

Welcome

to RSEC18 Conference

**Complexity in Research:
Researcher–Participant Dynamic Interactions**

3 July 2025

9:00 - 16:30

University House,
LS2 9JR



Morning Session Presenters

- **Reflections on insider/outsider positions in participatory educational research.**

Carolyn Bradley, PGR, School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds

- **Navigating Insider-Outsider Positionality: Reflections on Researching Mature Students' Access to Higher Education.**

Janith Jayatilake Kankanamalage, PGR, School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds

- **A Messy Interrelated Ecology: Situating Researcher in the Rhizome of Research.**

Samuel Lee, PGR, School of Education, University of Leeds

- **Developing best practice guidelines for research with the bereaved: Practitioner perspectives.**

Elizabeth Fair, PGR, School of Music, University of Leeds

- **Lived Experience and Its Influence on the Researcher-Participant Connection.**

Clare Copley, PGR, School of Education, University of Leeds

Clare Copley

PGR, School of Education,
University of Leeds

**Lived Experience and Its
Influence on the
Researcher-Participant
Connection**

Lived Experience and its Influence on the Researcher-Participant Connection

Clare Copley - Post Graduate Researcher

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My Research and my Positionality

‘Exploring sex and gender differences in growing up with Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD/Dyspraxia): impact upon diagnosis, mental health and progression into Higher Education’

- Occupational Therapist
- Parent of a child with DCD
- Woman with a diagnosis of Dyspraxia
- Post Graduate Researcher



What is positionality in research

- What we know and believe (Jamieson et al., 2023)
- Include personal characteristics, such as gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, personal experiences, linguistic tradition, beliefs, biases, preferences, theoretical, political and ideological stances, and emotional responses to participant (Berger, 2015)
- Highly relevant to university-based researchers whose lived experience intersects with their research (Dembele et al., 2024)



What is reflexivity in research

- The examination of how your positionality affects your research decisions
- 'Reflexivity is the act of examining one's own assumptions, beliefs, and judgments, and thinking carefully and critically about how these influence the research process. The practice of reflexivity confronts and questions who we are as researchers and how this guides our research' (Jamieson et al., 2023)





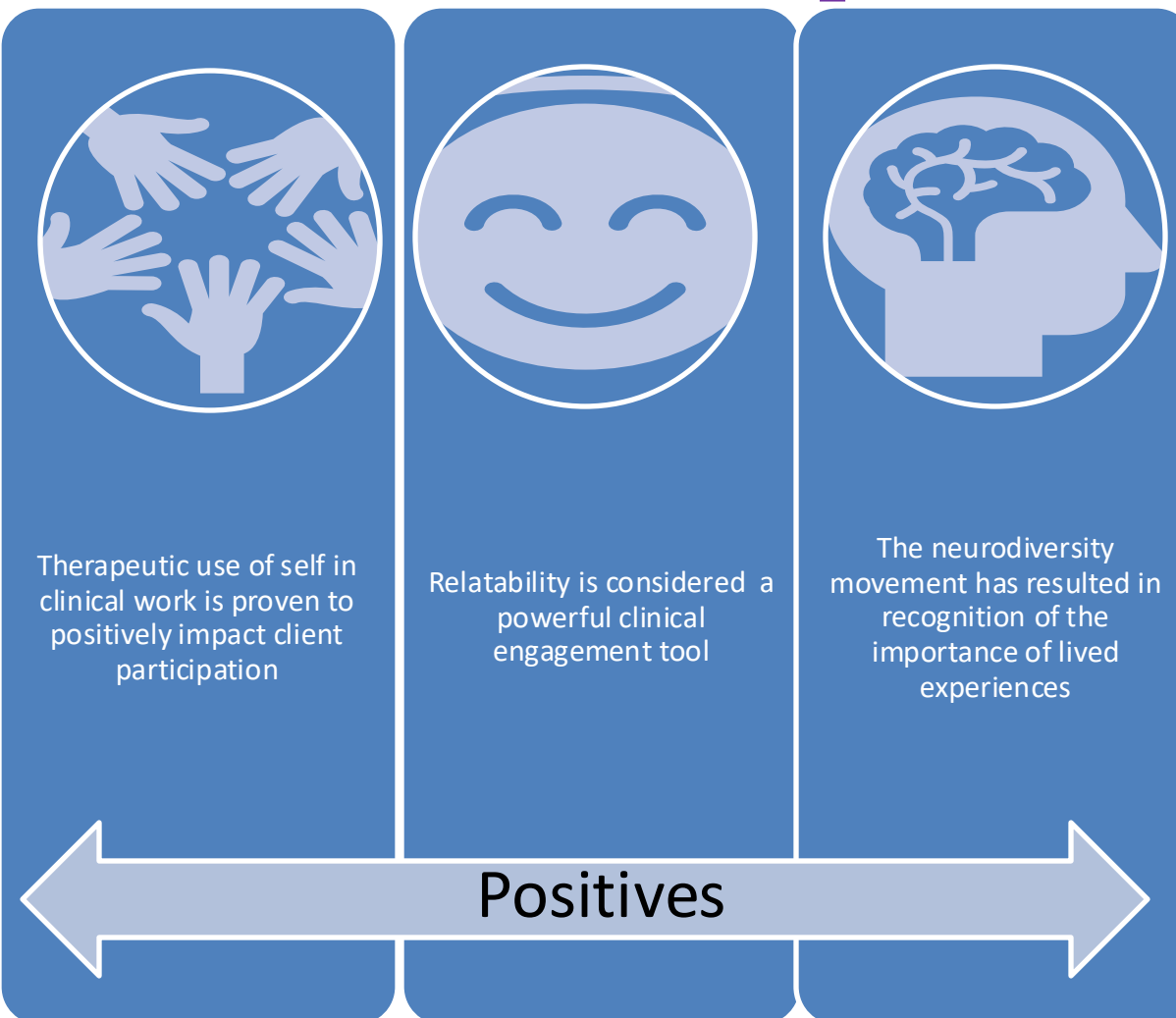
How has being reflexive about my own positionality impacted my research?

Every aspect so far including my research design, participant recruitment and data interpretation

I've been on a journey!

Personal experience of a research topic – a help or a hindrance?

Clare Copley
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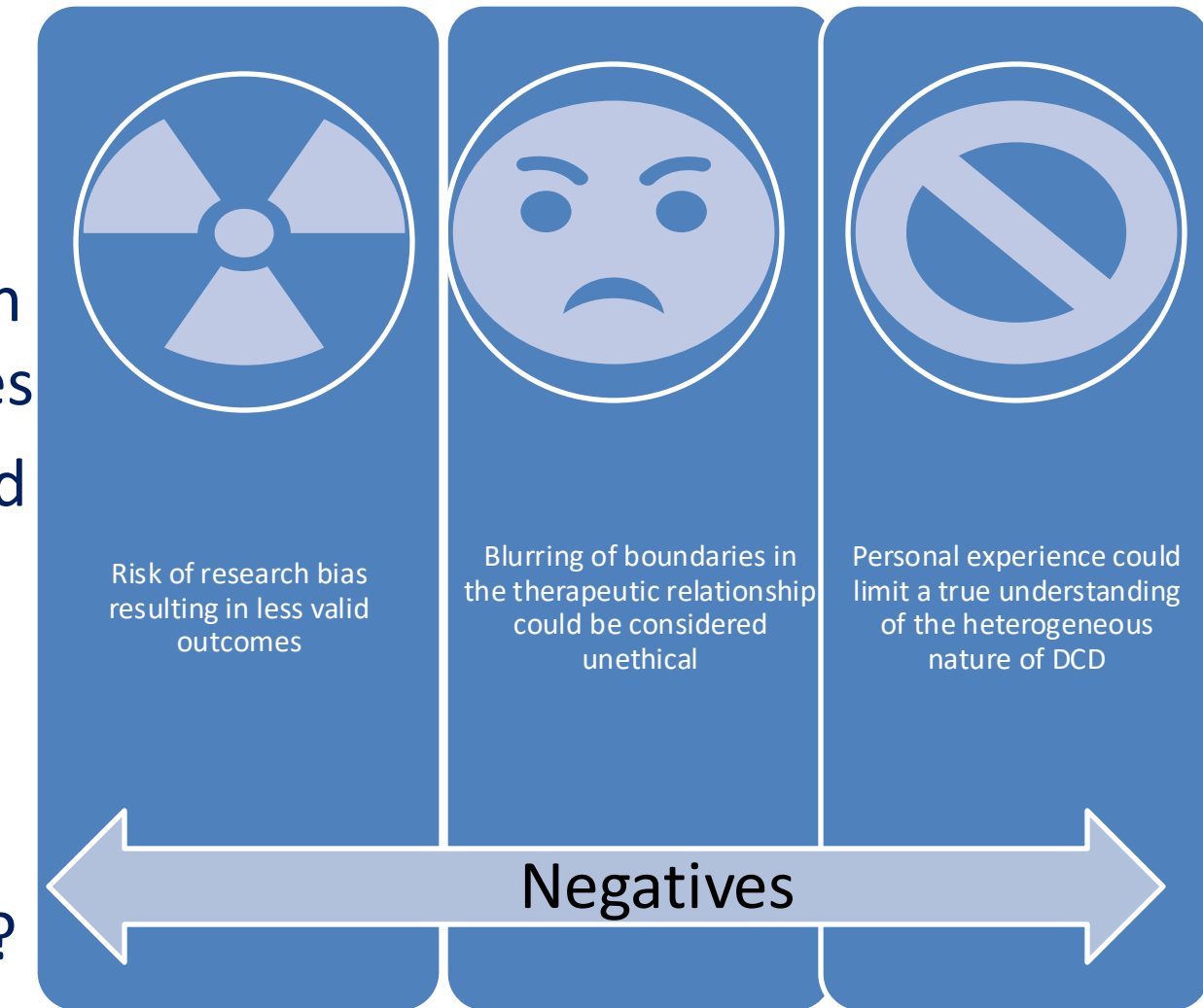
Research Questions

Understanding the differences in the presentation of Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) in males compared to females

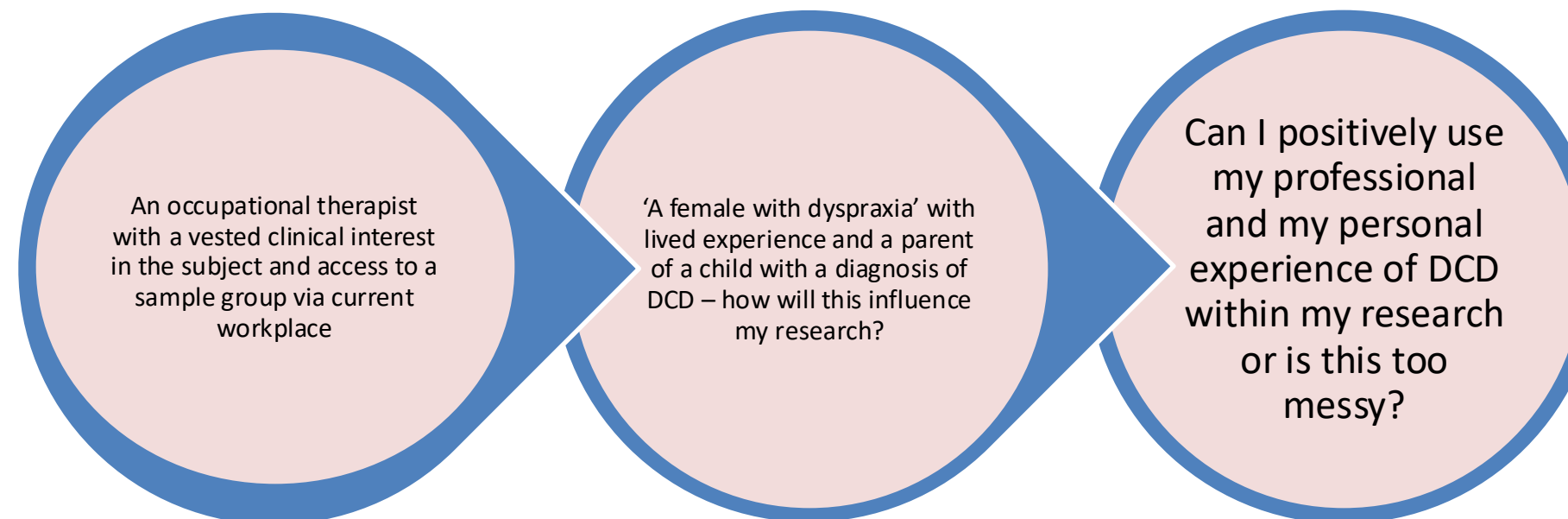
Why are more males than females diagnosed with DCD?

What co-occurring conditions are females presenting/being diagnosed with?

Is missed or miss-diagnosis impacting outcomes for females at degree level study?



My lived experiences and professional identity are undoubtedly a driving force for my research



References

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- Solman, B. and Clouston, T. 2016. Occupational therapy and the therapeutic use of self. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. 79(8), pp.514–516
- Tougaw, J. 2023. Neurodiversity: The Movement | Psychology Today United Kingdom. *Psychology Today*. [Online]. [Accessed 27 June 2023]. Available from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/the-elusive-brain/202004/neurodiversity-the-movement>

How lived experience has impacted my research...

The positives

- ‘Insider positioning’ (Ross, 2017) or “one our own” (Segerstad, 2021)
- Nuanced and responsible data collection...and richness in the interpretation of the data (Ross, 2017)
- Find solutions and understand what works for the people most impacted by the research topic (Dembele et al., 2024).
- Reflexivity can bring biases and unchecked assumptions ‘to the surface’ (Jamieson et al., 2023)

The negatives

- Making decisions about self-disclosure (Ross, 2017)
- I am emotionally invested (Ross, 2017)
- High demands on the researchers’ ethical as well as emotional capacities and responsibilities (Segerstad, 2021)
- Hopes and expectancies of the community under study might put the researcher into a dilemma (Segerstad, 2021)

Evidence from early data collection

‘Honestly...’

‘I wasn’t aware that most of these issues were due to my dyspraxia, to be honest, I thought I was just lazy, but I struggle with all of these things constantly’

‘I don't tend to stop and consider if I am fatigued but rather that it has just been a harder week- I perhaps need to build this in’

‘I’m a little embarrassed to admit it but...’

‘I have bad days... I can get very upset/angry at myself’

‘Changing bed sheets will be the death of me’

‘Others don't really seem to understand it’

‘P.S. THANK YOU FOR LOOKING AT DYSPRAXIA’



What I've learned

- That **positionality** should always be a central **consideration** in my research.
- That positionality is **not fixed**
- That I have a responsibility to **acknowledge and handle my insider privileges with care.**
- That it is essential to be **attuned to participant expectations**
- That **lived experience, when respected,** can enrich data
- That I should not be **fearful of being criticised for research bias,** but instead be open and committed to strengthening my participatory research practice.

Table 1. Prompt questions for embedding reflexivity in all stages of the research process

Stage of research	Broader reflexivity prompts
Research question and design	• Why do I want to research this group? • Am I an insider or outsider? • Could I (or my work) harm this group? • What can I give to this group? • Should I be the one to research this group, or am I taking space away from someone else?
Data collection	• Am I intruding on this group? How can I make this as non-coercive as possible? • How can I make this research accessible to the population? • Do participants understand what their data will be used for? • Have I thought beyond traditional ethics? • Could my collection methods cause harm?
Data analysis and interpretation	• Am I aware that people have given me this data and that they may not know me (e.g., survey, health, admin data)? • Who are these people behind the data? • Am I analysing the data in a compassionate way? • If I am using existing datasets, are there any silent assumptions in this dataset? • Could my analysis of the dataset reproduce existing inequalities?
Conclusions and framing	• How does my use of evidence reflect my biases as a researcher and as an individual with my own life, wants, emotions, needs? • What do I gain from this research? What does the population I have studied gain? • Is there a disconnect between the two questions above? If so, consider the first few questions in this table again.

References

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- Jamieson, M.K., Govaart, G.H. and Pownall, M. 2023. Reflexivity in quantitative research: A rationale and beginner's guide. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*. **17**(4), p.e12735.
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- Segerstad, Y.H. af 2021. On the complexities of studying sensitive communities online as a researcher–participant. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*. **19**(3), pp.409–423.

Thank you for listening – time for questions



We hope you found the sessions
insightful and the discussions enriching.
To help us improve future events, we'd
really appreciate your feedback.

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