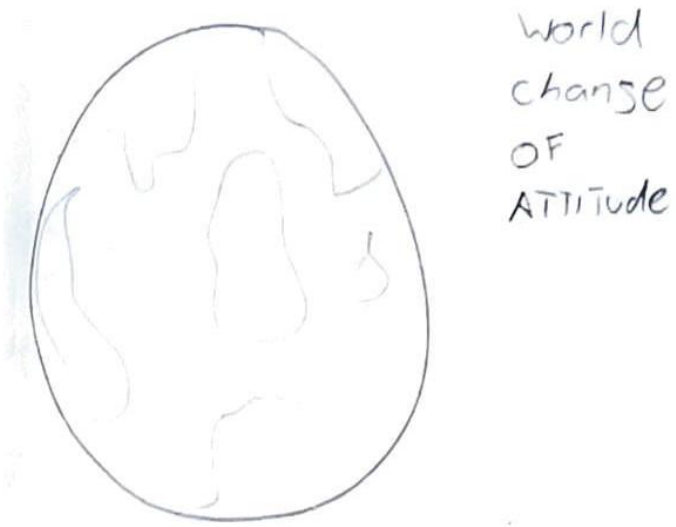
Benjamin Garcia-Lee / Justen Thomas/ UNSW

# “It is simple mate, you just gotta treat us like we are humans.”

## Building generative collaborative research relationships

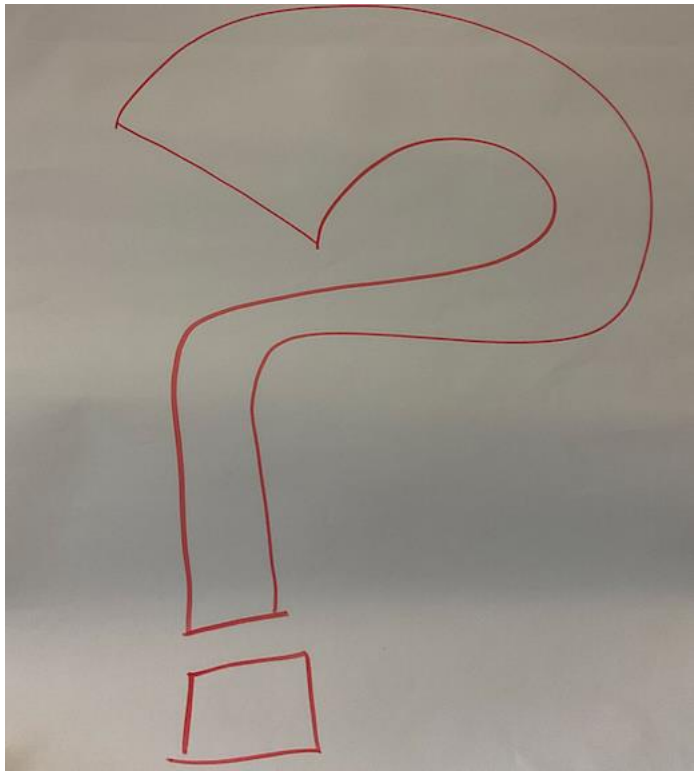
# Overview

- The study
- Forming a collaborative research team
- Collaborative research
- The research encounter
- Collaborative Research Praxis model




**From Justen's relational map of belonging**

# The study



**Self portrait. Relational Mapping Interview (Matt)**

**Primary Q: How do people with intellectual disabilities narrate belonging in their lives?**

Sub-question: What can collaborative research approaches tell us about belonging?

# The research relationship- our story

Ben: What are some of your thoughts about having been working on this same project for four years now?

Justen: It must have been something real positive if it's still going after four years, isn't it?

# The research collaborators

# Collaborative research

**Collaborative research** is how we have chosen to talk about our inclusive approach

- No one is outside the tent, erect the tent together (Armstrong et al., 2019)
- Requires mutual commitment to the research relationship (Embregts et al., 2018; Visser et al., 2021)
- Underpinned by a concern with epistemic justice (Fudge Schormans et al., 2019; Parsons & Letherby, 2020)
- Reflects positionality as academic ally and advocate
- Collaborative research and Belonging have a synergistic relationship and can be mutually constitutive and positively impact one another (Garcia-Lee, 2025)

# The research encounter- hanging out

- The research encounter describes the relational space of knowledge generation (Bos & Abma, 2022)
- In the research encounter our difference is what we share and can lead to new ideas (Bos & Abma, 2022)
- A sense of belonging should be the goal of collaborative research relationships
- Working towards epistemic justice is foundational to developing a sense of belonging

# Being seen, being heard and being believed

Justen self-portrait

“There is no point in telling your story if people aren’t going to listen and believe… I am wasting my breath when no one believes me” (Justen)

“”When you don’t have a voice, and you are not being heard because we were not believed” (Justen)

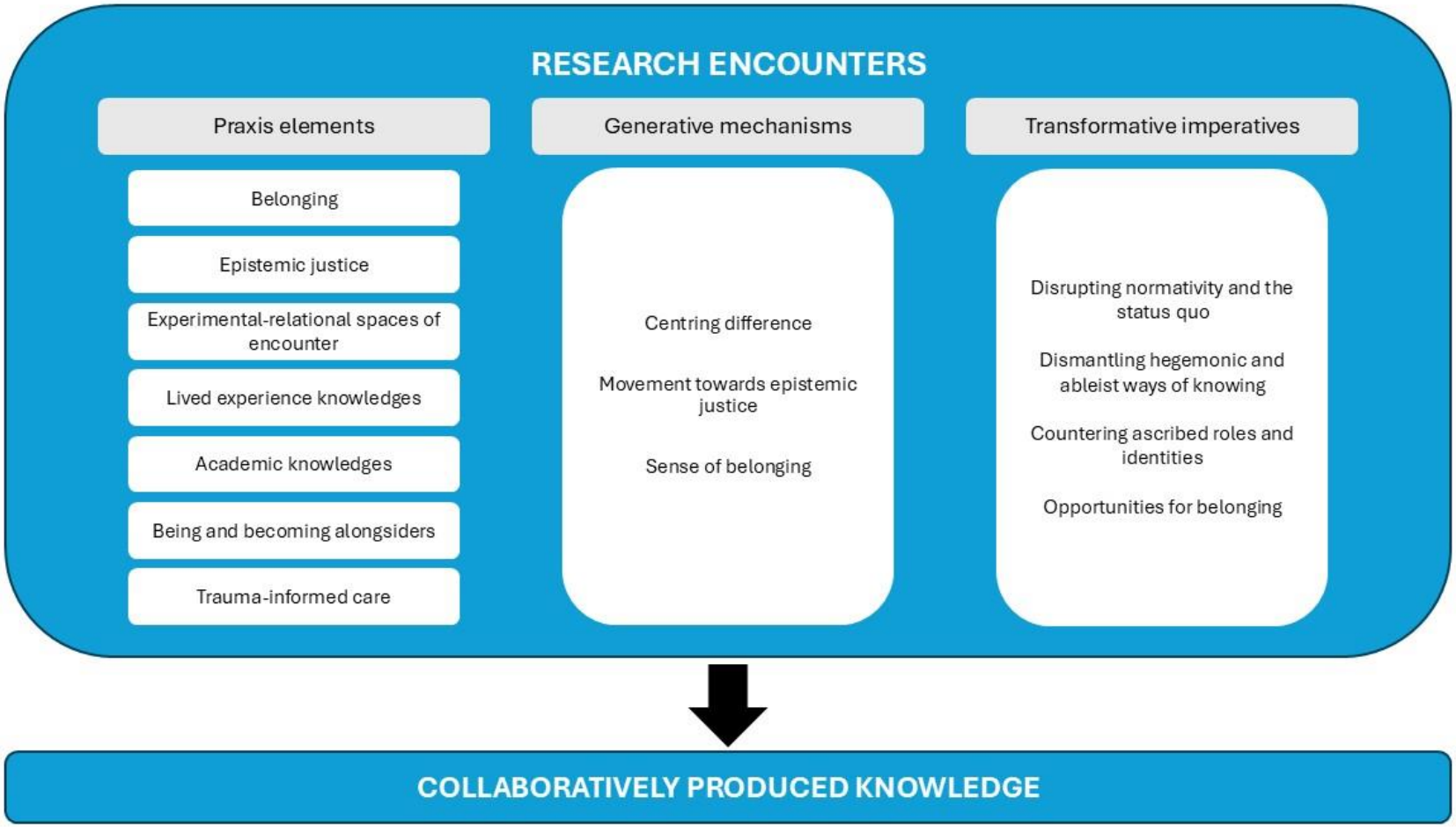
# The parts of the model

**Praxis elements**- the things that are important to make the research relationship safe, happy and productive

**Generative mechanisms**- The underlying narratives that shape the research encounter

**Transformative imperatives**- the things that motivate us to do this kind of research

# Collaborative Research Praxis model



# The next phase- Making the model accessible

- Consult with self-advocates and other lived experience researchers
- Take the jargon out
- Make the model relateable
- Provide everyday examples to explain the different parts
- Use the model from the beginning of a project

# Questions?

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