voice to make more informed and better choices (USDHHS, 2014) in "talking back" (Hooks, 2014) and now with the new 'Universal Design for Learning' (UDL) framework (CAST, 2024c). An update that focuses on 'repairing' systematic barriers for 'silenced' diverse students through providing choice within academic 'engagement', 'representation' and 'action and expression' (CAST, 2024c). A framework that incorporates numerous "hermeneutical resources" to support communication (Ferguson, 2025) and one which could lead to trauma recovery (Herman, 2010).

As suggested briefly by Young & Castro Schepers (2024), but expanded on here. A recent such experience for me was in implementing UDL principles to support our voice when working in partnership with staff from Indonesia and within a conference setting, this was found to be successful (see Bracken *et al*., in press) in facilitating "talking back" (Hooks, 2014). UDL can provide 'anticipatory inclusive practice' (Novak & Bracken, 2019), enabling diverse students to feel a sense of 'belonging (CAST, 2024c). Although one such criticism is that UDL may still be unable to provide inclusivity for all students, meaning that differentiation may still be needed in practice (Bracken *et al*., in press; Smith & Lowrey, 2017), and therefore, UDL requires more evaluative strategies to ensure its success (Edyburn, 2010). A criticism that I also discussed with colleagues in previous work (see Sewell *et al*., 2022). Nevertheless, UDL (CAST, 2024b; 2024c) has been approved by the Disabled Students Commission (AdvanceHE, 2024). Therefore, the new UDL framework (CAST, 2024c), which appears to consider ISV (Kennett, 2025), could further enhance future higher education student voice practices for DLN students.

Following these findings, with respect to this theme, I propose that ISV can be facilitated by implementing the following practice recommendations:

- Students healing (and being encouraged to do so) through 'individuation' (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014)
- Students undertaking (and being encouraged to do so) 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012)

- Universities to implement trauma-informed practice (USDHHS, 2014) to provide a supportive, wider environment for diverse students.
- Lecturers utilising person-centred approaches (Rogers, 1980) to understand and better support diverse students on an individual level.

This research has answered research question three and provided themes above that have been analysed to provide practice recommendations. However, the small number of co-researchers who participated in this study, mostly of whom were female, could have influenced the results. Therefore, further research could be conducted on a grander scale. Now, as stated by the heuristic inquiry methodology, a 'creative synthesis' was designed that incorporated all the approaches recommended above. This is illustrated in Artefact 4.1 in the analysis chapter. However, I will discuss the creative output in more detail below to respond to the following research question.

Research question four: What creative output can be developed through the analysis of student depictions that will represent the experiences of students with DLN?

The final research question concerns designing a creative output based on the analysis of student depictions to represent the experiences of students with DLN.

After analysing co-researchers' experiences of SV and how DLN students utilise their voice (Chapter Four), the final research question required the development of a creative output that represents the experiences of students with DLN. This artefact can be seen in the analysis chapter (artefact 4.1). I will now use this space to revisit the creation of the artefact and why it was created the way it was.

The creative artefact is presented as a table depicting stakeholders on the left and ISV approaches on the right. The artefact shows that ISV was not just the students' responsibility. It is, of course, a student's own motivation that will prompt them to heal their trauma as part of the 'individuation' process (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014). However, as this research reveals, healing cannot be implemented in isolation without regard for the student's relationships with others and their environment. It is essential, therefore, that implementation of TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) and UDL (CAST, 2024c) is encouraged throughout university departments and staff, particularly in relation to 'peer support' and 'safety' which enables interaction with those with similar characteristics and experiences (as can be seen in Bracken *et al*., in press) reducing power and hierarchy (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014) through shared experiences

(Herman, 2023; 2010) and “situated” knowledge (Collins, 2000). Peer relationships formed in this way could involve pairing DLN students with DLN lecturers and/or DLN peers with DLN peers. These peer partnerships can identify with each other in ways that elicit empathy, understanding and support (Moustakas, 1990; USDHHS, 2014), bringing to light the concept of “epistemic advantage” (Wylie, 2004). This approach aligns with the empathy that Cook-Sather (2022) suggests should be used in SV approaches with diverse students, and also aligns with Artefact 4.1 in relation to the person-centred approach outlined by Rogers (1980, reprinted with new material in 1995). Rogers (1980, reprinted with new material, 1995) states that therapeutic approaches to establish relationships could be used outside of the counselling and therapeutic process in support of those struggling with their mental ill-health. Relationships that adopt the core conditions of ‘congruence’, ‘unconditional positive regard’, and ‘empathic understanding’ (Rogers, reprinted with new material, 1995) can support DLN students who have undergone trauma as children to use their voice in SV processes in higher education. UDL now promotes safety and empathy to encourage higher education staff to practice these skills with diverse students (CAST, 2024c).

As students heal, they are likely to lose/reduce their child-like qualities (Jung, 1959 reprinted with new material 2014), cease performing (Butler, 1988) and begin the process of becoming ‘authentic’ (Maté & Maté, 2022) by making decisions and choices for themselves (Brown *et al*., 2020; Dollinger & Hanna, 2023) through “talking back” (Hooks, 2014). However, to achieve this, students need to be provided with opportunities to ‘self-

author' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). Co-researchers in this research made several suggestions about opportunities in which they could begin using their voice, such as in curriculum design, pedagogy, and feedback (Cook-Sather, 2009; 2022; Dollinger & Hanna, 2023; Turner *et al*., 2002). One approach that could facilitate these opportunities is for universities to adopt UDL (CAST, 2024b; CAST, 2024c). According to the CAST (2024c), UDL guidelines stipulate that students should have access to an education that provides multiple options for academic support. CAST's (2024c) recent update 3.0 could help lecturers to understand and support diverse students' past and present experiences of power, particularly within educational settings that hope to reduce subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). However, as stated above, I am aware through my own writing with colleagues that UDL, even the new framework (CAST, 2024c), can be critiqued (see Sewell *et al*., 2022). Therefore, further research is needed to explore the inclusion of ISV within this framework, particularly in relation to whether one framework can adequately support all diverse students (Smith & Lowrey, 2019), as well as the impact of previous negative experiences of power (Clark, 2024; Harding, 2004a). Further research is needed to explore the implementation of the new UDL framework (CAST, 2024c) and determine whether it can effectively support diverse students.

The creative synthesis revealed similarities and differences to my own self-search (Sela-Smith, 2002), prompting reflections within me regarding my own ISV fingerprint. Therefore, I shall now refer to my self-search to discuss these comparisons, a step in the research process, as recommended by Moustakas (1990).

Returning to my self-search

This section of the chapter will return to my self-search to compare my own ISV fingerprint (created from my own introspection and review of the existing literature) with that constructed in the creative artefact (analysis chapter, artefact 4.1), which itself is based on the experiences of other students (this work's co-researchers) with DLN. I will also answer the following questions as suggested by Moustakas (1990), to contribute to the research process. What have I learnt about myself? What changes have been made because of this research? And what epiphanies have I experienced (Moustakas, 1990)? First, I will discursively compare my ISV artefact, created in Chapter Two, with the ISV artefact designed based on the interviews with co-researchers.

Comparing inclusive student voice artefacts.

Safety is a relational endeavour.

As discussed by Herman (2023; 2010), the need for safety is recognised in both ISV conceptualisations, but my own initially limited ways of thinking meant that I only referenced safety in respect of 'psychological safety' (Clark, 2020; Torralba *et al*., 2020) to support me in using my voice after experiencing childhood trauma. However, upon interviewing co-researchers, I had an epiphany when one co-researcher mentioned TiP (USDHHS, 2014) as a potential for ISV. At this point, it occurred to me that many of TiP's elements mirrored the themes in this research, including the link between diverse

learners and the need for trauma support (Chesney, 2024; Chozinski & Gonzalez, 2022; Maib *et al*., 2022; Patton & Caffrey, 2023; Pérez II & Vicente, 2022). For example, TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) includes 'safety' and 'peer support', both of which were mentioned by co-researchers and were developed into themes before I became aware of TiP. This is because, although I had mentioned trauma, I had not considered that there was an approach explicitly tailored to supporting students like me.

My ISV fingerprint was focused on myself, the things that are 'wrong' with me and the things that I could change about myself, but I can now see that this limited thinking only continues to confirm that I am the one who is 'wrong', reinforcing the subjugation I experienced (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). However, my thinking has now shifted away from 'being wrong' towards accepting that there are elements of me that I would like to develop, but also understanding that I do not have to do this alone. The co-researchers provided an alternative approach that considers what stakeholders could do to improve equity of voice for diverse students. Through the co-researcher's input, I realised that feeling safe was not something that I could achieve on my own. To heal my trauma, I needed to feel safe in a relational capacity, especially with those in power. I was relieved in some way to learn this about myself and to discover that the responsibility for ISV is a relational act, incorporating the "collective wisdom" (Collins, 2000) of all "intersectional" characteristics (Crenshaw, 1989), rather than the sole responsibility of one person. The second stage of healing, as identified by Herman (2023; 2010), is remembering and mourning the trauma. When educators are vulnerable in self-disclosing their "situated"

knowledge (Collins, 2000), diverse students will follow (Hooks, 1994), thereby removing the "outsider within" position (Collins, 2000; 1986) and risk of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004).

Removing the mask to enable authentic interaction

The co-researchers discussed the need for understanding their diverse needs but did acknowledge that this could only be achieved through representation by others who have experience and/or similar characteristics to the co-researchers (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Bracken *et al*., in press) in the form of "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000). Co-researchers were seeking 'empathic understanding' (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material 1995), an 'epistemic advantage' (Wylie, 2004) concept that involves understanding what others feel. It is for this reason that co-researchers chose to spend time with others who share their characteristics and/or experiences (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Bracken *et al*., in press). It is with these peers that DLN students felt safe, more 'congruent' and accepted for who they are (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material in 1995). However, I would argue that this 'understanding' is impossible whilst co-researchers (and DLN students) are hiding behind a persona or mask (Herman, 2010; Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014; O'Connor, 2023). Committed to performing (Butler, 1988) to the "desires" of educators for silence (Mazzei, 2011). Therefore, I have learnt that for me to be accepted for who I am, I must remove the mask (Herman, 2010) that has protected me for so long and allow myself to practice 'congruence' with others (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material 1995), even with those in authority whom I

have often feared throughout my life. However, it is suggested that educators should also implement this (Hooks, 1994). To achieve this, I must 'individuate' (a process of healing) (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014) and begin my 'self-authorship' journey (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) and become authentic (Maté & Maté, 2022; Moustakas, 1973). The following section discusses these approaches and how they might remove the mask.

Individuation, self-authorship and authenticity.

My own ISV fingerprint included 'individuation' (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014) and how 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) could be (and has been) used to navigate my own healing, which was also mirrored in the co-researcher's ISV artefact. Healing can therefore be achieved through "talking back" in safe spaces (Hooks, 2014). The co-researchers discussed having a mask and/or a persona, which concurs with Jung's (1959, reprinted with new material, 2014) theory regarding 'individuation' and the process of healing childhood trauma and the associated performance (Butler, 1988). However, I did not discuss having a persona or a mask in my self-search because at that stage of the research, I was not aware of my own masking. Therefore, I had an epiphany that perhaps I was also masking my DLN (as found by O'Connor, 2023) and, as I began to explore healing in more detail, I had further insight when I discovered that healing childhood trauma leads to 'authenticity' and that

authenticity enables ‘self-authorship’ (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012; Maté & Maté, 2022; Moustakas, 1973).

Furthermore, the co-researchers focused more on authority and what people in authority could do to improve ISV. This agrees with Hooks (1994), who discusses the mutual dialogue needed from both students and staff and also concurs with the research by Baker and Naidoo (2023), who stated that staff could outline the support available for students and create space for students to request help that is not currently available enabling students to receive the care that they require for academic success. For instance, many of the co-researchers discussed wanting lecturers to provide them with choice in assessments or to ask them to provide training to other staff members on curriculum design and pedagogy (Cook-Sather, 2009; 2022; Cook-Sather & Motz Story, 2016; Dollinger & Hanna, 2023; Turner *et al*., 2002), removing “testimonial injustice” (Fricker, 2010) and subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). This aspect of the co-researcher’s ISV artefact led me to consider the ‘Universal Design for Learning framework’ (Cast, 2020; 2024a’ 2024b; 2024c) as this would allow for diverse ‘representation’, ‘engagement’ and ‘action and expression’ to enable more choice and autonomy to support students healing (Herman, 2010) and to build on the suggestion by Young & Schepers (2024). Staff can achieve ISV by providing different voices, different perspectives, and various forms of assessments, with advanced warnings of sensitive topics and regular check-ins with students in the classroom (Baker & Naidoo, 2023; Carello & Butler, 2015; CAST, 2024c; Schroeder *et al*., 2024). However, invitations to direct one’s education and/or life need to

be initially facilitated by those in authority to ease students into making choices for themselves, a suggestion I had made at several conferences (Courage *et al*., 2023; Courage *et al*., 2024). Staff can also discuss the potential for healing with DLN students (Schroeder *et al*., 2024) to enable them to begin and/or continue their journeys into becoming more 'authentic' (Maté & Maté, 2022; Moustakas, 1973), followed by the journey into 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) and "talking back" (Hooks, 2014).

This research has compared the findings from my self-search chapter (two) with those from the analysis chapter (four) to identify similarities and differences, a process required for presenting self-development, as directed by Moustakas (1990). The following section will examine the personal self-development that occurred within me whilst undertaking and subsequently completing the research.

Impact of the research on my own self-development

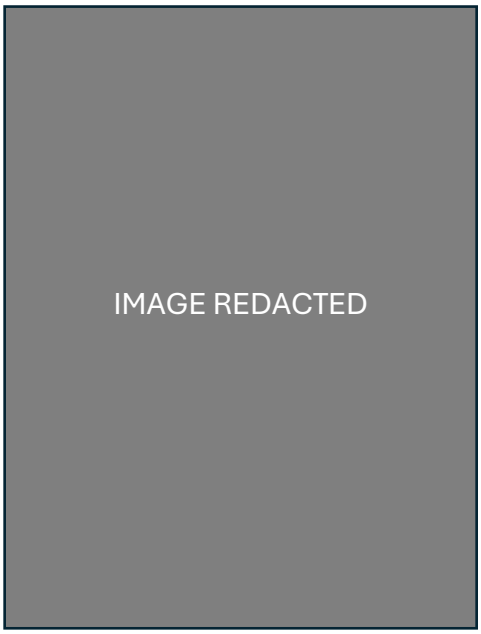
Identifying my own trauma-informed safe space to regulate my emotions

The final question pertains to the personal changes I have undergone as a result of this research.

Regarding affective changes, similarly to BA, I noted how I spent much of my time using my voice to accommodate the emotions of others as a performance (Butler, 1988) out of fear of upsetting them and I came to realise that my avoidance of my own emotions was a trauma response (Herman, 2010) to past experiences of subjugation (Collins, 2000;

Haraway, 2004). Like GR, between the ages of 8 and 15 years old, I retreated to the "margin" (Hooks, 2014) of my bedroom for safety. I read books to escape the unsafe environment that I perceived at home and school (as seen in the self-search chapter) (a behaviour identified by Herman, 2010). After my interview with PS, I realised that my inability, at the time, to manage my emotions was not just because of my trauma (Herman, 2010), but also because the adults in my life were unable to fully manage their own emotions due to their own unaddressed needs. This issue reduced my ability to learn to manage my emotions (Herman, 2010). During my self-search, I used emotion cards to identify the emotions that were impacting me the most. These were weepy, anxious, guilty, loving (The School of Life, 2024), and I added shameful to the cards, as seen in artefact 5.1 below (Researcher's diary, Saturday 11th March 2023). However, after RI's interview, I decided to try to stop avoiding my emotions, as this was something that RI stated helped promote/prompt the use of their own voice.

Artefact 5.1: Emotion cards (The School of Life, 2024, Researcher's diary, Saturday 11th March 2023)



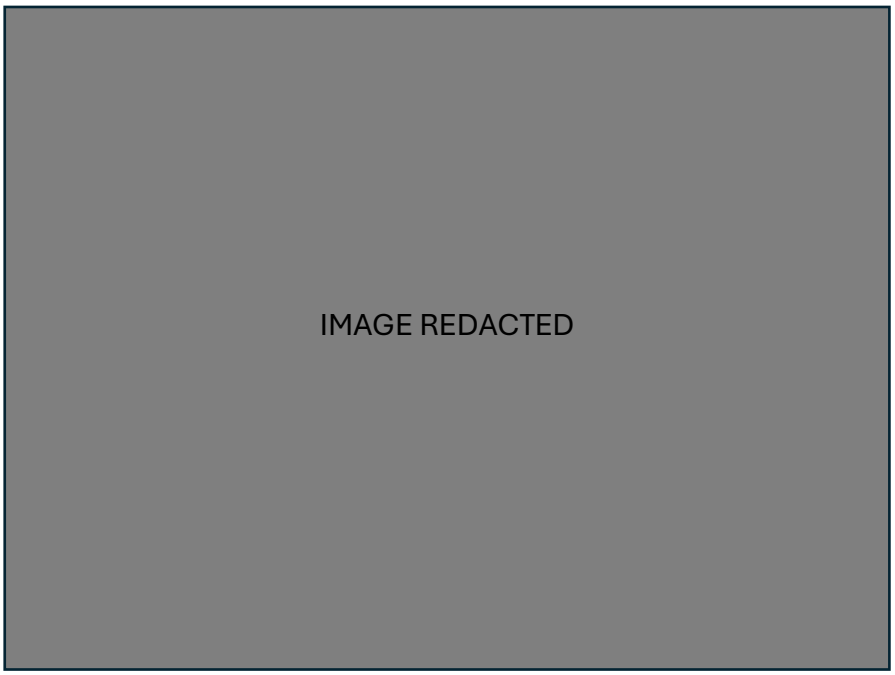
(Image redacted due to copyright restrictions. The photograph originally included emotion cards from The School of Life (2024), which illustrated the key emotions I experienced during this study. The Author (2023) also added a note illustrating an additional emotion as described above)

My recognition of my emotional avoidance led me to explore better ways of thinking about and coping with my emotions, such as undertaking Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). CBT involves highlighting the negative thought patterns that a person may have, the ways these impact the person's feelings and behaviours and encouraging change in the

way one thinks about themselves (Blagys & Hilsenroth, 2002). I decided to undertake intensive CBT in June 2023. CBT has taught me to sit with my emotions, allow them to be there, and to find and implement healthier coping strategies (reflecting those identified by RI), such as walking, mindful colouring, and listening to music.

Through CBT, I found safety in my own body (Herman, 2023; 2023; Van Der Kolk, 2014). I learnt to value the time I had with myself and used that time to listen to my internal voice. In time, my internal voice stopped shouting at me, and 'we' began to work collaboratively to heal my childhood trauma as directed by Jung (1971, reprinted 2020). Whilst writing this chapter in March 2024, I intuitively felt the pull towards repeating the emotions cards activity and this time, the cards that best represented the emotions are gratefulness, solitary, loving, happy, and confident (see artefact 5.2 below, The School of Life, 2024) (researcher's diary, 1st March 2024).

Artefact 5.2: Revisiting the emotion cards (The School of Life, 2024)



(Image redacted due to copyright restrictions. The photograph originally included emotion cards from The School of Life (2024), which illustrated the key emotions I experienced during this study as described above)

Undertaking this activity at two different points in the research illuminates the self-reported changes that have occurred effectively for me. I have learnt that all “embodied” (Gentling, 2003; Haraway, 2004) emotions are acceptable to feel, even those emotions that are considered negative, but that my coping strategies to those emotions (my silence

and avoidance) were not healthy. Therefore, I am pleased to have found healthier coping strategies that have helped me identify my emotions, understand my responses to them, and use my voice more effectively.

Removing perceived judgement through implementing trauma-informed practice

In my self-search, I discussed limiting judgement about students with DLN, but had not spoken explicitly of the judgement that I had felt I perceived as a child. However, in doing this work, I have now realised that I was judged many times for being wrong at home and/or in education, and this judgement has stayed with me, causing me to be fearful of further judgement (see Ristad *et al.*, 2024). Since then, I have learnt that judgement is a "partial" viewpoint (Haraway, 2004) and natural human response used by all humans to encourage 'conformity' from everyone but that this judgement is applied more firmly (in a more damaging way) to those who sit outside the natural order of life and/or those who are different (Kant, 2009) in the form of power and oppression (Harding, 2004a). It is this judgement that leads people to create a persona or a mask (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014; O'Connor, 2023) to perform to the dominant narrative (Butler, 1988). However, causing people to lose their 'authenticity' and independent voice in the process (Allison, 2023; Clarke *et al*., 2021; Freire, 1970, translated in 2017; Maté & Maté, 2022). Consequently, diverse students 'authentic voice' is not heard in SV approaches (Hooligan & Shah, 2017). To this end, I have changed the way I perceive and process judgement by not giving judgements the same credence as before and choosing instead to be proud of

being different. I have concluded that my authentic voice is just as important to hear in SV processes as the voices of those in authority, and because of this, I now enjoy "talking back" (Hooks, 2014), rarely staying silent in collaborative SV work. For example, I have been working with academic librarians as a student team member on various projects, using my voice to advocate for initiatives that matter to students (Courage *et al*., 2023; Courage *et al*., 2024). However, I do acknowledge that students need to become comfortable using their voice, which can be achieved by staff members scaffolding the amount of directedness they provide to students until they are confident enough to use their voice independently. This approach has been discussed at various conferences (Courage *et al*., 2023; Courage *et al*., 2024). This has now been complemented by UDL (Bracken & Novak, 2019; CAST, 2024c). More recently, I have begun working with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA, 2024), which was established by the National Committee of Inquiry (1997), providing me with the opportunity to influence quality for diverse students in higher education. Therefore, I feel this research has gone full circle in my exploration of DLN students' voices. Healing from silence can be achieved through student and educator collaborations (Hooks, 1994)

As I started to heal, I realised that some of my behaviours at home were quite different to my behaviours around hierarchical figures, as these were often the instigators of past subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004), and I took some time to reflect on this. I realised that at home, I presented with characteristics that are somewhat compatible with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and CBT had supported the revelation

that I was masking some of these behaviours. The NHS says that ADHD is a condition in which a person struggles to maintain concentration through inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity (NHS, 2021a). In response to my identification of this, I booked an appointment with an ADHD assessor and was somewhat surprised and relieved to have received the diagnosis of ADHD. I realised that the characteristics of ADHD mirrored the challenges I had experienced, and that the relief I felt was because I was now able to obtain the correct support.

On reflection, inattentiveness (the AD aspect of ADHD) has contributed to me making mistakes, being forgetful, losing concentration, having difficulties in following instructions, multitasking, and a lack of organisation. A range of issues is outlined regarding ADHD (NHS, 2021a). Whereas my hyperactivity and impulsiveness (the H aspect of ADHD) have impacted me by my constantly moving out of my seat, my hyperactive mind, repetitive fidgeting, losing concentration, constant talking, interrupting, and reacting impulsively (NHS, 2021a). Although, this is not an exhaustive list and does not include all my characteristics, it shows how easy it is for me to make mistakes and how I have learnt to mask these behaviours through the fear of being judged and disciplined, leading to my performative silence (Boler, 1999; Butler, 1988; 1990; Hanna, 2021; Hao, 2011; Herman, 2010).

As I healed my internal shame, I conformed and used silence less. I found myself masking less and using my voice more in “talking back” (Hooks, 2014). The NHS website states that the cause of ADHD has not been fully identified; however, genetics and differences in the

brain (structure and function) because of life experiences are the likely causes (NHS, 2021b). However, Maté and Maté (2022) state that there is no definitive gene that causes ADHD; rather, it could be due to the passing down of a 'sensitivity' characteristic in a world that is overrun with stressful encounters, showing the depth of my embodied experiences. Maté and Maté (2022, p. 242) suggest that the 'relational environment' is a possible cause, such as the home environment, bullying, interactions with educators, and trauma, and this would certainly concur with this research and feminist ideas of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). Maté and Maté (2022) state that diagnosing individuals:

> justifies social inequalities and injustices ... [because it prevents society] from having to look at how our social environment supports, or does not support, the parents of young children, and at how social attitudes, prejudices, and policies burden, stress, and exclude certain segments of the population, thereby increasing their propensity for suffering (Maté & Maté, 2022, p. 252)

This research offers an insider's perspective on the impact of the environment and how I, as well as co-researchers and other diverse students, may have required support and potentially therapy to navigate the current educational environment. Therefore, this research contributes to Maté and Maté's (2022) discussion, in which they recognise the relationship between ADHD, trauma, the environment, and the process of healing, enabling people (in this case, students) to become authentic. However, healing is never fully complete because the unconscious mind is vast, and there will always be new struggles that need to be navigated (Herman, 2010; Jung, 1959, reprinted with new

material, 2014). However, at the time of this writing, I do feel more balanced in body and mind because I am not concerning myself with the potential for judgement, and this has helped me to find my voice for "talking back" (Hooks, 2014).

The experience of understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction

I also conclude that understanding of and representation for DLN students is key for them in using their voice due to the "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) of shared experiences (Herman, 2023; 2010) and "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000), now also recognised by UDL (CAST, 2024c). This conclusion has provided me with even more motivation to continue advocating for students, as it has often felt lonely to think that no one in authority understands me. Therefore, I have come to realise that whatever role I take up in HE, I will seek to make it an influential one because I will not just be undertaking that role as any person; instead, I will be taking up that role as a person with DLN. I will, therefore, use my voice to express my DLN openly so that others know that they are not alone and that not all people in authority are to be feared. It is hoped that this will encourage DLN students to do the same (Hooks, 1994).

The experience of removing fear by humanising those in positions of power

I learnt through my CBT that I had a fear of using my voice with hierarchical figures due to subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) experienced at home and further replicated in school and HE because an authority hierarchy was present (as surmised by Clark, 2024). As

a child who relied on my caregivers for basic needs, I became anxious and worried that they would reject me. Artefact 2.1 in the self-search chapter presents one of those times in which I perceived that abandonment was a very real prospect. It is for this reason that I have come to realise that much of my fear and anxiety around other people's reactions to my voice was due to my own fear of rejection (London *et al*., 2007) of my authentic self. I have come to realise that my own perception of abandonment was a fear once felt in childhood and that now, as an adult, I can trust myself to manage those feelings more appropriately. Therefore, I have also learnt that I can use my voice in SV processes for "talking back" (Hooks, 2014) without being hypervigilant to other people's reactions and possible judgements, and in turn, my anxiety has reduced. I now feel that I have improved the way I think about myself, removed some elements of masking, learnt to accept, and feel my emotions, and I have regained aspects of my voice.

The experience of needing choice and autonomy

I was surprised to find that in most cases, co-researchers knew what they needed or wanted. Co-researchers often used their voice to seek support. However, PS felt that lecturers would frequently have, via their authority, the final choice (Canning, 2017) leading to "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010) and where this choice did not meet the needs of the co-researchers, they would then often remain silent in the future (a learnt silencing) through the feelings of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). Silence prevents the student from healing whilst replicating the role of power (Herman, 2010). I

have learnt that I do not want my 'own biography' (Jung, 1972, reprinted 2004, pp. 65-66) to be created by others and hidden from the world, but I also do not think that I should be solely responsible for all decisions. I have, therefore, come to conclude that collaboration is the best approach in SV processes (as discussed by Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014 and Stephens, 2020), arguably, throughout education, as noted also by Hooks (1994). When completing my self-search chapter, I felt that I was situated in the 'following external formulas' phase of 'self-authorship', but I now think that I have progressed to the 'internal foundations' phase, whereby I am now living by my own beliefs, values, and voice (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). I am now living in a way that best represents my authentic self, and this authenticity can be taken into SV approaches when collaborating with lecturers in ways acknowledged by Hooks (1994). Teaching students and educators about the ISV approach would help improve the student-teacher metacognition, which is fundamental to education and learning.

Now that I have discussed the ways this research has changed me, I would like to discuss the potential impact this research may have on various stakeholders, including HE institutions, lecturers, co-researchers, and other diverse students who did not participate in the study.

Research impact

This section will discuss the potential impact of this research on key HE stakeholders, including HE institutions, Lecturers, co-researchers, and other diverse students. I will also reflect on different ways that this research may help to support other communities, topics, individuals, and situations to incorporate the 'so what?' element of this research, and how it might lead to change (Sultan, 2019). Although this is a recommended discussion (Sultan, 2019), it would be impossible to cover all contexts that could benefit from future implementation of the recommendations outlined, as identified by the research findings. Some new literature is incorporated here to enable me to extend the topic and my reflections further, a process encouraged by Sultan (2019).

Co-researchers and other diverse students

In Gieser's edited book compiled of Jung's lectures (published under Jung's name in 2021), Jung makes the point that the painful process of 'individuation' does not occur until mid-late thirties, making me, as I write this, the prime age to 'individuate', and highlights why many of the co-researchers within that age range were also struggling with their well-being. Therefore, HE has a moral duty to support co-researchers and other students with DLN within the age range through the 'individuation' stage, as this is a necessary part of healing that potentially all people experience in their thirties (Jung, 1953, reprinted 2010). However, Jung (1971, reprinted with new material, 2014) acknowledges that undertaking 'individuation' is an emotionally challenging process that requires a high level of support.

Therefore, leaders in HE must recognise this by providing students with the environment that supports those who have experienced trauma and/or who are currently healing from trauma, such as utilising TiP (USDHHS, 2014) and/or UDL (CAST, 2024c). The impact of which could see HE itself becoming more authentic, as suggested by Kreber (2013), who states that when students become engaged authentically by undertaking activities relevant to them, they become more authentic. When students are engaged in this way, the tutors themselves become more authentic, providing a more socially just institution (Kreber, 2013), both engaging in dialogue relating to their individual experiences (Hooks, 1994).

This research provides examples in which HE, lecturers and peers could develop in supporting ISV for DLN students with their healing to regain their voice, suggesting the potential impact that this research could have on the development of academia, lecturers and on students' own healing. To achieve this, lecturers would need to be trained in TiP (USDHHS, 2014), and such examples already exist within the literature, revealing the move towards this approach (see Maib *et al*., 2022; McChesney, 2024; Nelsen *et al*., 2022; Pérez II & Vicente, 2022). A person-centred approach would also need to be facilitated to improve relational interactions within education (Rogers, 1980; 1995). I recognise that institutional cultural change takes time. However, this research can promote the importance of embedding student ISV approaches into university-wide strategy plans and policy, as this is likely to elicit essential perspectives in policy design (Bracken *et al*., in press). With intent, this research can contribute to lecturers' knowledge of the impact of

trauma on DLN students and their voice, thereby increasing lecturers' understanding of DLN students' experiences of SV processes and the potential benefits of using ISV approaches to amplify DLN students' voices. The new UDL (CAST, 2024c) contributes to the movement towards a more socially just education and, therefore, could be implemented more widely. In doing so, lecturers will become more receptive to understanding DLN students, their reluctance to use their voice and how they, the lecturers, can provide the right nurturing environment to support DLN students in using their voice in their learning, particularly regarding student-teacher metacognition.

Impact on other communities, topics, individuals and situations

I will now comment on how this research might support other communities, topics, individuals, and situations as directed by Sultan (2019). Although this research began by exploring ISV in HE, using Heuristic Inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), I have been able to explore the life course of co-researchers and myself. This has enabled me to see how the home environment and mental ill-health contribute to DLN students' lost voices, particularly in relation to parents having their own DLN who may unknowingly subjugate their children (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). I have also become aware of the ways co-researchers experience challenges in managing their own emotions, possibly due to the depth of their embodied knowledge, and how these interact.

In relation to support in the home environment, one potential practice, although ambitious, could be to utilise early interventions to support those parents who may have

DLN themselves. Early interventions could include teaching parents strategies that support emotional regulation (for themselves and their child) and ways to interact with their children sensitively and with empathy when making mistakes, thereby preventing subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). This approach could impact the child by potentially removing the fear of hierarchy (Hooks, 1994), thereby reducing the likelihood that the child will mask their voice in tertiary education, if this is followed by the inclusion of ISV approaches in tertiary education, the child is also less likely to mask their voice in HE.

This research could also impact all educators at all levels and practitioners working within education, including those involved in well-being services and topics, by revealing how DLN students are affected throughout their lives by subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and the ways this can lead to silence. The research would also particularly benefit those in counselling and psychology professions who have an interest in mental ill-health, the developing child, trauma manifestations, and the ways it could be healed. The research could also impact the ways counsellors and psychologists conduct their practice, particularly in relation to co-occurring conditions and the ways this might interact in the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000) present in education.

Additionally, the research could influence government, both local and national, regarding changes that could be made to education and the broader relational impact of external agencies supporting children and their families. This research could also influence policy, frameworks and project initiatives to become more inclusive of DLN students' voices.

There is also scope for this research to influence international stakeholders, given my work with the UDL conference, Indonesian partners and more recently, my work with our Indian partners who have all been interested in hearing the findings of this work as this work recognises the impact of “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989) within the “matrix of domination” (Collins, 2000).

I have discussed the potential impact of this research on each stakeholder, and I would now like to present recommendations for practice in higher education.

Suggestions for practice

This section of the chapter will provide recommendations and consider how ISV approaches can be applied in HE practices. The following section will discuss the impact on various stakeholders. However, first, I would like to reintroduce the recommendations and reveal how each stakeholder will implement them. Based on the research findings, the recommendations for incorporating ISV in practice are:

- To implement trauma-informed practice (USDHHS, 2014) in higher education institutions

- To create a person-centred approach, such as ‘empathy,’ ‘congruence, ’ and ‘unconditional positive regard’ (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material 1995), to be adopted in higher education
- To recognise the importance of developing ‘authenticity’ (Maté & Maté, 2022) in the ‘individuation’ process (Jung, 1953 reprinted with new material 2010; 1959 reprinted with new material 2014; 1971 reprinted 2014)
- To provide opportunities for ‘self-authorship’ (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012), and I propose here to utilise the ‘Universal Design for Learning framework’ (Bracken & Novak, 2019; CAST, 2024b; 2024c) following the recent publication by AdvanceHE (2024).

To implement trauma-informed practice in higher education

TiP has been described in the analysis chapter. It is an approach whereby staff realise the adverse effects of trauma, recognising the symptomology, and responding to the student by adapting higher educational practice in support of healing without re-triggering that person into re-living those experiences (Carello & Thompson, 2022; Perry & Winfrey, 2021; SAMHSA, 2014; Schroeder *et al*., 2024; Stephens, 2020; USDHHS, 2014). According to several authors, students most likely to be impacted by trauma are:

- Widening participation students
- Female students
- Students with childhood adversities

- Students with no or low social support
- Students with no or low self-efficacy and resilience
- Ethnically diverse students (Allen *et al*., 2022; Davies *et al*., 2022; Jones & Nangah, 2021)

To become trauma-informed, staff will first need to become aware of, sensitive to and responsive to students' trauma (Carter & Blanch, 2019; Trauma Matters Delaware, 2022). In this case, the trauma of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010). Although other theories/models of TiP exist (see Carter & Blanch, 2019; Dorado *et al.*, 2016; Fallot & Harris, 2009; Loomis *et al*., 2019; Trauma Matters Delaware, 2022). This research will utilise those outlined below, as these closely resemble the findings in this study and Herman's (2023; 2010) stages of trauma recovery. These are:

- 'Safety' – physical, psychological, and relational
- 'Trustworthiness and transparency' - trust is built through honest relational interactions
- 'Peer support' - healed persons supporting unhealed others
- 'Collaboration and mutuality' - decreasing power imbalances
- 'Empowerment, voice and choice' - strengths and healing is celebrated and voices are heard, and

- ‘Cultural, historical and gender issues’ - tailored support for the individual (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014).

This research has found that the co-researchers assumed that it is safe to speak to those who share your characteristics and/or experiences (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Bracken *et al*., in press) because they have the “epistemic advantage” (Wylie, 2004) of understanding more and are less likely to make judgements (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Moustakas, 1990; Pérez II & Vicente, 2022). This research concurs with Nettifee (2020) that those who have experienced trauma can be supported by using their voice with people they feel safe with, and that that safety can be felt within the body (Van der Kolk, 2014) and concurs with Hooks (2014; 1994) that speaking up more is beneficial to all. To this end, ISV can be achieved through ‘peer support’ (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Bracken *et al*., in press; Pérez II & Vicente, 2022; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) by enabling students to sit with peers who share their characteristics and/or experiences (Bracken *et al*., in press) as this is shown to balance power in mutually beneficial ways (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014; Hooks, 2014; 1994) and improve healing (Pérez II & Vicente, 2022; Sinko *et al*., 2021; Sinko & Saint Arnault, 2020). To improve the support received from peers, universities can ensure that they are aware of the impact of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004), trauma, the symptomology and the types of support they can provide to a peer of someone who has had or is experiencing trauma (Schroedar *et al*., 2024; Stephens, 2020). Furthermore, personal tutor support could be improved by also pairing students and lecturers together

who also share characteristics and/or experiences as this will also be beneficial (Bracken *et al*., in press; Hooks, 2014; 1994; McChesney, 2024; Pérez II & Vicente, 2022) as this will enable students to use their authentic voice in personal academic tutorial sessions.

To support those students in fear of hierarchy (Hooks, 1994), students could be provided with mentors (who share characteristics and/or experiences) who can act as an intermediary between the student and the lecturer (Bracken *et al.*, in press). Through the sharing of experiences and/or characteristics (Bracken *et al.*, in press; Herman, 2023; 2010; Pérez II & Vicente, 2022; Sarachild, 1978; Young & Schepers, 2024). TiP can "create supportive healing environments for all students" (Schroeder *et al*., 2024, p. 4). Therefore, in consideration of ISV, peers, mentors, student representatives, and tutors could be given 'psychological safety' (Clark, 2020) and TiP training (Bodfield & Culshaw, 2024; Gunderson *et al*., 2023; Henshaw, 2022; Maib *et al*., 2022; Wells, 2023) to enable good practice in realising, identifying and responding to trauma to be facilitated (Baker & Naidoo, 2023; SAMHSA, 2014; Schroeder *et al*., 2024; USDHHS, 2014). Training could be integrated into new staff inductions (and/or PGCEs for HE teachers), updated annually, and held in person to include students' role-playing case study scenarios (Davidson, 2017), thereby building on student-staff partnerships.

In the self-search chapter, I discussed the work of Austin (2001), who states that trusting collaborative partnerships supported those students who had experienced trauma, and this concurs with Hooks (1994). This aligns with the 'trustworthiness and transparency' and 'collaboration and mutuality' approaches to TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014),

suggesting that purposeful action to reduce power imbalances encourages authentic relational interactions (Henshaw, 2022). Therefore, in consideration of ISV processes, collaborative partnerships (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014) do provide ISV, but this must be accompanied by 'mutuality' (Herman, 2023; 2010; USDHHS, 2014) of a shared "situated" knowledge within the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000). As stated in the methodology chapter, 'mutuality' is undertaking relational interactions with others in the 'I-Thou' space, a place for the mutual exchange of communication between authentic people based on a shared goal and/or experience (Buber, translator in 2010). Mutuality and the discussion of shared experiences were also identified by Herman (2023; 2010) as stages for trauma healing, in which they insist that others listen to the stories of trauma survivors without making the victim feel like a child, such as making decisions for them. Therefore, ISV also aligns with the conceptualisation by Cook-Sather *et al.* (2014) regarding the equal reciprocal collaboration approach to student-staff partnerships, a perspective further expressed in our upcoming work (see Bracken *et al*., in press). I would also agree with Cook-Sather *et al. (*2014) in that students may not collaborate in the same way as staff members, particularly if that student has experienced trauma relating to their diverse characteristics. These students are more likely to remain silent or use their voice with their peers (Canning, 2017) for fear of further subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). This can be seen in the co-researchers' responses in the composite depiction (removing fear by humanising those in positions of power), stating that if lecturers were to be honest about who they are, then co-researchers felt that they could be honest about

who they are (Hooks, 1994), highlighting the importance of 'transparency' in TiP (USDHHS, 2014). One TiP approach could be to create a group of like-minded individuals (students, staff, and the wider community who have experienced trauma) whose role it would be to actively observe, discuss, and remove the potential for re-traumatising, while promoting and implementing those that are healing to support others (Schroeder *et al*., 2024). Although beneficial to some (Pérez II & Vicente, 2022), this approach may need significant training and funding (Bodfield & Culshaw, 2024; Gunderson *et al*., 2023; Henshaw, 2022; Maib *et al*., 2022; Wells, 2023), which in the current economic climate may prove challenging, showing the "everyday world as problematic" (Smith, 1987) for diverse learners.

A person-centred approach should be adopted in higher education.

Co-researchers and I discussed observing 'threats' in the environment, such as watching a person's body and listening for expressive language (Perry, 2006), a process that I had experienced as a child and one which SU noted. The impacts of such vigilance can be seen in the responses of other co-researchers, such as implementing avoidance behaviours (GR) and/or adopting a persona (BA) (as suggested by Herman, 2010). One way to alleviate students' fear of threat is for staff to communicate sympathetically about students' embodied knowledge (Gendlin, 2003; Haraway, 2004), thereby reducing power imbalances. This research recommends person-centred approaches that can support students who have disconnected from themselves (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new

material, 1995). To achieve this, the environment around the student must provide ‘congruence,’ ‘unconditional positive regard, ’ and ‘empathic understanding’ (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material, 1995). Providing ‘Unconditional Positive Regard’ has also been suggested in TiP literature to support students with experience of trauma (Davidson, 2017). Lecturers could implement ISV partnerships by removing their own personas and/or masks, by accepting the student for who they are with empathy, knowing that the persona that they have approached the SV partnership with is a result of childhood trauma (Jung, 1959, reprinted with new material, 2014) caused by subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004). Therefore, the research findings recommend that enhancements be made to educator training and continued professional development that teaches the application of Rogerian' core conditions (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material, 1995) in higher education practice. This would enable educators to provide ‘unconditional positive regard’, become ‘congruent’ and ‘empathic’ towards DLN students (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material 1995), thereby reducing perceived judgement. Staff can become more curious in SV processes when working with DLN students, as it is hoped that this would reduce the level of perceived felt judgement (Vaccaro, 2017) from students with DLN. I understand that lecturers are not therapists (McChesney, 2024); however, voice can detect when a person is safe or unsafe, and therefore, this approach is essential for healing (Herman, 2010; Nettiffee, 2020).

To provide opportunities for self-authorship.

Thompson and Marsh (2022) state that empowering students to use their voice to make their own choices in HE involves ensuring that students are allowed to redesign elements of practice without being 'forced' into making decisions that do not reflect themselves or their lived experiences. This can be seen in GR's experience when their parents pushed them to go into school and later, being encouraged to complete presentations in HE when they were not feeling emotionally able to do so due to the repetition of fear they felt when they were a child. Universities "need to create spaces where they [the students] can use their voice without fear" (Thompson & Marsh, 2022, p. 30) of being re-traumatised and implementing TiP can achieve this (Thompson & Marsh, 2022) by recognising students' past and present diversities (Baker & Naidoo, 2023; USDHHS, 2014) within the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000). Staff can move away from 'assuming needs' to undertaking dialogue with students to ascertain their requirements (Baker & Naidoo, 2023). This aligns with the concept of 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012), in that students can progress from being directed by others to becoming more self-directing in 'talking back' (Hooks, 2014). This can be achieved in HE by utilising the 'Universal Design for Learning' framework that incorporates choice in curriculum design (CAST, 2024b; CAST, 2024c; Young & Schepers, 2024) and, more recently, the recognition that diverse students require extra support in communicating their needs with those in hierarchical positions (CAST, 2024c). Through implementation, students can begin practising making decisions for themselves, initially with the support of

academic staff but gradually becoming more autonomous as they become more confident in making their own decisions (CAST, 2024c).

DLN students can be empowered to make their own decisions by utilising the 'scaffolding' approach, as specified by Bruner (1975a; 1975b), which is now included within the new UDL framework (CAST, 2024c). As Baker and Naidoo (2023, p. 811) state, "universities have a duty to act first and demonstrate their care". Providing students with the opportunity to direct their own education through "talking back" (Hooks, 2014) does not take away the academic knowledge that lecturers can bring to the partnership but instead, actively considers the knowledge that diverse students might understand about themselves (Baxter Magolda, 200; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). The "epistemic advantage" of knowing the hidden processes that may not be privy to those in authority (Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1998a). In doing so, universities can move to a more equal and collaborative educational experience (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014; Hooks, 2014). However, I agree with de Bie (2020) that an awareness of power is essential, particularly when those in authority have often been the root cause of trauma (Clark, 2024) and subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004).

Recognising the importance of authenticity in the 'individuation' process

Students making choices can be facilitated during the 'individuation' phase (Jung, 1971 reprinted 2014) and this can be supported by providing 'safety' and 'peer support' as advised by TiP (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Bracken *et al*., in press; Clark, 2024; Gunderson et al.,

2023; Nelsen et al., 2022; Pérez II & Vicente, 2022; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014). Safety, as a first stage of trauma healing (Herman, 2023; 2010), enables students to feel more able to make decisions when they are in spaces where they are supported to become 'authentic' (Maté & Maté, 2022). ISV may provide the best environment to encourage diverse learners to use their "talking back" (Hooks, 2014) voice in SV processes, and many of these findings are being promoted in the new UDL framework (CAST, 2024c). However, as Jung (1971, reprinted with new material in 2014) stated, 'individuation' is a challenging process. Therefore, students in HE need to be adequately supported to traverse the difficult transition and again, trauma-reducing approaches (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) could be used alongside ISV to ensure the environment continues to encourage DLN students to be heard in SV processes. The new UDL framework (CAST, 2024c) provides a basis for this; however, it is also essential to recognise that not all students can be accommodated for as students are more complicated than a simple framework might suggest (Smith & Lowery, 2017), given the multiplicity of "intersectionality" (Crenshaw, 1989).

To conclude, I have made several practice recommendations based on the themes found in this research. Many of the themes overlap with TiP and the new UDL framework, particularly in relation to 'safety' and 'peer support' (Blanch *et al*., 2012; Bracken *et al*., in press; CAST, 2024c; Clark, 2024; Gunderson *et al*., 2023; Nelsen *et al*., 2022; Pérez II & Vicente, 2022; SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014). Therefore, I argue that TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014) and UDL (CAST, 2024c) should be applied at all levels in HE. I also

recommend that lecturers and other teaching staff utilise person-centred approaches (Rogers, 1980) to ensure that DLN students feel accepted for who they are. DLN students often require 'individuation' to heal their childhood trauma and require sensitive support, via TiP, for the additional challenges this might bring (Jung, 1953, reprinted with new material 2010; 1959, reprinted with new material 2014; 1971, reprinted 2014). Cook-Sather (2022) recognises the importance of students healing their childhood trauma when working in partnership with staff. Once healing begins, DLN students will start to become 'authentic' (Maté & Maté, 2022). HE also needs to provide opportunities for 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012), and I proposed here that this could be facilitated by using UDL (CAST, 2024b; CAST, 2024c).

Following this conclusion, this chapter will now evaluate the research, with a particular focus on the theoretical framework, research design, the self-search chapter, the use of the researcher's diary, ethics, and the method of analysis. I will then provide two potential future research options and conclude.

Evaluation

This section of the thesis will evaluate the research. I will evaluate the theoretical framework, research design, self-search chapter, the use of the researcher's diary, ethical considerations, including the limitations and the extent to which I was able to overcome

them, and the process of analysis. This section will then present two examples of future research options that could be conducted based on the findings of this research.

Research paradigms

Burr (2015) outlined that disabilities and education are both socially constructed using language. I have found this applies to me because I have been labelled as having diverse needs. The language and labels identify my needs and explain them in a diagnostic report to those who may not be familiar with them. However, due to my diverse needs, my experience in Higher Education (HE) is likely to differ from that of those without similar needs (Stoller, 2018). Furthermore, it was also right to centre this research only on diverse students' voices (including myself), as it is likely that co-researchers' constructed fear of people in hierarchy (Hooks, 1994) would have impacted the results and/or would not have been discussed due to the lack of sharing the diverse identities of students (Herman, 2023; 2010; Papert & Harel, 1991; Sarachild, 1978). This was confirmed when a theme emerged that suggests understanding can only be understood if the person has had the same experience and/or characteristics as the co-researcher (Bracken *et al*., in press). Therefore, the findings in this research concur that ontology is socially constructed due to students' multiple realities or truths, and it would not be appropriate to consider that all humans view the world the same way (Patel, 2015).

Co-researchers constructed their knowledge of the world through their interactions with others (Hyde, 2021), such as their parents, peers, and educators, and in the present study, through my interactions with the co-researchers. Therefore, it was appropriate to adopt

social constructivism to construct knowledge (Gergen, 2009), and I greatly benefited from the shared experience I had with others (Moustakas, 1990). Although the topic could have been measured using reliable tools (Patel, 2015), this would not have provided the depth to mine and co-researchers' experience that benefits this study (Kinchin & Kinchin, 2019; Moustakas, 1968; 1990).

Removing the researcher's values has been critiqued for being unrealistic to achieve (Abram, 1996; Sultan, 2019). Therefore, it was appropriate to integrate my values into the study (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019), including my values related to collegiate partnerships (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014), which were an integral part of the process. Through my collaboration with co-researchers, we were able to successfully co-create (Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019) Inclusive Student Voice (ISV) from similar experiences and/or characteristics (Bracken *et al*., in press). Furthermore, due to our similarities, the reduced hierarchy (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014) limited students' fear of hierarchical figures, reduced feelings of being judged (Blanch *et al*., 2012), and had the potential to support co-researchers' healing (Pérez II & Vicente, 2022).

Theoretical framework

Through my exploration of phenomenology, I discovered the chosen humanistic therapeutic counselling theoretical perspective (Wilkinson, 2022a), which enabled me to utilise my own experiences to support ISV, as my openness allowed me to understand co-researchers' experiences. I incubated the co-researchers' experiences and began drawing themes that connected them to my own, adding depth to the data (Gendlin *et al.*, 2018;

Wilkinson, 2022b). Discussing co-researchers' emotions was also significant in exploring how co-researchers' past and present experiences continue to impact them now as adults (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, reprinted in 2013; 1968). However, co-researchers may have remained silent regarding some emotions (Sultan, 2019), particularly those that are painful. Chang (2010) highlighted how my experiences could intersect with co-researchers' experiences, working collaboratively with co-researchers, keeping a researcher's diary, and a counsellor development section (labelling in this research as 'impact of the research on my own self-development'), was successful in identifying and developing a conceptualisation of ISV.

The inclusion of Feminist Standpoint Theory (Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004a) has enabled the depth of diverse learners' experiences to be explored, particularly in relation to the role of power for marginalised groups. In prioritising diverse voices, I have utilised our "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) to gain insight into the "hidden" (Harding, 1991) processes that impact students' silencing. Furthermore, far from being central to women's experiences, feminist standpoint theory now considers "intersectionality" of all marginalised groups (Harding, 2004a), which was helpful in this study in recognising the felt subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and "epistemic injustice" (Fricker, 2010) experienced by my and the co-researchers. The theory approaches the silence of marginalised groups. It encourages "talking back" (Hooks, 2014) in collaboration with those in authority as beneficial to all (Hooks, 1994), which concurs with the findings of this research. However, I understand that the complexity of human diversity means that the

findings of this research may not resolve the challenges or power, nor will they apply to all diverse learners or all institutions (as suggested by Carbado *et al*., 2013; Collins, 2000; Hartsock, 1998b). This will require more research, perhaps utilising alternative theoretical perspectives, such as Critical Race Theory (Clay and Lalas, 2023), Critical Disability Theory (Brown *et al*., 2019) or Critical Pedagogy (Vilanueva & Sullivan, 2019).

Methodology

Heuristic Inquiry encourages the rich, in-depth voice of the co-researchers to be heard (Braud, 1998; Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Hiles, 2001; Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990), an essential methodology for DLN students who were silenced in childhood by authority figures (Clark, 2024). Therefore, it was necessary to be open regarding my own childhood experiences with my voice as a diverse learner to help build trust with the co-researchers using 'self-disclosure' (Buber, 1965; Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Hiles, 2001; Jourard, 1968; Jourard & Friedman, 1970; Moustakas, 1990) whereby hierarchy is reduced or removed (Byrne, 2017).

I was also able to provide Rogers' (1969) core conditions within the I-thou space (Buber, translated in 2010), enabling empathy and understanding to be felt, which became a recurring theme for ISV, revealing the need for this type of interaction. However, utilising such concepts as intuition, hunches, 'focusing', 'indwelling', 'self-dialogue', and 'tacit knowing' reduces the ability to use logical scientific approaches (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Gendlin, 2003; Hiles, 2001; Moustakas, 1990; Polanyi, 1966; 1969) but it does provide a unique lens (Polanyi, 1969) in which to explore the experiences of marginalised

students, the impact on their voice and the personal self-development that can arise from such work (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). However, it is unclear to what extent 'self-actualisation' had taken place (Maslow, 1971).

Research design and method

I opted for an interview method and based on the ontology, I found myself paying attention to co-researchers' use of language, such as the lexical choices related to judgement, fear, emotions, and safety. This language use highlighted to me that the experience of SV processes in HE was linked to co-researchers' relational interactions (Herman, 2023; 2010). Co-researchers found benefit in hearing my own firsthand experiences (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Mihalache, 2019), and this is evident in the themes, where understanding and representation were found to elicit ISV insights and validation. HI methodology proved successful because it provided the humanistic, therapeutic, relational approach that co-researchers, due to the trauma they (and I) had experienced, required (Hiles, 2001; Mihalache, 2019; Sultan, 2019, 2020). Therefore, it was essential for me that we could express our experiences with understanding and empathy to co-create new knowledge (Moustakas, 1990). The sharing of experiences provided 'congruence,' 'empathy,' and 'unconditional positive regard' (Rogers, 1969; 1980) because the co-researchers and I both had DLN which proved successful in the interview process and enabled me to extend my own knowledge with the support of another who had similar experiences to me (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019).

At times, I may have assumed the co-researcher's experience based on my own (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010), but I quickly clarified this assumption with the co-researcher to see if they shared the same perspective. The researcher's diary made me aware of my own imposition in the research process and the impact this might have on the interviewees. Therefore, I took the steps to reveal my own thoughts and experiences when the co-researcher had stated theirs first to reduce my influence on their responses and, at the same time, increase 'mutuality' (Buber, translated in 2010; Herman, 2023; 2010). HI (Moustakas, 1990) reduced power imbalances and improved equity of voice throughout the research process (Byrne, 2017; Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014; Hiles, 2001; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). However, one could never be entirely sure whether co-researchers were influenced by response bias, which has been found to increase when recalling emotional memories (Kapucu *et al*., 2008).

As outlined by Moustakas (1990), it was essential to provide co-researchers with the opportunity to bring both artefacts and communication into the research design which supported the success of listening to the voice of others with DLN within the collaboration of knowledge construction (Braud, 1998; Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; Hiles, 2001; Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). However, although co-researchers had the opportunity to include artefacts in the research, this was only undertaken by two co-researchers, indicating Sultan's (2019) point that artefacts were being used less often in HI research. It is impossible to know why the other co-researchers did not bring artefacts with them without further interviewing them. I assume that either the co-researchers felt

that they i) could communicate what they needed to verbally or ii) that the co-researchers did not understand the guidance I had provided in relation to what constitutes an artefact. Given more time, I would like to explore further. In my experience, the artefacts did not provide any additional inclusivity in the interviews (Mihalache, 2019), except when the pilot suggested that I take a list of topics to discuss with the co-researchers during the interviews. In hindsight, it may have been more beneficial to have sent this out to co-researchers before the interviews, as this may have supported co-researchers' motivation to bring artefacts.

Self-search

I was somewhat apprehensive about conducting the self-search chapter because I was concerned about the potential stigma associated with my perceptions of SV processes. However, I was encouraged by the thoughts of Devendorf (2022) and Gardner *et al*. (2017) that by sharing my perceptions, I would, in some way, be reducing inequality and oppression for diverse learners and providing some sense of justice in their trauma experiences (Herman, 2023; 2010). I am pleased that I persevered as this proved essential when conducting interviews, particularly in relation to building empathy for the co-researchers (Gardener *et al.*, 2017). I believe that the verbatim extracts from my researcher's diary and the inclusion of creative elements within the self-search chapter provided a unique “situated” (Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004a) ‘living experience’ (Sultan, 2019) of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) and “epistemic injustice” (Fricker, 2010) that might otherwise be absent from more traditional PhD research. This research

explored the impact of “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989) within the “matrix of domination” (Collins, 2000), indicating the influence of power and hierarchical structures in education.

I also do not feel that my approach to including literature based on the musings in my Researcher’s diary was the best, even though this was advised by key figures (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Sultan, 2019). However, the additional time frame allocated did not allow me to review and input the most up-to-date literature. A better approach would be to consider my own musings without the literature; however, I also recognise that this may lack academic focus. The self-search chapter was limited in the depth of the literature provided, but this is necessary to outline the researchers' limited awareness before involving co-researchers. Therefore, I cannot present this approach as either positive or negative, because it could be both and/or neither at the same time.

Although it is argued that HI is flexible regarding following the core phrases and processes (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Sultan, 2020), I found myself following the phases in a strict order (Moustakas, 1990; Sela-Smith, 2002) because I found the flow to help discover and guide the separate parts of the inquiry. I was able to express my initial interest in the topic and my past personal reflections using the ‘initial engagement’ phase and the ‘immersion’ phase (Moustakas, 1990). It is said that these should be explored without fear of judgement (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). I believe my avoidance of exploring my own trauma and silence was due to a concern that I would be judged, but this was read before I was aware that co-researchers also feared judgement. This illustrates why some

researchers may attempt to conceal their identities within the research (Grimes *et al*., 2019; Sela-Smith, 2002). However, I recognise that my self-search is only a "partial perspective" and that this might change moving forward and may not apply to everyone (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004).

I found that my insight into my own fears of judgement, both before and during the self-search, subsequently informed how I conducted the interviews with the co-researchers. I was aware of the potential for them to feel judged (Grimes *et al*., 2019) and sought to avoid creating this environment by speaking calmly and empathetically. Furthermore, to limit judgement. I had to give myself the same level of confidentiality when utilising the researcher's diary as I would give to co-researchers, such that I have only included the information in the thesis chapters that I feel comfortable disclosing, whilst all other reflections are kept private.

After discussing my trauma, I welcomed the distraction approaches to the 'incubation' phase because it provided some relief from the intense focus (Moustakas, 1990). In undertaking distraction, I became so relaxed that I was able to seamlessly move into the 'illumination' phase, whereby my thoughts began to inject themes into my awareness, leading to an 'explication' of my own individual ISV fingerprint, which I developed into a 'creative synthesis' (Moustakas, 1990). However, after interviewing co-researchers, I later discovered that my ISV fingerprint formulated through my own reflections did not identify the 'universal experience' (Moustakas, 1990). However, it did provide transparency in the research process.

Therefore, although there is some overlap, I reiterate that there remains an individual element to ISV that my initial ISV fingerprint was unable to capture, showing the importance of including co-researchers and hearing others' views, which Moustakas (1990) promoted. After conducting interviews, I was able to develop myself, which contradicts Sela-Smith's (2002) assertion that researchers are unable to achieve self-development. However, although this was not a stated aim of this research, I do not feel that I have experienced 'self-actualisation' (Maslow, 1943; 1971). This might take more time to achieve.

Researcher's diary

The Researcher's diary enabled the researcher's 'frame of reference' to be obtained before interviewing co-researchers, and to capture further evidence of self-development when co-researchers were introduced (Moustakas, 1990). An approach I adopted, which is illustrated in the analysis chapter. In this chapter, the co-researchers' interviews led to further reflections in my researcher's diary and prompted additional literature exploration, as advised by Sultan (2019). The researcher's diary was used throughout the analysis stage to support the development of themes, which extended my understanding of the topic of inquiry (Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019), such as the discovery of TiP (USDHHS, 2014). This contradicts the criticism from Sela-Smith (2002), who states that self-search ceases when co-researchers become involved. This was not

the case for this research, and the new literature explored in each section presented my continued self-development.

I also believe that this research has answered the overarching research questions formulated in the methodology chapter, whereby I have been able to reveal the role that power and trauma play in the lives of DLN students. Through awareness, the co-researchers and I were able to conceptualise ISV. I believe that using the HI methodology has discovered knowledge unique within student voice research. Therefore, Moustakas' (1990) HI was the appropriate methodology and method for this study as it uncovered the ways co-researchers' voices had been impacted by their silence. The methodology benefited the interviews because, through exploring the causes of trauma within the past, the co-researchers and I were able to progress into exploring and conceptualising ISV.

Ethics

The whole research was conducted to a high level of ethical standards, in respect of gaining gatekeepers' consent, co-researcher consent forms and the distribution of the Participant Information Sheet (PIS), which the gatekeeper and all co-researchers read and signed respectively (McNamee & Bridges, 2002; Punch, 2014; Sultan, 2019; Thomas, 2017). All interviews were recorded, and images were taken of artefacts before being uploaded to a secure online university site; all original recordings and images were then deleted. Co-researchers chose their own pseudonyms; however, these may have been easily identifiable. Therefore, I opted to use the first two letters of the pseudonym to

support anonymity and confidentiality (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010; McNamee & Bridge, 2002; Sultan, 2016; Thomas, 2017).

The interviews with co-researchers were conducted in the order in which they signed the consent form, and each co-researcher had completed all their interviews before moving on to the next co-researcher to prevent influencing one co-researcher's data with another, as advised by Sultan (2019). This supported the development of my reflections on the topic of inquiry, but if this had not occurred, I am certain contamination from other co-researchers would have been present. The conversational interview, as suggested by Patton (1980), Sultan (2019) and Moustakas (1990), was the best approach to the interviews because my original approach would have restricted me to set questions that may not have been appropriate to their experiences. Ethically, I did not want to influence the co-researchers' data, and found the conversational interviews to be more inclusive when listening to co-researchers' voices, rather than my own. The conversational interviews allowed the co-researchers to lead the interviews, while I limited myself to a few pre-prepared questions rather than many (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010). I am pleased that I discovered this during the pilot study, as it also supported the collaborative approach to the interview, which Moustakas (1990) had advised, rather than following my own agenda (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010).

All interviews were kept to time, and four of the nine co-researchers opted for multiple interviews, which equated to 14 one-hour interviews in total. As stated by Sultan (2019), the opportunity to prolong my engagement with the co-researchers provided depth to the

interviews and the data gained from them, allowing for a 'multifaceted' thesis. Multiple interviews allowed for the checking and re-checking of the data they supplied, ensuring credibility and transferability within the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sultan, 2019).

To mitigate ethical implications related to myself as the researcher, Moustakas (1990) advises taking time away to 'incubate' the knowledge gained between each co-researcher, allowing the 'tacit' to come into awareness. Ideas within the literature include walking, swimming, colouring, identifying feelings, using the researcher's diary and talking therapy (Sultan, 2019). All these awareness methods were undertaken during this research when required, though not all at the same time. 'Transference' did not occur during the interviews, a process whereby the co-researcher views and treats the researcher as though they are another person (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2014; Sultan, 2019); however, it is possible that co-researchers may not have mentioned that this was occurring. Therefore, all co-researchers were made aware of the counselling services available should they require them (Punch, 2014; Sultan, 2019; Thomas, 2017). Co-researchers were aware that I would utilise self-disclosure during the interviews during the recruitment presentation; however, I only disclosed my own experiences after the co-researcher disclosed theirs with sensitivity, as suggested by Sultan (2019), and I found this process supported the interviews. It was explained to co-researchers during the recruitment presentation and again before commencing the interviews that, although the methodology utilises concepts from humanistic counselling, I was not a trained therapist. This was not a weakness in the method, as I found the concepts and processes to provide

a mutual relational interaction which supported co-researchers' disclosure in the same way that understanding and representation became a conduit for ISV. I felt that I was being ethical in stating all this to the (potential and actual) co-researchers. Member checking was employed, whereby interview transcripts were sent to co-researchers, and contact was maintained throughout the analysis to ensure that the data gathered and themes discovered accurately represented the co-researchers' experience (Hiles, 2001; Sultan, 2019). This ensured that co-researchers had the opportunity to re-read the gathered data, choose whether to amend or delete elements of the data, and decide whether the themes best represented their experience. This is good practice in research ethics, as it adds credibility and conformability to the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sultan, 2019).

Analysis

I undertook the individual interview transcript analysis in the same order as the interviews, as advised by Moustakas (1990), to prevent themes from one co-researcher influencing those of another. The depictions and portraits included the co-researchers' own words as far as possible to ensure the experience was captured authentically (Mihalache, 2019; Moustakas, 1990). This process provided thick description, which Sultan (2019) states gives credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability of this research through ‘multiple perspectives’ and ‘transparency’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Themes representing ISV were found after each co-researcher’s interview transcript

analysis and supported the development of the final themes. The method maintained the co-researchers' voice as far as possible (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). However, I am aware that the composite stage merged the co-researchers' voices to create a unified experience, which enabled the development of the final themes. This merging, however, can be argued to cause some loss of the co-researchers' individual essence. I am neither identifying this as a positive nor a negative evaluative point, but one to reflect upon. Furthermore, it is possible that my analysis created distance from the co-researcher's experiences rather than simply allowing the co-researcher's words to speak for themselves. Therefore, this presents a criticism of the heuristic methodology (Moustakas, 1990). If I were to use this methodology again, I would be wary about presenting the co-researcher's experience in this way, and perhaps an alternative could be to simply use individual depictions and portraits.

One further criticism relates to the fact that this research was conducted for a PhD, which restricted me by word count; therefore, I could not include all the information from co-researchers, nor could I fully expand on the points I wanted to. However, the PhD process did enable the work to be reviewed annually in preparation for an oral examination by more knowledgeable others, which Sultan (2019) states adds further credibility, dependability and conformability to the research.

Conducting this work has revealed the numerous benefits and limitations of this approach, highlighting opportunities for further study. I will now discuss two potential future research opportunities arising from the findings of this study.

Potential future research

This section will consider two research suggestions based on the findings from this research, due to being identified as gaps in research and/or extensions to this work. One research suggestion aims to overcome some of the limitations, with the possibility of extending it to other educational institutions. At the same time, the second will implement and evaluate the approaches found in the findings. A conclusion to the whole project will follow this section.

This HI research (Moustakas, 1990) involved nine co-researchers, providing the reader with an opportunity to determine whether the conclusions of this research can be transferred to their context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further research could be conducted in various HE contexts (for example, such as those in Further Education or a research-intensive university). It could also be performed in different educational sector contexts (like secondary). For instance, this study illuminated to me that the home environment and early school interactions were instrumental in the development of coping strategies, of which masking and silenced voices were the outcome. It would be possible to replicate this research design to discover when masking took place for diverse students (O'Connor, 2023) and then discuss the potential for ISV in each educational context to explore which elements of ISV are appropriate for different age groups. Each context's research findings and, therefore, practice recommendations for ISV may need to be adjusted for each institutional age range, but how this will be implemented is uncertain at this stage.

The second future research suggestion would involve implementing the findings of this research into HE practices, within the research context, and evaluating their implementation. Here, however, clear evaluative success criteria must be articulated. Research could observe (longitudinally) the impact the changes might have on students, such as assessing whether ISV changes when the practical recommendations discussed in this research are implemented and whether the changes lead to students' development, authenticity, agency and/or academic success. More research in this area could potentially enhance the findings of this research. I recommend that work conducted in this area should be qualitative to enable nuanced data to be collected that sits within the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm and the interpretivism theoretical perspective, as this will mirror this research (Patel, 2015) because it is essential when progressing existing research to continue to utilise the same paradigm (Thomas, 2017). Where improvements in SV are observed, the research findings can inform a broader institutional policy change.

Conclusion

This chapter revisited the research questions in relation to the findings and assessed the self-search chapter to determine whether any self-development occurred (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). To achieve this, I explored the literature on DLN students' experiences in relation to the inclusion of their voice, discussed the findings explicated from the experiences of diverse co-researchers regarding the inclusion of their learner voice, and discussed how diverse students utilise their voice for each theme. A critical reflection and comparison were made in relation to the creative artefact before returning

to my self-search where I discuss key points of consideration, such as safety being a relational endeavour (Herman, 2023; 2010), removing the mask to enable authentic interaction, individuation, self-authorship and authenticity. As advised by Moustakas (1990), it is also important to note the self-development experienced by the researcher as a result of the research, which was completed in reference to each theme.

The thesis continues by providing practical recommendations. These are:

- To implement trauma-informed practice (USDHHS, 2014) in higher education institutions
- To create a person-centred approach, such as 'empathy,' 'congruence' and 'unconditional positive regard' (Rogers, 1980, reprinted with new material 1995) to be adopted in higher education
- To recognise the importance of developing 'authenticity' (Maté & Maté, 2022) in the 'individuation' process (Jung, 1953, reprinted with new material 2010; 1959, reprinted with new material 2014; 1971, reprinted 2014)
- To provide opportunities for 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012), and I propose here to utilise the 'Universal Design for Learning framework' (Bracken & Novak, 2019; CAST, 2024b; 2024c) following the recent publication by AdvanceHE (2024).

The recommendations were discussed before undertaking a broader evaluation of the entire research project. Evaluation is made in relation to paradigms, methodology, research design, ethics, and analysis. I completed the chapter by suggesting two future research opportunities. The following chapter will provide a final summary of the entire research, including research recommendations and specific examples within practice.

Chapter six: Conclusion and recommendations

> Developing one's voice takes courage and practice. Courage is necessary because you will inevitably experience failure ... courage requires us to allow ourselves to be vulnerable enough to continue trying (Robbins, 2016, p. 133).

This chapter will provide a final summary of the entire thesis before summarising the recommendations developed in this research. The recommendations will then be presented in a tabular format, accompanied by specific examples of practice.

Final summary

I have discussed widening participation and the impact this agenda has had on SV processes in a systematic and critical manner. I used these discussions to create research questions on the exploration of diverse students' silence and the ways they use their voice in SV processes. This research employed a unique approach to exploring SV in HE by utilising feminist theory, HI, and incorporating my own characteristics and experiences into the study (Moustakas, 1990), in the form of "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000). Heuristic research does not focus solely on interviewing others, but also on the researcher and the research process, by incorporating elements of my own learning reflections throughout (Sultan, 2019).

Research often focuses on contributing to new knowledge, and it should. However, this research has also profoundly changed me on a developmental level, not only as an educated researcher but also therapeutically in my pursuit of therapy. It is also possible that the research was therapeutic for the co-researchers, although this remains unsubstantiated without further investigation. Therefore, my contribution to new knowledge is not only conceptualising ISV for diverse learners, but also in the potentially therapeutic endeavour of Heuristic Inquiry (HI) for diverse learners (namely myself) through following HI as a researcher and a research subject, as was suggested by Moustakas (1990). Revealing that I closely followed the methodology.

Furthermore, choosing HI (Moustakas, 1990) enables the reader to view two perspectives (me as the researcher/subject and the co-researchers as subjects of the research). For instance, the self-search (Sela-Smith, 2002) chapter illuminates to the reader how I used my voice in childhood, including the processes that led to my silenced voice, making mistakes, my fear of hierarchy (Hooks, 1994), being disciplined or told that I am wrong, which led to trauma. The impact of this trauma is evident in Artefact 2.2. The self-search continued by distracting myself from the painful memories to exploring the ways I used my voice in HE SV processes, such as student representatives, student surveys and co-creation projects, whereby power was found to exist throughout. I ended by discussing the potential for an individual approach to SV processes that considers diverse learners. In my self-exploration, I discovered that I needed to undertake healing in the form of 'individuation' (Jung, 1959, reprinted in 2014) so that I might learn 'self-authorship'

(Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). However, I also realised that I needed safety (Herman, 2023; 2010), self-compassion and 'focusing' (Gendlin, 2003) to achieve this, and co-researchers required trauma support. Suggesting that tutors need to involve themselves in students' personal development to realise ISV (Hooks, 1994). However, much of HE consists of employing tutors based on their expertise to reproduce students' grade credentials rather than employing relational educators. However, there is scope to explore the potential benefits of employing relational educators, not to heal students' trauma, but to use their "epistemic advantage" (Wylie, 2004) as "situated" knowers (Collins, 2000) to aid students' healing of trauma just by being present.

The methodology of HI allows for the inclusion of co-researchers and the co-construction of knowledge creation (Hooks, 2014; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019), such as the co-researcher co-constructing ISV with me during the interviews. The co-researchers provided an alternative viewpoint to my own, which contributed to my learning, self-reflections and to the generation of research findings. For instance, there were similarities in the need for safety (Herman, 2023; 2010), the fear of those in power (Hooks, 1994), and the desire for choice and autonomy (Herman, 2010). Whereas there was a difference in co-researchers' suggestions of removing judgement, providing TiP (USDHHS, 2014), understanding and representation, and seeking authenticity. In analysing the data, I found the similarity between 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012), 'authenticity' (Maté & Maté, 2022) and 'individuation' (Jung, 1959, reprinted in 2014), which now affirms that healing and becoming more authentic is a suitable course

of action for individual diverse students and one, I argue, should be initiated in HE. Taken forward now by the new UDL framework, promoting equity education for all (CAST, 2024c).

Students in this research expressed feeling silenced throughout their education due to various forms of subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004) that exist in the "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000). Nevertheless, using their voice in this research had a pivotal impact on providing new knowledge. Therefore, supplying ISV could elicit more interesting reflections from diverse students that may not have been identified previously, including ways to improve HE practice. The difference for me centred around TiP (SAMHSA, 2014; USDHHS, 2014), an approach that I had not considered before interviewing co-researchers' but one which could provide diverse students with the 'safety' and 'peer support' from peers, lecturers, and university institutions (Bracken *et al*., in press) due to the ability to view people from a non-hierarchical position (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2014) and share "situated" knowledge (Collins, 2000). The need for healing was further expanded to include lecturers implementing Rogerian core conditions in their dealings with students (DLN or more generally) (Rogers, 1980, 1995), which again supports the relational dynamic of retraumatising and/or healing discussed above (Maté & Maté, 2022). Finally, choice and autonomy (Herman, 2010), such as in curriculum choices and assessment design, as found in this research and discussed by others (Brown *et al*., 2020; Dollinger & Hanna, 2023) could be facilitated by implementing 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012) and the 'Universal Design for Learning framework' (CAST,

2024b; 2024c) to enable “talking back” (Hooks, 2014) even when they are fearful (Taylor *et al*., 1995) or misinterpreted (Lorde, 1984).

I have provided a final summary of the thesis. I will now focus on the recommendations highlighted in this research, presenting them in a tabular format that includes specific examples of practice.

Recommendations for practice

This section presents Table 4.7 (below), which depicts the practice recommendations. The table (4.7 below) has been compiled using examples given by co-researchers in their individual depictions when asked to conceptualise Inclusive Student Voice (ISV) to ensure the aim of this research (to include the voices of diverse students) is maintained throughout. In addition, I have separated each stakeholder to show the responsibility that each stakeholder can take to ensure ISV. Please see Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Inclusive Student Voice recommendations and examples for practice

Stakeholders	Approaches to practice
	Individuation (Jung, 1959, reprinted 2014)
Student	-Access professional counselling and mental health support -Seek out peer support focused on mutual characteristics, experiences and understanding -Engage diverse student representatives to support voice and healing -Recognise when and why you are wearing a mask -Assess and live by one's own values -Develop healthy coping strategies -Learn strategies to regulate emotions
Student	**Self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012)**
	-Embrace discussing your needs with others -Utilise choice when appropriate -Scaffold participation of your voice and provide differences of opinion -Promote individual autonomy and advocacy -Explore your own individual values -Use new knowledge to teach and support others -Ensure discussions are collaborative, safe and amongst friends -Anonymise your voice with the student representative if needed
	Person-centred approach (Rogers, 1980; 1995; 1969)
Educator	-Build rapport with students -Implement anonymous 24/7 student voice options -Removing the fear of judgement in student voice -Encourage authenticity for all -Provide a calm neutral tone of voice and open body language -Develop goals, provide reassurance and celebrate achievements with students collaboratively -Increase tutorials and check-in emails when needed -Provide negative feedback to students embedded within two positives -Practice understanding and empathy -Embody educational and pastoral support focused on social and emotional development -Scaffold participation of voice and differences of opinions

	-Provide peer support focused on mutual characteristics and understanding -Raise awareness and understanding of trauma and re-traumatisation -Participate in collaborative and safe discussions amongst friends -Praise and positive reinforcement to combat the negative internal voice
	Trauma-informed Practice (Bodfield & Culshaw, 2024; Patton & Caffrey, 2023)
Institution	-Implement anonymous 24/7 feedback options -Raise visibility of staff who represent students' voice, for example, the Vice Chancellor of Students -Provide a calm neutral tone of voice and open body language -Participate in collaborative and safe discussions amongst friends -Raise awareness and understanding of trauma and re-traumatisation -Praise and positive reinforcement to combat the negative internal voice -Create a 'home from home' safe space on campus -Embed student choice where possible -Support the Counselling and Mental Health service to understand the complexity of student voice and trauma -Enable the Counselling and Mental Health service to teach emotional regulation and healthy coping strategies -Engage diverse staff populations to support voice and healing -Facilitate annual discussion followed by a survey that encourages reflection of students' thoughts and feelings -Implement a survey for students in their final year of undergraduate study to assess their overall experience of the course -Provide negative feedback to students embedded within two positives -Practice understanding and empathy -Embody educational and pastoral support focused on social and emotional development -Scaffold participation of voice and differences of opinions -Provide peer support focused on mutual characteristics and understanding
	Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2024c)
All stakeholders	-Diversify approaches to obtaining student voice, for example, whole cohort, small groups, 1:1, polls or use of technology -Diversify approaches to presentations, such as in assessments -Diversify approaches to tutorials, such as in assessments -Provide time at the end of the lesson for module-specific support -Create a safe space to appeal to all by including separate zones for different needs

	-Provide regular reminders given in different formats to complete student voice approaches -provide the option to complete student voice approaches at home or in class -Diversity survey questions -Facilitate multi-sensory lessons and diverse pedagogy

(Source, created by the Author (2025) for inclusion in this thesis)

Stakeholders in Higher Education can use this table as a guide to improve their approach to ensuring Inclusive Student Voice. It is not intended to be an all-or-nothing guide but rather, a pedagogical educational approach in which we can all take the necessary steps towards equity of voice in Higher Education for diverse learners. I will now conclude this work.

Conclusion

This research has shown that DLN students in this study have often experienced fear within their home and/or educational environments due to subjugation (Collins, 2000; Haraway, 2004), which has led to their silence. Through “epistemic injustice” (Fricker, 2010), diverse learners learn to conceal aspects of themselves that have not or will not be accepted in education by performing a role (Butler, 1988). In some cases, this has led to shame and conformity (Hooks, 1994); in all cases, it has led to silence (Kennett, 2025). In HE, this has impacted the SV process because it means that DLN students are left unable to communicate their needs due to the fear they feel from their childhood and the concerns of being judged.

ISV can be more successfully implemented in education by providing an environment tailored towards supporting students with past trauma experiences, where they feel safe to heal their trauma (Young & Castro Schepers, 2024). This research suggests incorporating Trauma-Informed practice at the institutional level (Bodfield & Culshaw, 2024; Patton & Caffrey, 2023), whereby students can feel safe to participate with staff members who exhibit shared characteristics and mutuality (known as peer support), establish trustworthiness, a recognition of students' historical experiences and how these may lead to re-traumatisation, and finally, empowering diverse students to use their voice by providing ISV approaches (Kennett, 2025).

In creating an institutional environment that recognises diverse students' trauma, students may then find the capacity to obtain therapy in which to heal their childhood trauma (Kennett, 2025). This can be achieved through 'individuation', whereby students learn to manage their emotions and move away from conforming to their childhood personas, however, this is not an easy process (Jung, 1971, reprinted, 2014; 1953, reprinted 2010; 1959, reprinted with new material 2014) and therefore, diverse students may be reassured to progress their healing further once their environment feels safe as stated above. Once both approaches are enacted, diverse students may begin to exhibit more authenticity (Maté & Maté, 2022; O'Connor, 2023; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

A further ISV approach identified by this research (Kennett, 2025) is for all staff members to exhibit the Rogerian core conditions (Rogers, 1980; 1995; 1969). In doing so, diverse students will experience the empathic understanding from staff members that co-

researchers sought when using their voice in student voice processes. However, just as Rogers (1980; 1995; 1969) claimed that the therapist should be congruent with the client, this research also wishes to extend the same importance of congruence to staff members when interacting with diverse students (Kennett, 2025). When staff members exhibited authenticity, diverse students felt as though they could also express their own authenticity (Kennett, 2025; Kreber, 2014). This is especially important as voice and authenticity co-exist (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Again, Rogers (1980; 1995; 1969) is helpful here, as staff members can exhibit 'unconditional positive regard' for diverse students who may require full acceptance from staff members before being able to express themselves fully.

Once the institution, staff members and students have begun enacting the above, it may then be possible to start providing students with choice and autonomy (Kennett, 2025). One approach that can support students in moving from being influenced by others to living authentically is 'self-authorship' (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). However, diverse students who have developed a fear of those in authority (Kennett, 2025) may require choice and authorship to be 'scaffolded' (Bruner, 1975a; 1975b) in the form of 'hermeneutical resources' (Ferguson, 2025). In this way, students can progress from "being shaped by society to shaping society" (Baxter Magolda, 1999b, p. 630).

This research also suggests enacting the new Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework (Bracken *et al*., in press; Bracken & Novak, 2019; CAST, 2024c) as stated in a previous conference and recent book publication (Bracken *et al*., in press; Kennett, 2023)

alongside additional recommendations found in this research to ensure that students are provided with multiple ways to engage, represent, express, and action their voice. I have covered the elements of ISV (Kennett, 2025) found in the new UDL framework (CAST, 2024c), as listed in Table 4.6. Further specific recommendations can be found in Table 4.7 above. By incorporating the anticipatory design element from UDL (Bracken & Noval, 2019), diverse students can be provided with the necessary tools to use their voice in the form of 'hermeneutical resources' (Ferguson, 2025) and ISV approaches (Kennett, 2025). ISV is, in my view, one possible future direction regarding the purpose of HE.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Pilot study Participant Information Sheet

(Source: based on the University of Worcester Research Ethics and Integrity Office Participant Information Sheet and privacy notice template (internal document), adapted by the author (2025) for this study)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND PRIVACY NOTICE

Participant/co-researchers copy

TITLE OF PROJECT: A heuristic inquiry exploring the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education.

Invitation

The **** engages in a wide range of research which seeks to provide greater understanding of the world around us, to contribute to improved human health and well-being and to provide answers to social, economic and environmental problems.

I would like to invite you to take part in one of our research projects. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done, what it will involve for you, what information we will ask from you, and what we will do with that information.

We will in the course of this project be collecting personal information. The UK continues to be bound by the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016, which is now the "UK GDPR". Under UK GDPR, we are required to provide a justification (what is called a "legal basis") to collect such information. The legal basis for this project is "**task carried out in the public interest**." Since the personal information we will be collecting in this project is defined under GDPR as "special category" data, that is more sensitive data requiring greater protection, we must identify an additional legal basis. This additional legal basis is **"*necessary for scientific research in accordance with safeguards.*"**

You can find out more about our approach to dealing with your personal information at ****

Please take time to read this document carefully.

What is the purpose of the research?

This study aims to understand inclusive learner voice through hearing about students with diverse learner needs current experience of learner voice and the ways that they utilise their learner voice.

Who is undertaking the research?

Name: Anastasia Kennett

Position: PhD researcher

Role on the project: Researcher

Who has oversight of the research?

The research has been approved by the **** Research Ethics Panel for the College of Arts, Humanities and Education line with the University's Research Ethics Policy. The University of **** acts as the "Data Controller" for personal data collected through its research projects and is subject to the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. We are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and our Data Protection Officer is **** For more on our approach to Information Assurance and Security visit: ****

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have received this invitation because you are an undergraduate student in Level 5 and 6 of the B.A Hons in **** or the B.A. Hons in **** within the school of **** at the University of ****. To take part in this research, you will need to self-identify yourself as having a diverse learning need through signing the consent form. I am hoping to recruit 10-15 participants/co-researchers for this study. Due to the dual role that the researcher holds (PhD researcher and Associate Lecturer), those students who are taught by the researcher are excluded from taking part in this study for ethical reasons.

How do I take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part in this study. Please take your time to decide and talk to others about it if you wish. Deciding to take part or not will not impact on your studies at the University.

The process by which you can agree to participate is to contact me by email on Kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk by June 2022.

If you do decide to take part, at the data collection stage, you will be asked, at the start of the interview, to sign a consent form.

How can I withdraw from this study after agreeing to participate?

You will be able to withdraw from the research without repercussions anytime up until a week after receiving the transcription. This is estimated to be between March/April 2023. To withdraw from the process, you will need to provide your pseudonym name so that your data can be identified and destroyed. The interview will be transcribed, and a copy of the interview will be sent to you to be checked for accuracy and full representation of the interview. You will be given a week to do this. If you do not contact me after a week of being sent the transcript, I will assume that you are happy with the transcript and to participate in the research write up. Beyond this point, your data cannot be withdrawn from the research as the analysis process will have commenced.

What will happen if I agree to take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be:

- Asked to email me ASAP at this email address to contact me via my email address: kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk
- You will be asked, at the start of the interview, to read through and to sign a consent form
- Data you supply will always be treated confidential and will be anonymised, using a pseudonym, chosen by you, in the thesis
- You will be made aware after contacting me, that you have the **option** to collect artifacts or develop secondary sources that you feel represents your experience of voice in university and/or enables you to voice your experiences. These could include photographs, diary entries, poetry, drawings, paintings, graffiti, stories, objects, music, letters/emails between the participant and the myself. Any further explanations can be explained in follow-up emails with yourself should you need more clarity before taking part in the research. All questions you may have will be answered before you sign the consent form so that you are able to give informed consent.
- Once you have contacted me and agreed to take part, I will email you to arrange a suitable interview time (all interviews will take place at the University **** at a time convenient to you).

- You will be asked to bring with you any artifacts and secondary sources to the interview so that these can be photographed, described, and discussed. The original sources and artefacts can then be kept by you and the photographs will then be electronically stored by me as a reminder of the sources. The photographs will be used as a data source, but will not be used within the thesis without a secondary consent form being signed by you. All photographs that will not be used will be destroyed (estimated July 2024).
- The interview will be conducted in privacy in a designated room at the University ****.
- The interview is anticipated to last between 45 minutes - 1 hour.
- The interview seeks to collect your experiences of learner voice in relation to your diverse learning needs.
- You will be provided with the **option** to have follow-up interviews if you wish, each one lasting 45 minutes – 1 hour.
- The photographs will be used to inspire a separate image to be taken by myself to be used to enter the Images of Research Competition held at the University of ****. The images of your sources will not be used for the competition.
- Your views will be audio recorded via a Dictaphone and then later transcribed. A copy of the transcription will be sent to you via email where you will then have seven days to make amendments. After this time, you will not be able to withdraw data.

- Audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription and these, in turn, will be destroyed after the study has been examined (estimated July 2024)
- All electronic data will be stored in a computer file, on the University's system, that is encrypted, and password protected. Any remaining data will be destroyed after the study has been examined (estimated July 2024)

What are the benefits for me in taking part?

Through taking part, you may develop a great understanding of yourself, the problem relating to the research topic and will be able to use your own experience to contribute to new knowledge. You will also be contribution to the research and debate around the topic of learner voice. If you would like a summary copy of the research findings, please let me know and this will be arranged once the research has been written up.

Are there any risks for me if I take part?

The research is not expected to involve risks to the participant. The conversation will consider aspects of your experiences as a student. If, however, the interview raises sensitive issues the interview will be suspended, and you will be referred to the existing University support systems for students. You may also consider contacting my Director of Studies (Dr. Alexandra Sewell) should you feel that you need to. You may also leave the research without any reason until March/April 2023.

It is not expected that there will be any risks associated with Covid-19, as restrictions for Covid are currently being removed. However, all Covid-19 restrictions (if they should occur again) will be followed. This may mean that you will be required to wear a face mask and/or conduct the interview online.

What will you do with my information?

Your personal data / information (consent form, interview recordings, transcripts, and artefact photographs) will be treated confidentially at all times; that is, it will not be shared with anyone other than my PhD supervisors. It will also not be shared with any third parties specified in the consent form unless it has been fully anonymised. The exception to this is where you tell me something that indicates that you or someone else is at risk of harm. In this instance, I may need to share this information with others; however, I would inform you of this and discuss this with you before doing so.

During the project, all data / information will be kept securely in line with the University's Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data and its Information Security Policy.

The photographs of the artefact and the transcript data will be used as data for this research. Further consent will be gathered from participants where photographs will be used within the write up/thesis.

I will process your personal information for a range of purposes associated with the project primary of which are:

- To use your information along with information gathered from other participants in the research project to seek new knowledge and understanding that can be derived from the information we have gathered.
- To summarise this information in written form for the purposes of dissemination (through research reports, a thesis / dissertation, conference papers, journal articles or other publications). Any information disseminated / published will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised and there will be no way of identifying your individual personal information within the published results.
- To use the summary and conclusions arising from the research project for teaching and further research purposes. Any information used in this way will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised. There will be no way of identifying your individual personal information from the summary information used in this way.

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings or to be given access to any of the publications arising from the research, please contact us.

How long will you keep my data for?

Your personal data will be retained until the project has been completed and the examination for the work has taken place. This is expected in July 2024.

How can I find out what information you hold about me?

You have certain rights in respect of the personal information the University holds about you. For more information about Individual Rights under GDPR and how you exercise them please visit: ****

What happens next?
Please keep this information sheet.

If you would be interested in taking part, please contact us using the details below and we will be delighted to answer any further questions you have about the research.

Our contact details are:
Anastasia Kennett
Email: kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the project at this point or at any later date you may contact myself (contact as above) or you may contact my Director of Studies/Supervisors:

Dr. Alexandra Sewell: a.sewell@worc.ac.uk

Dr. Peter Gossman: p.gossman@worc.ac.uk

Dr. Seán Bracken: s.bracken@worc.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

If you would like to speak to an independent person who is not a member of the research team, please contact **** at the University of ****, using the following details:

*****

Secretary to Research Ethics Panel for College of Arts, Humanities and Education

University of ****

Appendix 2 – Pilot study Consent form

(Source: based on the University of Worcester Research Ethics and Integrity Office Informed Consent Form template (internal document), adapted by the author (2025) for this study)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Participants/co-researchers form

Title of Project:

A heuristic inquiry exploring the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education.

Participant pseudonym for this study: **TBA**

Name of Researcher: **Anastasia Kennett**

I, the undersigned, confirm that (**please initial boxes as appropriate**):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____ or it has been read to me.	
2.	I have been able to ask questions about the project and my participation and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	

3.	I understand that taking part in this study involves the optional collection of secondary sources, an interview, and the option to have multiple interviews if I wish to share more of my experiences. Secondary sources will be anonymised and photographed. Photographs will be stored within a password encrypted file. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and kept in a password encrypted file.	
4.	I understand that the photographs of my artefacts/secondary sources will become part of the data source and that a secondary consent will be requested from me if the researcher wishes to use my photograph within the write up.	
5.	I understand that all recordings and photographs will be destroyed after data analysis has taken place, estimated around July 2024.	
6.	I understand I can withdraw without giving reasons, up to a week after I have received the interview transcript (estimated March/April 2023) and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	
7.	I understand that the information I provide will be used to: • Develop a creative synthesis of the findings. • Enter the photos of research competition but I know that this will not be using photographs of my artefacts.	

	• Publish in scholarly materials, such as books, textbooks and research journal articles. • Discuss in local and international conference presentations.	
8.	I agree that my information can be quoted, using pseudonyms, in research outputs.	
9.	I understand that my real name will not be revealed, and pseudonyms will be used for quotes.	
10.	I agree to joint copyright of the artifacts provided to the research until July 2024 (estimated) to Anastasia Kennett	
10.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	
12	I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name, or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team.	
13.	I consent to the audio recording and transcription of the interviews.	
14.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	

15.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	
16.	I know who to contact if I have any concerns about this research	

Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Appendix 3 – Pilot study's artefact

Brown, B. (2008). *I thought it was just me (But it isn't): Making the journey from 'What will people think?' to 'I am enough'* (First trade paperback edition). Avery.

Hooks, B. (2013). *Teaching community*. Routledge.

https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203957769

Appendix 4 – Pilot study's consent form to use artefacts

(Source: based on the University of Worcester Research Ethics and Integrity Office Informed Consent Form template (internal document), adapted by the author (2025) for this study)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(Use of photos of my artefacts within the research outputs)

Participants/co-researchers form

Title of Project:

A heuristic inquiry exploring the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education.

Participant pseudonym for this study: **TBA**

Name of Researcher: **Anastasia Kennett**

I, the undersigned, confirm that (**please initial boxes as appropriate**):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____ or it has been read to me.	
2.	I give my permission for the researcher to publish any photographs taken of my artefacts for the purpose of the research dissemination.	

3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project and understand that my real name will not be revealed, via the use of my photographed artefact, and pseudonyms will be used for quotes.	
4.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	
5.	I know who to contact if I have any concerns about this research	

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Appendix 5 – Co-researchers Participant Information Sheet

(Source: based on the University of Worcester Research Ethics and Integrity Office Participant Information Sheet and Privacy notice template (internal document), adapted by the author (2025) for this study)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND PRIVACY NOTICE

Participant/co-researchers copy

TITLE OF PROJECT: A heuristic inquiry exploring the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education.

Invitation

The **** engages in a wide range of research which seeks to provide greater understanding of the world around us, to contribute to improved human health and well-being and to provide answers to social, economic and environmental problems.

I would like to invite you to take part in one of our research projects. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done, what it will involve for you, what information we will ask from you, and what we will do with that information.

We will in the course of this project be collecting personal information. The UK continues to be bound by the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016, which is now the "UK GDPR". Under UK GDPR, we are required to provide a justification

(what is called a "legal basis") to collect such information. The legal basis for this project is "**task carried out in the public interest**." Since the personal information we will be collecting in this project is defined under GDPR as "special category" data, that is more sensitive data requiring greater protection, we must identify an additional legal basis. This additional legal basis is **"*necessary for scientific research in accordance with safeguards.*"**

You can find out more about our approach to dealing with your personal information at ****

Please take time to read this document carefully.

What is the purpose of the research?

This study aims to understand inclusive learner voice through hearing about students with diverse learner needs current experience of learner voice and the ways that they utilise their learner voice.

Who is undertaking the research?

Name: Anastasia Kennett

Position: PhD researcher

Role on the project: Researcher

Who has oversight of the research?

The research has been approved by the **** Research Ethics Panel for the College of Arts, Humanities and Education line with the University's Research Ethics Policy. The University of **** acts as the "Data Controller" for personal data collected through its research projects and is subject to the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. We are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and our Data Protection Officer is ****. For more on our approach to Information Assurance and Security visit: ****

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have received this invitation because you are an undergraduate student in Level 5 and 6 of the B.A Hons in **** or the B.A. Hons in **** within the school of **** at the University of ****. To take part in this research, you will need to self-identify yourself as having a diverse learning need through signing the consent form. I am hoping to recruit 10-15 participants/co-researchers for this study. Due to the dual role that the researcher holds (PhD researcher and Associate Lecturer), those students who are taught by the researcher are excluded from taking part in this study for ethical reasons.

How do I take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part in this study. Please take your time to decide and talk to others about it if you wish. Deciding to take part or not will not impact on your studies at the University.

The process by which you can agree to participate is to contact me by email on Kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk by June 2022.

If you do decide to take part, at the data collection stage, you will be asked, at the start of the interview, to sign a consent form.

How can I withdraw from this study after agreeing to participate?

You will be able to withdraw from the research without repercussions anytime up until a week after receiving the transcription. This is estimated to be between March/April 2023. To withdraw from the process, you will need to provide your pseudonym name so that your data can be identified and destroyed. The interview will be transcribed, and a copy of the interview will be sent to you to be checked for accuracy and full representation of the interview. You will be given a week to do this. If you do not contact me after a week of being sent the transcript, I will assume that you are happy with the transcript and to participate in the research write up. Beyond this point, your data cannot be withdrawn from the research as the analysis process will have commenced.

What will happen if I agree to take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be:

- Asked to email me ASAP at this email address to contact me via my email address: kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk
- You will be asked, at the start of the interview, to read through and to sign a consent form
- Data you supply will always be treated confidential and will be anonymised, using a pseudonym, chosen by you, in the thesis
- You will be made aware after contacting me, that you have the **option** to collect artifacts or develop secondary sources that you feel represents your experience of voice in university and/or enables you to voice your experiences. These could include photographs, diary entries, poetry, drawings, paintings, graffiti, stories, objects, music, letters/emails between the participant and the myself. Any further explanations can be explained in follow-up emails with yourself should you need more clarity before taking part in the research. All questions you may have will be answered before you sign the consent form so that you are able to give informed consent.
- Once you have contacted me and agreed to take part, I will email you to arrange a suitable interview time (all interviews will take place at the University **** at a time convenient to you).
- You will be asked to bring with you any artifacts and secondary sources to the interview so that these can be photographed, described, and discussed. The original sources and artefacts can then be kept by you and the photographs will then be electronically stored by me as a reminder of the sources. The photographs will be used

as a data source, but will not be used within the thesis without a secondary consent form being signed by you. All photographs that will not be used will be destroyed (estimated July 2024).

- The interview will be conducted in privacy in a designated room at the University ****.
- The interview is anticipated to last between 45 minutes - 1 hour.
- The interview seeks to collect your experiences of learner voice in relation to your diverse learning needs.
- You will be provided with the **option** to have follow-up interviews if you wish, each one lasting 45 minutes – 1 hour.
- The photographs will be used to inspire a separate image to be taken by myself to be used to enter the Images of Research Competition held at the University of ****. The images of your sources will not be used for the competition.
- Your views will be audio recorded via a Dictaphone and then later transcribed. A copy of the transcription will be sent to you via email where you will then have seven days to make amendments. After this time, you will not be able to withdraw data.
- Audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription and these, in turn, will be destroyed after the study has been examined (estimated July 2024)
- All electronic data will be stored in a computer file, on the University's system, that is encrypted, and password protected. Any remaining data will be destroyed after the study has been examined (estimated July 2024)

What are the benefits for me in taking part?

Through taking part, you may develop a great understanding of yourself, the problem relating to the research topic and will be able to use your own experience to contribute to new knowledge. You will also be contribution to the research and debate around the topic of learner voice. If you would like a summary copy of the research findings, please let me know and this will be arranged once the research has been written up.

Are there any risks for me if I take part?

The research is not expected to involve risks to the participant. The conversation will consider aspects of your experiences as a student. If, however, the interview raises sensitive issues the interview will be suspended, and you will be referred to the existing University support systems for students. You may also consider contacting my Director of Studies (Dr. Alexandra Sewell) should you feel that you need to. You may also leave the research without any reason until March/April 2023.

It is not expected that there will be any risks associated with Covid-19, as restrictions for Covid are currently being removed. However, all Covid-19 restrictions (if they should occur again) will be followed. This may mean that you will be required to wear a face mask and/or conduct the interview online.

What will you do with my information?

Your personal data / information (consent form, interview recordings, transcripts, and artefact photographs) will be treated confidentially at all times; that is, it will not be shared with anyone other than my PhD supervisors. It will also not be shared with any third parties specified in the consent form unless it has been fully anonymised. The exception to this is where you tell me something that indicates that you or someone else is at risk of harm. In this instance, I may need to share this information with others; however, I would inform you of this and discuss this with you before doing so.

During the project, all data / information will be kept securely in line with the University's Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data and its Information Security Policy.

The photographs of the artefact and the transcript data will be used as data for this research. Further consent will be gathered from participants where photographs will be used within the write up/thesis.

I will process your personal information for a range of purposes associated with the project primary of which are:

- To use your information along with information gathered from other participants in the research project to seek new knowledge and understanding that can be derived from the information we have gathered.

- To summarise this information in written form for the purposes of dissemination (through research reports, a thesis / dissertation, conference papers, journal articles or other publications). Any information disseminated / published will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised and there will be no way of identifying your individual personal information within the published results.
- To use the summary and conclusions arising from the research project for teaching and further research purposes. Any information used in this way will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised. There will be no way of identifying your individual personal information from the summary information used in this way.

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings or to be given access to any of the publications arising from the research, please contact us.

How long will you keep my data for?

Your personal data will be retained until the project has been completed and the examination for the work has taken place. This is expected in July 2024.

How can I find out what information you hold about me?

You have certain rights in respect of the personal information the University holds about you. For more information about Individual Rights under GDPR and how you exercise them please visit: ****

What happens next?
Please keep this information sheet.

If you would be interested in taking part, please contact us using the details below and we will be delighted to answer any further questions you have about the research.

Our contact details are:
Anastasia Kennett
Email: kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the project at this point or at any later date you may contact myself (contact as above) or you may contact my Director of Studies/Supervisors:

Dr. Alexandra Sewell: a.sewell@worc.ac.uk

Dr. Peter Gossman: p.gossman@worc.ac.uk

Dr. Seán Bracken: s.bracken@worc.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

If you would like to speak to an independent person who is not a member of the research team, please contact **** at the University of ****, using the following details:

*****

Secretary to Research Ethics Panel for College of Arts, Humanities and Education

University of ****

Appendix 6 – Co-researchers consent form

(Source: based on the University of Worcester Research Ethics and Integrity Office Informed Consent Form template (internal document), adapted by the author (2025) for this study)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Participants/co-researchers form

Title of Project:

A heuristic inquiry exploring the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education.

Participant pseudonym for this study: **TBA**

Name of Researcher: **Anastasia Kennett**

I, the undersigned, confirm that (**please initial boxes as appropriate**):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____ or it has been read to me.	
2.	I have been able to ask questions about the project and my participation and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	

3.	I understand that taking part in this study involves the optional collection of secondary sources, an interview, and the option to have multiple interviews if I wish to share more of my experiences. Secondary sources will be anonymised and photographed. Photographs will be stored within a password encrypted file. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and kept in a password encrypted file.	
4.	I understand that the photographs of my artefacts/secondary sources will become part of the data source and that a secondary consent will be requested from me if the researcher wishes to use my photograph within the write up.	
5.	I understand that all recordings and photographs will be destroyed after data analysis has taken place, estimated around July 2024.	
6.	I understand I can withdraw without giving reasons, up to a week after I have received the interview transcript (estimated March/April 2023) and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	
7.	I understand that the information I provide will be used to: • Develop a creative synthesis of the findings. • Enter the photos of research competition but I know that this will not be using photographs of my artefacts.	

	• Publish in scholarly materials, such as books, textbooks and research journal articles. • Discuss in local and international conference presentations.	
8.	I agree that my information can be quoted, using pseudonyms, in research outputs.	
9.	I understand that my real name will not be revealed, and pseudonyms will be used for quotes.	
10.	I agree to joint copyright of the artifacts provided to the research until July 2024 (estimated) to Anastasia Kennett	
10.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	
12	I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name, or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team.	
13.	I consent to the audio recording and transcription of the interviews.	
14.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	
15.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	

16.	I know who to contact if I have any concerns about this research	

Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Appendix 7 – Co-researchers artefact consent form

(Source: based on the University of Worcester Research Ethics and Integrity Office Informed Consent Form template (internal document), adapted by the author (2025) for this study)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(Use of photos of my artefacts within the research outputs)

Participants/co-researchers form

Title of Project:

A heuristic inquiry exploring the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education.

Participant pseudonym for this study: **TBA**

Name of Researcher: **Anastasia Kennett**

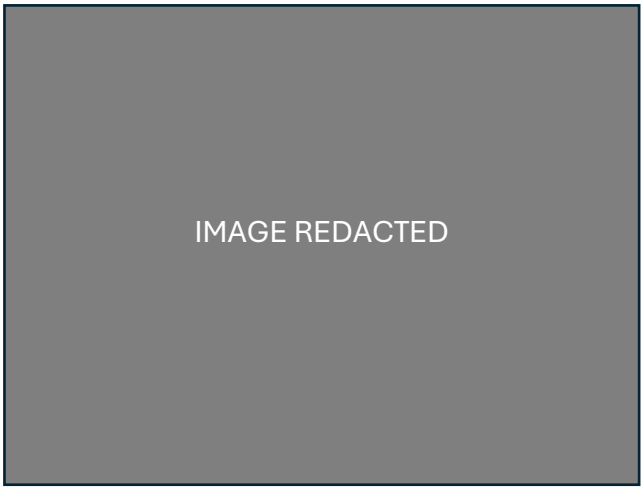
I, the undersigned, confirm that (**please initial boxes as appropriate**):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____ or it has been read to me.	
2.	I give my permission for the researcher to publish any photographs taken of my artefacts for the purpose of the research dissemination.	

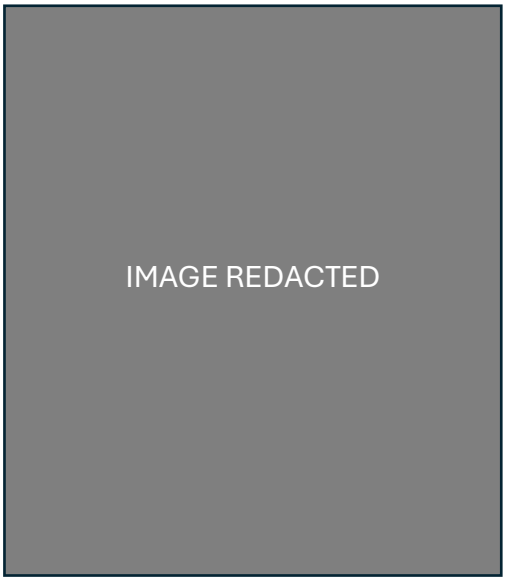
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project and understand that my real name will not be revealed, via the use of my photographed artefact, and pseudonyms will be used for quotes.	
4.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	
5.	I know who to contact if I have any concerns about this research	

Name of Participant	Signature	Date
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

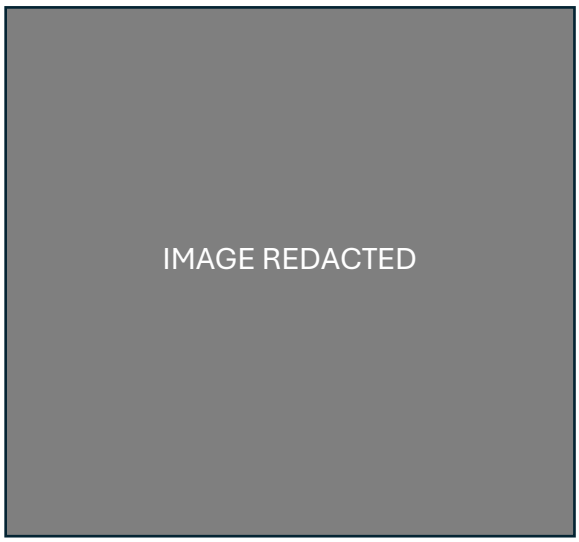
Appendix 8 – Co-researcher RI artefacts



(Source: The image has been redacted due to copyright restrictions. The redacted image depicted an internet meme of an animated cartoon character squinting in apparent confusion. The overlaid text conveys the experience of having many computer tabs open, depicting the experience of cognitive overload)

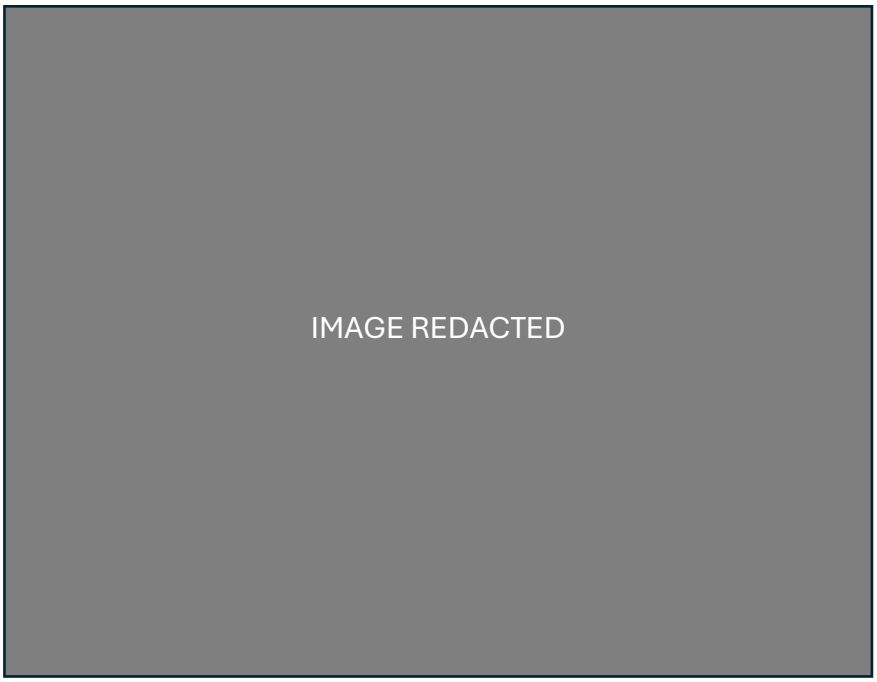


(Source: The image has been redacted due to copyright restrictions. The redacted image depicted an internet meme of a wet, wide-eyed cat that appears frightened. The overlaid text conveys the experience of having many computer tabs open, depicting the experience of cognitive overload)



(Source: The image has been redacted due to copyright restrictions. The redacted image was a meme that used a still image from an animated film featuring a character driving frantically, with her hair blowing about and an intense expression. The overlaid text conveys the struggle of balancing multiple responsibilities and maintaining a healthy well-being. This meme was used to illustrate the experience of being overwhelmed and stretched too thin by the many tasks a person needs to undertake)

Appendix 9 – Co-researchers RU artefacts



(Source: The image has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The redacted image depicted a red portfolio folder used to document students' skills, achievements, and qualifications. It was included to encourage a sense of educational achievement.

Appendix 10 – Ethical approval application form

(Source: Based on the University of Worcester Application for Ethical Approval: Staff, Associate Researcher and Postgraduate Research Student form (internal document), completed by the author (2025) for this study)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

STAFF, ASSOCIATE RESEARCHER & PG RESEARCH STUDENT*

*(*including PhD, DBA, Professional Doctorate and MRes)*

To be completed by staff, associate researchers and students enrolled on postgraduate research degrees proposing to undertake research regardless of the type of data to be used / collected. This is to ensure researchers can be confident about whether they need full ethical approval or not.

If 'yes' is given as a response to any of the items on the checklist, the rest of the form should be completed as instructed.

However, **if 'no' is given as a response to all items on the checklist**, you can self-declare that your research project does not require ethical approval. In this case, we still require you to give a brief summary of your project in 'Details of the Research' (**SECTION D**) before sending the form to ****

SECTION A: REVIEW PROCESS
Please indicate which Research Ethics Panel you are submitting your application to:

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, PSYCHOLOGY AND SPORT **(CBPS REP)**	☐
COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION **(CAHE REP)**	☒
COLLEGE OF HEALTH, LIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES **(CHLES REP)**	☐
Please tick one of the boxes below. *Please consult the relevant guidance on Research Ethics Blackboard page before doing so.*	
FULL REVIEW	☐
PROPORTIONATE REVIEW	☒

SECTION B: RESEARCHER AND PROJECT DETAILS *(Complete relevant sections)*	
Lead Researcher:	Anastasia Kennett
Other Researcher(s):	
Lead Researcher Email: *(Must be a University of **** email)*	Kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk
School / Department:	School of Education
Status of Lead Researcher:	PhD Student
Project Title:	A heuristic inquiry exploring the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education.
DoS / Supervisory Team *(where applicable**)* ***e.g. for PhD / DBA / MRes students*	Dr. Alexandra Sewell [DOS], Dr. Peter Gossman and Dr. Seán Bracken
Is project externally funded or been submitted to an external funder?	No
Name of Funder:	
**** Funding Bid Reference Number if applicable:	

SECTION C: RESEARCH PROPOSAL CHECKLIST			
		Yes	**No**
1	Does your proposed research involve the collection of data from human participants?	☒	☐
2	Does your proposed research require you to gain access to secondary data or documentary material through an organisation or individual?	☐	☒
3	Does your proposed research involve the use of data or documentary material which is of a sensitive or confidential nature	☒	☐
4	Does your proposed research involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent? *(If your project involves adults who lack capacity to consent, please refer to the Guide to the Ethics Checklist as it may need to be reviewed by an NHS Research Ethics Committee)*	☐	☒

5	Will your proposed research require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited?	☒	☐
6	Will financial inducements be offered to participants in your proposed research beyond reasonable expenses and/or compensation for time?	☐	☒
7	Will your proposed research involve collection of data relating to sensitive topics?	☐	☒
8	Will your proposed research involve collection of security-sensitive materials?	☐	☒
9	Is pain or discomfort likely to result from your proposed research?	☐	☒
10	Could your proposed research induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks	☐	☒

	encountered in normal life?		
11	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in your proposed research without their knowledge and consent at the time?	☐	☒
12	Does your proposed research involve deception?	☐	☒
13	Will your proposed research require the gathering of information about unlawful activity?	☐	☒
14	Will invasive procedures be part of your proposed research?	☐	☒
15	Will your proposed research involve prolonged, high intensity or repetitive testing?	☐	☒
16	Does your proposed research involve the testing or observation of animals?	☐	☒
17	Does your proposed research involve the significant destruction of invertebrates?	☐	☒

18	Does your proposed research involve collection of DNA, cells, tissues or other samples from humans or animals?	☐	☒
19	Does your proposed research involve human remains?	☐	☒
20	Does your proposed research involve human burial sites?	☐	☒
21	Will the proposed data collection in part or in whole be undertaken outside the UK?	☐	☒
22	Does your proposed research involve NHS staff or healthy volunteers not recruited as NHS patients on NHS premises? *(If yes, before completing this application it is important you refer to the further guidance in the Guide to the Ethics Checklist)*	☐	☒
23	Does your proposed research involve NHS patients, their relatives, or carers? *(If yes, before completing this application it is important you refer*	☐	☒

	to the further guidance in the Guide to the Ethics Checklist)		

If the answers to any of these questions change during the course of your research, you should seek guidance from the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Panel.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL CHECKLIST DECLARATION

By submitting this application via my *** email account, I am declaring that I have answered the questions above honestly and to the best of my knowledge. ***Please note:*** *The Lead Researcher is, where applicable, submitting on behalf of all researchers involved with the research.*

- If you have answered **NO** to all questions you should now submit this form to **** to self-declare your project does not require ethical review according to the terms of the University of **** Ethics Policy along with a brief outline of the project in 'Details of the Research' (**SECTION D**).
- If you have answered **YES** to one or more questions you must now complete **SECTION D** and **SECTION E** and submit the completed form to **** identifying the College Research Ethics Panel you wish to review your application in the subject line.

SECTION D: FULL APPLICATION

Details of the Research

Outline the context and rationale for the research, the aims and objectives of the research, and the methods of data collection. This should draw on the previous literature and should be more than simply a set of aims and objectives. The methods of data collection also need to be justified, and the selection of specific measures or tests should be justified in relation to their validity for the population in question.

Applicants are encouraged to write as concisely and precisely as possible and use lay language. Please explain any acronyms or specialist terms used. The use of subheadings is helpful.

Research Context

In Higher Education, traditionally academics have tended to create and organise curriculum design on behalf of the students (Bovill, Bulley and Morss., 2011, p. 203). However, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) have increased their recognition of the "student voice" by listening to students concerns using various methods of communication to improve practice (Seale, 2009; Hämäläinen, Kiili and Smith., 2017). Incorporating "student voice" (Seale, 2009) into curriculum design has many benefits, including improving attendance; achievement; pedagogy and students' skills (Ruddock, 2006; Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felton 2014; Nixon and Williams, 2014; Brooman, Darwent and Pimor, 2015). These methods often include survey driven feedback systems, evaluation forms, and the National Student Surveys (Bennett and Kane, 2014; Canning, 2017; Thiel, 2019). Other methods have enabled students to work collaboratively with staff members (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felton, 2014) but Lecturers are still currently holding much of the power in co-creation participatory methods (Fry, Kitteridge and Marshall, 2008; Campbell *et al*., 2007; Bovill and Bulley, 2011; Bovill, Bulley and Morss, 2011; Brooman, Darwent and Pimor, 2015; John-Matthews *et al*., 2020).

Rationale for the research

However, students' diverse learning needs impact the ways students understand and respond to surveys (Bennett and Kane, 2014). In addition to this, there is also a concern that some students with diverse learning needs may not be able to articulate their curriculum design needs (Race, 2004; McIntyre, Pedder and Rudduck, 2005; Mann, 2008; Furedi, 2010; Canning, 2017; Gillespie-Lynch *et al*., 2017). This could be because these students struggle to separate their independent voice from the voice of the collective group (Batchelor, 2006) and/or inclusive voice has not been embedded within their Higher Education institutions feedback practices (McLeod, 2011). This has meant that students with diverse learning needs are vulnerable to having their voice left unheard (Batchelor, 2006; 2014). Their sense of being is likely to be different to the sense of being of students without diverse learner needs and (Moustakas, 1990; Guba

and Lincoln, 1994; Stoller, 2018) Research exploring the inclusive voice of students with diverse learning needs is limited, with little to no work exploring the inclusiveness of student voice practices (Tuhkala, Ekonoja and Hämäläinen, 2021).

This research seeks to explore inclusive student voice in an independent higher education university in England through the experiences of students with diverse learner needs. The research will ask the following main question, what is the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learner needs in Higher Education? It is hoped that the research will illuminate ways in which learners with diverse needs utilise their student voice through the creation of a creative output designed from analysis of students' depictions. The research will also seek to provide recommendations for practice.

Paradigm and Research Methodology

The chosen heuristic inquiry methodology will involve the collection of individual perspectives (Moustakas, 1990). In heuristic research, the researcher is said to hold a degree of knowledge which they can use to become a participant within the research and to embark on a process of self-discovery with participants, who are viewed as co-researchers to co-construct new knowledge and to illuminate a phenomenon (Douglass and Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019; Mihalache, 2019). New knowledge is created through the researcher's own personal self-discovery followed by the interpretation of the "lived" experiences of others (Moustakas, 1990; Moss, 2015). This allows the researcher to explore and interpret the researcher/co-researcher's in-depth experiences through the language they use (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2001; van Manen, 2015). This situates the research within a constructivist/interpretive relativism ontological positioning and an interpretivism epistemological positioning (Sultan, 2019).

The theoretical perspective for this research aims to understand and interpret participants experiences through "intentionality" for a chosen phenomenon and the meaning-making that the researcher and co-researchers construct relating to a phenomenon (Husserl; 1931; Crotty, 1998). This situates this research within a phenomenological interpretivism perspective (Crotty, 1998; Klien and Myers, 1999; Goldkuhl, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2017). Although Husserl (1970) recommended "reduction" as a process to attempt to reduce researcher bias, Moustakas' (1990) heuristic inquiry adapted the theory to aim for a deeper sense of meaning by incorporating researchers' own experience. Furthermore, Heuristic inquiry accepts the researchers' and co-researchers' past and present perceptions of the experience as interconnected ontological experiences of 'being' rather than viewing the world as two separate parts (the participant and the experience) (Merleau-Ponty, 1968; 2013). I have had personal experience with the research topic that would be difficult to set aside and therefore the heuristic inquiry methodology will be chosen because it enables the

gathering of multiple forms of 'voice' and rich data (Braud, 1998; Moustakas, 1990; Hiles, 2001; Djuraskovic and Arthur, 2010; Mihalache, 2019).

The heuristic researcher engages in building an open, empathic, and highly communicative relationship with the participant/co-researchers (as seen by Rogers, 1980) to work collaboratively in an "I-Thou" relationship (as seen by Buber, 1970) to progress to self-actualisation (as seen by Maslow, 1943) through co-creating new knowledge (Therefore, the researchers' axiological values (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Hartman, 2014) of inclusion and co-creation will be fundamental in forming the aims and objectives of this work. Moustakas' (1990, p. 15-27) heuristic inquiry requires discipline from the researcher who is instructed to sit with the topic of inquiry, allowing thoughts and questions to move through the researcher's mind ("self-dialogue") until Polanyi's (1966; 1969) "tacit knowing" (knowledge yet to be uncovered) begins to be realised using "intuition", "indwelling" and Gendlin's (1981) "focusing" (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan 2019; 2020). This process is repeated until the experience becomes "illuminated" within the researchers own "internal frame of reference" and checked regularly with the co-researchers/participants for accuracy and thoroughness (Moustakas, 1990).

Aims and objectives

Research Aim

To explore the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs and the ways in which students with diverse learning needs utilise their inclusive student voice in HE.

Research objectives

To review existing literature pertaining to students with diverse learner needs and the inclusion of their learner voice in order to familiarize oneself with the existing literature and existing findings.

To discover interpretivist heuristic knowledge of how students with diverse learner needs experience inclusive learner voice in Higher Education in order to develop recommendations for practice.

Through the depictions of diverse learner needs experience, discover, and elucidate how students utilise their voice.

To utilise students' depictions to produce a creative product that will illuminate students' inclusive learner voice experience, to improve practice in Higher Education practices.

Research questions

RQ1 What does the literature say is the experience of students with diverse learner needs in relation to the inclusion of their learner voice?

RQ2 What is the experience of inclusive learner voice for students with diverse learner needs?

RQ3 In what ways do learners with diverse needs in Higher Education utilise their voice?

RQ4 What creative output can be created through the analysis of student depictions?

Methodology and Data Collection

Heuristic inquiry utilises a variety of methods for data collection, such as open conversational interviews, researcher's diary/journal, written and artistic artefacts (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). This gives the researcher and co-researchers multiple options to present and discuss their experience, in this case, of inclusive voice in HE (RO3), making the research holistic, inclusive and "person-centred" (Mihalache, 2019). Moustakas' (1990) heuristic inquiry provides the option for multiple interviews with each co-researcher so that they have the time to fully explore their experiences relating to inclusive voice (RO2) This means that interviews could continue beyond an hour and/or several interviews on different days; but this is aways co-researcher led (participant led) and there is no explicit expectation/pressure for multiple interview participation. Furthermore, the researcher will focus entirely on one co-researcher at a time to ensure that the data is fully complete before moving on to the next.

Data collection for this study will follow Moustakas' six phases of heuristic inquiry; these are: -

1) "Initial engagement" – a personal journey of self-discovering and "tacit knowing" relating to the research question (RO1).
2) "Immersion" – to become immersed into the topic of inquiry through interviews with co-researchers to discuss their experience of inclusive voice (RO2) and the ways they utilize their inclusive voice (RO3).
3) "Incubation" – a detachment from the topic of inquiry through distraction allowing "tacit knowing" to surface.
4) "IIllumination" – "tacit knowing" is realized, and themes emerge.
5) "Explication" – exploring the themes and thoughts relating to the experience/phenomenon to explain the researchers and co-researchers frame of reference.
6) "Creative synthesis" – Utilising the themes to create a creative output that best represents the new knowledge found. (RO4)

(Moustakas, 1990, p. 27-37).

A researcher diary will be utilised which will enable the gathering of the researchers' thoughts and the diary entries will be kept being used to inform part of the data analysis (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). Once the initial phase of exploring the literature has been conducted, the researcher will be recruiting co-researchers to join the research process through discussing their experiences of inclusive voice (RO2). Co-researchers will be invited to take part in an open conversational interview and will be asked to bring with them any written and/or artistic artefacts relating to the topic of inquiry and/or which will enable their voice to be heard (the bringing of artefacts will be optional) (RO3). Additional guidance will be given on the types of artefact/secondary sources that can be used and any questions regarding this will be answered before the interviews. It will be explained that the artefacts/sources remain in the ownership of the participants but that a photograph of the artifact/sources will be taken to be used as an additional data source, and this will be stored in an encrypted file in the university system. Co-researchers will then take their artefact/sources home with them. It will be explained to the co-researchers that the photographs and the written transcripts will be used as data sources. However, additional consent will be requested from the participants where the photographs will be used within the research write up/thesis and dissemination, but confidentiality will be maintained throughout using pseudonym names.

Once the study is complete, all electronic data will be destroyed.

Artifacts can be vast and take many forms, but some examples were gathered from the writings of Moustakas (1990) and Sultan (2019), listed below:

- Photographs
- Diary entries
- Poetry
- Drawings/paintings/graffiti
- Stories
- Objects
- Music
- Letters/emails between co-researcher and the researcher

Any secondary sources gathered belonging to a third party will be used in the interviews, these might be sources relating to the university, such as internet webpages and policy documents that have been published online. These do not require consent but will be anonymized.

The interviews will take place in a pre-booked private room at the University of **** to ensure that the interview will not be disturbed by others. The interviews will also be

recorded electronically and transcribed, the transcriptions will then be sent to the co-researcher so that they are able to check that the interview captured what thy had intended to say, this is called member-checking (Mihalache, 2019).

The mode of analysis as dictated by Moustakas (1990, p. 51 - 52):

1) Immerse oneself within the data for each individual co-researcher taking regular breaks and identify key themes for each individually.
2) To create "individual depiction of the experience" for each co-researcher that maintains the language used by them and to include examples from the transcripts and the main themes.
3) Immerse oneself in the data developed from the "individual depictions" and to create a "composite depiction" that best represents the themes of the group experience.
4) To utilize the "individual depictions" of two/three co-researchers (created in stage 2) who have best represented the themes to formulate into "portraits". At this stage, the researchers own meaning-making will be added to the "portraits."
5) To create a "creative synthesis" (creative product) that best explains the experience.

As part of the final stage of analysis, a creative product will be produced that will depict the experience that has been discovered through the process of inquiry (Sultan, 2019). This will be one creative product that will improve the understanding of inclusive voice within Higher Education (RO4). The creative product will not identify any of the researchers' names and anonymity will be maintained to adhere to ethical standards. The product will be centered on highlighting the experience itself and not individual co-researchers. Examples of creative products as suggested by Sultan (2019) include:

- A story
- A drawing/painting/collage/sculpture
- A photograph
- A voice recording
- A poem
- A video

This research will also utilise the work of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) approaches to qualitative research to ensure that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability is maintained. This research will utilize the following processes to ensure rigour:

- Prolonged engagement
- Multiple sources

- Referential adequacy
- Member checking
- Thick description
- A confidential “audit trail
- Reflexive journal.

(Lincoln and Guba’s, 1985, p. 328)

Project timetable (Full time)

January/February 2022

- Conference presentation(s)
- Research ethics submitted
- Complete initial literature search – this will be revisited.
- Begin writing methodology chapter

March/April 2022

- Obtain ethical approval
- Conduct pilot interview(s)
- Co-researcher recruitment
- Complete methodology chapter
- Commence data collection
- Complete data collection (August/September 2022)

March/April 2023

- Commence data analysis
- Complete data analysis write-up
- Conference presentations

March/April 2024

- Completed creative synthesis
- Complete thesis write up
- Conference presentations
- Complete journal article and submit to relevant journal

Dissemination

- UW Photos of research competition
- Publication in a journal(s)
- Local, national, and international conference presentations

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Who are your participants/subjects? *(if applicable)*

Moustakas (1990) suggests that there should be n = 10 – 15 co-researchers involved in a heuristic inquiry research. However, for this research, no fixed number of participants will be stated because the data could reach data saturation (see Faulkner and Trotter, 2017) or become fully illuminated using less participants than Moustakas (1990) estimates because of the option to undertake follow-up interviews with the same co-researchers. Therefore, although an initial target of n = 10-15 participants will be set, a smaller number of participants may be used.

This research will include co-researchers who are currently Level 5 and 6 undergraduate students at the University of **** within the School of Education and Inclusion, studying on the BA. Hons in *** or the BA. Hons in **** courses. All students on the two courses/levels will have the opportunity to take part as long as they self-identify themselves as having a diverse learner need that they feel impacts on their learning as part of the inclusion criteria. Participants will not need to be diagnosed as having a disability or learning difference to participate. This will be explained to the students in the research presentation to their group and through the Participant Information Sheet. Self-identification will be gained through an email confirmation to the researcher and through the signing of the consent form. The rationale for this decision relates to the research methodology in which the participants must exhibit a shared identity and experience with the researcher in aspects that relate to the phenomena (Moustakas, 1990). In this case, I, myself have a disability and have taken the BA. **** course at the University of **** and as part of that course, I had undertaken several modules that were on the BA. Hons in **** course. Participants will be interviewed separately and anonymously and therefore, will not need to disclose to anyone else that they have taken part in the research nor that they have a diverse learner need.

A rationale for the specification of the level of studies is because these participants will also have had experience of learner voice feedback systems as part of their university experience, which are essential components of heuristic inquiry whereby the co-researchers will need to resemble the researcher's identity and experience (Moustakas, 1990). Furthermore, as suggested by the chosen methodology, the researcher will also become a participant (Moustakas, 1990).

No incentives or compensation will be used to recruit participants.

References

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How do you intend to recruit your participants? *(if applicable)*

This should explain the number of participants and the means by which participants in the research will be recruited. If any incentives and/or compensation (financial or other) is to be offered to participants, this should be clearly explained and justified. The sample

size should be justified either on the basis of a power analysis, or on the basis of previous studies.

Please include in this section the following subheadings to indicate exactly how potential participants will be:

i) **Identified:** include details of inclusion/exclusion criteria that will be applied. If gatekeeper permissions are required to access potential participants, please provide details of correspondence with gatekeepers, and outline the level of gatekeeper involvement in recruitment.
ii) **Recruited:** indicate all planned recruitment methods (e.g. email invitation, in-person approach, social media (Facebook, twitter), snowball sampling).
iii) **Approached:** include details of how potential participants will initially be contacted, who will make initial contact, how potential participants will indicate their initial interest in becoming involved, how long individuals will have to decide whether or not to take part. Detail any screening procedures i.e. the procedure by which the inclusion / exclusion criteria will be applied.

(Details provided should clearly explain the process that occurs between a potential participant receiving recruitment material and taking part in the research- if helpful please include a flow diagram).

Please ensure that you include in your application copies of any recruitment poster(s), advertisement(s), invitation emails or letters and social media recruitment text. Please also refer to these below when describing your recruitment methods.

Identified inclusion/exclusion criteria:-

Inclusion criteria – Participants must be undertaking the undergraduate course in the BA. Hons in **** or the B.A. Hons in **** at the University of **** at the time of recruitment. Participants will include those currently studying level 6 and level 5 students and must self-identify has diverse learner needs. A diagnosis is not required. However, due to the dual role that the researcher holds (PhD researcher and Associate Lecturer) for the University of ****, only students currently in level 6 and level 5 will be allowed to take part. This is because students currently in level 6 will soon leave the course or would have left during data collection and are unlikely to return as students on the same course. Furthermore, current level 5 students will move up to level 6 in the September (2022) and the researcher will commit to not undertaking a lecturing position teaching on any level 6 modules for that year (from Sept 2022 – September 2023). This is because those students who are being taught by the researcher are excluded from taking part in this study for ethical reasons.

Gatekeeper consent will be required (BERA, 2018) from the Course Leaders (**** and ****) and an email will be sent out to each. The research requires the students to self-

identify that they have a disability and/or additional need but does not require the gathering of any other personal details.

Recruited - The researcher will recruit the participants from the University of **** School of Education and from within the Department of Education and Inclusion, who are currently studying at level 5 and level 6 of the undergraduate BA. Hons in **** or the BA. Hons in **** courses. Participants can be recruited from either of these two courses, an equal number of participants from each course will not be required and an initial sampling size of n=10 – 15 is desirable (Moustakas, 1990). Though no set number of participants can be fully agreed upon regarding obtaining data saturation, only the number of interviews; therefore, data saturation can be obtained by completing between 9-17 interviews with any number of participants (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022). It is hoped that between 50-80 students will be invited to participate in the research, with the objective of recruiting (minimum desired number) of the students. Recruitment will take place in-person through presenting the research idea to undergraduate students within their university lessons. The presentation will include circulation of the Participant information sheet (PIS) which will detail how participants can volunteer to be involved in the study.

Approached - Students will be asked to voluntarily (BERA, 2018) contact the researcher if they wish to take participate and the inclusion criteria will be clarified through email correspondence. If students meet the inclusion criteria that is that they self-identify as having a diverse learner need, they will be able to book an interview. Two weeks after the presentation, a reminder email will be sent, including the PIS form, to all the students on the two courses, through each Course Administrator. This research will use an opportunistic sampling method in which a targeted group is chosen but only those students who feel they have the time to participate can contact the researcher.

No incentives will be provided for participants.

References

BERA (2018) Ethical guidelines for educational research, London: British Educational Research Association (BERA).

Hennink, M. and Kaiser, B. (2022). 'Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: a systematic review of empirical tests,' Social Science and Medicine, 292, pp. 1 – 10. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523

Moustakas, C. E. (1990) *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications. Sage Publications*. Newbury Park: CA

How will you gain informed consent/assent? *(if applicable)*

Where you will provide an information sheet and/or consent form, please append this. The University of **** Participation Sheet and Privacy Statement template must be used. If you are undertaking a deception study or covert research, please outline how you will debrief participants below.

Undergraduate students will be provided, during the presentation and subsequently within the reminder email, with a participant information sheet and will be asked to read this (see attached). The participant information sheet will include details relating to the gathering of participant data, such as information relating to the interviews and the use of artefacts. For instance, participants will remain the owners of the artefacts, but the artefacts will be photographed, discussed, and described in relation to the research topic.

If participants agree to participate within the research, they will be asked to email the researcher who will ask them to self-identify that they have a diverse learner need and will also ask them to provide informed consent by signing a consent form (see attached) before engaging in any aspect of the study (estimated to be June/July 2022) (BERA, 2018). This consent will cover the interview process, recording and photographing of any artefacts that they wish to include. Participants will be informed that an additional signed consent form will be sought from them before the photographs of their artefacts, with pseudonyms, will be used for the write up and dissemination.

To accommodate for diverse learner needs, participant can request that the participant information sheet and the consent form be supplied to them in a variety of formats, such as a PDF, or presented without tables and/or on coloured backgrounds. However, although the format will be different, the information within them will be the same.

After the interviews, a transcript will be created of the interview which will be sent to the participants so that they are able to check the representation of the transcript. The participants will then have a week to respond with edits. If after a week, the participants have not contacted me, I will assume that they are happy with the transcripts and the option to withdraw from the study will be removed.

Participants will still have the choice to withdraw from the research at any point up until commencement of the data analysis (BERA, 2018). This will be somewhere between the March and April of 2023 as stipulated on the Participant Information Sheet.

References:

BERA (2018) Ethical guidelines for educational research, London: British Educational Research Association (BERA).

Moustakas, C. E. (1990) *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications. Sage Publications*. Newbury Park: CA

Confidentiality, Anonymity, Data Storage and Disposal *(if applicable)*

Provide explanation of any measures to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of data, including specific explanation of data storage and disposal plans. Plans for data storage and disposal must be feasible given the nature of the study.

Please use the following headings:

i) **Confidentiality**: will participants be identified (*directly or indirectly*) in any study outputs or their identity disclosed to any third party? If yes, please provide further details and justification.

ii) **Anonymity:** are the data being collected fully anonymously i.e. the identity of participants (directly or indirectly) will not be known at any point to the researcher? If the data **are not** being collected anonymously will it be stored in an identifiable format, or after data collection will it be anonymised (*permanently de-identified to the researcher*) or pseudonymised (*process whereby all identifiers are removed and a unique reference is assigned to each participant to which the researcher retains the key, in a separate secure location and is therefore still able to identify a participant's data*)? Please give full details.

iii) **Data storage**: where will the data (*paper and electronic*) be stored including consent forms? Who will have access to the data? If applicable, include details of level of encryption on portable devices.

iv) **Disposal:** how long will the data be stored? What arrangements will be in place for the secure disposal of data?

For guidance please refer to the current UW Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data.

Data formats: -

In Heuristic Inquiry, the participants and researcher can bring their own secondary sources as data to the research in the form of artifacts. The range of artifacts can be vast and take many forms, but some examples were gathered from the writings of Moustakas (1990) and Sultan (2019) who identified the examples listed in the table

below. The table also explains the ways in which the artefacts will be used whilst also maintaining participants confidentiality, anonymity, data storage and data disposal:

Paperwork as artifacts: Photographs, diary entries, written poetry, drawings, paintings/graffiti, stories, music	Should not contain any identifiable information or person. A pseudonym name/number will be used, and a photograph will be digitized. Additional signed consent will be requested by the participants to use the photograph within the write up and dissemination. Photographs will be stored electronically in a computer file with an encrypted password attached. Any unused digitized materials will be deleted once the work has been examined (estimated July 2024).
Electronic artefacts: Letters/emails between co-researcher and the researcher, voice or video recordings from the interviews, photographs, diary entries, written poetry, drawings, paintings/graffiti, stories, music, online webpages and policy documents	Should not contain any identifiable information or person. A pseudonym name/number will be used, and photographs of the artifacts will be stored electronically in computer file with an encrypted password attached. Additional signed consent will be requested by the participants to use the photograph within the write up and dissemination. The password encrypted file will be deleted once the work has been examined (estimated July 2024).
Objects	Should not contain any identifiable information or person. A pseudonym name/number will be used, and a digitalized photograph will be taken of the artefact. Additional signed consent will be requested by the participants to use the photograph within the write up and dissemination Any digitized materials will be deleted once the work has been examined (estimated July 2024).
Interview recordings and transcripts	Should not contain any identifiable information or person. A pseudonym name/number will be used, and the recordings will be stored electronically in a password encrypted file until

	transcribed. Once transcription has taken place, the recordings will be destroyed. Any remaining transcripts within the file will be destroyed once the work has been examined (estimated July 2024).

Confidentiality – Participants will not be identified by the research as they will be asked to provide a pseudonym that will be used on all photographs of artifacts and interview transcripts. The list of participants, their pseudonym names and the list of their artefacts will be kept on a digitalized spreadsheet and stored on the university OneDrive space. This data will then be destroyed once the work has been examined (estimated July 2024).

Confidentially will be maintained throughout the research (BERA, 2018). Artifacts should not include an image of the participant or any other person; nor should the artefact include words that could identify the participant or another person and where these are displayed, every attempt will be made to removed them. Where this cannot be achieved, the artifact will be removed from the research.

Photographs of artefacts and interview transcripts will be used as data sources, but additional consent will be gained from the participants for the use of the photograph within the write up/thesis and dissemination.

Anonymity – Data that includes any identifiable information, such as relating to the university in which they attend, or names of lecturers/friends will be anonymized during the transcript phase and pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality (BERA, 2018).

The promise of confidentiality and anonymity will only be broken in the unlikely event of a risk of harm to the participant or other people, in this case, the interview will be stopped, and the participants will be reminded of the consent form that they signed, and the supervisor will be notified.

Data Storage – Digital Photographs, recordings and transcripts will be stored electronically within a password encrypted computer file.

Disposal – Recordings will be destroyed once transcripts have been created. Further transcription data and/or unused photographs will be destroyed once the work has been examined (estimated July 2024).

This research recognises the importance of GDPR (Information Commissioner's Office, 2018) with the following statement included in the Participant Information sheets to inform participants of their rights to their data and personal information:

*"We will in the course of this project be collecting personal information. Under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016, we are required to provide a justification (what is called a "legal basis") in order to collect such information. The legal basis for this project is "**task carried out in the public interest**". Since the personal information we will be collecting in this project is defined under GDPR as "special category" data, that is more sensitive data requiring greater protection, we must identify an additional legal basis. This additional legal basis is **"necessary for scientific research in accordance with safeguards."***

References:

BERA (2018) Ethical guidelines for educational research, London: British Educational Research Association (BERA).

Information Commissioner's office (2018) Guide to the general data protection regulation (gdpr). Available at: guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr-1-0.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk) (Accessed: 20th January 2022).

Sultan, N. (2019) *Heuristic inquiry: researching human experience holistically*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Potential Risks to Participants / Subjects / Researcher *(if applicable)*

Identify any risks for participants/subjects that may arise from the research and how you intend to mitigate these risks. Potential risks to the researcher must also be considered. Risks may include physical, practical, psychological and emotional consequences of participation.

Risks to participants:

Participants may experience triggering effects because of conversations had within the interviews (Sultan, 2019), although this is likely to be rare, the participants will be directed to the university counselling and mental health service so that they may receive help and support. Another reason for directing participants to receive counselling from the university is to prevent any "blurring of roles" within the research, such as the researcher becoming a therapist for the co-researchers (Sultan, 2019, p. 219). Participants may also contact the researcher's supervisor(s) and/or the gatekeepers should they feel they need to. They may also withdraw from the study without explanation.

Risks to researcher:

The researcher may also seek the support of the university counselling and mental health service should they begin to feel any mental ill-health arising from the research (Sultan, 2019). The researcher will also maintain professional boundaries with the participant/co-researchers through an on-going recognition of the professional ethical guidelines and boundaries that the researcher will be utilising in the research (Sultan, 2019). Time will be allocated between interviews and subsequent participants to allow the researcher time to use reflexivity and mindfulness, a key element of heuristic inquiry (Sultan, 2019). Heuristic Inquiry involves elements of self-discovery and therefore, the researcher is included as a participant (Moustakas, 1990). However, to mitigate any further risks relating to this, confidentiality of others will be used, and the researcher will ensure that any thoughts, perceptions and written diary entries will relate only to the research topic and will not feature any other identifiable content.

References:

Moustakas, C. E. (1990) *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications. Sage Publications*. Newbury Park: CA

Sultan, N. (2019) *Heuristic inquiry: researching human experience holistically*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Other Ethical Issues

Identify any other ethical issues (not addressed in the sections above) that may arise from your research and how you intend to address them.

Participants can withdraw from the research up to a week after they receive the transcripts (estimated March/April 2023). The participants will need to provide their pseudonym to ensure that their data can be identified. Their data will then be destroyed.

How specifically are you working to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission?

Please include reference to any specific protocols or subject-specific guidance that you are following. This should include all stages of the research, but particularly recruitment of participants and data collection. Please also consider whether the risk to participants is increased due to their potential direct or indirect experience of COVID-19.

This research will follow any local and/or national Covid-19 restrictions. Currently, all Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted. However, should restrictions come into force again during this research, the research will take all precautions to limit transmission of the virus. This could include wearing a mask or using online platforms to undertake the research. These could be enforced at any point during the research process and all restrictions can be applied throughout all aspects of the research should this be required. If restrictions have not been enforced legally, but a participant is still concerned regarding

Covid-19 transmission, they will be asked whether they prefer online or face to face interactions and their wishes will be respected.
Published Ethical Guidelines to be followed
Identify the professional code(s) of practice and/or ethical guidelines relevant to the subject of the research.
British Educational Research Association (2018) Ethical guidelines for educational research, London: British Educational Research Association (BERA). University of **** (2018) Research ethics policy. Available at: **** (Accessed: 31th March 2022)

DECLARATION OF RESEARCHER / PG RESEARCH STUDENT

By submitting this form via your University of **** email account, you are confirming the following:

- I have read the University Ethics Policy and any relevant codes of practice or guidelines and I have identified and addressed the ethical issues in my research honestly and to the best of my knowledge and by submitting this form to ****
- I confirm that I have a research data management plan in place in accordance with the policy for the effective management of research data.

SECTION E: APPLICATION DOCUMENT CHECKLIST
PLEASE NOTE: ▪ **All research materials / supporting documentation must be submitted as separate documents with this form.** ▪ **Please ensure the documents are clearly named to indicate what they are.**

- **Your proposal will not be reviewed without these documents. If these documents are not received by the submission deadline date your proposal will be returned to you.**
- **Please refer to the Research Ethics pages on Blackboard for the most up to date versions of the templates and current guidance documents.**

Please indicate which documents are included:

☒ Participant Information Sheet (PIS) & Privacy Statement *(University of ****Template)*

☒ Consent Form *(University of **** Template)*

☒ Interview Guide / Schedule

☐ Questionnaires

☒ Letter / Email from Gatekeeper granting access to research site, data or population

☐ Other *(Please specify)*

➢

☐ Have you identified the relevant laboratory guidance concerning operation of labs in the context of Covid-19 and do you agree to comply with this guidance? *(where applicable)*

☒ Have you included details about how GDPR requirements have been met?

☒ Have you read both the **Research Proposal Checklist Declaration** (**SECTION C**) and **Declaration of Researcher / PG Research Student** (**SECTION D**)?

☒ Is the application being sent from a University of **** email address?

☒ Do you understand that by submitting this form from your University of **** email account you are declaring that you have met all of the conditions?

☒ Have you named the College Ethics Panel (e.g. CBPS / CAHE / CHLES) in the subject line of your application email?

PhD / DBA / MRes Students Only

☒ Has your Director of Studies / Supervisor PhD / DBA / MRes had sight of your application form?

☒ Has your Director of Studies / Supervisor been copied into the email sending the application?

Appendix 11 – Interview guide

Pre-interview set up

- The audio recording device will be switched on.
- The researcher will thank the co-researcher for taking part in the research and will remind the co-researcher to read and sign the consent form and will be told about what the research entails
- The co-researcher is informed that they can have ask any questions and have them answered.
- The researcher will remind the co-researcher of the inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Grounding meditative activity: Several deep breaths will be taken by the researcher. The co-researcher will be invited to join in if they feel comfortable to do so.
- Introduce co-researcher to the main aims and objectives of the research being careful not to influence their thoughts.
- Start the interview
- Take a photo and discuss the artefacts and secondary sources.

Exploring personal experience of inclusive voice

1) As a student with diverse learner needs, what does it mean for you to have a say about your education?

2) As a student with diverse learner needs what does learner voice mean to you?

Additional probing questions

- Tell me about a time in which you felt you did not have a say regarding your education because of your diverse learner need and how did that feel for you?
- Tell me about a time in which you felt you could have a say in your education because of your diverse learner need and how did that feel for you?
- Tell me what your experience of providing feedback was like in other educational settings?

Students' present experience of student voice feedback systems

3) In what ways has university enabled you to have a voice regarding your educational experience
4) What was your experience of having a voice and providing feedback within university and being a student with diverse learner needs?

Additional probing questions:

- What does it mean to you to have your learner voice listened to within university?
- In what areas of your learner experience would you like to have more of your voice listened to and why?
- In what ways have you felt advantages/disadvantaged by student feedback systems and how?

- As a student with diverse learner needs, in what ways have you found it challenging to communicate your thoughts and ideas through the current feedback systems?
- As a student, which techniques have the university used which enabled you to utilise your own individual voice?
- As a student, what techniques have you personally used which enabled you to utilise your own individual voice?

Students' inclusion/exclusion of current student voice feedback processes

5) As a student with diverse learner needs, what ways do you think student feedback systems can become more inclusive of your individual learner voice?

Additional probing questions:

- Please can you provide examples of the ways in which you have experienced inclusivity when utilising your individual voice to provide student feedback?
- Please can you provide examples of the ways you have felt excluded when utilising your individual voice to provide student feedback?
- Tell me what it was like for you when you felt excluded in respect of student voice, and can you provide examples of this?
- Tell me what it was like for you when you felt included in respect of student voice, and can you provide examples of this?

Exploring inclusive voice feedback processes

6) As a student with diverse learner needs, how do you think the university can improve to become more inclusive of your individual voice during student feedback systems?

Additional probing questions:

- Through including the voices of students with diverse needs, how do you think the university student feedback systems can enhance the students experience of Higher Education?
- Can you provide examples of how the university can provide an inclusive experience during student feedback processes?
- What would inclusive feedback processes look like to you?
- In what ways have you been able to utilise your voice in a more inclusive way?
- In what ways can universities improve student voice feedback systems to enable more inclusivity within student feedback systems?

Generic Question

7) Do you have anything else to say regarding student's inclusive voice for students with diverse learner needs?

Researcher's responsiveness to the co-researchers' answers

- Display open posture and body language

- Display warmth, empathy, and compassion
- Provide own examples through relational conversational dialogue

Ending the Interview

- Ask whether there was anything that the co-researcher would like to add
- If not, then thank co-researchers for participating
- Turn off the audio recording device
- Ask whether the co-researcher would like another interview
- Arrange another interview if required.
- Explain that the data will be transcribed and sent to them for clarification of content and/or for suggestions of edits and the deadline for this is a week. After which time, I will assume that you are satisfied with the content of the transcripts. Thereafter, you will not be able to withdraw from the research.

Appendix 12 – gatekeeper's letter

Dear ****

My name is Anastasia Kennett, and I am currently in my first year of my PhD in Education at the ****. I am messaging you to request access to all Level 5 and 6 students currently enrolled on the **** and the B.A. Hon's in ****. I would be very grateful if I may be able to attend a mandatory module for each of these courses so that I may introduce myself and the topic of Inquiry through a small 10-minute presentation. I am also requesting for the course administrator to send out two follow up emails, one of which will be sent out a week after my presentation and the second to be sent out two weeks after the first email to all the Level 5 and 6 students.

My research project entitled:

"A heuristic inquiry exploring the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education."

The aim of this study is to explore the lived experiences of students with diverse learning needs in relation to the inclusion of their learner voice within their Higher Education experience. I am looking to recruit 10 -15 participants/co-researchers who will consent to me to interview them regarding their experience of student voice. The interview(s) will last between 45 minutes and 1 hour and will discuss how students with diverse learner needs experience inclusive learner voice within Higher Education. In addition, it will

discuss how students with diverse learner needs utilise their learner voice. The interviews will be audio recorded using a Dictaphone, transcribed, and then sent to the participants/co-researchers to enable them to check for accuracy and representativeness. The audio recordings will be deleted after the transcriptions have been completed. The recording will be kept in a password encrypted file on the University system and participants will have the right to withdraw from the research up to the transcription confirmation date. I anticipate that this will be around a week after each participant has been provided with their interview transcript. Transcripts will then be stored in a password encrypted file on the University system and destroyed once the work has been examined.

When they contact the researcher through email, the co-researchers will be given an optional choice to bring any artefacts and secondary sources to the interview that express their experiences. With the co-researchers consent, these will be photographed, these might include:

- Photographs
- Diary entries
- Poetry
- Drawings/paintings/graffiti
- Stories
- Objects
- Music

- Letters/emails between co-researcher and the researcher

The transcription of the interviews and photographs of the artefacts/secondary sources will become the data for the research. All photographs will be stored electronically and destroyed, although a second layer of consent will be requested from the coresearchers where their photographs will be used within the thesis. All artefacts/secondary sources will remain within the ownership of the participant and participants will be able to take away their belongings after the interview.

I have attached the Participants Information Sheet (PIS) to help you understand why and how the research is being conducted. I hope you find it to your satisfaction, however, if for some reason you have any questions or you would like me to be more explicit then I would be very happy to discuss this further and make any recommendations you might have.

Research ethics approval has been applied for by the normal process.

Thank you for your time in reading this email, I hope that you see this research idea a fascinating one. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact myself or my supervisors.

Kind regards,

Anastasia Kennett

Appendix 13 – Ethical approval granted letter

(Source: Ethical approval confirmation email from the University of Worcester Research Ethics Panel, received by the author on 17th May 2022)

COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS PANEL (CAHE REP)

CONFIRMATION OF APPROVAL

17 May 2022

REP CODE: CAHE21220019-R

A HEURISTIC INQUIRY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCE OF INCLUSIVE STUDENT VOICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Dear Anastasia,

Thank you for your application for proportionate review ethical approval to the College of Arts, Humanities and Education Research Ethics Panel on the 26th April 2022.

Your application has been reviewed in accordance with the University of **** Ethics Policy and in compliance with the Standard Operating Procedures for proportionate ethical review.

The outcome of the review is that the Panel is now happy to grant this project ethical approval to proceed.

Your research must be undertaken as set out in the approved application for the approval to be valid. You must review your answers to the checklist on an ongoing basis and resubmit for approval where you intend to deviate from the approved research. Any major deviation from the approved application will require a new application for approval.

As part of the University Ethics Policy, the University undertakes an audit of a random sample of approved research. You may be required to complete a questionnaire about your research.

Yours sincerely,

****

Chair - Full Review Panel

College of Arts, Humanities and Education Research Ethics Panel (CAHE REP)

Appendix 14 – Ethics amendments request form

(Source: Based on the University of Worcester Amendment/Deviation to Approval Application form (internal document), completed by the author (2025) for this study)

AMENDMENT / DEVIATION TO APPROVED APPLICATION

STAFF, ASSOCIATE RESEARCHER & PG RESEARCH STUDENT*

*(*including PhD, DBA, Professional Doctorate and MRes)*

To be completed by staff, associate researchers and students enrolled on postgraduate research degrees where amendments or deviation to/from a previously approved application are required.

SECTION A: RESEARCHER AND PROJECT DETAILS	
Reference Number:	**CAHE21220019-R** Student reference number 18004748
Lead Researcher:	Anastasia Kennett
Other Researcher(s):	N/A
Lead Researcher Email: *(Must be a University of ****email)*	Kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk
DoS / Supervisory Team *(where applicable**)* ***e.g. for PhD / DBA / MRes students*	Dr Peter Gossman (DoS) and Dr Sean Bracken (Supervisor)
Project Title:	A heuristic inquiry exploring the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education.
Relevant Research Ethics Panel:	**HS REP** ☐ **ECS REP** ☐ ☒

SECTION B: AMENDMENT / DEVIATION REQUEST
Nature of the Amendment
To increase participant/co-researcher sample size by: • Opening up the research to all level 4 students attending the B.A. Honors in **** and the B.A. Honors in **** at the University of ****. This will involve a face-to-face presentation to the students in a mandatory module whereby the research will be explained to the students and a PIS form will be distributed (Expected week beginning Monday 27th March). One week following the presentation, a reminder email will be sent out to the students to remind them of the research and will also include the PIS form (Expected week beginning Monday 3rd April). This will be followed up by a further reminder email a week later (Expected week beginning Monday 10th April). • Revisiting the level 5 and level 6 students attending the B.A. Honors in **** and the B.A. Honors in ****at the University of **** to conduct a reminder presentation for them of the research. PIS forms will be distributed (Expected week beginning Monday 27th March). One week after the presentation to send out a reminder email that will remind students of the opportunity to participate in the research and a PIS form will be attached (Expected week beginning Monday 3rd April). This will be followed up by a further reminder email a week later (Expected week beginning Monday 10th April).

Rationale for making the Amendment
Moustakas (1990) suggests that 10-15 participants are required to undertake a Heuristic Inquiry study. This research has not yet reached this threshold with only five participants recruited at present. The reminder for L5 and L6 students seeks to increase potential participants as does the expansion to recruit from L4 students. Agreement for recruitment for L5 and L6 has already been obtained from the Course Leaders. This will also be requested for the L4 students.
SECTION E: AMENDMENT / DEVIATION CHECKLIST
PLEASE NOTE: ▪ **A copy of the application and any supporting documents impacted by the amendment / deviation request must be submitted with this request.** ▪ **All amendments made to the application and supporting documents must be clearly highlighted either using bold text or colour to clearly indicate where changes have been made.** ▪ **Your Amendment / Deviation request must be submitted to **** when completed.** ▪ **Please note, your request will not be reviewed without these documents.**
Please indicate which documents are included:

☐ ☒ Participant Information Sheet (PIS) & Privacy Statement *(University of **** Template)*

☐ Consent Form *(University of **** Template)*

☐ Interview Guide / Schedule

☐ Questionnaires

☐ Letter / Email from Gatekeeper granting access to research site, data or population

☐ ☒ Other *(Please specify)*

- Email to gatekeepers requesting their permission

☒ Is the amendment / deviation request being sent from a University of **** email address?

☒ Have you named the Research Ethics Panel (e.g. HS REP / ECS REP) in the subject line of your application email?

PhD / DBA / MRes Students Only

☐ ☒ Has your Director of Studies / Supervisor PhD / DBA / MRes had sight of your amendment / deviation request?

☐ ☒ Has your Director of Studies / Supervisor been copied into the email sending the request?

Ethics response and changes made

(Source: Research Ethics Panel feedback email/document regarding amendments to the approved application, received by the author on 16th March 2023. The form also acknowledges the changes made by the author for this study)

RESEARCH ETHICS PANEL

REVIEW FEEDBACK / OUTCOME / RESPONSE TO AMENDMENTS

SECTION 1: APPLICATION INFORMATION *(To Be Completed by Research and Knowledge Exchange Facilitator)*

RESEARCH ETHICS PANEL	
HEALTH AND SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS PANEL (HS REP) *(School of Allied Health and Community, School of Science and the Environment, **** School of Nursing and Midwifery, School of Psychology, School of Sport and Exercise Science, **** Medical School)*	☐
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SOCIETY RESEARCH ETHICS PANEL (ECS REP)	☒

*(School of Education, School of Arts, School of Humanities, **** Business School)*	
TYPE OF APPLICATION	
FULL REVIEW	☐
PROPORTIONATE REVIEW	☐
AMENDMENT	☒
REP CODE	
CAHE21220019-R	
PROJECT TITLE	
A HEURISTIC INQUIRY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCE OF INCLUSIVE STUDENT VOICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION.	
DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN SUBMISSION	
Application Form / Checklist *(University of **** Template)*	☐
Participant Information Sheet (PIS) & Privacy Statement *(University of **** Template)*	☒

Consent Form *(University of **** Template)*	☐
Interview Guide / Schedule	☐
Questionnaires	☐
Letter / Email from Gatekeeper granting access to research site, data or population	☒
Other *(Please specify below)* • Amendment Deviation Request	☒

NOTE FOR REVIEWERS:
The review feedback template now relates directly to the information requested in the Application Form and various supporting documents that may accompany an ethics application. You **ONLY** need to complete those sections where you feel issues need to be addressed or amendments made. There is no expectation that you should write something in every section of this template.

SECTION 2: REVIEW FEEDBACK / RESPONSE TO AMENDMENTS

(To Be Completed by Reviewer and Applicant as appropriate)

RESEARCH PROPOSAL CHECKLIST *To be completed by Reviewer*
RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH *To be completed by Reviewer*
Are you confident that extending the research opportunity to L4 students on these two courses will give you the number of participants required? If not, do you have a further plan? Will revising the nature of the sample to include L4 students still allow you to address your research questions? You mention 10-15 participants as an ideal number, but in the event that you over-recruit, what will your strategy be?

RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT

To be completed by Applicant

I am very confident that expansion of participation to L4 students on both courses will provide the number of participants required for this study. The students are coming to the end of their first year in Higher Education and would therefore, have accumulated some experience of student voice in Higher Education enabling the research question to be addressed. Although Moustakas (1990) states that 10 – 15 participants is an ideal sample size to obtain depth and meaning, Moustakas, also states that one participant can be sufficient because of the opportunity to have multiple interviews. It is possible then to have less participants, however, the research findings would benefit from acquiring the depth and meaning from a wider sample of participants. A further plan to revisit L4 students (as has been requested for L5 and L6 students) could be deployed later to remind students of the study. In the unlikely event of an over-recruitment (more than 15 participants), I will explain to the student(s) that capacity has been reached and that unfortunately, I am unable to recruit them as a participant on the research.

Moustakas, C. (1990) Heuristic researcher: Design, methodology and application. SAGE Publications.

WHO ARE YOUR PARTICIPANTS/SUBJECTS? *To be completed by Reviewer*
RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
HOW DO YOU INTEND TO RECRUIT YOUR PARTICIPANTS? *To be completed by Reviewer*
RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
HOW WILL YOU GAIN INFORMED CONSENT / ASSENT? *To be completed by Reviewer*

RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
CONFIDENTIALITY, ANONYMITY, DATA STORAGE AND DISPOSAL *To be completed by Reviewer*
RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
POTENTIAL RISKS TO PARTICIPANTS / SUBJECTS / RESEARCHER *To be completed by Reviewer*
RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES *To be completed by Reviewer*

RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
HOW SPECIFICALLY ARE YOU WORKING TO MITIGATE THE RISK OF COVID-19 TRANSMISSION? *To be completed by Reviewer*
RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
PUBLISHED ETHICAL GUIDELINES TO BE FOLLOWED *To be completed by Reviewer*
RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET(S) *To be completed by Reviewer*

- Who has oversight of the research?: Please can you change the name of the REP to University of **** Research Ethics Panel for Education, Culture and Society? This is also the case at the end of the form

- How do I take part?: Please change the date from June 2022.

- How do I take part?: Could you factor in short period of time between being given the consent form and signing it? Participants need time to read through the document and give it further consideration so doing this immediately prior to interview can be problematic.

- Please change the name of your DoS to reflect the name of the contact details at the end of the form.

RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT

To be completed by Applicant

All necessary changes have been made – see highlighted sections. Dates have been changed to reflect the Easter holidays
CONSENT FORM *To be completed by Reviewer*
RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
INTERVIEW GUIDE / SCHEDULE / QUESTIONNAIRES *To be completed by Reviewer*
RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT *To be completed by Applicant*
LETTER / EMAIL FROM GATEKEEPER GRANTING ACCESS TO RESEARCH SITE, DATA, POPULATION *To be completed by Reviewer*

Please make revisions to the following sections of the gatekeeper letter:

- *'…and I have been ~~currently~~ recruiting co-researchers for my PhD study…'*
- *'I am emailing you to ask whether you would consider permitting me to expand my existing recruitment to all level 4 students. In addition, to increase recruitment of Level 5 and 6 students, I would also like to revisit them during one of their mandatory modules (expected to take place the week beginning Monday 27th March) to deliver a presentation about the research. I would ~~am~~ also like to request that a reminder email be sent out a week later with the Participant Information Sheet attached (expected week beginning Monday 3rd April), and ~~.~~ a further reminder email be sent out a week later (expected week beginning 10th April).'*
- *'An amendment to the original Research ethics approval has been applied for through the Education, Culture and Society Research Ethics Panel'.*
- Please can you clarify who will be sending out the emails mentioned in the text?
- Can you ensure that supervisor details are included?

RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT

To be completed by Applicant

All necessary amendments have been made – see highlighted sections.

Dates have been changed to reflect Easter holidays.

OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)

To be completed by Reviewer

Could you ensure you check the boxes in relation to the following questions in section E:

- Is the amendment / deviation request being sent from a University of **** email address?

- Have you named the Research Ethics Panel (e.g. HS REP / ECS REP) in the subject line of your application email?

RESPONSE TO AMENDMENT

To be completed by Applicant

All necessary amendments have been changed – see highlighted sections.

REVIEWER(S)

Please complete **SECTION 3** (below) and return your completed review to ****

APPLICANT

When you have responded to all required amendments above, please return the completed form to **** along with your amended application and supporting documents, for further review.

SECTION 3: REVIEW OUTCOME

To be completed by Reviewer

PLEASE SELECT ONE OF THE OUTCOMES BELOW FOR THIS APPLICATION

Application should be referred to an external REC *e.g. because it involves NHS patients, or individuals recruited through social care or the criminal justice system.*	☐
Approve the application	☐
Approve the application subject to amendments being made to the satisfaction of the Chair	☒
Resubmission of application to the Research Ethics Panel (REP) taking into account amendments set out by the Panel.	☐
Reject the application *Reviewers should only reject the application if they feel that there are fundamental issues with the project that cannot be addressed by revisions. These reasons should be clearly articulated.*	☐

Reviewer should specify the reasons for rejection below

REVIEW COMPLETION DATE	16 March 2023

Appendix 15 – Amended gate keeper letter

Dear ****

My name is Anastasia Kennett, and I have been recruiting co-researchers for my PhD study in level 5 and level 6 of your courses. I am emailing you to ask whether you would consider permitting me to expand my existing recruitment to all level 4 students. In addition, to increase recruitment of level 5 and level 6 students, I would also like to revisit them during one of their mandatory modules (expected to take place the week beginning Monday 17th April) to deliver a presentation about the research. I would also like to request that a reminder email be sent out by **** and **** a week later with the Participant Information Sheet attached (expected week beginning Monday 24th April), and a further reminder email being sent out a week later (expected week beginning 1st May).

All other parameters of the research, that you had agreed to for level 5 and level 6, remain the same.

An amendment to the original research ethics approval has been applied for through the education, Culture and Society Research Ethics Panel.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact myself or my supervisors: Dr. peter Gossman and Dr. Sean Bracken.

Kind regards,

Anastasia Kennett

Appendix 16 – Amended PIS form

(Source: Based on the University of Worcester Research Ethics and Integrity Office Participant Information Sheet and Privacy Notice template (internal documents), adapted by the author for this study)

CAHE21220019-R

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND PRIVACY NOTICE

Participant/co-researchers copy

TITLE OF PROJECT: A heuristic inquiry exploring the experience of inclusive student voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education.

Invitation

The University of **** engages in a wide range of research which seeks to provide greater understanding of the world around us, to contribute to improved human health and well-being and to provide answers to social, economic and environmental problems.

I would like to invite you to take part in one of our research projects. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done,

what it will involve for you, what information we will ask from you, and what we will do with that information.

We will in the course of this project be collecting personal information. The UK continues to be bound by the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016, which is now the "UK GDPR". Under UK GDPR, we are required to provide a justification (what is called a "legal basis") in order to collect such information. The legal basis for this project is "**task carried out in the public interest**". Since the personal information we will be collecting in this project is defined under GDPR as "special category" data, that is more sensitive data requiring greater protection, we must identify an additional legal basis. This additional legal basis is ***"necessary for scientific research in accordance with safeguards"***.

You can find out more about our approach to dealing with your personal information at ****

Please take time to read this document carefully.

What is the purpose of the research?

This study aims to understand inclusive learner voice through hearing about students with diverse learner needs current experience of learner voice and the ways that they utilise their learner voice.

Who is undertaking the research?

Name: Anastasia Kennett

Position: PhD researcher

Role on the project: Researcher

Who has oversight of the research?

The research has been approved by the University of **** Research Ethics Panel for Education, Culture and Society in line with the University's Research Ethics Policy. The University of **** acts as the "Data Controller" for personal data collected through its research projects and is subject to the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. We are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and our Data Protection Officer is **** For more on our approach to Information Assurance and Security visit: ****.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have received this invitation because you are an undergraduate student in Level 4, 5 and 6 of the B.A Hons in **** course or the B.A. Hons in **** within the school of Education and Inclusion at the University of ****. To take part in this research, you will need to self-

identify yourself as having a diverse learning need through signing the consent form. I am hoping to recruit 10-15 participants/co-researchers for this study. Due to the dual role that the researcher holds (PhD researcher and Associate Lecturer), those students who are taught by the researcher are excluded from taking part in this study for ethical reasons.

How do I take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part in this study. Please take your time to decide and talk to others about it if you wish. Deciding to take part or not will not impact on your studies at the University.

The process by which you can agree to participate is to contact me by email on Kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk by end of May 2023.

If you do decide to take part, at the data collection stage, you will be sent a copy of the consent form via email and will be asked to read through the document and sign it before the start of the interview, this process will enable you time to read the consent form before committing to an interview.

How can I withdraw from this study after agreeing to participate?

You will be able to withdraw from the research without repercussions anytime up until a week after receiving the transcription. This is estimated to be between April/May 2023. To

withdraw from the process, you will need to provide your pseudonym name so that your data can be identified and destroyed. The interview will be transcribed, and a copy of the interview will be sent to you to be checked for accuracy and full representation of the interview. You will be given a week to do this. If you do not contact me after a week of being sent the transcript, I will assume that you are happy with the transcript and to participate in the research write up. Beyond this point, your data cannot be withdrawn from the research as the analysis process will have commenced.

What will happen if I agree to take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be:

- Asked to email me ASAP at this email address to contact me via my email address: kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk
- You will be asked, at the start of the interview, to read through and to sign a consent form
- Data you supply will always be treated confidential and will be anonymised, using a pseudonym, chosen by you, in the thesis
- You will be made aware after contacting me, that you have the **option** to collect artifacts or develop secondary sources that you feel represents your experience of voice in university and/or enables you to voice your experiences. These could include photographs, diary entries, poetry, drawings, paintings, graffiti, stories, objects, music,

letters/emails between the participant and the myself. Any further explanations can be explained in follow-up emails with yourself should you need more clarity before taking part in the research. All questions you may have will be answered before you sign the consent form so that you are able to give informed consent.

- Once you have contacted me and agreed to take part, I will email you to arrange a suitable interview time (all interviews will take place at the University at a time convenient to you).
- You will be asked to bring with you any artifacts and secondary sources to the interview so that these can be photographed, described, and discussed. The original sources and artefacts can then be kept by you and the photographs will then be electronically stored by me as a reminder of the sources. The photographs will be used as a data source, but will not be used within the thesis without a secondary consent form being signed by you. All photographs that will not be used will be destroyed (estimated July 2024).
- The interview will be conducted in privacy in a designated room at the University of ****
- The interview is anticipated to last between 45 minutes - 1 hour.
- The interview seeks to collect your experiences of learner voice in relation to your diverse learning needs.
- You will be provided with the **option** to have follow-up interviews if you wish, each one lasting 45 minutes – 1 hour.

- The photographs will be used to inspire a separate image to be taken by myself to be used to enter the Images of Research Competition held at the University of ****. The images of your sources will not be used for the competition.
- Your views will be audio recorded via a Dictaphone and then later transcribed. A copy of the transcription will be sent to you via email where you will then have seven days to make amendments. After this time, you will not be able to withdraw data.
- Audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription and these, in turn, will be destroyed after the study has been examined (estimated July 2024)
- All electronic data will be stored in a computer file, on the University's system, that is encrypted, and password protected. Any remaining data will be destroyed after the study has been examined (estimated July 2024)

What are the benefits for me in taking part?

Through taking part, you may develop a great understanding of yourself, the problem relating to the research topic and will be able to use your own experience to contribute to new knowledge. You will also be contribution to the research and debate around the topic of learner voice. If you would like a summary copy of the research findings please let me know and this will be arranged once the research has been written up.

Are there any risks for me if I take part?

The research is not expected to involve risks to the participant. The conversation will consider aspects of your experiences as a student. If, however, the interview raises sensitive

issues the interview will be suspended, and you will be referred to the existing University support systems for students. You may also consider contacting my Director of Studies (Dr. Peter Gossman) should you feel that you need to. You may also leave the research without any reason until April/May 2023.

It is not expected that there will be any risks associated with Covid-19, as restrictions for Covid are currently being removed. However, all Covid-19 restrictions (if they should occur again) will be followed. This may mean that you will be required to wear a face mask and/or conduct the interview online.

What will you do with my information?

Your personal data / information (consent form, interview recordings, transcripts, and artefact photographs) will be treated confidentially at all times; that is, it will not be shared with anyone other than my PhD supervisors. It will also not be shared with any third parties specified in the consent form unless it has been fully anonymised. The exception to this is where you tell me something that indicates that you or someone else is at risk of harm. In this instance, I may need to share this information with others; however, I would inform you of this and discuss this with you before doing so.

During the project, all data / information will be kept securely in line with the University's Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data and its Information Security Policy.

The photographs of the artefact and the transcript data will be used as data for this research. Further consent will be gathered from participants where photographs will be used within the write up/thesis.

I will process your personal information for a range of purposes associated with the project primary of which are:

- To use your information along with information gathered from other participants in the research project to seek new knowledge and understanding that can be derived from the information we have gathered.
- To summarise this information in written form for the purposes of dissemination (through research reports, a thesis / dissertation, conference papers, journal articles or other publications). Any information disseminated / published will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised and there will be no way of identifying your individual personal information within the published results.
- To use the summary and conclusions arising from the research project for teaching and further research purposes. Any information used in this way will be at a summary level

and will be fully anonymised. There will be no way of identifying your individual personal information from the summary information used in this way.

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings or to be given access to any of the publications arising from the research, please contact us.

How long will you keep my data for?

Your personal data will be retained until the project has been completed and the examination for the work has taken place. This is expected in July 2024.

How can I find out what information you hold about me?

You have certain rights in respect of the personal information the University holds about you. For more information about Individual Rights under GDPR and how you exercise them please visit: ****

What happens next?
Please keep this information sheet.

If you would be interested in taking part, please contact us using the details below and we will be delighted to answer any further questions you have about the research.

Our contact details are:
Anastasia Kennett
Email: kena1_18@uni.worc.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the project at this point or at any later date you may contact myself (contact as above) or you may contact my Director of Studies/Supervisors:

Dr. Peter Gossman (Director of Studies): p.gossman@worc.ac.uk

Dr. Seán Bracken (Supervisor): s.bracken@worc.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

If you would like to speak to an independent person who is not a member of the research team, please contact Esther Dobson at the University of **** using the following details:

*****

Secretary to Research Ethics Panel for Education, Culture and Society.

University of ****

Appendix 17 – Amendment request approval letter

(Source: Ethical approval confirmation email from the University of Worcester Research Ethics Panel, received by the author on 31 March 2023)

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SOCIETY RESEARCH ETHICS ECS REP) AMENDMENT OUTCOME

31 March 2023

REP CODE: CAHE21220019-R A

HEURISTIC INQUIRY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCE OF INCLUSIVE STUDENT VOICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Dear Anastasia

Thank you for your revised amendment request submitted for ethical approval to the Education, Society and Culture Research Ethics Panel on 30 March 2023.

Your amendment application has been reviewed in accordance with the University of **** Ethics Policy and in compliance with the Standard Operating Procedures for ethical review.

The outcome of the review is that I am happy to grant the amendment to this project ethical approval to proceed.

Please note your research must be undertaken as set out in the approved documents for the approval to be valid. Please ensure you review your answers to the checklist on an

ongoing basis and contact the Research Ethics Panel again if you intend to make any further amendments to the approved research.

Yours sincerely

****

Chair – Education, Culture and Society Full Review Panel Chair – Education, Culture and Society Research Ethics Panel

Appendix 18 – Individual depiction – PS

Diverse learner needs

I am a mature student, part of the LGBTQ community, parent to two kids and I have also been flagged as potentially having ADHD.

Past experiences of voice

I have a parent who has Aspergers, so they are very good when you have a cause to fight for, but we never had conversations about feelings. They have strong opinions and would stand by them. I was allowed to disagree and stand up for what I believed in, but I had to form a discussion on why that was my viewpoint because I wasn't allowed to tell people that they were wrong. If you've been told that you are wrong or not listened to in education, you stop talking and develop a lack of self-worth. You think to yourself what's the point in talking if I am wrong. I became aware of that constant self-doubt of, if I say this, am I wrong? Is somebody going to tell me that I am wrong? That internal battle all the time of wanting to say no or to disagree, or to say this is how I feel compared to this, but there is just no point. I am wrong. I don't want to feel that shame that comes with that. However, this actually led me to have stronger views because I would always have to prove that I was right, that you do know what you're talking about. It's ridiculous because all I am doing is proving it to myself. However, I now realise that I never got those skills needed to manage my emotions because they weren't modeled at home. I never knew that it was okay to express my feelings, so I bottled them up and didn't talk to anybody. I

couldn’t cope with those feelings because I couldn’t identify them, I didn’t know what they were and it really impacted my life, in and out of education.

At school, I got called, “you’re gay” and a “dike” as derogatory terms because I studied woodwork, so I avoided going. This was the time at which you are questioning and developing who you are, you don’t need those social stigmas, labels and stereotypes put on you, because you don’t even know your own labels at that point. I didn’t get any help for my ADHD back then. It wasn't a thing that you would have got help for because of the lack of awareness and understanding. I wasn't disruptive enough or behaviourally challenging enough to warrant going into an SEN school. Nobody listened when I repeatedly told them I felt sick and didn’t want to be in school. I would cry and the teacher would ask if I wanted to leave, to which I said yes. Then I would be put in the office or a hut outside with someone, but they would just sit with me or phone my parents to come and get me, but it was more anxiety than because I was ill. I didn’t get much communication other than, this is probably not the right place for you, leave my lesson and go home? I know now that it was probably anxiety and ADHD but back then, it wasn't a case of looking at the **underpinning cause.** I have realised that all my emotions that were negative were expressed as anger, but they weren’t anger. I joined a martial arts club as a coping mechanism, a fixation and a channel for my emotions but as you grow up and lose those coping mechanisms, it all starts to replay itself again but you’re an adult now.

How the student experiences student voice in higher education

In university, when I was flagged as potentially having ADHD, I went to the disability team who asked me if I needed all kinds of support, and I answered no because it's already provided for me in my cohort and from my lecturers. Things like providing extra time with tutors if you need anything clearing up or clarifying so there's never anything that you feel you can't talk about because the course is practicing what they preach. We have no judgement on LGBTQIA or ADHD, but it can be hard in lectures because sometimes you're receiving information from other people who have not had those experiences and that can be quite difficult, but I am on a cohort that respects that we are all different and respect the voices from most communities. I think the biggest impact is being a parent so when you're halfway to uni and the school rings, you don't get a choice, you're either giving up your lecture or you're taking them with you. When we had covid, we learnt you could access things online but now less people are turning up to lectures and the universities are taking that option away and I understand why but on days when you can't get childcare or something happens, it is good if that lecture is online or an asynchronous task that you can access to say, I have taken part in that content. I am very close with my lecturers, a lot of them are parents or have been parents so are very understanding about that.

I have a friend who has been a course rep, school rep and college rep and I am very comfortable talking to them because I know something will get done because whereas I am happy to shout for inclusion, they are happy to shout louder. I don't have time to do that, being a parent, and a student and working but I know if I leave that with them, that

will get hammered in until someone gives me an answer and it might not go in my favour but it will be brought up. If I had not met them, I don't think everything would be spoken about. I have felt in the past that those people who are representing my voice as reps will only take that as far as they feel comfortable, I don't know whether that's because of infringement of my personal rights or the information they are sharing or whether their values and opinions align with what I'm saying, I don't know but you have to trust that person to have the confidence to speak out on your views and your opinions. Having made friends with that person, I know that whether they feel comfortable or not, they will have it put forward. They will always say if it is not their view and that it is the voice of the students, and they will always then feed that back. I will get the negatives and the positives. If it's not a priority, that's going to be fed back to me and I can sit and I can steam and I can deal with it but at least I know my voice was put out there and I got an answer.

I feel like feedback coming from the power is easier to give out than feedback from the little people to the power. I think that's because of the way we are brought up. In my house, I can challenge my parents, essentially the power in the house. Whereas, in school you do as you're told. The small things are done but the bigger things have to comply with the power, the government and Ofsted and they are just not acted upon. Everybody has got fear, and from bottom up that's where fear grows but when giving feedback top down you can put that fear onto someone else. As school rep, you're taking responsibility for my views and opinions but when you're feeding back, you're not taking responsibility for the

voices that's been made because you didn't make those choices but if you have to voice the opinions of others then you're taking on the responsibility of voicing somebody else's opinions and I would imagine that a lot of those points contradict each other because we're all personal and we have our own personal views on those points and some of those will even contradict that rep's individual values. So, to take all that responsibility or pressure on and to represent voice whilst also doing your own work could be quite difficult.

In the course surveys, we always get the results back from them and what they are doing so that's good. I feel that we are heard in most of that, but they are module specific and sometimes they are quite fixed questions. I assume that's because they have quite specific statistics that they need to meet and that those are the specific questions that meet those statistics.

Conceptulising inclusive student voice

I am now taking up counselling as an adult to be able to identify the feelings that I am having because I never got that as a child so I think a lot more of that approach where we are looking at the person as a whole and not just their academic skills would benefit me. I am learning to access my own feelings and sit with them which I couldn't before. If someone was to sit with me and explore all the emotions I was feeling, maybe I'd have been a better emotional literate human adult. I would tell myself not to bottle it all up, give myself space to explore and identify my feelings and to tell them that it's okay. You

don’t have to feel angry because it's okay that you’re sad. I would then develop that emotional literacy.

I know the student rep that I go to well because we are friends, and they have very strong roots in politics and education that benefits and promotes power in students and an opinionated strong voice. They are taught about their power and their values, and although I would consider myself in a different social class to them, my values have always been that you stand up and shout loud for what you believe in but that hasn't come through my education, that is from home. The others don’t necessarily have that form of education. They have more of an education where there is an element of voice, but more policy where that strong voice isn’t needed to be outspoken. The students are there for the teacher rather than exploring your own things; you go to school, you learn, you come home, that’s it.

I think perhaps if feedback could be submitted anonymously that would take the pressure off that person. They could just deliver it and sit in the meeting and have that discussion, gain the feedback and then give it back to students in a broad way because then no one will know who said what. This would negate that idea of somebody else taking responsibility for those choices that were made. And if the anonymised platform stayed open all year, people could post whenever they thought of something because we’ve all thought about something or done something and gone home and it's played on your mind. Then you have that time to submit rather than having to message your school rep or waiting until the next time where if you’re a parent of two doing all the things that I do,

you've probably forgotten by then. No one has to man it for 24 hours, somebody just has to oversee it, put it into an agenda and push it in the groups.

I am part of a campaign team at the moment and through that, it is the first time that I've met the Vice Chancellor of Students. It's the first time I've learnt their name or know where their office is. I've been here for a long time, and I never knew who they were. I would like to see more visibility from this person in those first few weeks of induction stating that this person is in charge of your voice overall and through your college reps, school reps it comes to them but actually if you have a concern that you want to raise, this is where their office is so you can go above that, and say actually, I want this changed. I know there is a system in place, but I feel that, if you feel really passionate and feel strongly about something then it needs saying above that. For me, it's inclusion that we have it open to us to discuss that with people who can actually make that change.

I've spent three years to become that knowledgeable other and now I've got the chance in my third year to impart some knowledge and to have that self-confidence to say, I've learnt that, yes I've got a piece of paper that says it but I can actually impart that knowledge now because I've spent three years understanding it. There should be no reason why students can't say, this is what we've been training for, we're in our third year now studying inclusion and when you're doing this in the curriculum, we can help you by showing you how to adapt this and that to become fully inclusive. I just don't know why we don't utilise what we've got and benefit from it for each other.

The surveys are very much in the here and now but when you get to third year you become very reflective on your entire journey so, it would be good to have a survey at the end of the year of your thoughts and feelings rather than just one about the module. In the last year, you know what your pressures are so perhaps there could be more feedback generally on modules and content and things like that. Also, I think there could be open-ended questions but again, I do understand that they must meet statistics. I do also think that at the end of the year we could have a discussion rather than a survey where you feed off each other's points. You can have that as a year group or maybe all three-year groups with all the staff where no one is taking offence. To draw on and have that discussion with all of us could help move things forward because you can see the similarities and differences in the year groups. You can see the content they had and where that's gone and everybody is saying, ok we can work with that, and we can understand that. We could then give students insights back into why things are done differently.

I became friends with the student rep because they have a different educational experience to me and I think that's broadened my own understanding of education because you can only understand what you've experienced and through listening to their experience, I've gained more knowledge. And actually, I found so much common ground with somebody that on paper we are on opposite ends of the spectrum so that's really interesting. Through discussions, we can go and educate each other so maybe voice comes from collaboration, and you have to be challenged by hearing opposing views to be

able to really understand your own views and they might change; mine have, just through meeting other people and hearing their stories or experiences.

People need to have those discussions in a safe way, non-judgemental or fear of being criticised or even being told that you're wrong. Set some boundaries, know the rules, know where you stand and how you can approach that because that's a life skill. Universities set you up for life as well so seeing them implement it, seeing that you are heard shows you what you should expect in the workforce. You should be listening and working together to find an outcome and compromise that works for everyone but that's basic conflict resolution that should be taught. So, I think for me personally, when it comes to voice, it's all about discussion, understanding and learning the skills to be able to say, that's a really good idea but this, this and this means we can't quite go in that direction. How about we collaborate and compromise. I think also that you should have that understanding in that safe space that you don't get your own way, that's not how life works. But without fear, you should be free to feel and express everything that you want to and that doesn't mean you have to give out everything, only everything that you want to get acknowledged and that's what makes it safe. A discussion means that you feel safe because you are the outcome. You agree to it, even in these discussions, you're saying, I agree to this conclusion, I agree to this collaboration, you agree to this compromise and in doing so, I agree to work with you and move forward. So, I think that's what makes it safe but also what makes it safe is that there is no judgement. You are free to be who you are and to stand up for your own morals and values.

Inclusive Student Voice fingerprint – PS

Past experiences of voice

- Absence of emotional literacy
- Discussion was the norm
- To label or not to label
- Absence of curiosity
- Silence is a protection from shame

What is the experience of student voice

- Seeking Integrity
- Understanding increased by similar demographics
- Comfortability (shared) and variability (challenging) in values
- A lifetime of power and fear
- Responsibility
- University doing its own thing for its own needs

Conceptulising inclusive student voice – how students utilise their voice

- Seeking Emotional literacy
- The power of voice and shared values
- Anonymised student rep feedback

- Hierarchy of visibility
- Becoming the knowledgeable other and using those skills
- Advancing surveys to include feelings
- Expanding voice to discussions
- Collaboratively listening to others experiences increases understanding
- Wanting to feel Safe to be themselves

Appendix 19 – Individual depiction – PA

Diverse learner needs

I am a man with a health condition who moved to the United Kingdom as a child. So, English is not my first language.

Past experiences of voice

I don't tell my friends or parents if I am having a symptom, just because it feels like I keep complaining about it. I don't think I know of any other way of saying; I am not myself today, I probably won't be speaking much, and I might be off. There are higher expectations in my country, where people are never happy in the place they are at so when I told my one parent I was going to university, his response was, are you getting a job whilst you're going? And when I said I was finishing soon, they said, are you doing more studying or **just** getting a degree? And I said no. Just to prove them wrong, I will try and get a Master's and go on to a PhD. It's like that from my one parent as well, saying, what are you going to do next? But whatever you do it is not good enough. That thing that I chased was not good enough anymore. Sometimes I end the call because it makes me feel bad.

In primary school, I couldn't speak English but there were others from my country there so that's who I made friends with. It felt segregated because I struggled to make friends with the other children for the first two/three years because I couldn't speak English. I

remember not caring or not paying attention at school. I just went to see my friends. I wasn't learning anything, or I had already known it because the education in my country was ahead. I would say that education is more important for social reasons than education reasons because not having those social skills will affect you more in a job because even if you have the education but zero social skills, you wouldn't get the job. There was also no difference when we voiced our concerns or not. We got to choose football for PE once, but they said we would get too hyped so we had to play badminton instead but why would you ask for an opinion and knowingly do the opposite. So, a lot of us sat out angrily and didn't want to play.

In secondary school there was stigma to certain groups of people because of how they were perceived, and we called them 'outcasts' because no one talked to them or wanted to be seen as one of them. So, I did try and conform to others; I would get the same haircut as people and wear the same things because I felt like if I didn't, they would pick on me. I stopped conforming in year 9 when I started to go to the gym and got the best results in my year. I never got teased for getting good grades, for being a nerd and for being stupid. I didn't feel like I needed to conform and that's because I felt like I had built a good reputation for myself. I felt comfortable speaking to anyone in my year and the teachers because I was good academically. I didn't feel like I needed to pretend I was stupid or really smart. There weren't too many black people in my school, so I started hanging around with them and getting their views on the student council and they would say no, I am not a nerd, I am not participating in that. So, the council noticed this and

never asked for their opinion, which they didn't mind, but it changed things for us for the worse because I feel like the things they wanted would never have been brought up.

I joined the student council in year 10. It meant that I had to go and speak to students whom I wouldn't normally speak to, to get their voices and concerns. It also meant that I was more comfortable speaking to teachers and voicing my concerns because I was put in that position for that reason. If I wasn't on the student council, I don't think I would feel comfortable in raising stuff like that. It was taken more seriously, and it felt more like an adult conversation rather than a child complaining. The student council before only concentrated on the nice top set students, who never misbehaved. They never focused on the average student, the students who are still trying to conform to one or the other group. I also felt like I needed to speak up for the other people from my country because they weren't as confident to explain the way things were done in my country. They knew me so I didn't need to worry about being given a bad label that I wouldn't want. I went on to make friends with the "outcast group." Once I grew up, I realised that it's not their fault, but before that, I was bullying them, but I am passed that now, I feel more comfortable talking to anyone now without judging them.

How the student experience student voice in higher education

My health condition affects my education quite a lot because of the symptoms and lack of concentration at home so I cannot do a lot of work, if I have symptoms that could just discourage me for the rest of the day and, I must watch my sleep and things like that. I'd

say that the university has adjusted to me quite well and they are concerned when I do have symptoms and I can't attend lectures instead of getting annoyed. In the past week, I haven't attended any lectures because my symptoms have been getting worse and when I tell my teachers they don't get angry, they send me stuff that I can do, and like I said they are really nice to me and understanding. Before the lesson starts, I'd say to my lecturer that I am not feeling well and if I leave the lecture, it's because of my symptoms which they encourage me to.

You get treated more like an adult in higher education and it feels more normal to have a voice. As far as the surveys are concerned, there are too many of them so if you do try and make a difference and contribute, you'll end up completing two or three of them every week and it does get exhausting. So, I've done the first couple and then when I realised that I was getting too many, I just stopped doing them. It just became a burden and something that I felt I had to do which I didn't like. There were boxes where I could talk about my problems instead of just tick boxes or short answers so that allowed me to expand on what I could say. They were legible, and the writing was quite simple English that everyone could understand. The student rep is really good. I think about two weeks ago, we had a problem on our course, so we spoke to them about it, they had a meeting arranged and after an hour and a half conversation, we came to a conclusion. So, I liked that we were able to sort that out so quickly and I think the course rep did an amazing job communicating with us because I did get emails every day until that meeting to let us know what was going on. I feel like having a voice makes it easier for me to have an

experience as a person without diverse learning needs because those barriers can be, maybe not leveled but they can be brought down.

Everyone is really inclusive so if I bring up an issue, it's usually well understood and no one has ever argued or said, no, we don't want that. They know that if it is helping one person, it is worth doing. Having something that differentiates you is not looked down upon as it is in school because people are more open to diverse learning needs and everyone in my class has some diverse learning need. I feel that people are more confident to be themselves rather than conform, they are all just trying to do their best. In secondary school, people who would not try on purpose because they wouldn't want to be labelled a nerd but now, it's good to get better grades. Though, I still feel like I am conforming sometimes like the way I dress. It's happening less and less but I still feel more comfortable in a hat that cost £150 pounds than £15 because of how other people might perceive me and how I want them to perceive me. I would be thinking ahead of what I can say and what I should refrain from saying if I am around certain people because I know certain topics are controversial. If I had time to explain my viewpoint then I'm sure they would understand it but without further explanation, it sounds bad. I feel anxious to think that I might not fit in or find any friendship groups that I must really watch what I am saying. It's definitely about giving and betraying a character in a way. So, I decided I preferred to sit by myself. I feel comfortable with speaking out in front of the whole class now and I think it's because I've got to know the other people and their views so, I know what I can and shouldn't say. I also always think I am not doing well enough to fit the

white male that we've been shown because we've always been told that they do better, get good grades, job and money but because I am struggling, I feel like I am not doing well enough for who I am and it's my fault. For me, I want to do better, it's more motivating but it was discouraging to hear that white males outperform everyone and then there is me who didn't outperform anyone.

I would say that one gender still speak up less on my course, but there are less of one gender and more of the other so it's really hard to say. I feel like one gender have different opinions, and they go off feelings rather than facts. Someone impulsively disagreed with me using made-up statistics which, if I had googled it, it might take a while so I can't even answer and it usually comes with a lot of emotion, so staying quiet is a lot less trouble and you get along better. Another example was when we were discussing equality, and not a single thing has been said that one gender are underperforming another. I didn't speak out about it because I am the only male in that class and, I didn't have any research in front of me to prove it. I did google it later to see if I was right, because I did hear it a lot and I did find that one gender are doing better so I could have said something but I thought people would disagree with me because the teacher was portraying a certain biased viewpoint in the PowerPoint, whereby I couldn't say anything against them. I'm worried I will come across as entitled and someone who doesn't care for women in education.

Going against what your lecturer says is also really nerve wracking. I think it's because they are an authority figure so I feel like they will know more so I shouldn't disagree with

them. They are in that field and have no reason to lie to us, but I feel angry especially because I couldn't say anything. I don't like spreading misinformation in general and I have no idea why that was included when it is not true. There is a lot of misinformation in that lesson, I really hate it, so I don't go to it. I came from a really poor background in my country, but I feel like it's me being personally attacked because we are always told that white males are at an advantage compared to everyone else. Whereas I have never seen that, my black friends for example, we all hung out together and I can relate to them more than other white males because they also came from different countries, and they also struggled with money. I know a lot of international students, they had worse upbringings than most people in England but because they came here, they are seen as a white male and are automatically presumed to have or receive money from rich parents when in reality, half of the white males have never seen the privilege that we are perceived as getting. In my country, everyone is white but there still existed a class system and I was from a lower social class, but tutors never considered it because I am white. I just feel like putting everyone in the same box is not good because it's a completely different lifestyles, but you can't say they are the same just because they look the same so, I think tutors need to narrow down the groups.

In one lesson, it feels like a school and in another, it feels more like a conversation. So, in the one I don't like, it is always teachers at the front speaking to us, going through a PowerPoint and then we do an activity and then it's back to them speaking at us again. The auditorium doesn't encourage conversation as much as having tables on the same

level as the teacher where I'd feel more comfortable talking, participating and asking questions. There is no real interaction with the teachers, and no one really wants to speak up because they were only looking for set answers from the PowerPoint and not for anyone's opinion. We are just fed information, but we don't know why it's important or how it applies in general. Whereas in the other lesson, the teacher touches on lots of different examples even from all around the world so it really helps to understand it. In the other lesson there wouldn't be examples or conversations about it. The teaching style involves very little interaction and that's why I haven't come to a lesson in weeks. I feel like I would be a lot more productive at home. In that lesson, we are forced to do group work often, but we are in an auditorium, and I sit by myself so, I feel really excluded, so I just tend to go on my phone during those tasks. I would like us to go over something new; we are going through the exact same thing. It doesn't feel like I am more informed about a topic. It just feels like I've got someone else's view on it and I'm not sure what I should believe. I just go after the facts and try and make my mind up from that.

Conceptualising inclusive student voice – how students utilise their voice

Learner voice means to be able to feedback about the lessons, not once or twice a year, but you should be able to speak to the teacher whenever and for them to adjust it straight away. The thing that would discourage me from using my voice is if I had to do it in front of many people. I feel like having a one-to-one chat is better. I generally think that males would feel more comfortable talking to someone one on one regardless of whether it's to a male or female. It doesn't matter who it is because I believe everyone is very

understanding and that's why I would feel comfortable speaking to everyone on my course about my health condition. The most important thing you can do for someone with Diverse Learner Needs is to ask them what they need and want but some people don't want to disclose their disabilities to the whole class because they might feel vulnerable, so teachers shouldn't disclose that information. I feel like if people know too much about you, more than you would like them to know, that information could be used against you and that feels vulnerable knowing that. For instance, if I will stand out and stop conforming, that can be used against me. It could be similar or the same as a PACT meeting. I feel like because it is one-to-one, I would open up more with the questions that were being asked of me rather than me just explaining stuff because I might miss stuff out or not remember it.

In the lesson that I like, the teacher lets us choose the whole curriculum. If we make a suggestion, they will discuss it or tell us why it is not suitable. I feel like I've always had my voice heard. The class size is small, and I think that helps a lot because everyone is more comfortable and confident in speaking and it's good that its student led because we get to choose what we like, need or want. I am comfortable asking questions and I know I will get a reasonable answer. I do like the style of having a conversation rather than having one correct answer as this gives us an opportunity to hear other people's voices. I don't think it would work in all lessons because there are things that you need to know that you wouldn't want to know. So, I just think smaller groups and a better classroom rather than an auditorium encourages group work or group conversations better. But I also struggle to

work with certain groups on my course, like I've noticed that I don’t get on with the younger ones as much as the older groups because I feel more comfortable speaking to them about relatable topics. I think that the people that you are comfortable with automatically know you better, they know more of the true you so you're not afraid to say something controversial because I will have another chance to explain myself. Whereas, if it’s someone I am not familiar with, it might leave a bad impression of me, they might not want to talk to me and then I would not be able to explain myself fully.

Inclusive Student Voice fingerprint – PA

Past experiences of voice

- Not good enough
- Proving others wrong
- School as a social playground
- Conforming or not to conform
- You're an adult now

What is their experience of student voice in HE

- Understanding and accommodating
- Seeking student voice is exhausting and helpful
- Conforming
- Gender, race, and ethnicity is complex
- Power over knowledge and experience sharing
- Developing students' independent epistemological knowledge through conversation

Conceptulising inclusive student voice

- Danger of disclosing too much
- Needing privacy

- Student led encourages choice, discussions, and opinions
- Intersectionality must be recognised
- Fear of rejection

Appendix 20 – Individual depiction – RI

Diverse learner needs

I am a mature student and a parent to three children. I commute to university, and I have struggled with my mental health, often manifesting as anxiety.

Past experiences of student voice

I had a really good upbringing; my parents supported me in everything that I've done. Anything that I wanted to do; I did within reason. They allowed me to go swimming and gymnastics and when I didn't want to do it anymore, they supported my decision. They allowed us to lead the way and I think it made me who I am today. Neither of my parents went to uni but they supported my decision to be here. I think if they had full control over what I did, I think I would have rebelled and did what I wanted anyway, or I wouldn't be standing where I am today. They gave me discipline but also that little bit of independent leeway and freedom as well. There has got to be that middle ground which I do feel like they gave me. It gave me that respect for my parents, and they respected me. I asked my one parent to support me with childcare once, which made me feel anxious because it was a big ask and meant they had to cut their hours down at work, losing money to have my child but we all sat down together and managed it. We address issues which I like because my partners family tends to brush things under the carpet, anything that's affected them or bothered them, they just forget it whereas, we don't, if that upset you, hurt your feelings or affected your mental health, let's sit down and address it. I'd say, not

so much my one parent because they don't talk about it, but my one parent never believed mental health existed even though at the time they was really depressed. We had lost a grandparent, and we were all kind of struggling and I was in a really bad place but my one parent was saying, people who have got depression, don't talk about it and I remember being like, that's not right to my one parent but we sat down and spoke about it and it was a really really hard conversation but they went to the doctors. I advised my one parent on exercise and healthy eating, and slowly both myself and my one parent improved. They understand it a bit more now since we spoke about it as a family. I think because of their generation, my grandparents don't believe in that, so I think that kind of passed down to them like nothing is allowed to affect you. My other parent tends to bottle things up, but I just think that's because they never had the support as a child.

It has helped me to grow and realise when I am having an off day and when I need to speak to my partner, to my one parents, or to a friend. I now know it's normal to feel like that whereas in the past, I'd be like, why am I feeling like this? I have no reason to be. My one parent would say to me, they would say, why are you depressed, you've got a partner who loves you, three healthy children, and a roof over your head and you've got this and that, like listing all the positives and I am like, they are right, why am I like this? Whereas now, I know it's normal to have those days and it can stem from anything tiny, can't it but I do now know when it is happening, and I know how to address it because I know myself better now. When it hits me, it's horrible, it's like a ball of fire coming up from your tummy up into your throat and then you get this lump in your throat and you're just like, I

can't handle the world today and I can't deal with anyone or anything. When that happens, I go to the gym, for a walk, or a run. Exercise definitely helps me, I do eat pretty healthily, but I do like a chocolate bar because that always helps. Sitting down with the kids as well, even just reading a story with one of my children or all of them really helps me because I can then switch off from the world, from uni, from all the responsibilities.

My partner and I met at school, we had our first child young and that was the choice I made, to go back to our careers as we got older and it's good that I've got his support. I went back to college after a 10-year gap out of education during the year of lockdown, so it was all online, so I had to work from home with the children there. That was difficult but everyone was in the same position. I don't regret my life choices because this is the life we wanted. Starting something new, I always get that tummy pain and nervousness. I got so anxious about my timetable because I needed it to arrange childcare that I almost changed my degree, but I am glad that I didn't because I've enjoyed this course. I was changing because the timetable would suit my needs more not because it was something that I wanted to do. In the end, I sat down with my partner and said, look, I am going to do this, and they said, but that's not what you want to do, we will figure something out." But I was so upset by it all that I was like, no, no, no, I need to change to know what the timetable is but they were like, that's not what you want though and I am glad that they did that and that I had his support because I don't think I would have enjoyed the other degree.

How the student experience student voice in higher education

I speak to students here and about my views and my opinions when I don't think something is fair or when I have struggled but I tend to just speak to family because I don't know them as well as my family and everyone is busy, like, as soon as your lesson is finished, you pack up your bags and head off or your lecturer has got to go to another meeting. Tutorials are only half an hour, there is only so much you can fit into half an hour. Normally it's about work rather than, how are you? How are you feeling? I just think there is probably more support for my friends who live onsite or around the surrounding area because they live on campus perhaps because they are typical 21, 20, or 19-year-olds. Last year, I had writer's block and I just thought, I need some more time, I asked for an extension but was told that it had to be mitigating circumstance so a death, an illness, depression, mental health and it didn't come into any of those. I just needed more time, and they explained the procedure and I just thought that it was going to be more hassle than it's worth, so I just stuck it out and did it which ended up being a couple of late nights which was really hard with kids. All my assignments are usually done two weeks before they are due as a rule because you don't know what is going to happen, you don't know who is going to get sick, who is going to be off school, or what's going to happen with the car or the traffic getting in. You literally have to take everything into account, don't you? I feel like there should be more support. Younger students can just switch off from the world, get their heads down in the laptop for three hours straight, and do it whereas I can't. Once I've got the children in bed, cooked the tea, clean the house, done the washing, or gone for a walk for my mental health, its 9 o'clock, so, I will squeeze an hour

in before bed because you have to grab the hours where you can whilst also prioritising your mental health.

I feel like any time that I have gone to someone at the uni, I've kind of been shut down. If I've not quite understood something and I've stayed behind after the lesson and say, can I just go over that last bit that you said, they will be watching the clock and say, I have only got three minutes, you will have to email me. I've had comments before where it's been, I don't get what you don't understand. And I think, do I look thick? Am I the only one that didn't get that? But I just need them to reiterate what they just said so that **I** can understand it a bit better, like, have you got an example of that? I just feel like it makes you feel a bit inadequate, like you shouldn't really be here. If you don't understand that then you shouldn't be here, like you're unimportant because everyone else in the group got it. Or did they? Or is it only me going forward to say, can you go over that whereas the rest of them would just go away without saying anything? I just don't think the support is there yet. If it's a percentage, it's 70/30, there is stuff in there, but there needs to be more help and support.

I am a mature student, meaning I need more time off with my children or to seek childcare. The nursery onsite is a great inclusion for mature students but my lectures were until late at night and the nursery shuts at 6. This year is much better, so I do think they have listened. But I had to go to the student union but I live an hour away so it's trying to fit things in and get back for school so it would either have to be online or I've had to slot it in somewhere to meet my needs. When I spoke to the students' union, I realised they

don’t actually have anybody in my position. The people that I am talking to are lovely and very very helpful but none of which can relate or understand what I am saying. They would try and tell me they understood my needs saying things like, I haven't got children myself, but I know where you’re coming from but I’m like, but you don’t.

I get on well with all of my tutors, but I find their time is so tied up so if I say, can I catch you at the end of the session? They’ve always got somewhere else to be or if I say can I have an online tutorial, it’s normally about assignments. They are never about feelings or about how they can address my issues. I just felt the book was always passed, like, I understand what you’re saying but, it's not something I can deal with for you. You need to speak to der der der der. But again, you’re a mature student, parent, you haven't got the time to be chasing people and it’s 48 hours before you get a reply and then you’ve got to repeat yourself. I think they are fed up with hearing from me and so, I just shut down, plod on and get on with it. I felt so anxious. I imagine they all hate me and that I am a nightmare and that’s not the right attitude to come to uni with but that’s how I felt.

I must take days where I put my wellbeing first because I have a lot more anxiety coming to university. My anxiety makes my brain explode, like there are extra tabs to think of and I am just like oh god, this is overwhelming, but I always say, just think of what you are working towards because there are times where I've had enough because I just don’t think the support isn’t there. My anxiety decreases when I submit assignments and do well. I really want to do my master's but then I am going to be up against it again and that’s not the way I should feel. I should feel, yes, I can do this, the uni have got me, it’ll be fine, but I

don’t think I can. I've just not had anyone who has actually cared. Last week, I was off uni, I had a really really tough mental health day. I tried all the things I could to pick myself up, such as going to the gym, running, walking the dog, spending time with my children, all of that and I still couldn’t pick myself up. I emailed uni to say I am not going to be in, and I just got back, thanks for letting me know. Not, I hope you’re ok, is everything okay? You know where I am anytime, but I got nothing, just a thank you for letting us know. I think that they think that I use my mental health and being a mature parent as an excuse. But I wouldn’t speak to others the way I speak to yourself. I think at the minute, mental health-wise, I think anxiety is just through the roof but there is no one there to say, I am just checking in, how’s things? You know, offering that pastoral support, rather than just academically but there is none of that at uni.

We have one lecturer who is very open about themselves, and you get an idea of things that they’ve been through in their education. So, it’s nice to know the journey people have been on but we’ve been in some lectures where it’s like, I talk, then you talk when you’re spoken to. Read off the board, do some notes and that’s it, there’s is no group discussion or working as groups and I find I don’t study well like that, it bores me, gives me a headache and then you walk out the room thinking, what have I just learnt. Because you're just getting those tutor's ideas of what they thought but it should not be like that. There are no right or wrong ideas. But in that lesson, this is the question, and this is the answer and that’s it. Sometimes they bring the seminar into the lecture for a 10-15minute discussion but most of the time, it is just like, this is this, go off and do that bit now. We

have literally discussed everything about inclusion bar mature students. They did ask for some ideas that we would like to know more about, and mature students were suggested but I can't see them doing it because I don't think the class is interested in it. They are not mature students themselves, it's not something that interests them. I think it's therapeutic to write and learn about yourself as a mature student because I kind of get things off my chest, not that anything is ever done but I feel better for it. I think if someone's reading it, someone knows how I feel. You must be so inclusive in the classroom, and I think if you're doing all these things for all those people then why are you missing out on something that is right in front of you like mature students.

The student course reps in my group are not approachable. For the first year, I felt this person did not like me and then the second year, I didn't have any reason to speak to them. They are very very young, live on site or nearby so no traveling. So, I've actually never gone to them with an issue because they will know it's me because I am the only person in that group that's older, mature, got children so I've never bothered. I just think I will be penalised, so, it's not worth it, it's pointless because nothing will get done and I just think they will mark my grades down or that I will just stick it out, it's fine. The group is lovely, and everyone seems to get along, but they haven't got the same experiences. They don't care if you've got to go home and clean the bathroom before you can start doing work, they don't care if you've got to put the kids to bed because they haven't got to do that, they have got their own stuff to worry about, they might have work instead. Maybe they try to keep it inclusive by treating me like everybody else but that's not really what

you want either. I don’t want to be treated like everyone else, I am not like anybody else. I never thought it was a learner need until recently. I am juggling that many balls at uni and at home and people are just launching more at me. So, you get to that point where you think, I've tried to tell you but you’re not listening. There are only so many times you can say something and then if it doesn’t get done you just plod along and keep swimming. It feels like they are throwing more balls at me rather than taking any off me or even listening. Literally, felt as though I was being kicked to the floor whilst I am down. Then I just thought, I can't cope with this. Nothing being done and so, another ball is added to the list and more stress. It just knocks your confidence massively.

Conceptualising inclusive student voice – how students utilise their voice

It's not even like having special treatment but I think there should be more support, more encouragement, more checking in, you know, even if it was just an email to see how you're getting on. Are you alright? Because I think that goes a long way just to say, hiya, are you ok? Not all the time are people going to be say, no not really no, and break down in front of you but you might change those people’s outlook on the day by just saying hiya, are you okay? And just giving them a smile. I try and see the positives and be like, come on, you’ve got to get through it, carry on and obviously, it’s not a question for me to drop out. But sometimes you do need to lift yourself up and think of how far you have come. I think that in one way I am glad that I came now because as I say, it would be lovely to graduate in front of my children and I think that’s so good for them to see that learning never stops. So, I do try and think. Ok, being a mature student, I have got more to focus

on, more reasons to do it, I can't give up, showing my children that learning never stops. Like, look at what your one parent has been doing whilst you were growing up and that's what keeps me going that I have got more drive, that is a positive of me being a mature student. In many cases, it would be good to have feedback that tries not to have negative comments but having positive ones instead and turning that frown upside down. Look at it from this perspective rather than that perspective. That kind of feedback rather than it always being negative.

When we had tutorials, this one lecturer who is really really diverse gave us options to have it online. She'd say, I know a lot of you have got to travel in and they will say a lot of you just so that it doesn't pick us out of the class, what would you all prefer? I do think there should be more tutorials offered or online catch-up sessions. It can also be online for things like presentations, this one tutor that I am talking about, they have done it whatever you're comfortable with. Whether it's a poster or a PowerPoint, it's up to you, whether you want to do it online or in front of the class, you want to pre-record or you speak live, entirely up to you and I think that's really diverse. That should be what they are all practicing. They can also give the timetable out earlier so that you can sort out childcare and make the lecture times to suit the nursery for mature students with families and fitting in more lectures on certain days for commuters. Maybe have a learning plan where you would have a bit longer on assignments and something where you will get extra support, that kind of thing.

When the good tutor starts the lecture, it's always like how's your week been? How are you feeling? And that does help, it's great to get it off your chest. My PACT tutor also checks in with me but it's their job to do that. There has only ever been one lecturer that's patted me on the back and gone, well done. That person has been like, you're incredible, you're amazing, keep going. Tutors need to ask, is there anyone who wants to speak to me at the end or during the session? Is everyone ok? Drop me an email if anyone is worried about anything. Just to offer that little bit of support, to know that they are there and available whether you go to them or not. It is good to talk, and it is definitely therapeutic to offload and get it off your chest. Especially when you've got someone who is happy to listen to you as well. I know everyone's busy, and I do appreciate that, but no one has ever got the time. Like, I spoke to you last week and this week and it definitely felt therapeutic and nothing's going to come of it but it's just nice to offload. I also find having somebody who has had a similar situation definitely helps too, or even like speaking to a lecturer and not feeling like you're going to be penalized for having a different opinion. But obviously something being done would be amazing or at least acknowledged or addressed. To be CC'ed in an email to see that they had contacted someone and let them know my needs or had just told them my thoughts and feelings. Therefore, reps need to be a people person, they need to be confident, friendly, helpful, and to put their arm around you and be like, ok, everything's going to be fine.

I do find having the same sex person to talk to is better because women get women. We have hormones, we have our lives completely changed when we have children. They don't

necessarily for men, do they? They sort of just go back to work and sort of get on with it. One of my lecturers has opened up to say they have got children but some of them don't open up to tell you anything. I do find that when they have, they know how you're feeling and I feel like there is less judgement there because they opened up to us, told us about their background, what they've been through, what they are going through and I could relate to that. I like to hear about their backgrounds and that people have been through similar journeys or about how they started to where they are now. It's things like that, so maybe that helps but then I wouldn't expect everyone to do that. I like group interaction, when people are talking. I like it when it is more student-led because sometimes you can be like, not narrow-minded but kind of like tunnel vision but then you hear somebody else's take on something and you think, oh, I like that because I am learning more. You can make more notes, you can elaborate on it more, you can extend your knowledge, can't you.

Inclusive Student Voice fingerprint - RI

Past experiences of voice

- Choice and autonomy
- Respect for decisions is a two-way process
- Emotions are worked through
- Withdrawal from life
- Seeking support and guidance from others

What is their experience of student voice in HE

- Similar life experience encourages understanding
- Seeking empathy and action from others
- Social, emotional support and empathy
- Group discussions to exchange ideas and understanding
- Unapproachable increased when little characteristics is shared and/or understood
- Sharing the load

Conceptualising inclusive student voice

- Characteristics as motivation
- Reasonable adjustments
- Emotions recognised with compassion

- Similar characteristics increases understanding

Appendix 21 – Individual depiction – JA

Diverse learner needs

I have struggled with bad anxiety, and I was diagnosed with social anxiety a while back but my main struggle with my mental health is depression. I have also been diagnosed with dyslexia and dyspraxia.

Past experiences of voice

I came from a very conservative upbringing, attending a Catholic school aged 11 and 12 and from a little village. I didn't have any friends there as I was always with my parents and my sibling because the school was a couple of towns away. And I had to go to church with my one parent every Sunday, so I was heavily influenced by that as well.

I have just been diagnosed with dyslexia and dyspraxia which I am glad about because I really struggled through school with things like reading and comprehension. It never really got picked up. I have always felt kind of stupid because I was always behind on everything at school, so I had to have one-to-one sessions with the TA for my reading because I struggled whilst everyone else had quiet reading in the classroom. I could always tell that something was different, but my teachers never really picked up on it until my year 11 teacher had me tested to see what I needed but this was not a diagnosis. Like special provisions in exams so that's when they gave me 25% extra time for processing and green paper because I read off it a bit easier. My diagnosis came later. For me, a diagnosis has

helped, I quite like it, not in a weird way, I quite like being put in that box because then I was like, oh, okay so now I know what I need to do to move forward in education.

I went to a performing arts school at the age of 14. There was a lot of big personalities, cocky, bitchy people there and I never felt like I fitted in. That was when my mental health really declined because of the people in my class. I was able to see things from a much more diverse perspective because of being able to go out with my new friends, travelling there daily, having those new experiences and seeing all the diversity. However, I was all of a sudden thrown in at the deep end around these people that were more confident than me, louder and kind of in your face whereas the friends I had before were quite quiet and conservative. It got quite uncomfortable and that's when my social anxiety started to come out and I started to think, those students over there are laughing about me or I didn't like people looking at me like that and judging me even though I knew realistically that they are too concerned with themselves to look at me. So that kind of brought on the low moods and depression and always feeling out of place. It got to the point of telling my parents in the morning that I felt sick or something so I could lie in bed all day. I guess I just always felt judged because I was different. I was the kind of person who used to just sit and read my book at lunchtime and everyone else just thought I was weird. I wasn't like everyone else on my course who were really competitive. I just don't like that competitive environment. But everyone else in my year, they were like, I'm best, look at me and I just struggled to be around them all the time because I felt very different.

The main thing that I dealt with throughout school was my mental health and I went on to medication at the age of 17 because therapy didn't work for me. I think because I didn't have a particular reason behind it so when I was in therapy and trying to explore it, there was nothing coming up. I was just going through these weird emotions and just couldn't control it and medication has really helped. So, without that diagnosis I never really could have got that medication and be where I am now. I wouldn't have gone to university without it. I wouldn't have been brave enough. My mental health fluctuates, I will have weeks where I am still struggling with low moods and I still have anxiety but my main one really is depression because I get those times when I really just have no motivation, stay in bed, and feel numb.

How the student experience student voice in higher education

I will have weeks where I am struggling with low moods, and I must get mitigating circumstances in uni because I can't manage to do things. So, I am glad of the diagnosis of that because I think it allows me to get more support, like from the DSA and things like software that I would have never had before diagnosis. And I am also in the process of getting a couple of extra things like a reader pen for when I am reading, and I can't understand it, or I can't pronounce words. I am really excited about that because it really frustrates me when I am looking at something and I can't put the words together or the sounds together and I'm like ugh. So, I know the diagnosis is kind of labelling but for me I think it's helped me to figure out what I need to do to keep getting better in my education, if that makes sense? Last year, I was at a point where I was really struggling to

understand all of it, and I ended up having a breakdown in class and had to leave, my lecturer came and talked to me about it and went through why I was struggling so much. I am glad that they did that because we ended up having weekly meetings before the lecture so they could go over it with me before doing it in class. So, if there were specific things that I didn't understand, they could go through it with me before doing it in front of the whole class. It helps because I'm less nervous and less anxious going into the lectures. Also, if I had a better understanding of what we were doing then I could follow along better and keep up with the conversations with the other students if I understood things like the terminology better rather than just being sat there going argh.

People who haven't experienced mental health or coping mechanisms don't get it, but for me that was my only release at the time in that time of full-on breakdown, full-on hysterics. I feel like it's harder for them to understand my point of view. I think I could talk about it to some people who don't have diverse learner needs because I've spoken to my parents and other students who I know don't have diverse learner needs but it's harder because it is more difficult to explain to them or for them to get how I feel, or how I perceive things. They just start looking at me weirdly, they never asked me about it, which is what I would have preferred. They just started walking on eggshells around me which is worse because you almost feel like you're broken because everyone else sees you as broken. I would rather someone see it and go, oh, what did you do? Because I would rather say to them, oh, I've got mental health issues, it got really bad, but all it means is that I got through it. We all need to start getting used to seeing and accepting things like

this. I have had chats with the lecturers a few times and I do feel comfortable around most of my lecturers, and you know, I've known them for a while now, so I think that helps. Plus, especially on my course and what my course is, I know that the lecturers will understand so I'd still feel like talking to them because I feel like they have experience already of dealing with students like me. Most of the people on my course have similar needs but I do have other close people in my life with completely different needs, so I do have my partner who has ADHD and you know that's completely different to me but we have both experienced some kind of, not fitting in and we both didn't receive practically any support at school so that's something else that we shared.

I feel really comfortable going to our student rep because we have all gotten to know each other really well but I think it would be different if it was someone that I didn't know as well or if it was a big group but in this case, we are all friends, we all do stuff together and I feel comfortable talking to all of them. I think it would be very different if they weren't my friend because it's one thing posting on social media to strangers but having to talk to stranger's face to face, I would find it very difficult talking to them about what I've specifically been struggling with. So, I do feel like I am getting heard. However, sometimes I've felt anxious in meetings having to speak to people because it wasn't just the lecturers that I knew but also lectures from other years and other modules that I didn't know. And, it was a large group to speak in front of consisting mainly of lecturers, so it felt intimidating having all of these proper adults all looking at me, waiting for me to say something and I am just like errr.

I know that I am an adult but like for me in my head it splits between young adults and adults. So, like late teens, early 20s is when you're still acting like an idiot. In my head I'm like, you're not mature yet, you aren't settled down with a house, pets. Like, when I say proper adults, I'm like older adults who have got it all figured out. Like, I would look at an essay question and procrastinate and that's the immature side of me. I'm like, I'm fine, even though it's definitely not. Also, sometimes my emotions when I am having those down days it's kind of like I revert back to the age of 11 or 12. I don't feel like an adult who is paying rent, who's going to uni anymore. I kind of just feel like I'm just this little person curled up in my bed in a little bedroom. It's weird because when I say 11 and 12, I don't mean what I was like at 11 or 12. It's almost like an 11 or 12 version of me now because when I was 11 and 12, I was actually quite confident, I didn't have those issues that I have now. So, when I see my little inside 11 or 12 younger self now, it's almost like she's in there punching me in the gut when I am trying to stand up and talk about something. Like I can just feel like everything drop. Whereas, if I'd have wanted to speak about something when I actually was 11, I probably could have done it.

When I am feeling anxious and depressed my dyspraxia would get worse, I'll manage to walk into a door more often because I am stressed and my coordination just goes out of the window but it's not that I am not paying attention Also, my mental health can get worse from my dyslexia when I'm starting to feel frustrated because I can't understand something and I start to think that I am stupid and then that gets completely spiraled into, what am I doing with my life? I will fail uni, I am not going to be able to afford a house, get

a job. It just spirals which is hard to get out of. So, that tends to be when I take a couple of days off because I've gotten in that place where I am questioning everything in my life. There is nothing really that anyone can do, I'm really appreciative of others concern but I just say, I'll be back in next week and thanks for the concern, I will be okay, I just need time.

Conceptualising inclusive student voice – how students utilise their voice

The lecturers coming from the background that they do, are much more understanding when I am not going in because I am having a bad day or when I submit things late and I must get mitigating circumstances. I have felt more accepted and like I fit in here than I ever did at school considering what my needs are. I feel that they are catered more here. I am with like-minded people; I get along with everyone on my course and all my lectures. I don't feel like I am being judged because I am having a bad day. The lecturers would always ask if I'm okay and if there was anything they could do to ease how I am feeling and make it so that I can carry on going to lectures. Also, my partner has ADHD and that's very different to me, so, they don't understand me, but I can offload on to them because I don't feel judged.

When I am in that place, I am normally in it for a couple of days, and I just need time to come out of it. There is no single approach or method that I use because it's difficult to find something that snaps you out of it because it kind of takes over me. I live with someone, so, I tend to offload everything on to them. They have the same diagnoses as

me but we struggle with different things but that means we can help each other. I have tried to find something that could snap me out of it but for me the only thing that has ever worked is to sit in bed with my teddy bears and a drink, put my favourite programmes on the television and just sit and cry as much as I need to because I just feel like I need to get it out. I need to feel it all and just allow myself to go through it all for a couple of days because if I try and be like, no, I am fine, I get to a point where it gets worse and that's when I end up having a proper breakdown and end up in hospital because I've hurt myself so like I would rather every now and then have a couple of days where I just need to sit in bed and cry. It is my safe space. I have made it busy because it makes me feel more comfortable. I've got pictures of me, my friends, my family, my partner. I've got posters of my favourite book and movie. Posters from shows that I've been to and plants. That's where I want to be and that's where I feel safe. Sometimes, I like blasting some tunes, listening to my depressing music. It's weird, they make me feel better when I am depressed because then I think, I am not the only one, it's kind of like a comfort thing.

The uni could create something similar with plants, bean bag chairs because it almost feels like a hug and also not just a big open space because some people are not going to want to go into that big open space because they might feel like they are on show so there needs to be certain sections of smaller rooms like in the corner, walled off a bit so that everything is in one space but there are little spaces where if you need to cry and you don't want people to look at you crying, you can go into that corner and no one can see you. Also, I do know of other people who would prefer not to be on their own at a time

like that and who would prefer to be in a bigger space where people can be around them so that they don't feel like they are going to do something stupid if that makes sense? Or do something rash because there are people around them. So, it is best to have people around who are going through it because I think it can sometimes be uncomfortable being around people when you are in that head space when they have no idea of what you are going through.

I feel like I belong here. Belonging means being in a place where I don't feel judged, that's all I want in life. Just to be somewhere where I can cry in my lecture and people say, are you ok? Not think, what are they doing. And I can cry, and people don't say, oh, that's weird because I can't control it, it just happens. I feel like I belong as well because there is more diversity in the type of students which then makes me feel more part of the group because when everyone had similar personalities, I was different, and it was a lot harder. Whereas now, people are so different here, but that's a good thing in the sense that there is no clicky groups, they're not that group of nerds or the popular students that you see on TV.

Inclusive Student Voice fingerprint – JA

Past experiences of voice

- Labelling can be helpful
- Feeling out of place and judged leading to social anxiety
- Mental health leads to withdrawal

What is their experience of student voice in HE

- Benefits of labelling: reasonable adjustments
- Others lack of understanding: similar experiences leads to better understanding
- Relations built over time important for voice
- Age regression impacts voice
- Intersectionality spiral into withdrawal

Conceptualising inclusive student voice

- Understanding is not being judged and reasonable adjustments
- Space to recuperate focusing
- Desire for a safe space
- Belonging within the diversity pool

Appendix 22 – Individual depiction – LO

Diverse learner needs

I have dyslexia and it causes me loads of anxiety.

Past experiences of voice

When I was in secondary school, I felt like I was the only person who had dyslexia. If I spoke to people in secondary school, I think they would be like, what is that? Why do you read so slowly? Why do you do this? This is really confusing, what kind of disability have you got? And I'm like no it's not, I just learn in a different way, but they would be really confused. People don't speak to me and choose not to speak to me because I always mix up my words or I don't take enough time to answer stuff. I am also really bad at grammar, I wasn't taught it that well and if I did get taught it, I didn't understand it and it just went straight through my brain. It feels annoying, I feel angry and embarrassed because if someone asks me a question like, do you want to do this? I'll take a couple of minutes to figure out what they are saying and then answer but they just move on to the next person and ask them instead. And I'm just like, I wanted to do it, but you didn't give me enough time to figure it out. I was diagnosed with dyslexia in the last year of sixth form where I didn't really get much help because they were treating everyone like adults, like nothing was wrong. But I think I got diagnosed because my teacher looked at my essay and said, your spelling and grammar is really bad, I think you should get a dyslexia test and I was like errr, ok, what is that? I said that it is fine with me, and then, I did a little test on a laptop

and got more time in my exams but that was all the support I got. My sibling also didn't understand what it was, neither did my sibling. My sibling is super smart, and science-y and I told them that I am dyslexic, and they were like, what do you mean? What is that?

How the student experience student voice in higher education

I had my walls up in the beginning because it was all new. I had a meeting in the first week with my personal tutor where we introduced each other but I was very stubborn and I put my walls up, they tried to push me to talk, but I was not in the right place and I was like, I am not giving you any answers. So, I think not being educated on what disabilities and learning difficulties are, how they affect people and what it can cause can be excluding. I feel like them not knowing is annoying because then you have to explain it and they won't understand. And I think being closed off and not open to the idea that people are different and learn in different ways is also exclusive.

I know you have physical disabilities and you have to do accessibility plans but you can't really see learning difficulties, so people are unaware when I put my hand up and say, I can't do this, it's too fast, please can you slow down or can you raise your voice because I can't hear you, it helps me to process; they are like, you don't look like you're struggling and I'm like, but I am. I think if a disability is visual, people will make way for accessibility and provisions more than they would for people who have invisibility disabilities or learning difficulties. I think the teachers will teach it, but they won't put it into practice, so like, they will demonstrate how they can be more diverse, to be better and how they can

make it accessible but the next class they will just go back to normal and do it fast again. If there's not many people, I'll put my hand up because I know I'd be answered quickly and say, can you just raise your voice because we can't hear you, we are at the front, but we still can't and then they will do it and then revert back and not do it again. And so, we would just have to listen really carefully and try and do that. Me and my friend, we will speak to each other in class because if the teacher goes too fast, we are like, what did they say? They said this but then the teachers are like, why are you talking when I am trying to do this? We are just trying to teach each other and educate each other and just being told that we can't do that is *sigh*. We put module feedback in to say, please can you talk a bit slower because it would help us and then they will talk a bit slower for the next lesson and then they will go back to it again. I just think doing it in the long run and keeping it like that is the best thing. Although, I think like if I was them I would just do it and then, I would forget but then having people you know in your class who have disabilities and you're not providing what they then you are still not educating them and they are meant to be here to be educated.

In my first year, I did a presentation, and I did post-it notes and they were packed, and I read it and I just didn't do well at all because they were so close together and everyone is looking at me and I am trying to read it and its just *sigh* and presentations are always timed. I want to have a bigger amount of time and then base it off of that because we have 10minutes and it took me 5 minutes just to do my speech and there is three of us so they had to speed up and I was like, I am so sorry but I just couldn't read it as fast. Time

pressure *sigh* makes me nervous and full of anxiety because I know the teacher is looking at their phone and everybody is looking at me and I've got this whole thing to read but I've got to read it fast but slow so I can match it in between the time and you don't know how much time you've got left as well and they don't really show it to you and I'm like, I don't know if I've spent 30 seconds or 30 minutes talking about this. But then they give you a warning of how much time you have left, but I don't like that either, especially if I am last and I've got like 5 sheets of paper that I need to read still. So, I would read it so fast that no one could hear me. When I properly got professional help the second year of uni, it had given me more time to do my exams, but I don't do exams on my course so it would be good to use that time for presentations 100%.

We have some classes with another course, the classes are way bigger, and everyone is quite loud in expressing their opinions. When I am in that class, everyone is talking, and the teacher is teaching you at the same time. I feel like I don't want to be there because I feel like they are excluding our course because they are going too fast to keep up with the majority of people and the time they've got but we all come out of that lesson and the majority of my course are shellshocked like, we didn't understand what just happened because it's so fast and they explain it very specifically and we need it to be like broadened a little bit so we can understand it. We tried to google it, but they are switching to another bit, and we didn't catch it, we don't know what it was, and we are trying to skip to the other page. It's a bit frustrating as well because it takes me longer to process things, so if they say something, I will write it down and then if they say

something before I am done, I can't write it down whilst I am writing everything else down. It's hard because I'll go home and be like, I didn't learn anything from that, I didn't understand it and that's part of my course, I need to do this, but I don't understand the lecture that says what to do for my essay or something like that. I didn't realize how important it is but if they don't have the difficulty themselves, they are like, I don't understand really, why do I have to slow down?

The module feedback forms online are really good. It depends on who it is because you know which lecturer has written it from the language, so the language might be more complicated but then again, some of them are longer but have only got 5 ratings instead of big comments that you have to fill in. Some of them are just ratings but you want to expand on it and some of them are big boxes, but you don't know what to say. We just want to give module feedback that is simple, you understand what it says like, is this module good? Yes, because if someone goes on to it, reads the question and doesn't understand it or they don't know what box to put it in, they just won't do it. Well, I know I won't and then they just won't get their feedback. I also prefer to do it online because if they do it in person, they will hand it out and say this is a 5-minute thing, do it now, and you do it and they are like give it back and I am like, I have only just written my name. And they are like, well you can do it at home then or online and I am like, then why did you give it to me because you're wasting resources, I can do it on my laptop, it's fine. Teachers need to say it a bit more too because it sometimes just pops up online and I am like err, what is this? So, reminding us would be good by sending an email, or a little thing at the

end of the lecture saying module feedback is up can you just do this because it will be really helpful for us and for you next year.

Conceptualising inclusive student voice – how students utilise their voice

Module feedback pops up online and all the lecturers are like, aww can you have a go at this, it will really help us and I'm like, yeah, we will do it in a little bit and we all do it because, especially us, if there is something wrong we can put it in there. It is all anonymous as well so you can be honest about things. Like, in one of mine, we did the module feedback and then in the next session, they put it on the board and said, I'll improve on this, I am really sorry about this like, I didn't realize this was a problem and they are like, ah, thank you so much for these really good opinions. I will keep doing this and that's really good only if teachers go back to it and put it into practice. They need to have simple questions, like do you understand what the teaching is? And stuff like that, and you can say yes or no then expand. Doing them online is also nice and quicker because I can write online quicker than I can in person.

We all have learning needs, so it is quite nice knowing others with diverse needs because you can relate to them about your issues and problems. I've also got a student rep in my adjoining course who are really good at saying stuff that we all want to say and stuff like that, so, it's really nice to know that it's in meetings and stuff like that. I feel really comfortable going to them because they are our age and they have a disability as well, so it's really nice learning about them and them learning about us. It's really nice when they

email us and says like, has anyone got any suggestions or worries and stuff like that, you can add it and I can do them in the meeting, and it will not only benefit us but all the people who have disabilities or learning difficulties. I think them being open about being higher up, having a disability and knowing that they feel comfortable expressing why they have accessibility plans or provisions and stuff like this is really good. It's quite nice to know that they aren't stuck up or closed off. It's quite nice they are being open because we then feel like we can be open to them and like express our worries to them. At first, they were quite closed off because we were like new people and we didn't know them as well but this year, it's quite nice because we are all friends now.

Coming to uni, I feel a lot more heard because of the smaller group. I don't think I would be heard if my class was so big. It's quite nice to say my opinion on stuff and everyone is really nice, just chilled. If a teacher is going too fast and stuff, I feel comfortable to say, can you please slow down because I don't think I am learning anything if they are going so fast, so it's quite nice having smaller groups because then I can express myself a bit more. If not then they can go back and research all the stuff or we can tell them. If they are open to the idea of us teaching them about what they can do to teach us and help us learn in uni its quite nice because then in the next couple of weeks we will feel comfortable saying like, I don't really understand this, I can't read it, I don't understand what it says, they can be like, ok, that's fine, we can do this. We are not a group of people who are like, I don't want to speak about it, maybe on some days, but most of the days I am like, I don't understand, can you slow down please. So, for instance, for my presentations, I use a

scripts, so, I normally do a sentence or so in really big writing and then do a lot of them for my speech, so there's not much text on my card but there is enough for me to read it and take my time and then flip it. I think it just helps if the lecturers know that people in the class are different and understanding that your presentation or your PowerPoint, whatever you are doing, has to be adjusted so we might take up a bit more time in our presentations. So, having a teacher that goes, yeah, that's fine, go for it. It's great.

Most of my class has got a difficulty and we all learn in different ways and it's quite nice knowing that a teacher understands that and like, says at the beginning of the class, like, I have dyslexia because then they will understand. Just like multi-cultural students would benefit from having multi-cultural lecturers to relate to them, it's the same thing for us too because we can relate and be like, yay, we can all understand each other, we can do it slowly, we can do this, we can understand that we all have difficulty with spelling etc and it's quite nice knowing that they understand that if you spell something wrong it's not a big deal and if our grammar is iffy. I think them expressing their experiences as well because it's really nice knowing that they have been through similar things and is comfortable expressing themselves. It makes me feel more comfortable expressing myself. So, it's quite nice that some of the lecturers, the first couple of lessons were like, hi, I am this person, I do this, I struggle with this, I really like drawing, it's just nice knowing a little bit more about them and then building them up in your mind.

I love my PACT; I really like them. I think when I came to their office, it was quite nice saying, I've got this, I need help getting a diagnosis, I don't know what to do or how to do

it and they were like right, we will do this and this. Do you feel this way? Do you want to do this? No, that's fine, don't worry. And then after my meeting, they will make a log saying, we are going to refer to DSA for help. Over time, I have got more comfortable and we did more meetings and I think it was last year, I had something happen and I went to them because I couldn't handle my essay and they was like, right, this is the support uni have, I can support you, you don't have to speak to them, you can speak to me and I like spoke to them and I did one meeting with counselling which I cancelled three times but they were like, oh okay, that's fine, don't worry, would you like me to come with you for your first one and I was like, yeah, that's fine, that's great, thank you.

Inclusive Student Voice fingerprint – LO

Past experiences of voice

- lack of understanding
- Processing time
- Isolation

What is their experience of student voice in HE

- Hidden disabilities and sustainable support
- Challenges of voice in presentations
- Reasonable adjustments: the teacher's approach
- Module feedback is complex
- Understanding is crucial

Conceptualising inclusive student voice

- Module evaluation forms
- Sharing experiences and learning needs
- Pedagogy: talking and listening to students expressing their needs
- Lecturers with learning needs is positive
- Lecturer doors always open

Appendix 23 – Individual depiction – GR

Diverse learner needs

I was told that I had anxiety four years ago and I got diagnosed with depression last September.

Past experiences of voice

When I talk to professionals or family, I feel like they just say, you just need to get through it, and I think it's difficult for them to say that to me when they don't even know the situation. I sort of got forced to do things that I didn't necessarily want to do. They thought they would try things to see if they could make me feel better but in the long run, I wasn't in the mind to do that, at that time. During secondary school when I was going through a really anxious time, my one parent and stepparent used to take me to school otherwise I wouldn't go in and sitting in a classroom around people who would say things to me, felt a bit awkward. I remember in my English class; I sat right in the middle of all the popular people, and I found that really difficult because they made little comments behind my back. No one was aware of my mental health because I wouldn't tell them but it's just being in an environment where you don't feel welcomed and where you just feel awkward. So, it makes you feel better when you are not forced to do something because what you're doing becomes more normal in comparison to how you're feeling so at the end of it, you're actually feeling quite accomplished. But I don't know whether I wasn't

listened to when I was younger, because I was younger, because they sort of look at you like you're a teenager, what can you be anxious about?

When I first started getting anxiety, my family wouldn't know what to do. It sounds really horrible to say but they would shout at me and just say, you're just doing it because everyone else feels like it and I think that really affected me and how I dealt with it. I felt like I shouldn't react like that but my family did find it really difficult to understand and I almost got fed up at points because it was like this same thing every day and I would sleep like all day to shut out the emotions and I think if people were to say something to me, that would be my go-to. I would leave, go to my room and go to sleep. I would block it out and I wouldn't deal with it, I wouldn't have to feel those sorts of emotions. Then I was depressed all through the summer and I think my parents really saw how much it was affecting me and became more understanding of it. My one parent would say, you need to get up, but it was sort of frustrating for me hearing them saying it because I know deep down that I need to do it but it's difficult to do that.

My one parent would come over to me and would ask a lot of questions and I would be just like, stop. I just can't be bothered to speak to them because I will be worried about the things that my one parent is going to say back. They would say things like, it's all in your head and things like that. They are not as understanding and I would be thinking, why are you saying that to me? So, I am not saying anything back because to me, it doesn't make sense for why they are saying it so why should I say anything back. Growing up, me and one parent argued a lot. I was a misbehaving child, who would have quite a lot

of screaming fits and I used to have night terrors all the time, it wasn't just with my one parent, it was with a lot of people and not for any necessary reason but a lot of the time we would argue and shout at each other and I just wouldn't deal with it. I would just go to my room, and we wouldn't talk for days because neither of us wanted to talk to each other. I was sort of angry at my other parent for not being on my side, so, I would just retract and not say anything else. So yeah, I would just shut it out and I wouldn't deal with it, I would just ignore that parent even though we lived in the same house. I think I would discuss it with my other parent when I am really exhausted all the time because they are very open about listening to me and all the things that I was doing. They would come up and say goodnight and I'd cry, and they were very good at listening to how I was feeling and then reassuring me and being there for me.

It's hard for me to understand because they are meant to be the adult but then I think I must try and make my one parent pay more attention to me rather than them spending time with my other parent, the one who was angry at me. I think I would sit downstairs for longer or sit with them in the kitchen or try and get them to do things to almost make that other parent feel bad. But I don't know whether that's because I didn't have the attention on me or because the house seemed quieter because we weren't talking because it's awkward being in your own home and avoiding them. That one parent worked at home a lot so when we had arguments and we wouldn't speak to each other, it was just me and them at home. I felt like I couldn't go downstairs because they were there, but I don't necessarily think that was their fault, it was just, you know they've got a very high temper,

and we just clashed a lot. I think it was difficult for me to process when they were not speaking to me because they are meant to be the adult. We still have arguments, and we still don't talk to each other for a bit but it's like I'll get so angry about something, and I'll hold a grudge, so I'd be like, you sort it out, you speak to me first.

How the student experience student voice in higher education

I think student voice in higher education is determining how you want to be taught, how exams and assignments are structured, the methods of teaching, and the contribution from lecturers like how much they can help and things like that.

I had spoken to the lecturers about not wanting to do the course anymore because it was affecting my mental health, and they were trying to say can you not just carry on and finish the year and get that over and done with. Then the same thing this year, people have been saying, can you just try and do this, and I am trying to say to them, I can't do that because of my mental health. When I was going through a really bad period, it made me feel worse that I had to come in, so to me it was easier to say to myself, I am not going in. I am going to do it from home. But then I would also say to myself the night before, I am going to get up and go in tomorrow, but then I would wake up feeling like, I just don't want to go in and I don't know whether it became my new normal because I knew going in would help me. I think it is that sense of dread, the feeling like everything is very bad and the overthinking of everything that could happen. I think with this course, they are very good at adjusting when I've said I don't want to do something. I had a presentation to do,

and I emailed and said, I won't be able to do it in person and they said, can you reschedule to do it in person, and I said can I just do the voice-over and they said, can you just do it online. Although that still made me feel anxious and although I still felt like they weren't listening to how I was feeling. I didn't want to argue with them about it, so I just said, yeah that's fine. They also gave me the option of not having my camera on and taking my time, so it was a more relaxed presentation rather than me just not doing it.

When I didn't go to lectures, I was going in for like one a week, if that sometimes, I felt a lot of guilt because I hadn't gone and I felt like, I hadn't done what I should have been doing, so it's sort of like, I know I haven't gone to lectures but in that moment, I physically can't. It's an easy thing to say, I'm not going in because it calms me, but I personally felt a lot of guilt for not going in because I felt like I missed out on a lot. I feel like I was impacting my education as well because I have a lack of understanding of things because I haven't been in there in person to learn it. And I was worried about telling my family because I knew they would disagree with the fact that I was not going into uni and people around me like my housemates would always say, oh, she's not going to lectures again. I was staying at my boyfriends a lot when I was going through a really difficult part and I think his housemates were not aware of it and I wasn't going to say to them that I wasn't going because of my mental health because they are the type of people who wouldn't really understand and it was sort of annoying me because I shouldn't have to explain myself.

There have been times where I have come in, but depression makes you tired, so I am not really focusing because I am just focusing on how tired I am. I feel exhausted, and the anxiety makes me think about lots of things so you can't just concentrate on the actual education. I shake when I am anxious, and I think I'm focusing on that and trying to calm myself down by thinking positively rather than thinking about where I actually am. I feel like I am angry, and I just think about things, I don't dwell on it, but it does affect my mood. I think I try and block it out because I'm quite an emotional person, like if I'm sad, I am really sad, if I am angry then I am really angry there is no in-between. Sometimes I don't reject it and sometimes I don't think about it because it angers me. I reached out for counselling once and I just thought it was really unhelpful, they just gave me techniques that I just wouldn't use like listening to meditation music and things like that and I just felt, ugh. Obviously, it works for some people but for me, I just feel a bit silly doing it and then I went through a really bad patch again and I went back and saw a different person and they were really helpful, and they really discussed techniques that I actually enjoyed doing. And I felt more listened to the second time.

I think the knowledge on what mental health issues are, are quite known but if you haven't suffered with it, you don't understand what exactly it is to go through it and I think people find that hard to understand. Like you could say to people, look, I have depression and they will be like, oh, you've got depression, but I don't think people truly understand how limiting it can be. They don't feel what I felt and I think some lecturers, I don't know if they sort of get it like, I keep emailing them saying, I am not going to be in

but I don't fully think they understand why I am not going to be in and I feel like they could be thinking that I am just using it as an excuse but then there are also some that are very understanding. My personal academic tutor is really understanding, and they are really aware of the achievements I make. I also think, as our course is surrounded by a lot of people with mental health difficulties, they are quite understanding of the effects of it.

When I am anxious, I stumble over my words or I can't really process what I am thinking to what I am saying, like it doesn't come out right. It doesn't always make sense. I think if people don't know I have anxiety they don't notice it as much whereas people that know I have anxiety they notice the things that I do when I am feeling anxious so I think I am quite good at hiding it as in the way that I am speaking but I will fidget or I will go quiet. If I am in a situation, I sort of avoid or pull back from doing it. I think I go silent because the anxiety makes you fearful even though there is nothing to be fearful of. So, if we are doing group work, I normally wouldn't speak out. I've gotten better at doing it now, but I wouldn't have spoken out if I had the choice not to, I would just leave it for other people to do. But even in terms of group work, presentations etcetera, I do my part even if I'm not speaking. I am happy to speak my part within my group, it's just when I am talking in front of the whole class, so I do my bit and then I don't speak. I don't think anyone minds because in my group, there is one person who is really confident, so they do it all. I think it's just the fear of speaking out and being the only one talking. I am not scared that I am going to mess up or that people are going to laugh at me but it's just that fear of, I don't want to do it, but I can't exactly pinpoint what the reasoning for that is. I think having

attention on me in a large class is intimidating as everyone is focused on me so maybe it's because it's intimidating, and all the attention is on listening to me. So maybe it's that I am now accustomed to it because I never speak out, so I don't feel confident in doing it now.

I'm quite open about my mental health with the lecturers because I think it's important for them to know why I am not there and that they are aware that it is an on-going issue. Maybe not in person but I will always email to say sorry, I am not in because of my mental health. I may not necessarily talk to them in person, but I'd talk to some people in person about it. There are certain lecturers that you feel more comfortable with than others and I think if you know they have more understanding of how you're feeling it's easier to present or talk with them in class. For the ones who aren't as supportive, I was more likely to not show up to lectures because I didn't feel as comfortable and I also, without sounding bias to genders but I always felt more comfortable towards females. I think I have always felt more awkward around males. It's the not understanding and the feeling of judgement as well because I think some people are very like, oh, you've got depression, just get over it. Or it's in your head and I think then you can feel stupid almost for having those feelings and although they are not necessarily saying you're wrong, you can feel that they are judging you almost. If something happens where I do feel judged, it does affect my mood, I do feel like I would step back and not say as much even though I feel like I shouldn't have to, but I struggle to express my emotions so why should I be the one trying.

One of my lectures was very long and I really struggled attending that, so we came up with a plan. I feel like they listened to what I struggled with, why I struggled with it and came up with a plan for me to go in later or step out during the lecture. I think it makes me feel better because I can give myself time and it makes me feel more confident because I will be able to go into a scenario where I am able to focus more and do better rather than feeling overwhelmed. Once I've been to the lecture, and I've been in that day, I feel more accomplished and confident within myself because I have been able to do it. When I was in a really bad way, the expectation to attend all lectures was really difficult because I was just so exhausted and had no motivation, but I think discussing that with people around me, the small accomplishments were recognized rather than, oh, well you haven't been to your lectures. It's like if you've got out of bed and managed to do your lectures online that's an accomplishment, maybe next time you could create a goal of coming in because it's about creating that sort of, you've done well in that, let's see if you can progress, rather than saying, you need to come to lectures and pushing me to feel uncomfortable. A lot of them said that if I missed lectures, they could do tutorials so I could catch up on work without feeling like I needed to still go in and then for things like presentations, I've never done a presentation in person because I was always overly anxious, so I was able to do some on my own or I did them online which made me feel less anxious or for a couple of them I actually put speech on the PowerPoint and sent it to them so that I was still doing it but I wasn't doing it in person so it wasn't overwhelming. They could help me get

into a routine because I find routines helpful but just taking the time to work out what I actually need rather than what I should be doing would be a lot more helpful.

Without sounding bias to genders, I always felt more comfortable towards females, and I have always felt more awkward around males. I think women are more understanding towards me. I think I have had a more of a positive outlook with females than males about my mental health and I think being in that sort of situation with a female lecturer is more comforting but then there have also been male lecturers who have said, you don't have to come into lectures, I am not going to force you. I think it's sort of that understanding and more, obviously they are your lecturers and it's professional but more of a friendship sort of relationship. There are certain lecturers that you can joke around with and then there are some that are serious, and they teach you and that's it. So, I think if you're friendly with a lecturer it's easier to be positive in lectures. And I think with lecturers they have been a bit more understanding and not as forceful as my one parent. Most of them say you can come in and try and do it and be more encouraging to try but they are not as forceful with it, so I think it's better understanding to what my one parent thinks. I know that when I am not anxious, I feel a lot more confident, and I can take my time to discuss things.

University is more of a choice, it's not compulsory. I think if you make that choice to not come in because of your mental health then that should be your choice. I think it's more of, it's on you if you don't attend lectures. I think as long as you are doing the work, you are doing what you're meant to do, then you don't have to do in-person presentations. I

think having a relaxed environment that encourages people to come in is good because for me, I feel like I miss out on a lot because the class is so friendly, and you can come in and have a joke around. It's a lot more helpful to come in and learn in person but then there is also that no pressure of having to come in which did help me so yeah having a no pressured environment is good. I know in myself that it makes me feel better if I don't put that pressure on myself in terms of having to go so I don't really let people's opinions affect my choices because if I don't want to do something then I won't do it but then there is also that encouragement from people trying to get me out of the house which, although I don't want to do it, if it is beneficial and then I would listen to their opinions. Some people within my class have disclosed that I have struggled with my mental health, and they are very supportive in the fact that they will message to check up on me.

Inclusive Student Voice – GR

Past experiences of voice

- Forcing someone to do something before they are ready is unhelpful
- Dismissal of delicate emotions from others
- Avoidance of delicate emotions from the self
- The ‘adult’ speaks first

What is their experience of student voice in HE

- Pushing me beyond my means is fearful
- Guilt spiral and judgement
- Finding a coping mechanism
- Similar experiences by others helpful.
- Fear and silence
- Supportive vs unsupportive (judgement)

Conceptualising inclusive student voice

- Comfortability and approachability
- Be curious, ask questions, create a plan with achievable goals.
- Choice over pressure

Appendix 24 – Individual depiction – BA

Diverse learner needs

So, I am a mature student who grew up in poverty and I struggle with my mental health. I have anxiety and depression. I am undiagnosed, but I am in the process of trying to get a diagnosis of ADHD. I also have several health conditions, IBS, PCOS, asthma, PTSD, underactive thyroid, and one that affects my sleep.

Past experiences of voice

I've grown up with two narcissistic adults so there is a lot of guilt and not being good enough. My childhood was very traumatic and lonely, I was emotionally and physically abused. I became the protector; I was defensive and dominant. The family was stressed because of poverty, and I was living with an alcoholic whilst witnessing another adult having a suicidal mental breakdown. I was made to be an adult from a very young age. I mourn for the losses I never experienced as a child. When I applied to university, they said, do you think you're academically clever enough to go? So, I always feel guilty that I am always doing something wrong. It’s always been my fault for everything. So, I have to pass this to prove to them that I am good enough. If I do rubbish, I'll think maybe they were right. My sibling came here, they did really well, so, I will always be compared to them. Also, I am the only one in the family who has disclosed my mental health issues, so, I'm seen as the damaged one, there is always something wrong with **them** whereas the others haven't. So, I will never be seen in the same category as my sibling because of that.

I've never fitted in, bullying followed me around in education because I am a vulnerable empath, people see my weaknesses. I am a people pleaser, always will be but bullying changed me to become rebellious, like walking out of class and swearing at teachers. It's just anger but it was a cry for help. I can't communicate how I am feeling and no one else understands how I am feeling. I didn't speak throughout high school, no one knew anything was going on. I go above and beyond to make friends but if they don't show me anything I cut them off or push them away. I've fallen through the net with safeguarding, and I am not the type of person to ask for counseling unless I really really need it because I am worried, they will think I am mental or that it would affect my job or that no one would hire me. I said to them that I think I've got ADHD, and they were like, why have you got so much wrong with you? So, for me, I am already a walking failure. I gravitate towards others with massive behavior because I know how they feel. I can tell them what I wasn't told as a kid. I tell them they are good enough and give them reassurance when things are tough. No one gave me that approach when I needed it. I just wanted someone to show me they cared because my parents never cared. I can't do that on myself because I don't see myself in the same light or as severe as that because then people will judge me.

Due to growing up in poverty, I dress in a certain conservative, more expensive way than I actually have in my bank account. Maybe it is a persona for me because perhaps I have noticed in public that it has actually affected me. I definitely have some narcissistic traits, whether I want them or not. As much as I don't want to be, I feel like parts of it is in me and I must fight it because I'm anti-being like the adults from my childhood. I am the only

one who has rebelled, but it still affects me now, they've messed up my head so much. I don't feel loved by anyone, it is just a lot of guilt. I was always in a persona when I had to get home and do stuff for them otherwise, I would be punished, then I'd get hurt or I would be in trouble. So maybe I used an adult persona when I was younger.

How the student experience student voice in higher education

I can get so overwhelmed that I am unable to concentrate or take anything in and with my anxiety, I over think things like, I can't leave the lecture because people are going to think things of me. When it comes to assignments and things, I always ask myself, am I good enough? What is actually being asked of me? And feeling overwhelmed because I don't have a clue what I am doing, even though I have, so maybe I have some self-doubt. I'm an older student and everyone else has finished 6th form and come straight here and I feel disadvantaged because I haven't, so, I think, everyone else gets it but I can't ask questions because I think why don't I get it? Being older, I am alone most of the time, it's rubbish but I haven't spoken to anyone because I don't want to be a burden. So, again it's the I am not good enough. Also, everybody sees me as a parental figure, so they ask me things and I'm like, don't ask me, I don't understand either, argh. They are thinking, oh, Banana* you're more knowledgeable but I am thinking, no I really am not, I don't understand what we are doing. So, I feel there is a bit of pressure in that sense too. Some people don't have the confidence to speak but because I am slightly older and have had experiences in life, I feel I have to be the one that steps up to speak in class because no one else will. I do it to

help everyone. It’s a persona in a way but it does play on my mind and then I think, do they think I am irritating, and do I know it all?

My PACT tutor is brilliant but with anxiety, you almost feel like you’re a nuisance because I am there all the time asking and bombarding them with questions. I’m not but in my head, I am at that point where no one else has had this many tutorials, they must be sick of me. I don’t want to upset them. I won't sleep because I'll be upset and feel bad and I think the next time I see them, they will think badly of me, I am a bad person, or I've upset them. Yeah, everything is my fault, like everything. I hold a lot of guilt, so when I've had a conversation with someone, I will sit on my own and I will retell the whole conversation to myself to make sure that I haven't said anything to offend anyone or upset anyone. Mine is all about judgement from others, letting everyone down, or them thinking badly of me. I am having therapy but because I have spoken a lot about my life, I’ve become very unemotional with it now. It gets easier the more times you say it, digest it and with the time I've had. I've had counseling through the uni but you only have 5 sessions and then you’ll have to reapply so that wasn't enough for me. I need regular reassurance that I am doing well or just for someone to check in on me really but, there is nothing.

I really struggled this year; I've had some issues with some people on my course and some health issues that meant that I had to miss uni so I told them but they were saying sarcastic comments about it, and I was like, that was a big thing for me to go to the doctors because I would feel like, I'm not good enough and overthink that maybe it's all right. My specialist tutor is lovely, but I feel like it becomes a counseling session and, don’t

get me wrong, it's nice to talk to someone but I've been brave, and I've asked if we can have a planning session? A little deadline every week because if you tell me to read a couple of pages, I feel pressured to do it for them whereas I won't do it for myself. I don't know why but if they move the deadline or I have mitigating circumstances, I will still do the work for the deadline that it should have been in for because I don't want to be seen as different to others. I neglect my health if I am at home doing assignments, I won't shower for days and I won't eat. I think it's linked to the anxiety in the sense that I am not good enough. Other people need to recognize and tell me that something isn't going ok. I can't make that decision myself. I'm like, ah, it's probably alright. I think I just need reassurance that it is ok to think that something is ok or that it's not.

I don't think I could necessarily go to the student rep because I don't want to be a burden or a pain, and I don't see my needs bad enough to need help. I have been to them sometimes, but I didn't feel it was helpful because it wasn't kept confidential, so it doesn't work. I understand they've let students choose the rep to show that we've got a student's voice but honestly, I think that maybe tutors should get to know us for a couple of months and then they choose somebody to do it instead, someone mature and confident to voice things as I didn't feel like the person who would voice it to the group was always doing it for the right reasons. I've spoken to module tutors, but I felt like they were a bit abrupt, and I think it's the stress of uni and a lot being asked of staff. But then I just feel worse. Like why do I bother. If I'm asking for help, it's a big thing that I am asking. I just feel

stupid, like I'm wasting their time. I still didn't know what I was doing but I couldn't ask again or go to another tutor because they might think that I'm playing one off the other.

Sometimes, I shut down and go mute because I feel like I am being a burden, a pain or that they think the worst of me, like I am stupid or dumb. I think it is a cry for help, but I can't show it or voice it, so I just zone out. I know they are not personally criticising me, but you can't help but take it that way if you have had this trauma and they don't understand that. Even saying no to me or anything negative, I'll always feel bad and cry straight away. I'll be thinking, they can't be bothered with me or haven't got the time for me. I would then wait for them to contact me; I wouldn't chase them. I have had to miss lectures because I got here on time but couldn't find anywhere to park so, now I am late. It's only 5 minutes but I can't walk into the lecture so, I've just gone home because I am overwhelmed and upset. I don't want to disappoint them because I hate people thinking badly of me. They won't look at me cross or anything, but they expect you to say sorry you're late, but I go chosen mute because I'd be so upset. And if they replied and said, this is the second time or next time can you get here earlier. I will explode into a flood of tears because they would think badly of me.

I don't know how to manage my emotions; I just don't think I can. Sometimes, I wouldn't do it, I would just shut down and go mute. People will see that I am upset, or they will know because I have gone quiet. I've gone in shut down mode. They probably just think I am being ignorant. But you can tell by my face. You can tell by a tone of voice if someone is being off with you or not and maybe facially too because you can see it. I think that is

my biggest aggravation with everything like uni, home, everything is that I am always relating to people who don't understand. For instance, when I walk in and my peers are like ugh, here they are, just rocked up *eye roll* or they have said nothing but looked at their watch like hang on, you don't know my circumstances, this is a big thing that I am even here. I am not going to share with someone that I have all these problems, but I am in, they could be happy to see me, or just welcoming. It is like talking to kids and I miss that adult conversation. It just made me feel more secluded, so maybe more mature groups or mixing of year groups could be good.

Conceptualising inclusive student voice – how students utilise their voice

I need regular reassurance that I am doing well or for someone to check in on me. It would be better if it was somebody who knew me, like my poor PACT because they know that I've got good intentions and that it's not attention seeking. They would know what to say to me if they knew me and would know what triggers me. But I guess it doesn't have to be someone I know because sometimes you can vent more to people you don't know because they make less judgements about you. I worry that if I am saying things to my PACT tutor who teaches me for some modules then I think that I am not good enough, I'm behind, I've got issues, they think I'm mental so maybe it's better to talk to someone you don't know. This person could be very open, welcoming with a friendly face, non-judgemental and inclusive about everything. They will talk to me in a non-condescending way, like no matter how small a question, it is always relevant. I want them to give me

positive praise, reassurance approach and a trauma-informed approach, which is saying that it must be really tough for you, you're doing really well.

I know there is a mental health team on site, but you only have triage and 5 sessions. There needs to be somewhere where you can go in a crisis. If I am upset, I need distractions to calm myself down, not necessarily hide but I don't want people watching me being emotional. Though, sometimes I do need someone to talk to so maybe somewhere where there's a mental health first aider hovering around and if they see someone upset, they check in on them and say, is everything okay? We can't have loads of individual rooms but maybe dividers, with table space and a couple of bean bags, so you can have a little cry rather than people judging you because you're in your own little area. I don't cry, don't get me wrong, I really really don't but I might have a panic attack so, I might be there hyperventilating. I don't want people asking me if I am ok whilst I am having a panic attack. I just need to sort my head out myself first so somewhere where you can go at any time and speak to someone in crisis because if you set sessions, I don't want to open up to start with because it's hard for me to talk about it so by the time you've got to the 5th session, it is too traumatic and then it ends, so unlimited, not counselling but someone. If we did have this safe space, someone who has actually been through this trauma would be there, who physically feels it because I can see that they feel it, they can help them because they physically know. Perhaps the uni can do more to encourage friendships, like a little friend space that isn't too big and open. Somewhere quieter, a little corner somewhere where it is just dedicated to somebody making friends.

Like a chill out area that doesn't just have desks but maybe has smaller sofas. So, somewhere welcoming where you know people are going to be on their own.

If we had set break times, then if I am late, I could come in on the break. I could sneak in, feel overwhelmed, have a cry and sort myself out before I came to the lesson and not feel so shit. Then, I will say sorry at the end of the lecture, but this will allow me to calm down first. I would also like to see an inclusive approach, a more adapted engaging mixed approach to learning and moving around, not like around campus because that would be stressful but within the class. So, I have one lecturer who would explain something one way and without me even asking, they will explain it again in a different way. It's just knowing how that is going to affect me, if you know that I've got anxiety and depression, I am not asking for special behavior towards anyone, but I am saying have that awareness in your head that maybe I should answer the question properly for Banana* because they are probably going to go home anxious about it or overthink it. It is just that trauma-informed approach. Like feedback, I know they are not personally criticising me, but I take it as that, because you can't help but take it that way if you have had this trauma. So, for me, maybe starting with a positive before you go on to the negative would be helpful. I call it a shit sandwich; I need that shit sandwich. This might come across as favoritism but just saying something that you did well at the end of the lesson to each person in the class or let's say, we have to think of one thing that we are doing well this lesson and I can see that puts people on the spot but it is easier to say all the things we are doing badly but no one ever says the good things, something more personal. I think if I expressed that I've got

anxiety or depression to them or said what was making me anxious and then the tutor was subtly like, I can understand why you feel like that because I have it too. Some might be ready to talk about it, and some won't but I think it's better to put your arm out there and try and feel accepted by them, but the student has to be the initiator because there is nothing worse than someone prying into your life.

I try and live for the moment, and I try not to get anxious over things I can't control. I keep saying to myself, Banana*, I can't control that but that's it really. I do a lot of distractions to be honest, like coloring, mindfulness coloring. I will distract myself by saying *out loud* trees, chocolate, bird, rock. But I know I need to learn more about my emotions and healthy ways to vent it because I go from 0 to 100. I still haven't learnt how to properly regulate my emotions. It's hard though because I don't want to be singled out, like if we were in a lesson and somebody picked me out of the lecture to check if I am ok whilst everyone else is watching me and thinks that I am doing something wrong. So maybe at the end of the lecture, the teacher could come over and have a chat with me or just ask, does anyone want a catch-up? Because there have been many times that I've felt upset, and I wanted to talk to the tutor at the end but then they've gone. I am very reserved or falsely confident in lectures due to the persona that I have developed but I need that trauma-informed practice. However, I am the type of person that **if** I am yelling angrily and you come up to me, I will tell you to fuck off, go away, I need the space. Whereas if I am upset and crying, I will say go away but what I really need is a hug. I know I am confusing but if you don't have any trauma, you don't understand this. I will come back

when I am ready, I know not everyone would do that, but I will come back because I'll be like ok, get yourself together, sort yourself out, Banana.

Inclusive Student Voice – BA

Past experiences of voice

- Not being good enough linked to always doing something wrong
- An outcast
- Emotional literacy
- Mutual understanding/helping others
- Persona

What is their experience of student voice in HE

- Good enough juxtaposed by a helpful persona
- Fear of negative emotions by others
- Lack of self-care and trust
- Burden and integrity
- Chosen mute and body language are important indicators
- Emotional literacy

Conceptualising inclusive student voice

- Finding a safe person
- Lecturer awareness of impact of diverse needs
- Trauma-informed practice

- Emotional literacy
- Self-help

Appendix 25 – Individual depiction – SU

Diverse learner needs

I am a mature student and a working-class single parent. I also have undiagnosed ADHD and autism

Past experiences of voice

I have noticed that when I've been at school, worked in a school, and when I have been a student here that segregation exists between peers in which groups are formed with similar identities, not just physical identities but also people's likes, dislikes, interests, and between higher and lower achievers.

How the student experiences student voice in higher education

Being a mature student, it is important to get our voice across that we are not all 18 and fresh out of college or 6th form, we don't want the same things. Also, it's realising that we have responsibilities, whether that's children, work or other commitments that affect our opportunities to be included. People act differently amongst other people to try and fit in so if everyone said yes to a social event, but you were the only person who couldn't make it because you are a parent and a student, you would just feel like you had to say yes because everyone else did. I think they do it to feel a shared identity or a shared belonging. They don't want to feel different; they just want to be liked and not be wrong. If I were to do that, I would feel pressured, thinking if I say no, then other people won't

like me, or they will see me as different. I think university has the perception of being social where you've got societies and things like that but if you don't fit into any of those categories, you're an outsider. I sense that people are very segregated into different peer groups, different ages. It's very clicky and they've got very similar identities when they sit together, not necessarily physical identities, but similar likes, interests, or the same societies or they are high achievers or lower achievers. I guess they do it to feel safer and stronger in a way, like pack animals, in their identity groups, surrounded by people who are the same. You feel vulnerable if you are on your own, a bit isolated or different. For me, I become very socially anxious, self-conscious and questioning myself in my head, like why are they looking at me like that? Have I done something wrong? Have I said something? Do I look different? Just generally questioning social cues and social norms.

I get frustrated when people are either black or white, they are not really open to other points of view or other perspectives, even if it is backed up by science or data, they're just narrow-minded. It annoys and frustrates me. I prefer people who have a wider perspective on things, who can see two sides to an argument rather than, no, I am right, what you're saying isn't right. I feel highly vulnerable then because I hate confrontation and confrontational questions that I don't know the answer to. I also don't know how to present myself in a way that doesn't make it into an argument. I am grateful that my cohort is very open-minded, we've had many debates and discussions. They are very inclusive and inclusive of everyone's voice. Exclusive is when someone doesn't understand autism and the sensory inputs. Like not being given enough time to answer a question or

being picked on spontaneously ugh because that makes me go into fight or flight. I freeze and then I must process or remember what they just said, even though I was listening, then I think, oh, gosh, what if I answer wrong? What if I look like a fool? I am worried about what other people think of me. I just think if they want their voice to be heard or if they want to contribute, they would. It's not fair to force someone to contribute when they don't feel comfortable. I think it builds reluctance and self-questioning. I think if I was constantly being picked on, I wouldn't want to come to the lectures. I don't want to be forced; I'd just feel uncomfortable. They are probably scared that they've got the wrong answer, or afraid of judgement from other people, including the lecturer.

I haven't really got involved that much with school reps or course reps. If they've put an announcement out saying, can we have your voices on so and so then I would and if there have been constant reminders or if I've got 5 minutes then I will log on because it is time-consuming. But I wouldn't actively go out of my way to talk to them. I don't feel as though my voice is as important as someone who may live in the city* or on campus. I feel excluded when I am judged for having an opinion or a conflict in ideology to the rep. The rep might have their big idea of making things great, but I don't feel like they are approachable, so I don't approach them because I think its conflict, confrontation or that I am being questioned about my opinion. For instance, I felt judged and stigmatized for being a parent by the rep before they were a rep. They are very opinionated on certain groups of people and how I identify as a student, so I felt excluded as a parent. I didn't feel like I could go to anyone about it because this person seemed very liked and invested in by

other people, like am I the only person who has this opinion of them. My closest friends saw me stressed and upset and they understood my point of view. I will avoid going in next time to avoid that person's views because I wouldn't want that feeling to happen again. I feel like this rep is a façade, they want inclusion, but they don't really practice what they preach.

I've done a few surveys online, but they are either time-consuming or vague. So, for example, the vague one for me would be module feedback, it's literally, did you enjoy this module? Yes, no, what could we improve on? And that was it. On the other hand, a time-consuming one was about putting lecturers or PACTS forward for an award, it was worth it and I did put forward who I thought was deserving of it but it was so so in-depth and time-consuming and I thought, this is lovely but if only all this effort could go into the student one and making improvements to the module, voice and opportunities. Or teaching styles. I don't think I have ever been asked as a student what my teaching style or preferences are. I think some of them are quite broad, they need to be in sub-categories or yes or no tick boxes because I think some people might struggle, like for me, I can tick yes, no, maybe but I struggle to explain why sometimes so if the question was, would you recommend this lecturer? And the answer is yes or no, and I put yeah, then I think why? I struggle to articulate why they are a good lecturer.

To become more inclusive, student reps need to accept other people's views, process them and actually think, ah, that's a different perspective and actually implement the strategies that this cohort has actually suggested rather than think, oh that's cool but

yeah, I am still going to do it my way like. I think this rep likes people to know that their trying to get student voice or to be seen as though they are getting the student voice but in reality, they are just doing it to add to their façade rather than actually changing things actively and doing things that they said they would do. I think they do it to be liked, a popularity thing. This particular person is from a very advantaged educational background, they are middle class whereas I'm very working class and I think a lot of people having a privileged background hasn't really opened their eyes to experiences that other people might have had. Not just educational experiences but life experiences as well. I think that comes down to hierarchy because this person has obviously had opportunities where money isn't a barrier, or their family is very secure, and they've had very lovely opportunities that I am very jealous of, but I think that's made them very narrow-minded. And again, because they haven't experienced what we as students have said or put forward, I think that's why they are very narrow-minded because they haven't experienced it. They can only perceive it in their own way, and they are only following their own sort of narrative even though it looks like inclusion, they're not, it's a facade.

I sort of keep my needs to myself, I haven't expressed them to my friends either because I am so scared of people thinking I am too faced, or immature. I feel like this rep already has a perception of me and I don't want to add to that, I don't want them to think, oh that perception of me was right. They probably think that I am unworthy. This particular person has very traditional views of certain people and of certain identities and I just feel like I can't go to them because they are very narrow-minded. If I am being totally honest, I

think that they think, why are you at university when you have a little one and you're on your own? They are very judgemental, I just felt very judged for being a parent and that was before they were a rep but it sorts of continued and as this person's popularity has grown it is adding to their sense of power. They always made their point very clear and if someone had an opposing view, they would get irate about it, not necessarily aggressive but more frustrated, I guess. I think it's like I said, sort of conformity I guess, people sort of see them as higher up, they are not just a student now, they are a rep **for** students, so again they are higher up on the hierarchy. It's authoritative. I think even though student reps advocate for student's voices, and they don't wear a uniform they are still viewed as authoritative to a degree, so I think maybe people are a bit reserved like me on saying what they really think. I fear judgement I think and that can be seen in a person's body language. I mean they might not say anything that is discriminative but their body language or eye contact, or looking you up and down, disgusted sub-consciously and facial expressions can show judgement. I think also being approached in a certain manner, like if someone came storming over to you saying can I have a word, again it's body language and close proximity. I was wrongly accused of something once, nothing major but it made me feel disheartened because I genuinely want an education, to be actively involved and actually learning something and someone is pointing their finger at me saying I had done wrong when it was a genuine mistake. It is highly frustrating. I feel like I have to prove myself as well, like I am not their perception of me and again going back to the course reps, it's disheartening but at the same time it rev's me up to provide more advocacy for

people like me who work hard and want a degree and who have all these other commitments just to prove a point, to sort of stand up for other single parents who are at university so that they have reassurance that their voice can be heard, and their voice is worthy regardless of what people say.

Conceptualising inclusive student voice – how students utilise their voice

Mature students who are parents, for instance, would like a meal or to be sociable in a quiet environment that is less busy, so it is important that the course leader puts it to a majority vote. It has worked in the past for us, so when it comes to a majority vote, there is the minority who probably don't agree with the majority vote so that makes it a bit difficult but I think a poll or something is the most inclusive way to ask for people's opinions because people probably don't, if its anonymized, won't feel pressured to say what they don't want. There is no pressure to comply socially I guess, just sort of be your authentic self or no need to voice why you can't make it. I feel I also need people to have open body language, smiling, feeling less judged and actually meaning it when you say you won't be judged. A calming presence, neutral language and expression.

I know everyone seems to hate them but like ice breaker tasks or if the lecturer labels us all 1, 2, 3 and then we go into that group, like randomized groups. It is sort of relieving a bit because then for me personally, if I'm talking to others or introducing myself I know once you get talking to people, some people do talk out loud, oh, this is a bit awkward and you think, oh, thank god I am not the only one to think it or, you find a common ground

with people I think. There is also a realisation in me that we share similar identities as a student or if we've got previous work experience in a similar setting or we might have similar questions. I would gravitate towards them for a sense of security, I guess. When I am in a group where I have similar identities with, I know I won't be judged as much by someone who is outside of the group. I think feeling understood, definitely and that empathy because I know some other people might have prejudices. I am usually quite reserved and quite introverted but I think once I feel a sense of belonging, empathy and sort of feeling understood by others, I feel more confident to advocate for myself or advocate for others who have a similar identity to me, whether that's a student, a mature student or anything. I feel quite strongly about advocacy. I think there are different groups that you subconsciously float towards and get attracted to and then there's people that have different characteristics, whether that's social class, opportunities or various educational or academic privileges. I think you are subconsciously attracted to people who are similar to you rather than those who are seen as above you or below you.

For me, if I don't have an opportunity to speak or if things are so fast-paced, I don't feel like I can fit my voice in and I just sit back reserved. If the university offers an opportunity to voice my opinion there and then that would be good but if I really don't have an opinion, I won't express my voice, so I think opportunities are very important. If the rep had similar characteristics to me, I definitely would feel more understood, and I could approach them because I know that they've shared the experiences that I have and I would assume that they would have similar views to me so I would feel confident in

approaching them. I would also do the surveys if I've had verbal reminders, written reminders, or an email but in all fairness by the time I've got home, I've probably forgotten about it because I am too busy doing other things, whereas, if I've got a visual reminder or a verbal reminder, I think oh, I've got to do that. I would prefer to do it in class, there and then because I will forget due to my other commitments. It's a time issue really. The surveys could have more questions on them, like how could we improve? Like where it says, what improvements could be made? They could have made that question a bit more specific with sub-categories like student voice or communities or teaching strategies rather than, how can we improve? Because it is a very general question.

All our lecturers are very aware of making things inclusive or having accessibility. So, I think the lecturers in my opinion have been faultless. They have been brilliant with voice and stuff; they always send emails or give verbal reminders about putting their voice forward. As I said before, I need my lessons to be multi-sensory, visual, engaging and active learning for them to be better for me because it helps me process new information and recall it but I know that others would get more from just being talked at but I guess, yeah I've never been asked what my preferred teaching style is and I don't think the rest of my cohort has either so that would help the lecturers decide how to teach. If lecturers are just reading off the screen, my mind just switches off whereas if they're having group discussions, a table activity, video or them asking questions about the video, it helps me to absorb the information, recall it and have an opinion on it. There is no point in expressing your voice if you don't have an opinion. I do get in certain context there are the quieter

ones who probably would prefer not to contribute and would prefer to sit but equally that is their own choice, so everyone is entitled to their own preferences and choices. If lecturers knew students learning styles, they could do the same as if they are aware of any additional needs and make reasonably adjustments.

Inclusive Student Voice fingerprint – SU

past experiences of voice

- Unconscious segregation of characteristics

What is their experience of student voice in HE

- Social conformity and safety in numbers
- Right and wrong ignores perspectives
- Fear of failure and of being judged
- Hiding self to avoid conflict
- Elaborate but optional survey questions
- Façade can be seen
- Differences in characteristics leads to a disconnection of understanding

Conceptualising inclusive student voice

- Anonymity improves authenticity
- Safety in body language and expression
- Insider understanding exudes understanding and empathy, and rejects judgement
- Finding time to feedback amongst other commitments.
- Inclusive pedagogy is multi-sensory

Appendix 26 – Individual depiction – RU

Diverse learner needs

I am a mature student who has been diagnosed with Dyslexia. I have also experienced a previous mental health difficulty.

Past experiences of voice

My national Record of Achievement has all my certificates in. I did pretty poorly in my GCSE's, but they recognised in year 10 that I had dyslexia, so it was quite late in my academic career. Unfortunately, nothing came from that other than getting an apple-coloured sheet to go over the print so things wouldn't jump around. Then I went on to college, they identified my learning needs, but I decided not to take on any additional support or help. Maybe I was a bit stubborn or in denial, but I felt capable of carrying on without it and getting a good grade. As it happens, I dropped out, I don't know whether that was down to not being able to excel academically or whether I wasn't interested in the course. I went straight into working until I did my level 2 and 3. Still working, I then decided to change my career path, so I retook my GCSEs, then Covid hit so I didn't get to sit my exams. I think I was quite lucky because I hate exams, I am not good under pressure, so I got predicted grades instead which doubled from my previous grades. I think maturity plays a part. I apply myself better and I understand the value of an education as well. That's not to say that I didn't before but I think I was still developing mentally, and I think if I do have dyslexia then that could account for why I was slower

than my peers at the time. Also, I did not have a voice in school, I was withdrawn, quiet, bullied, I didn't speak up at all which again might have impacted on my grades. I've never really been that confident of a person. I confirmed my dyslexia on the application for university but again, I didn't state that I wanted any additional support as I think that is my stubborn determination to beat the system. I definitely have spelling issues and I can't pronounce words for the life of me. I can read relatively fine, but in terms of numbers, I have always had numbers transposed or mixed up so 73 is actually 37. I have adapted to it and check my work constantly because I've never had that support in the first place, I know it is available to me, but I am determined to go through without it even though it may become more of a hindrance to me.

I was keen to be a teacher, police officer or a paramedic but I was told that there was no chance based on my grades and that I should look at something more suitable to my performance and it makes you feel ugh, like worthless in a sense, like you're not capable to live your dreams or your goals. I would love to go back to my teachers now and go HA (laugh) and say this is me, this is what I can do and like I say, there has been a failing by the school in that respect. I definitely can't credit my teachers from school for my performance now. I have been able to do this on my own whilst holding down a full-time job. For many years I felt incapable and that I was not good enough to achieve and that my life is destined to be somebody of a lower profession. It is always at the back of your mind and unfortunately, relationships that I have had as well have kind of reinforced that. I have been in relationships since I was 17 until 5 or 6 years ago so I do think that's got a

lot to do with it as well regarding what people are telling me externally and how they are making me feel. Like in college, the girl next to me was probably 4 or 5 years younger than me but they were still like, Ruby* what's the answer? What's the answer? And I was like, I don't know, excuse me Miss, what's the answer? So, I think voice comes with age and the confidence to be able to say it because I know when you're younger there is always that peer pressure of, oh, look at them being the teacher's pet trying to find out the answers.

In employment, I have been micro-managed, and it allowed me to close up. I had never been in a situation where I could have free reign, I have always felt constraint, which is reasonable in any job role but yeah, it closes me up. In my present employment, there is still hierarchy, so again, I am still constraint, but it is better because there is no micro-manager. The micro-manager feels like pressure, being observed constantly, scrutinized and questioned by your manager, why were you doing this? Why were you doing that? It usually comes from management and having to reach targets. If you've not done 40 jobs in a day, you get questioned. If it continues over time, I close up. I want to provide quality of quantity whereas micro-managers are quantity over quality. I have had managers who are brilliant. They don't micro-manage, quite the opposite, which makes for a better atmosphere. It is easier to go in. You feel like you're being treated like an adult. I can talk to them on an adult level because you're not treating me like a child. Therefore, I am going to be open with you, I am going to tell you my concerns because it allows me to be freer with what I am telling them. They listen to me, and we often express our frustrations, they will go through it with me calmly and try and identify what it is that's

frustrating me. Whereas, with micro-managers, you feel like a child because you have to answer to **Miss** all the time. It portrays I am in charge, you will do this, and do it when I say. The worst response would be a complete dismissal of my frustrations.

How the student experience student voice in higher education

As a student rep, it was difficult communicating with students and trying to understand what they were saying. Some are like, uh and shrug their shoulders oh that's fine, like one-word answers but it's like come on, give us more. They don't know how to deal with it whereas I'm like right, we should do this, we should do that. One of the students is happy to voice their concerns in front of students but is shy in front of lecturers. Another one is well spoken but didn't know the best way to go about it, so I supported them in navigating their voice. I think a lot of the younger students see it as oh, just another teacher that they must answer to or view it as a schooling environment and have not found their own voice yet purely through age. The biggest challenge for me is that it is a very different environment, especially going full-time as well so it was like just going back to school for me. However, because I work in another university, I have developed the confidence to drop an email to a lecturer. I feel confident and comfortable saying can I come and see you. And I do feel like that is the staff privilege. I think that might have something to do with knowing the inside out and how the university environment works. If I do have issues, I know where to go and who to turn to, whereas most students will probably turn to their PACT tutor or a lecturer that they feel comfortable talking to.

It was a hindrance being a course rep because of time constraints, I knew that if I couldn't attend a meeting that it was not helpful for the school, so I attended as much as I could, but it wasn't ideal in terms of how much pressure it was putting on me. So, I stopped doing the role. I have interacted with a course rep, but feedback wasn't relayed back, which wasn't the best, but I don't know why. I had also gone for a tutorial and the lecturer had gone through my work, they seemed to like it and made a few grammatical comments and some things that I could add in but when I got my grade back, I got told something was wrong about it, yet, it was the same work I gave them to review so I was really frustrated about it. I agree with the feedback but why wasn't that mentioned to me in the first place? I got a lower grade which I was annoyed about because I know I am capable of doing better so that was another thing that I mentioned in this survey. I was so annoyed by the lecturer that I never went back to ask them to elaborate. I would have been fine with negative feedback; I would have been able to work with that and adapt my assignment accordingly. I think the reason why I didn't go back to them was because it's done now, I can't change that grade anymore so what's the point. I really enjoyed their lectures, so I was very disappointed. I think I would see them again, but I would be more wary in terms of what feedback I get from them in future, in case it is not valuable feedback that I can work with. I'll never learn if all I'm going to get is positive feedback, I am sure there is something in there that you can rip to shreds. Another thing, I was going through a tough time a few months ago, it is better now but when there are changes to my mental health, I completely close down, become more withdrawn, and more isolated.

So, it defiantly has a knock-on effect, 100%. So, I am glad that it is better now, but I might get a mental health appointment just in case it comes back again when the pressure comes back.

Surveys are a bit generic, it doesn't allow you to express what you mean if you were dissatisfied with something, so that was not very good in terms of depth. One survey I really ranted, I was having a bad day so when they told us to do the survey, I was thinking, bad timing mate *laugh*. And afterwards, I was like, I probably should have read that before submitting it. I am usually quite reserved and word things in a manner that doesn't portray anger and frustration but sometimes when I am feeling passionate about something or I have had a bad day, I am not really thinking, I am just going blaaaaa, having a rant. However, because the surveys are not in-depth, I can't highlight constructive information about an individual, but it could become horrible for the people involved, so, I think that's probably why it's not in there. Hopefully, they would go to the course rep about that, but some don't, some just shy away from it. I think it's how it's delivered; the tone of voice and feeling comfortable to approach that person, so, it could be a clash of personalities, but they don't highlight the positives, again going back to that shit sandwich, it's very much focusing on negative things or the things that need improving.

We are all different and we can all deliver news or information differently; it all depends on the person interpreting it and how the other person is delivering it. I don't think it's anything personal to that person. But I have seen how the other students cope with it, and they get quite upset over it. The feedback does come across harsh sometimes, but I just

take it on the chin. It's hard to distinguish what's personal and what's not and that's something that I've learned over the years because I have often taken things close to the heart. If I receive negative or harsh feedback, I hit the roof sometimes and I will get upset and I will read it first and I will take it all straight to heart so it's my old self, the old self comes back in straight away as soon as I read something. I just calmed down about it and thought, we all make errors every now and then. My cohort is significantly younger than me. I am like the parent of the group, so, again, I think it is a maturity thing, an age thing. Now, if something is bothering me then I would express it to somebody, but I have been in situations before where I have sat there quietly not knowing and have got myself in such a state over it, worrying. I am a huge worrier, but it's things that I don't need to be worried about that I will be dissecting but that's me trying to help my mental health.

I have noticed that I talk a lot in class and even one of the lecturers told me not to keep putting my hand up, to let somebody else ask a question. So, I just closed down and thought I shouldn't have done that, it was wrong of me to take the limelight and too much of the lecturer's time. I have been there where I have seen individuals constantly go, this, this, this, this, and it's like, we are all here, not just you and what the lecturer said made me became very aware of that. However, I will only ask questions if I don't know because I want to know. Also, when I answer questions, I will only answer one question or two straight away and then I will wait for anyone in my cohort to answer but I hate that 10 seconds of silence when nobody is answering and I am just like *tapping fingernails on table* and I can see the lecturer is trying to encourage people so I feel bad for that

lecturer because nobody is engaging. So, who engages, I do, and eventually I get told, Ruby*, put your hand down. The following lecture, I didn't say a bloody word and I just thought for that one lesson, I did a trial to see how many people would ask a question and to see how interesting the lecture is now that I am not asking you any questions. It was a bit mean of me, but nobody said a bloody word. I was dying inside because it was boring and mundane. The lecturer was just talking at us because no one was engaging. I got so annoyed that I started to engage again, it was driving me up the wall. The other students may not be speaking because they may not know the answer, they could lack confidence, or just generally not engaging with the subject, but now I think over time they have become reliant on me.

In one module, we could do anything we wanted for an assignment, but it was so broad. I said, no, don't say that to me, nooo. I was bombarding myself with ideas of what I wanted to cover and I was like right, come on now this is getting ridiculous and I thought education because that's a topic that's suitable for the environment that I am in and whilst watching TV, they were talking about something topical and I thought, that's it, that's the one, I am doing that. But I am a structured person so to give me free reign on something, oh my goodness me, my mind was blown. I thought of all sorts of topics and all sorts of subjects but as soon as I managed to get hold of my topic, I couldn't stop. It was good because it gives you free reign and the free reign was a very positive thing. The only time in terms of the course where I have really struggled is words, so reading academic journals, it takes me a long, long time. I can read one paragraph and I will have to google 3

or 4 words within that because I do not know what they mean. It doesn't have to be my learning needs, it could just be learning and learning what that word means. It's not something that I have brought up to any of the lecturers. It concerns me a little in terms of the assignments. I know that I am not going to improve my grades dramatically, but I don't want to rely on support as a fall back the way others may rely on it.

Conceptualising inclusive student voice – how students utilise their voice

I have been single for 5 years now and I've been very focused on me as opposed to having a parent to rely on or a partner to discuss things with to see what they think about it. I am now making my own decisions and my own path. It has developed over time through my own confidence in me and now I am able to speak out about things that concern me more. My manager in my current job allows me to have a voice. They are equally forthcoming with positives and negatives. As a peer mentor, I can use my voice to arrange meetings with my mentees that allow me to be flexible with time constraints. Making the course to be a course rep, I have helped improve my CV, experience and diversify myself in other areas. Some students, like anyone really, can be inarticulate in how they express things but luckily, our cohort is well spoken and will express their concerns. If a student feels like they could air their voice, they could go to the student rep and remain anonymous. It's just like me telling someone I've got a problem, can you sort it out for me, but you can only do so much as a course rep to help a student and voice their concerns. In terms of feedback, I don't give a crap anymore *laugh*. I had retaken my GCSE's, so I already knew I was changing my life and my career. I have never been a selfish person but

by doing this course I feel extremely selfish even though it is not. I am actually doing something for myself for a change and I have also started to look at other areas in my personal life too and think, you need to start doing other things for yourself, to think for yourself and have more courage and confidence.

I think it's maybe understanding the benefits of education and the benefits of speaking out instead of sitting there quietly and not knowing. I try to address the things that are concerning me there and then, like I don't wait. If I find myself in a situation where I am too shy to say something, because I can be too shy sometimes and it comes out as confidence which is really weird when I am actually a bag of nerves. It's almost a mask, especially if there was something at stake but over time my voice has developed, and I found that inner voice within me to say something. If I don't say something straight away, then I will stay back at the end of the lecture. Mainly because I don't want to make a fool of myself or embarrass myself, especially if it is something that's been reiterated or gone over many times or something really stupid or I feel stupid and don't want to say it in front of people because I still feel like that sometimes but over time I have become more like, sorry I have to ask now.

I don't see the lecturers as just my lecturers, they are my colleagues because I have worked in a university before whereas I think the others on my cohort don't and I think age has something to do with this because there are other mature students who are also more than happy to speak and voice concerns, worries or put their hand up in class. I think age in terms of knowing that if I don't speak out, things won't be heard, the lecturers

won’t understand my initial reaction or lack of engagement. It was similar to that when I was in college, I was one of those that, if I didn’t understand it, I would put my hand up, but I don’t know whether that’s age and the maturity of confidence to say it. I think because I am doing this as a mature student and the impact this is having on my personal life in terms of being dedicated to the course, things need to be asked because if you don’t ask, you’re then wasting your time. I think it's also probably come about by working and being comfortable in your environment to go to any individual if you’ve got an issue. I think that’s where my staff and student role come into play because I am comfortable doing that. I’ve got as much right to be here as anybody else and even more so because it's **my** environment. Being a staff in a different university helped me to integrate into the environment so easily.

Lecturers need to give constructive criticism, I don’t like to swear but I call it a shit sandwich so, you're good, you’re negative, you're good. As a student, we need to be open to criticism, to change and to see from another person's point of view. Again, criticism is not necessarily a bad thing, it can help because you are not going to better yourself unless you know where you are going wrong. So, just because it is delivered differently, it doesn’t mean it is coming across in a vicious manner. However, if I do become upset, I calm myself down by walking away and try to dissect the information. I get more emotional when I am at home and nobody is around but at work, I would be quiet and withdrawn for the rest of the day. As a student, I will ask constructive questions for alternative feedback and say, can you elaborate on this? I am looking for clarifications of what the lecturer is asking and

expecting from me in the future. As a mature student, this whole course and career change is huge and if I don't ask, I am never going to learn or get the grades that I am hoping for. I don't ignore it, they are not just giving it because they have got nothing better to do, they are giving that feedback for a valid reason, they want to help but we need feedback that includes a good mixture of positive and negative comments but also where they had other ideas on what they would have liked to have seen too.

Inclusive Student Voice fingerprint – RU

past experiences of voice

- Limited support for needs leads to learning to live without it
- Taking longer to mature and develop a voice mentally for learning
- The ability to achieve can be accomplished
- Listening to negative judgements
- Speaking up for others less confident than ourselves
- Limited freedom infantilises a person and silences them

What is their experience of student voice in HE

- Viewing university hierarchy as a child still in school
- Integrity
- Feedback coincides with emotions
- Manner of delivery and interpretation
- Making space for less confident students to speak, silences the confident speakers
- Pedagogy that encourages stepping out alone

Conceptualising inclusive student voice

- Relying on the self encourages own voice
- Fighting the mask to use my voice

- Familiarity and comfortability improves voice
- Feedback as a tool not a criticism