

TOWARDS A RESTORATIVE MODEL OF DISABILITY



DEFINITION

A **restorative philosophy in action** refers to the practical application of restorative values—such as **respect** for human dignity, **solidarity** and responsibility for others, **justice** and accountability, and **truth** through dialogue—within real-world contexts (e.g., schools, communities, and justice systems)

STUDY

This research examines the dialogue between **Restorative Philosophies** and the concept of **Disability**—a critical issue given the inequities experienced by young people with special educational needs and disabilities and the transformative potential of restorative work in education. The study positions young people and their communities of care as key knowledge creators and draws on new empirical data gathered from two **primary phase special schools** in the South of England. This study offers a unique contribution by bridging the gap between practice and research and by generating new ways of thinking about restorative philosophies and the concept of disability.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



RQ1 - In what ways do young people with SEND experience a restorative philosophy in action?

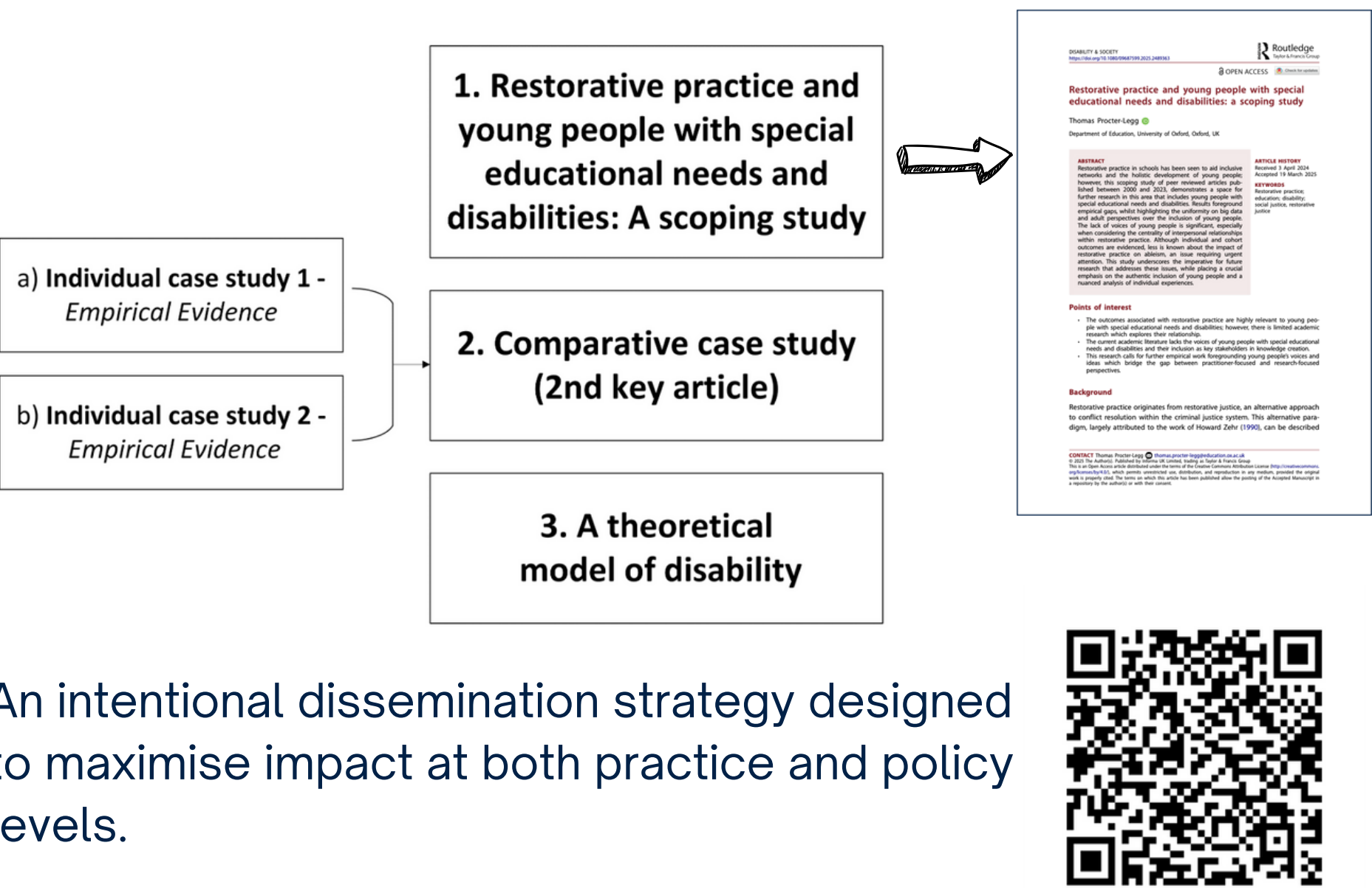


RQ2 - In what way does a deeper understanding of the lived experience of young people with SEND reshape the normative understanding of restorative work in education?



RQ3 - In what way can this new understanding of experiences be applied on a theoretical level e.g., when viewing disability through a restorative lens do we challenge or reinforce established models of disability?

INTEGRATED OUTPUTS



DESIGN ELEMENTS



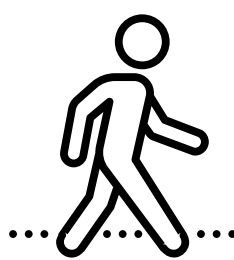
Adopts a qualitative, interpretivist methodology within a critical realist paradigm to explore the experiences of young people with SEND through a restorative and rights-based lens.



Rooted in a restorative axiology, it amplifies voices of young people, challenges hierarchical relationships, and situates findings within broader sociocultural and political contexts.



Informed by the Lundy Model (2007) and Article 12 of the UNCRC, it emphasises space, voice, audience, and influence, prioritising dialogic methods such as walking tour interviews.



INITIAL FINDINGS

RQ1

- Demonstrates rich, diverse, and multi-sensory strategies - absent from current literature.
- Illustrates restorative work as continuous rather than a one-off grand resolution - in contrast with much of the literature.
- Challenges hidden punitive paradigms within pedagogy, curriculum, and whole-school systems - amplifying more critically informed literature.

RQ2

- Challenges the hierarchy of spoken language within restorative processes.
- Aligns restorative work with neuroscience and sociological frameworks, expanding its theoretical grounding beyond behaviour management and siloed thinking.
- Finds that restorative outcomes remain individualised, with limited systemic impact on SEND processes e.g., admissions, diagnosis, and tribunals.

RQ3

- Disability is situated within ‘needs’, closely aligned with a biopsychosocial model.
- Additionally we see a shift from disability as an individual condition to a collective, and community identity.
- This is underpinned by the restorative concept of externalisation of harm and how identity and our own humanity is tied up with the humanity of others.