A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: The Strengths and Limitations of Genograms in Educational Psychology Practice

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Abstract

Genograms are a graphic representation of the composition and structure of a person's family members, relationships, systemic patterns and influences over at least three generations (McGoldrick, Gerson & Petry, 2008). Genograms can include objective family information such as births and deaths, as well as subjective information such as relational dynamics and family patterns, and use symbols to represent these (McGoldrick et al., 2008).

The genogram is a tool, which is frequently used in systemic family therapy and has been gaining popularity in other professional fields since 1985, including psychology professions (McGoldrick et al., 2008). Training in the use of genograms is now included as part of many educational psychology professional doctorate training courses. However, there is currently very little published research literature in relation to the use of genograms in educational psychology practice.

This research was a small-scale, qualitative study, which sought to explore educational psychologists' perceived strengths and limitations of using genograms in their practice. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather the views of educational psychologists working for a traded service in an inner-London borough. Nine key themes were inductively identified using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), in relation to the perceived strengths and limitations of using genograms in educational psychology practice including: engaging clients and building rapport; accessibility; information

gathering and assessment; case formulation; using the genogram as a therapeutic tool; specific areas of need; ethical considerations; knowledge, training and experience; and, systemic considerations in current educational psychology professional context. The research also identified that educational psychologists were using genograms across many areas of their practice including; consultation, assessment, interventions, supervision, multi-professional work and critical incident response. Implications for educational psychology practice are discussed and future directions for research are outlined.

     Keywords: Genogram, Family Tree, Educational Psychology, Strengths, Limitations

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Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Table 2: Included Literature

Table 3: Inner-London educational psychology Service Employee Statistics

Table 4: Examples of coded extracts for 'Differentiation' from transcripts

Table 5: Themes and Sub-Themes

List of Figures

Figure 1: Basic Genogram Exemplar

Figure 2: Perceived Strengths of Genograms in Educational Psychology Practice Thematic Map

Figure 3: Perceived Limitations of Genograms in Educational Psychology Practice Thematic Map

Figure 4: Engaging Clients and Building Rapport Perceived Strengths and Limitations Thematic Map

Figure 5: Accessibility Perceived Strengths Thematic Map

Figure 6: Information Gathering and Assessment Perceived Strengths and Limitations Thematic Map

Figure 7: Case Formulation Perceived Strengths Thematic Map

Figure 8: Therapeutic Tool Perceived Strengths Thematic Map

Figure 9: Specific Areas of Need Perceived Strengths and Limitations Thematic Map

Figure 10: Ethical Considerations Perceived Limitations Thematic Map

Figure 11: Practitioner Competence Perceived Strengths and Limitations Thematic Map

Figure 12: Systemic Considerations in Current Context Perceived Strengths and Limitations Thematic Map

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction Chapter Overview

This chapter introduces the current study, in which educational psychologists were interviewed to explore their perceived strengths and limitations of using genograms in educational psychology practice. The chapter begins by providing a working definition of the genogram and defining characteristics, and then discusses historical development, theoretical underpinnings and application of the genogram within systemic family therapy. The chapter then considers current educational psychology practice context and relevance of the study to the professional field of educational psychology. Finally, the chapter outlines the researcher's philosophical perspective, position as a researcher, and provides an overview of the thesis.

1.2. Genograms

1.2.1. Working Definition and Defining Characteristics of Genograms

Genograms are a tool used to graphically represent the composition and structure of family members, relationships, systemic patterns and influences over at least three generations (McGoldrick, Gerson & Petry, 2008). Genograms can include objective family information such as births and deaths, as well as subjective information such as relational dynamics and family patterns, and use symbols to represent these (McGoldrick, Gerson & Petry, 2008). Figure 1 below provides an exemplar of a basic genogram to support the reader to visualise what a completed genogram might look like.

Figure 1: Basic Genogram Exemplar
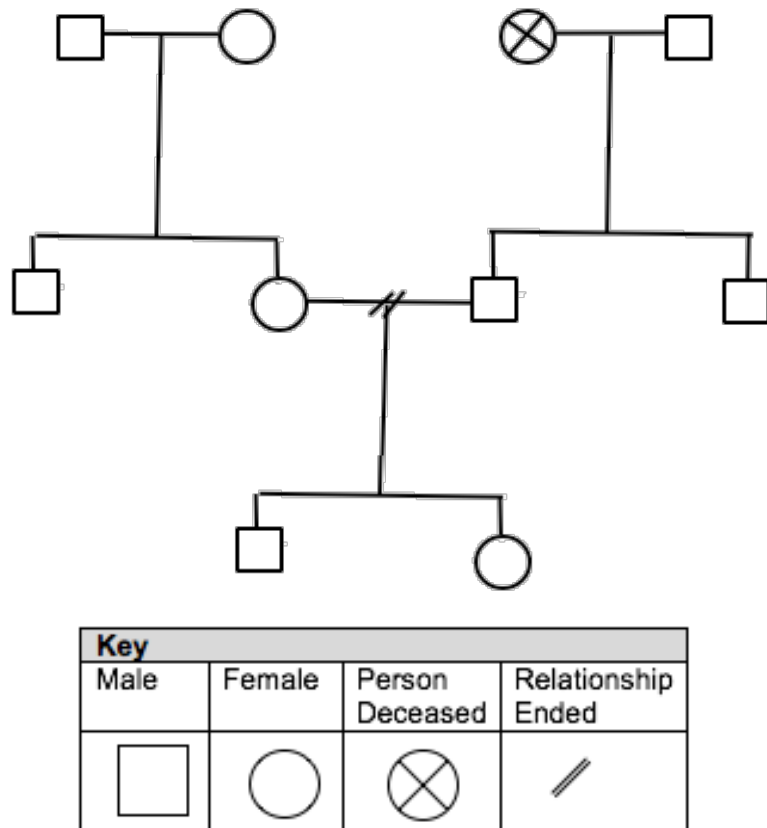
1.2.2. Genogram Development

Genograms emerged from within systemic family therapy and family medicine

professional fields, and were initially used without a standardised format until

the 1980s (McGoldrick et al., 2008). During this period, there was no set

consensus on information to seek, how to record it, or interpretation

(McGoldrick et al., 2008).

In the 1980s, the standardised genogram format was developed, in

collaboration with a group of leading family therapists at the time (McGoldrick

et al., 2008). Following the standardisation, genograms were popularised by

McGoldrick and Gerson's book *Genograms in Family Assessment*, which

offered a practical guide to the application of genograms in clinical practice

(McGoldrick and Gerson, 1985).

There have been a number of modifications to the standardised genogram

format since the 1980s and the current format is seen as a "work in progress"

due to the expanding use of genograms, which is likely to generate notions

for modernisation over time (McGoldrick et al., 2008, p.1). For example, the

ability of computers to be used to support genogram mapping led to the

development of colour coding (McGoldrick et al., 2008). Genograms have

begun to be used in a range of professional spheres including; social work,

psychiatry, research, psychology and education (Kennedy, 2010). However,

McGoldrick, Gerson and Petry (2008) argue that the clinical potential of

genograms is still emerging.

There is currently no published genogram instruction manual: however,

general guidance on the application of genograms can be found in Appendix

1. Additionally, a summary of common symbols used in genogram

construction can be found in Appendix 2. Finally, for the interested reader, an

outline of questions that could be used with a family in a brief genogram

interview are provided in Appendix 3.

1.2.3. Theoretical Underpinning of the Genogram

Systemic family therapy has undergone changes and development over time,

typically referred to as three phases (McGoldrick et al., 2008). The initial

phase was concerned with patterns and processes of families, the second

phase was concerned with the co-construction of beliefs and meanings

between people, and the third (and current phase) is focused on an increased

awareness of social and cultural contexts (Dallos & Draper, 2005).

Genograms have developed alongside these phases and consequently are

thought to be able to explore theoretical concepts from all three phases,

offering a diverse range of application (McGoldrick et al., 2008).

Fundamentally, however, genograms are underpinned by systems theory,

which suggests that issues experienced by an individual are intertwined with

systemic and current or historical contextual influences (Dallos & Draper,

2005 & McGoldrick et al., 2008). Genograms were developed as a tool to

facilitate the exploration of these systemic influences.

1.2.4. Genogram Application in Systemic Family Therapy

Genograms are predominantly used within systemic family therapy, where

they are co-created with family members and a family therapist, who acts as a

facilitator in the process (Dallos & Draper, 2010). Genograms can be

completed with one family member or several (McGoldrick et al., 2008).

Within systemic family therapy, there are two main ways that genograms are

used; in assessment to gather information, and to promote change in families

through generating hypotheses and systemic understanding, which leads to

opportunities for therapeutic intervention (McGoldrick et al., 2008).

McGoldrick et al., (2008) suggest that genograms can be usefully employed

as: an efficient summary and gestalt of family information; a way of joining

with families, facilitating engagement and the development of the therapeutic

relationship; an assessment tool for exploring relationships between various

family members across time; exploring family narratives; formulating systemic

case hypotheses; and as a therapeutic intervention, which can facilitate

change through generating new narratives of a family's experiences or

initiating family conversations. Furthermore, McGoldrick et al., (2008)

ascertain that genograms can be creatively differentiated for levels of

development for example, using toy miniatures to represent different family

members. The time required to complete a genogram can significantly vary

dependent upon whether it is being used as a tool to collect basic family

information or as a comprehensive family assessment interview (McGoldrick

et al., 2008).

McGoldrick et al., (2008) also acknowledged some limitations of genograms

including; privileging of certain family of origin experiences, resistance from

families and limitations in how much information can be displayed on the

genogram. However, comparatively there are very few limitations identified

regarding the application of genograms.

It is recognised by the researcher that the strengths and limitations of

genograms in systemic family therapy identified in this section are not

exhaustive and for the interested reader, more detailed information on the

current theoretical, clinical application and interpretation of genograms in

systemic family therapy can be found in McGoldrick, Gerson and Petry's

(2008) revised 3rd edition book, *Genograms in Assessment and Intervention*

book.

1.3.   Educational Psychology Practice

This section will discuss relevant educational psychology professional

practice guidelines, and national and local context at the time of the current

study's completion in 2019.

1.3.1. Professional Practice Guidelines, Legislation and Ethical

Frameworks

In current professional practice guidelines, there are five core activities of

educational psychology practice: assessment, consultation, intervention,

research and training (Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP),

2002). These core activities are implemented across the levels of the child,

parents/carers and family, school, professionals, organisations, and local, or

national authorities (DECP, 2002). Within descriptive literature, it has been

indicated that genograms can be applied across all areas of educational

psychology practice (Beaver, 2011; Blow, 1997; Dowling & Osborne, 2003).

Furthermore, in current educational psychology legislation and ethical

frameworks, children are considered holistically and in relation to context and

wider systems (BPS, 2002; HCPC, 2015). Working across the

aforementioned different levels allows educational psychologists to influence

children's learning and development in a range of contexts, with a range of

different people and across different systems, and bridge the gap between

these (Beaver, 2011; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cline, Gulliford & Birch, 2015; Kelly, Woolfson & Boyle, 2017). Genograms focus on understanding individuals in context and may therefore be a helpful tool to support educational psychologist with this task.

In 2015, changes embedded in the Special Educational Needs (SEND) Code of Practice (2015), influenced the role of educational psychologists incorporating social, emotional and mental health needs of children. This led to additional scope for educational psychologists to increase the work they do with individual pupils through therapeutic work in schools, which presents opportunities for those interested in working therapeutically (MacKay, 2007). For example, using systemic family therapy techniques such as genograms with families.

1.3.2. Current Educational Psychology Professional Context

The role of educational psychologists derives from their specialist knowledge of education and psychology however, the role has been impacted upon by contextual changes over time.

Since 2006, professional training in educational psychology in the UK has moved from a one-year master's qualification to a three-year professional doctorate (Cline, Gulliford & Birch, 2015). The title 'Educational Psychologist' is now legally protected and all educational psychologists must register with the HCPC, meeting standards of proficiency, conduct, performance and ethics, and continued professional development (Cline, Gulliford & Birch,

2015). Once qualified, educational psychologists are required to demonstrate

continuing professional development, maintenance of high standards of

competence in their practice (BPS, 2017; HCPC, 2015).

The current remit of educational psychologists is useful to consider when

situating this research in its wider context, and although everyday activities of

individuals will differ, the educational psychologist's role typically involves

carrying out a range of core activities aimed at promoting learning and

development of children through the application of psychology (Cline,

Gulliford & Birch, 2015). In current context, educational psychologists typically

spend the majority of their time working with schools and education providers,

but also with children and families and other agencies (Cline, Gulliford &

Birch, 2015).

In the past, educational psychology services were predominantly employed

by the local authority and schools were able to access a free service but over

time, funding cuts and changes to models of funding have led to the majority

of services moving towards traded models of delivery (Cline, Gulliford & Birch,

2015). Indeed, this is the case for the participants in the current study, who

were all working for an inner-London traded educational psychology service

at the time of completion.

Trading has enabled schools to become service commissioners and therefore

have greater autonomy over determining which services they commission,

which has a direct impact on service delivery (BPS, 2016). In response,

educational psychology services have been required to contract and

negotiate different services with different schools to generate income (Ashton

& Roberts, 2006; Lee & Woods, 2017). Therefore, whilst educational

psychology practice is partly determined according to national and local

context, individual service commissioner needs significantly impact upon the

delivery (Tobias, 2018). This has created both opportunities and challenges

for educational psychology practice service delivery.

1.4.   Research Rationale

It is recognised by the author that genograms are used in educational

psychology practice in the United Kingdom (UK) and training in the use of

genograms is now included as part of many educational psychology

professional doctorate training courses. However, following attempts to locate

published research literature in the area of the application of genograms in

educational psychology practice, it became apparent that there was very little

in this area. Therefore, it seemed that despite an increased recognition

across the profession regarding the importance of working systemically and

usefulness of genograms to support this practice, to date there appears to be

limited interweaving of genograms with educational psychology practice

research.

The current study is a small-scale, qualitative, exploratory study which aimed

to extend the current knowledge base in the application of genograms in

educational psychology practice. The research aimed to add value by

revealing information in this relatively un-researched area, which will develop

the knowledge base for the educational psychology profession and

considerations for practice, in current context.

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1) What are educational psychologists' perceived strengths of using

   genograms in educational psychology practice?

2) What are educational psychologists' perceived limitations of using

   genograms in educational psychology practice?

1.5.   Philosophical Position

The current study used a critical realist stance as a guiding ontological and

epistemological position, to explore educational psychologists' perceived

strengths and limitations of using genograms in their practice.

1.6.   Position as a Researcher

Prior to starting the educational psychology professional training doctorate

course, the researcher completed a two-year, systemic practitioner post-

graduate diploma training course at Prudence Skynner Family Therapy Clinic.

As part of the course, the researcher was taught about the development and

application of genograms in systemic family therapy. Approximately two years

later, the researcher started the professional doctorate course in child,

community and educational psychology at Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust

where she attended lectures led by family therapists in systemic theory and

the application of systemic techniques, including the use of genograms.

Within one of the lectures, a curious trainee had asked whether there was any

research literature supporting the use of genograms within educational

psychology practice and it soon became apparent that there was a dearth of

literature in this area. This sparked an interest for the researcher in exploring

further the use of genograms within educational psychology practice.

The researcher will be open about their background training as a systemic

practitioner throughout the research to promote transparency and was aware

that this may have had an effect during analysis of data, such as the influence

of pre-conceived ideas.

1.7.   Overview of Thesis

Following on from this introductory chapter, the literature review (Chapter two)

reviews published research literature in a systematic manner regarding the

strengths and limitations of genograms from education and psychology

professions. The search strategy is presented, followed by an overview of

relevant research and highlighting gaps in the evidence-base. The chapter

ends by drawing conclusions from the research and setting out the

subsequent aims and research questions underpinning this study. In chapter

three (Methodology), the methods and approaches taken for this study are

detailed. The adoption of a qualitative methodological approach is explained,

with the chosen methods of semi-structured interviews for data collection and

inductive thematic analysis. The current study operates within a critical realist

stance. The philosophical underpinnings will be also addressed in more detail

in the methodology chapter. In chapter four (Findings), each of the nine

identified themes and connected sub-themes, in relation to the two research

questions, are reported, embedding quotations from the participants. In

chapter five (Discussion), the key findings of the study are discussed in

relation to the existing theory and research. From these discussions,

interpretations about the implications of the study for future research and

educational psychology practice are given. The strengths and limitations of

the research are also considered. Finally, chapter six ends this piece of work

with overall conclusions and reflects on the significance of the findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Literature Review Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the systematic approach taken to reviewing the quality and range of existing research literature, in relation to the strengths and/or limitations of genograms. The aim of the literature review was to establish what is already known about the strengths and limitations of genograms, critically appraise relevant research and to justify the aims, rationale and research questions of the present study.

From the five types of literature review identified by Sternberg and Sternberg (2010), the current one resembles closest the 'integrate existing knowledge' category (p.62). This will be achieved by seeking to present the existing research literature, discovering trends in the findings and drawing conclusions (Oliver, 2012). The chapter begins by providing an overview of the systematic review process, which was undertaken to identify relevant research literature. The identified research articles concerning the strengths and/or limitations of genograms are then critiqued and the findings are synthesised in relation to addressing the two literature review questions:

1) What does the existing research tell us about perceived strengths of genograms?

2) What does the existing research tell us about perceived limitations of genograms?

Finally, the chapter illustrates the gap in the existing research, how this study

can extend the research in this area and presents the research questions of

the current study.

2.2. Search Strategy

A systematic examination of published research literature was undertaken.

For the credibility of a literature search, it is important that studies were not

missed due to a poor search strategy and that a structured and reliable

approach was taken (Aveyard, 2010). A range of procedures were therefore

used to ensure that the search identified all relevant articles, within the scope

of the study. The systematic search was considered to be an extensive and

purposeful search, utilising numerous databases and providing a thorough

exploration of published research considering the strengths and limitations of

genograms. It is important to note however, that the author acknowledges this

review is not an exhaustive account of the strengths and/or limitations of

genograms.

2.3. Pilot Search

The researcher completed a pilot search of the literature as part of a research

protocol assignment in January 2018. This was needed to contextualise the

proposed research and demonstrate that there was a gap in the literature, to

provide a rationale for the current study.

Due to the current study's aims to explore the strengths and limitations of

genograms within educational psychology practice, the initial pilot exploration

search was limited to the field of educational psychology. A search was

undertaken in psychology electronic databases using the EBSCO online

index using the subject terms "genogram*" OR "family tree*" AND

"educational psycholog*" OR "school psycholog*" (Limited to Title, Subjects or

Keywords). The pilot search yielded only one relevant article, Tobias (2018).

A decision was therefore made to expand the search to include psychology

and education professions electronic databases, which subsequently

increased the list of relevant articles. A thorough search of the literature was

undertaken in November 2018 and again in February 2019.

2.4.   Electronic Databases

Electronic databases were searched in accordance with the research

questions and using the search terms detailed below in November 2018 and

again in February 2019, using the EBSCO online index. Due to the focus of

this study being on the strengths and limitations of genograms in educational

psychology practice, it was considered by the researcher that psychology and

education electronic databases were the most appropriate and useful

databases to search, to meet the focus of this study. The search therefore

comprised of results from: PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, Psychology and

Behavioural Sciences Collection, ERIC and Education Source electronic

databases.

2.4.1. Search Terms

The above electronic databases were searched individually using the search

terms below. The thesaurus function was used to identify all relevant terms,

and the terms were also discussed and agreed in research supervision, to

ensure that all relevant literature was captured. Boolean operator terms were

used to ensure all of the terms were included in papers using 'AND', and to

allow the wide range of search terms to be covered using 'OR'.

Search 1:

Genogram* OR "family tree" (Limited to Title, Subjects or Keywords)

AND

Strength* OR advantage* OR benefit*

Search 2

- Genogram* OR "family tree" (Limited to Title, Subjects or Keywords)

  AND

- Disadvantage* OR limit* OR difficult* OR challenge* OR barrier*

2.5. Hand Search

Electronic searches are not in themselves exhaustive and Downe and Walsh

(2006) argue that qualitative research is often under-represented in

databases. A further hand search of the literature was therefore undertaken in

the two reputable educational psychology journals in the United Kingdom – 1)

Educational and Child Psychology and 2) Educational Psychology in Practice,

in November 2018 and February 2019 from all available issues, using the

subject terms genogram* OR "family tree*". The search of Educational

Psychology in Practice journal yielded 2 results, Tobias (2018) and Pellegrini

(2009), which were included in the literature review.

2.6. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure that the most

relevant existing research, was included in the literature search. Table 1

below shows the inclusion and exclusion criteria:

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Language: published in English	Grey literature, editorials, books or book reviews
Human Population	Papers with a focus on a modified genogram format e.g. Medical Genogram or Spiritual Genogram
Published journal articles	Papers published before 2000
Literature that focused on strengths and/or limitations of genograms	
Traditional genogram format	
Full text available	

The literature search was limited to the human population for relevance to the

current study, as humans are the service users of educational psychologists.

The literature search was also limited to articles published in English

language, to allow the researcher to have accessibility to the articles.

Additionally, only published journal articles were included.

Genograms appear to have been used without a standardised format,

throughout the earlier part of the twentieth century, primarily in family therapy

and medicine (McGoldrick, Gerson & Petry, 2008). The literature was

therefore limited to standardised, traditional genograms for consistency of

format across the published literature reviewed (McGoldrick, Gerson &

Shellenberger, 1999). Several alternative or adapted versions of the

genogram were found in the literature searches including; the Ethical

Genogram (Bilot & Peluso, 2009), Cultural Genogram (Hardy and Laszloffy,

1995), Spiritual Genogram (Limb & Hodge, 2010), Community Genogram

(Ivey, 2011 & Reed, 2016), Political Genogram (Crowell, 2017), Career

Genogram (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2013), Intellectual Genogram (Dyer &

McKean, 2016), Sexual Genogram (Gambescia, 2016) and Transgenerational

trauma and Resilience genogram (Goodman, 2013).

The researcher initially identified six further potentially relevant articles to the

literature search, which were written between 1984 and 1995 (Bannerman,

1986; Erlanger, 1990; Low, 1984; Mauzey and Erdman, 1995; Pistole, 1995;

Schilson, Braun and Hudson, 1993 & Vinson, 1995). However, the researcher

was not able to obtain full article access to these via EBSCO, Google

Scholar, Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, Institute of Education or

University of East London libraries, or by emailing the authors directly.

Following a wider exploration of literature, a decision was made to limit the

search to articles written after 1999, as this year coincided with the release of

the revised second edition of *Genograms: Assessment and Intervention*

(McGoldrick, Gerson & Shellenberger, 1999). The second edition of this book

was written as an update to the original book written in 1985, due to

genograms being a "tool in progress", the broader use of genograms within

other professions and the standardisation of genograms as a tool (p. Xiii).

Additionally, the book was updated to "illustrate more fully…the applications

of genograms" and updated the symbols from the first edition (p. xiii).

Literature published prior to 1999 was therefore likely to be in the initial

exploratory phase of genograms outside of a therapeutic context, rather than

as part of established practice with strengths and limitations considered,

using the current standardised genogram format (McGoldrick, Gerson &

Shellenberger, 1999). However, the researcher cannot be certain of this as

they were unable to access the full articles.

2.7. Snowballing

Due to so few relevant articles being identified in the electronic and hand

searches, despite a broad search criterion, an additional search of Tobias'

(2018) and Pellegrini's (2009) references was undertaken to identify potential

further literature through 'snowballing'. The decision was made to snowball

these articles due to their high relevance to the current study; both involving

the use of genograms in educational psychology practice. However, no

further literature which met the inclusion criteria was identified.

2.8. Search Returns

Following the completion of all searches, papers were screened and duplicate

studies were removed from the output. This process involved reading the

titles and abstracts of articles to ascertain whether they met with the inclusion

criteria for the current literature review (Aveyard, 2010). If there was

insufficient information within the titles and abstracts, the paper was kept

within the search remit and a decision about its inclusion was made when it

was read more thoroughly.

Over the course of the three separate searches (electronic databases, hand

search and snowballing), a total of six studies were identified as relevant to

the current literature review. The literature included was from within four

different professional fields; educational psychology, undergraduate

developmental psychology teaching and learning, family therapy and

research. Full details of the included studies, including their participants,

location and methodological parameters are listed in Table 2 below. A table of

all excluded studies are listed in Appendix 4.

Table 2

Included Literature (N=6)

Author and Year Published	Title	Participants	Location	Methods of Data Collection	Professional Field
Alexander, J. H., Callaghan, J. E. M., & Fellin, L. C. (2018).	Genograms in research: Participants' reflections of the genogram process.	9 women aged 22-50 years old	UK	Semi-structured interviews	Research
Pellegrini, D. (2009).	Applied systemic theory and educational psychology: can the twain ever meet?	A family: 5-year-old girl & her mother	UK	Case study	Educational Psychology
Rempel, G., Neufeld, A. & Kushner, K. (2007).	Interactive Use of Genograms and Ecomaps in Family Caregiving Research	Men caring for spouse with dementia	Canada	Semi-structured interviews	Research
Schalkwyk, G. J. (2007).	Choreographing learning in developmental psychology utilising multi-generational genograms and reflective journal writing	Undergraduate Developmental Psychology Students	China	Observations & Reflections	Undergraduate Psychology Teaching and Learning
Swainson, M., & Tasker, F. (2005).	Genograms Redrawn: Lesbian Couples Define Their Families.	6 Lesbian couples	UK	Semi-structured interviews	Family Therapy
Tobias, A. (2018).	The use of genograms in educational psychology practice.	A family: 11-year-old girl, mother & 3 siblings	UK	Case study	Educational Psychology

2.9.   Summary of Included Studies

All of the included studies considered the strengths and/or limitations of

genograms in different education or psychology related professional fields.

Two of the papers included in the literature search were case studies from

within educational psychology practice and therefore have the highest

relevance to the current study; Pellegrini (2009) and Tobias (2018). Both

studies were individual case studies, which generally reported positively on

the application of genograms in educational psychology practice. Pellegrini's

(2009) case study focused on the use of systemic techniques, including a

genogram, with a five-year-old girl, who was referred by a school special

educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) due to concerns about the girl's

relationship with her mother. Tobias's (2018) case study looked specifically at

the use of a genogram as an assessment and intervention tool with an 11-

year-old girl, who had not attended school for several months.

Two of the included papers were from a research context and used

genograms as part of semi-structured interviews with research participants;

Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner (2007) and Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin

(2018). Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) study considered the co-

construction of genograms with male caregivers to generate data in semi-

structured research interviews, and Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin's (2018)

study explored the use of genograms in research with female participants,

who had experienced domestic violence, as part of a broader study exploring

the intergenerational transmission of family violence.

Swainson and Tasker's (2005) study was from within a family therapy

professional context and explored the usefulness of genograms with six

lesbian couples. Finally, Schalkwyk's (2007) study explained her experiences

of using genograms to develop undergraduate developmental psychology

students' ability to integrate theoretical knowledge and understanding of

psychosocial issues, through reflective learning.

2.10. Critical Appraisal

Qualitative research can be flawed and appraisal is therefore essential to

ensure good quality (Downe & Walsh, 2006). The quality of the literature was

screened using the framework provided by Downe and Walsh (2006) for

qualitative research. The 'Summary Criteria for Appraising Qualitative

Research Studies' framework was selected to support the current literature

appraisal, due to it synthesising criteria from various established qualitative

research appraisal frameworks (Downe & Walsh, 2006). The criteria include

consideration of; scope and purpose, design, sampling strategy, analysis,

interpretation, reflexivity, ethical dimensions and relevance and transferability

of qualitative research (Downe & Walsh, 2006). This section of the chapter

will discuss each of the included literature articles in relation to each of the

criteria.

2.10.1.   Qualitative Research

Downe and Walsh (2006) argue that a strength of qualitative research is its

ability to illuminate findings in specific contexts. The methodologies of all of

the included papers were qualitative, which allowed for in depth information to

be gathered regarding the strengths and/or limitations of using genograms.

2.10.2.   Scope and Purpose

Downe and Walsh's (2006) essential criteria for the scope and purpose of

qualitative research includes "a clear statement of, and rationale for, research

questions/aims/purposes" and the study being "thoroughly contextualised by

existing literature" (p.114). Within the included literature, the scope and

purpose of the research was clear in all papers and the studies were

contextualised by existing literature. However, a systematic approach of the

literature review was not evident in four of the included studies; Alexander,

Callaghan and Fellin (2018), Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner (2007),

Schalkwyk (2007) and Swainson and Tasker (2005). It is uncertain for the

reader, therefore, whether or not these studies can be justified as "thoroughly

contextualised in existing literature" (Downe & Walsh, 2006, p.114).

2.10.3.   Design

Essential criteria for the design stage of appraising qualitative research

includes a method/design, which is consistent with the research aims and a

"data collection strategy, which is apparent and appropriate" (Downe &

Walsh, 2006, p.114). Five of the included studies clearly documented their

methodology; two of the studies had used individual case studies and three

had used semi-structured interviews. In Schalkwyk's (2007) paper however,

formal methodology was absent and included instead descriptive

observations and reflections on teaching practice. This is closely linked with

the trustworthiness of the findings, which will be discussed in the 'Analysis

and Interpretation' section below. There was limited discussion around

methodology selection processes in all articles.

In relation to philosophical positions of the included literature, two of the

papers have been written from a social constructionist position (Tobias, 2018

& Schalkwyk, 2007), which was clearly stated and Swainson and Tasker

(2005)'s paper is written from a constructionist position. Philosophical

positions were briefly discussed in the two other included papers (Alexander,

Callaghan & Fellin, 2018; Pellegrini, 2009), however not explicitly stated.

Finally, Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) paper did not detail the

position of the researcher, therefore it is important to consider that the

findings could be biased in that paper.

2.10.4.   Sampling Strategy

Appropriate sample and sampling method including; detailing of selection

criteria, justification of sampling strategy, thickness of description and an

explanation of any disparity between planned and actual sample, are included

within Downe and Walsh's (2006) essential criteria for qualitative research.

Two of the articles, Swainson and Tasker (2005) and Alexander, Calaghan

and Fellin (2018) included a detailed sampling strategy and rich description of

participants, which was a strength of these papers. However, the four

remaining papers appeared to have an unclear or unspecified sampling

strategy, which may have led to a biased sample. Tobias (2018) and

Pellegrini (2009) did not explicitly discuss their sampling strategy; however, as case studies they appeared to have used convenience sampling based on educational psychology casework. Details of the family members and ages are included in the papers. The sample included in these papers are highly relevant to the current study. Similarly, Schalkwyk (2007) did not discuss their sampling strategy however, it again appears to be based on convenience of available undergraduate developmental psychology students within the class that are being taught. The study was completed in China and therefore only has tentative transferability to United Kingdom education context. All students included were described as speaking English as an additional language, however, there were no details provided regarding the number of students included in the study or additional demographics such as the gender of students. Finally, Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) sampling strategy was also unclear and the number of participants included in the study was not stated. However, all of the included participants were described as male caregiver and there is one detailed case illustration of a participant, which is helpful to aid the reader's understanding of one of the participants. The study was completed in Canada and therefore only has tentative transferability to United Kingdom context.

2.10.5.   Analysis and Interpretation

Inclusion of an appropriate and explicitly named analytic approach and method, and a description of the interpretation, with a clear audit trail and data used to support findings, are included as essential criteria in Downe and Walsh's (2006) qualitative research appraisal criteria. Within the included

literature, context was described and taken account of in the interpretation of findings in two of the articles (Alexander, Callaghan & Fellin, 2018; Swaison & Tasker, 2005). However, all of the other included articles appeared to have unclear accounts of interpretations, limited audit trails and no use of direct quotes from participants to support interpretations, which indicates a possible lack of rigour and trustworthiness in the findings.

In relation to the two articles, which accounted for their interpretation of the findings, Swainson and Tasker (2005) used a grounded theory analysis and provided evidence of data used to support findings reported, considered alternative explanations and the diversity of participant responses. Additionally, Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin (2018) used Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis methodology, provided a clear audit trail and used verbatim quotes in the discussion of findings. A clear interpretation of findings is therefore a strength of both of these articles.

The remaining papers did not have a clearly stated analysis and interpretation method, which presents clear limitations in relation to the reported findings. The included case studies in the literature review (Pellegrini, 2009 & Tobias, 2018) are highly relevant to the current study and offer rich and detailed descriptions of their application of genograms in educational psychology practice. However, the papers do not share a clear audit trail of the processes and decisions taken for the findings included. Furthermore, Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) study provided a descriptive case illustration of one participant, however the analysis and interpretations were otherwise

descriptive in the reporting of findings and unsupported by any concrete data

or audit trail. Additionally, two of the articles were based on the author's

reflections, which is not a robust methodology (Pellegrini, 2009; Schalkwyk,

2007). Concerningly, Schalkwyk (2007) also did not state the analytic or

interpretation methodology used in their study and the findings appear to be

written as reflective-meaning-making, which does not have an audit decision

trail. Schalkwyk (2007) did however acknowledge the lack of validity and

reliability in their conclusions and stated that "no absolute knowledge claims

can be made and generalised to different contexts" (p.137), which promoted

transparency in relation to this.

Due to the findings of the studies discussed being written in a descriptive

style, trustworthiness is questionable and allows for potential researcher bias

in interpretation. According to the appraisal criterion, Rempel, Neufeld and

Kushner (2007) and Schalkwyk's (2007) study findings cannot be deemed to

be robust or trustworthy, which should be held in mind when considering the

'Review of Literature' findings section below. It is acknowledged by the

researcher that it can be difficult to represent in-depth analysis and

interpretation steps in publications, however the lack of evidence in the

articles indicates a possible lack of rigour and trustworthiness (Downe &

Walsh, 2006).

2.10.6.   Reflexivity

Downe and Walsh (2006) argue that it is "imperative to publish some reflexive

content so that the reader can sense how the researcher shaped the entire

project" (p.116). Within the included literature, researcher reflexivity was demonstrated in Pellegrini (2009), Swainson and Tasker (2005) and Schalwyk's (2007) papers. However, researcher reflexivity was not demonstrated in two of the articles (Alexander, Callaghan & Fellin, 2018; Rempel, 2007) and did not extend beyond acknowledging the professional relationship with participants in Tobias' (2018) case study. This may be accounted for by the limited word count in publications, however consequently impacts on the integrity of the research, as the articles did not acknowledge the effect of the researcher on the participants or findings (Downe & Walsh, 2006). It is therefore unclear how the researchers may have shaped the research in these studies.

2.10.7. Ethical Dimensions

Downe and Walsh (2006) argue that ethical dimensions should be "an explicit component of good-quality qualitative research" (p.116). Within the included literature, a strength of Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin's (2018) paper is the detailed account of ethical concerns and steps taken to address these. Additionally, Swainson and Tasker (2005) refer to confidentiality and written consent in their paper; however, their description did not extend beyond this. Concerningly, there is no demonstration of ethical dimensions or how these were managed in the remaining four papers, which impacts upon the quality of the studies (Pellegrini 2009; Rempel, Neufeld & Kushner,2007; Schalkwyk, 2007; Tobias 2018).

2.10.8.   Relevance and Transferability

This section will consider the relevance and transferability of the included

literature, according to Downe and Walsh's (2006) criterion. As

aforementioned, Pellegrini (2009) and Tobias' (2018) studies were individual

case studies from within educational psychology practice and therefore have

the highest relevance to the current study. Pellegrini's (2009) case study

focused on the use of systemic techniques, including a genogram with a five-

year-old girl and Tobias's (2018) case study looked specifically at the use of a

genogram as an assessment and intervention tool with an 11-year-old girl and

her family. As single case studies, both Pellegrini (2009) and Tobias' (2018)

studies offer limited generalisability in their findings. However, the descriptive

nature of participants does allow for relevance and consideration of other

participants regarding transferability and these papers have the highest

relevance and transferability to the current study, as they are situated within

educational psychology practice.

Two of the included papers were from a research context and used

genograms as part of semi-structured interviews with research participants;

Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner (2007) and Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin

(2018). Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner (2007) and Alexander, Calaghan and

Fellin's (2018) studies report findings from the researcher and participants'

experiential reflections of constructing genograms. Although relevant to

consideration of strengths and limitations of genograms, these studies have

limited transferability to educational psychology practice.

Swainson and Tasker's (2005) study was from within a family therapy

professional context and explored the usefulness of genograms with six

lesbian couples. Swainson and Tasker (2005) included a detailed sampling

strategy and rich description of participants, which is a strength of the paper

and although considering the use of genograms in a different professional

field, offers consideration of participants regarding transferability.

Finally, Schalkwyk's (2007) study explained her experiences of using

genograms to develop undergraduate developmental psychology students'

ability to integrate theoretical knowledge and understanding of psychosocial

issues, through reflective learning. Schalkwyk's (2007) findings were mostly

written in hypothetical terms, without reference to specific student examples

or quotes. Schalkwyk (2007) did however acknowledge the limitations of this

approach. Again, this study is not directly transferable to educational

psychology practice but may offer consideration of some transferability and

relevance to training of educational psychologists on professional doctorate

courses.

In relation to the identification of limitations of the studies, considerations of

limitations by the researchers were not evident in Pellegrini's (2009) or

Rempel Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) papers and are limited in Shalkwyk's

(2007) paper.

2.10.9.   Critical Appraisal Summary

All articles were critically reviewed as being of adequate quality and relevance to draw upon for the literature review, despite the limitations acknowledged in the critical review. However, due to the studies being conducted in different contexts and additional flaws identified, caution is necessary when considering the generalisability of the findings to educational psychology practice. Moreover, the conclusions drawn from the family therapy, research, and teaching and learning papers can only be tentatively bridged across to the educational psychology context. The papers from China and Canada must also be judged cautiously, when considering potential application in the United Kingdom.

2.11. Review of Literature

The papers included in the literature are drawn from a range of professional contexts which included research, undergraduate psychology teaching and learning, family therapy and educational psychology. Presentation of the findings from these papers is now given in line with the two literature review questions:

1) What does the existing research tell us about perceived strengths of genograms?

2) What does the existing research tell us about perceived limitations of genograms?

2.11.1.   What does the existing research tell us about perceived strengths of genograms?

2.11.1.1. Collaborative Tool

All of the reviewed literature demonstrated a number of incidences where genograms were identified as a collaborative tool, which had a positive impact and supported participant engagement (Alexander, Calaghan & Fellin, 2018; Pellegrini, 2009; Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's, 2007; Schalkwyk, 2007; Tobias, 2018). For example, Tobias's (2018) study found that the "co-construction facilitated a much deeper discussion than would have normally been possible within the constraints of an initial consultation" (p.96).

Additionally, the literature suggests that the collaborative nature of genograms promoted rapport with participants. Specifically, Tobias' (2018) article highlighted that the co-construction "reduced social awkwardness and embarrassment", enhanced communication, engagement and rapport, and was a motivating tool for the family to engage with (p.96). Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) and Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin's (2018) findings also showed that the collaborative use of genograms facilitated rapport and in-depth, rich discussion in research interviews.

2.11.1.2. Accessible Tool

The two research studies highlighted genograms to be an accessible tool for participants, from a range of different backgrounds. Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) study argued that due to the pictorial nature of genograms, they are adaptable to different ages, gender, generation, cognition, and command of the English language. Swainson and Tasker's (2005) study also found that all of their participants were familiar with the idea of a family tree.

Additionally, Schalkwyk's (2007) study found that students were able to share their experiences and construct knowledge in a third or second language. These findings demonstrate the accessibility of genograms as a perceived strength with a diverse range of clients.

2.11.1.3. Non-Threatening Assessment Tool

Four of the included studies suggested that the pictorial element of a genogram facilitated information gathering and was perceived as a less-threatening assessment tool. For example, Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) study found that the pictorial aspect of the tool captured the interest of participants, was un-threatening and facilitated ease of disclosure with the male participants. This was also found in Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin's (2018) study, which reported the genogram, as a material object, "enabled expression of difficult memories and powerful emotions" (p.17), which may not have been possible without a visual tool. Additionally, Tobias' (2018) study found that the use of a genogram was less threatening than other forms of information gathering in educational psychology consultation. Finally, Schalkwyk's (2007) study also found that completing the genogram was non-threatening for students.

2.11.1.4. Information Gathering

All of the included studies highlighted information gathering as a strength of genograms. Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) study argued for the use of genograms in research and suggested that they have potential for diverse use as a data generation tool. Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) study

also found that genograms facilitated contextual data to be elicited about

participants including; family structure and relationships, family dynamics,

support networks, demographic information, critical family incidents such as

birth, separation, conflict and illness, emotional and behavioural patterns.

Furthermore, information gathering was also a reported strength of genogram

use in Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin's (2018) study, which found that

genograms elicited a wealth of data that verbal accounts alone may not have

produced in interviews. For example; information about relational dynamics,

family history, intergenerational patterns, family structure, family relationships,

and lived experiences, which supported the researcher to contextualise the

participants (Alexander, Calaghan & Fellin, 2018). Furthermore, the use of the

genograms enabled the interviewers to ask specific family-related and circular

questions to gather additional data (Alexander, Calaghan & Fellin, 2018). The

findings of Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) study also suggested that

data had been uncovered, which may not have been using other tools and

therefore enhanced researcher understanding and added additional data for

the research analysis.

Similarly, Tobias (2018) and Pellegrini's (2009) articles found that genograms

enabled discussion with clients to gather information and explore; family

characteristics, values, themes, gender roles, and life events. Swainson and

Tasker's (2005) study also showed that drawing the genogram was a useful

method to generate discussion with the couples about; family life

experiences, cultural beliefs and rituals, religious beliefs, stressful

experiences, views on parenting, and gender.

Finally, Schalkwyk's (2007) study found that genograms supported students

to share information about their family demographics, distinctive family

characteristics and culture, relationships between family members, family

structure, patterns of behaviour, and significant life events. Additionally,

Schalkwyk (2007) argued that genograms provided a framework for exploring

"biological, cognitive, cultural, psychosocial histories and implied futures for

their family of origin" (p.131).

2.11.1.5. Exploring Family Relationships and Dynamics

In addition to gathering contextual information, the included studies also

reported the ability of genograms to explore family relationships and

dynamics with participants. For example, Tobias (2018) and Pellegrini's

(2009) articles reported the ability of genograms to support the exploration of

family relationships, dynamics, feelings and patterns of interaction within

families. Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin's (2018) study also found that

genograms elicited information about relational dynamics, family history,

intergenerational patterns, family structure, family relationships, and lived

experiences, which supported the researcher to contextualise the

participants. Moreover, Swainson and Tasker's (2005) study showed that

drawing the genogram was a useful method to generate discussion with the

couples about family relationships and finally, Schalkwyk's (2007) study found

that genograms supported students to explore family demographics, unique

family characteristics and culture, relationships between family members,

family structure, patterns of behaviour and significant life events. However,

given the identified limitations of the included studies in relation to analysis

and interpretation methods in the critical appraisal section of this chapter,

these findings may not be reliably evidenced.

2.11.1.6. Exploring Specific Difficulties

Genograms were identified in the literature as a beneficial tool in exploring

specific issues including; selective mutism, eating difficulties, separation or

medical concerns, homophobia, and domestic violence (Alexander, Calaghan

& Fellin, 2018; Pellegrini, 2009; Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner, 2007;

Swainson and Tasker, 2005; Tobias, 2018).

2.11.1.7. Identifying Strengths and Resources

Four of the included studied found that genograms enabled family strengths,

resources and possibilities for change to be identified (Alexander, Calaghan &

Fellin, 2018; Pellegrini's, 2009; Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner, 2007; Tobias,

2018). For example, in Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin's (2018) study,

genograms enabled participants to consider new ways of relating to family

members, envision potentially rebuilding relationships and consequently

promote positive change in the family. Participants also reported that they

used their genograms outside of the research space to connect with family

members or instigate changes in their relationships (Alexander, Calaghan &

Fellin, 2018). Furthermore, in Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) study,

completing the genogram also supported participants to unearth unrealised

support networks and contributed to new perspectives. Finally, Pellegrini's

(2009) article reported that the genogram had been useful in promoting

systemic thinking to bring about change. However, this was Pellegrini's

(2009) personal reflection as a researcher and it is uncertain whether

participants also experienced the genogram in this way.

2.11.1.8. Multi-Dimensional Perspectives

Two of the studies identified the ability of genograms to include and promote

discussion about different perspectives when used with more than one

participant. For example, the genogram used in Tobias' (2018) case study

was completed with several family members, which allowed the family to see

multi-dimensional perspectives. Swainson and Tasker's (2005) study also

found that genograms allowed the couples to share and discuss different

perspectives on their definitions of family and who was included on each of

their separate genograms. These findings demonstrate some of the different

ways that genograms can be used with clients and with more than one client

at a time.

2.11.1.9. Reflection and Hypothesising

All of the studies included identified self-reflection, researcher reflection and

hypothesising as strengths of completing the genogram. Tobias (2018) and

Pellegrini's (2009) case studies both identified that using the genogram

enabled reflection and hypothesising for both the professional and the

families, which in turn improved self-awareness and highlighted areas for

interventions. Both research studies found that genograms stimulated self-

reflection for the participant and interviewer about family histories and context (Alexander, Calaghan & Fellin, 2018 & Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner, 2007). Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin's (2018) study also found that genograms enabled reflective and reflexive consideration of family histories including; understanding of the impact of violence, new insights or shifted understandings of themselves and their families. Couples in Swainson and Tasker's (2005) study also used their genograms to reflect on connections, culture, identity, family patterns, values and beliefs, qualities. These discussions and reflections enabled new narratives to emerge and uncovered the impact of homophobia on the couples. Finally, Schalkwyk (2007) found that genograms supported students to reflect on their family backgrounds and integrate theoretical knowledge and understanding of psychosocial issues, through reflective learning.

2.11.1.10.   Therapeutic Effect

Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin's (2018) noted the therapeutic effect of completing a genogram for participants in their study and found that participants were able to use their genogram to explore their identity, reframe narratives and induce a more systemic understanding rather than a blaming position, which enabled empathetic understanding and acceptance (Alexander, Calaghan & Fellin, 2018). Furthermore, drawing the genogram was found to support the articulation of experiences and made visible previously unarticulated or unidentified information, and was experienced as positive and empowering for some participants (Alexander, Calaghan & Fellin, 2018).

2.11.1.11. Learning about Psychosocial Concepts

Specific to teaching and learning, Schalkwyk (2007) found that creating a genogram enabled students to co-construct knowledge and develop new skills as active participants, in a way that went beyond textbook learning or passively receiving information. Moreover, learning in this method privileged student's personal experiences and encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning or gaps in knowledge. Schalkwyk (2007) also argued that the genograms enabled students to generate hypotheses and question these to review any assumptions they had. The study found that genograms supported students to both learn about the concepts of family demographics, distinctive family characteristics and culture, relationships between family members, family structure, patterns of behaviour and significant life events that may have impacted upon development (Schalkwyk, 2007). Additionally, other findings from the paper highlighted that genograms offered "specific context and content of development through the lifespan and challenges that affect development" (Schalkwyk, 2007, p.131) across Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecosystemic levels.

2.11.1.12. Summary of Perceived Strengths of Genograms

Overall, the included research literature reported positively on the use of genograms across different contexts including; educational psychology, undergraduate developmental psychology teaching and learning, family therapy and research. The papers highlighted strengths of genograms as; a collaborative and accessible tool, beneficial for gathering information, exploring family relationships and dynamics and exploring some specific

areas of difficulty such as selective mutism, eating difficulties, separation or

medical concerns, homophobia, and domestic violence. Additionally, the

studies highlighted that genograms helped participants and researchers see

things from other perspectives, reflect and hypothesise. One of the studies

also reported therapeutic effects on using genograms and, finally, one of the

studies highlighted genograms as a teaching tool for psychosocial concepts

for undergraduate developmental psychology students.

2.11.2. What does the Existing Research tell us about the Perceived Limitations of Genograms?

2.11.2.1. Emotive Experience

Several of the studies highlighted the emotive impact and potential risk of

emotional upset or anxiety in relation to completing a genogram including;

surprise at learning new information about family members and difficulty

discussing ex-partners (Alexander, Callaghan & Fellin, 2018; Tobias, 2018),

discussions about homophobia and the impact this had had on their lives

(Swainson &Tasker, 2005), anxiety in relation to drawing complex

relationships and histories of violence in relationships (Alexander, Callaghan

& Fellin, 2018) and strong emotional responses including shock at seeing

their family dynamics on paper (Alexander, Callaghan & Fellin, 2018). This

leads to a point of cautionary thinking in terms of risk management and

ethical considerations in relation to using a therapeutic tool out of a

therapeutic context.

2.11.2.2. Location of Blame

Within educational psychology practice, Tobias (2018) reflected that genograms should not be used as an assessment in isolation, as this has the potential to locate blame for presenting issues within the family context alone, without considering other influences such as school. Location of blame was also highlighted in Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin's (2018) study due to some participants locating blame on one family member for all family disharmony, which may risk entrenching unhelpful family discourses.

2.11.2.3. Time Available

The amount of time available or needed to complete a genogram with participants was highlighted as a potential challenge of using them. Pellegrini (2009) highlighted the need for ongoing contact with clients over time, which may be difficult for educational psychologists to organise. This was indeed the case in Tobias's (2018) case study, where she completed 2 two-hour home visits to complete the genogram with a family. Furthermore, Schalkwyk's (2007) study found that a single lecture was not enough time to complete the activity and students were required to complete their genograms at home, and Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin (2018) found completing a genogram with their participants to be time consuming. This finding connects to the earlier points made about the positives of gathering information using genograms that might not be possible using other methods. However, these findings indicate that this might not be possible with limited time constraints.

2.11.2.4. Restrictive Format

Three of the studies found the genogram symbols to be a restrictive format in some way. For example, some of Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin's (2018) participants found it challenging to symbolise and represent retrospective relationships, complexities in family relationships and family roles, and experienced some frustration with the task in relation to this. Specific to research, Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin (2018) also reported that the visual information alone would be difficult for researchers to analyse and it was therefore important that visual images were enriched with verbal discussion alongside it.

Furthermore, Swainson and Tasker's (2005) participants found it difficult to depict their families using the traditional genogram due to a bias towards nuclear, heterosexual family norms. They argued that "family can be seen as a social construct, which has changed over time and differs across cultures" and how couples defined whether they were "family" or not, made the task challenging for some couples (Swainson & Tasker 2005, p.4). Furthermore, Swainson and Tasker (2005) found that some key relationships lacked language to describe them, such as friendships which were felt by participants to be qualitatively more than friendships and instead, part of their "family of choice" (p.4). Swainson and Tasker (2005) also reported that participants found it challenging to represent donor biological parents of children on their genograms. However, despite experiencing some difficulties describing and mapping families using the traditional genogram format, Swainson and Tasker's (2005) participants subsequently reflected that that

the process of grappling with some of these difficulties become a useful

process through discussing them together and establishing new or shared

narratives.

It has been noted by the researcher that Swainson and Tasker's (2005) study

was likely to have been completed before the change in law regarding the

Civil Partnership Act (2004) (available from 21st December 2005) and eight

years before the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013), which legalised

same sex marriage. These changes in legislation may therefore have

impacted upon same-sex couples' lived experiences in current context.

However, Tobias (2018) also reported that she needed to co-construct

additional symbols to represent family experiences in her more recent study.

2.11.2.5. Restricted by Information Available

Two of the studies identified that the genogram process was limited by a lack

of information available. For example, Schalkwyk (2007) found that

participants were only able to use information that they readily knew about

their families, and students were required to complete their genograms

outside of the lecture to gain additional information. Swainson and Tasker

(2005) also found that it was difficult for some couples to complete their

genograms due to limited contact with their families of origin and therefore

information available regarding them.

2.11.2.6. Motivation to Engage Required

Two of the studies identified motivation to engage as a potential challenge of using genograms with participants. For example, despite successfully engaging a family in the task of completing a genogram, Tobias (2018) reflected that this success was dependent on the client's motivation to engage. Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) study also discussed the importance of participants needing to be willing to share information about their families for the genogram to be a helpful tool.

2.11.2.7. Training

Prior or ongoing training in facilitating the use of genograms was identified as a potential barrier to using genograms in three of the studies (Alexander et al., 2018; Rempel et al., 2007; Pellegrini, 2009). As part of his discussion and reflections about the limited published literature around the use of systemic techniques in educational psychology practice, Pellegrini (2009) reported that most educational psychologists have received limited training in their initial training and further training can be expensive. Additionally, Pellegrini (2009) identified a need for more INSET training and supervision for educational psychologists as part of continued professional development in the use of systemic techniques. Educational psychologists may therefore not feel adequately trained, and thus competent, to use genograms, as part of their practice. In Tobias' (2018) study, nearly 10 years later, it appears that this is still the case and genograms are not a commonly used assessment or intervention tool in educational psychology. Additionally, the importance of training was discussed as a potential limitation in Rempel, Neufeld and

Kushner's (2007) and Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin's (2018) studies in

terms of the importance of researchers being trained to respond to potential

disclosure of sensitive or emotive issues from participants whilst using the

genogram as a research tool.

2.11.2.8. Expectations

As part of his reflections on the use of systemic techniques by educational

psychologists, Pellegrini (2009) suggested that the perceived role of

educational psychologists and their unique contribution may prevent

educational psychologists using systemic theory in their work, in an

increasingly multi-agency context: for example, highlighting that whilst

schools may show an interest in alternative methods of working, many still

request "full cognitive assessments" (p.282). Pellegrini (2009) also suggested

that this limitation may be further compounded by educational psychologists'

personal expectations of their role.

2.11.2.9. Ethical Considerations

In the context of research publication, both Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner

(2007) and Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin (2018) identified some ethical

considerations including; confidentiality due to including multiple family

members on the drawing, which may affect participant anonymity. This was of

high relevance in Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin's (2018) study due to

potential elevated risk of violence if participants were identified and therefore

safeguarding concerns. Furthermore, Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin (2018)

found genograms to have some unintended effects outside of the research

interview including reconnecting with family members and therapeutic effects,
which researchers might not be prepared for. Alexander, Callaghan and Fellin
(2018) highlighted this as an important ethical consideration when exploring
personal issues or using a therapeutic tool outside of a therapeutic space.

2.11.2.10. Summary of Perceived Limitations of Genograms

Comparatively to the perceived strengths, there was little discussion about
the perceived limitations of genograms in the literature. However, the papers
highlighted potential challenges in relation to genograms being an emotive
task, possible location of blame within individuals of families, completing of
genograms being a time-consuming task and a restrictive format for some
participants. Genograms were also limited by the information available to
participants and motivation to engage with the task. Appropriate training in
genogram use and responding to participants, expectations of role and ethical
considerations, were also highlighted within the included literature as possible
limitations in the use of genograms.

2.12. Distinctive Contribution of the Current Study

The systematic literature review has identified an emerging but limited
literature base around the strengths and limitations of genograms within
psychology and education professional fields. It is hoped that the current
study will extend the current published research literature base and increase
the relevance of outcomes and findings to the educational psychology
profession. This proposed contribution is supported by Tobias' (2018) recently
published article, which argued that "the genogram approach would benefit

from further research, examining the claims made about its usefulness in a

robust and trustworthy way, using some formalised methods of enquiry"

(p.97). The current study aims to add value by revealing information in this

relatively un-researched area, which will develop and extend the knowledge

base for the educational psychology profession and considerations for

practice and casework.

The current study aims to explore educational psychologists' perceived

strengths and limitations of genograms in their practice through answering the

following research questions:

1) What are educational psychologists' perceived strengths of using

    genograms in educational psychology practice?

2) What are educational psychologists' perceived limitations around using

    genograms in educational psychology practice?

The researcher will endeavor to answer the research questions by collecting

data through semi-structured interviews with educational psychologists, who

have used genograms within their practice, to gain insight in to their perceived

strengths and limitations around using this approach. The data will be

analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stage thematic analysis.

3. Methodology

3.1. Methodology Chapter Overview

This chapter first provides a description of the research aims and purpose,
underpinning philosophical position, rationale for a qualitative methodological
approach, participant information and sampling procedures. The remainder of
the chapter includes a comprehensive description of the data analysis and
finally, the quality of the research and ethical considerations are discussed.

3.2. Research Aims and Purpose

The current study was an exploratory piece of research, which aimed to
explore educational psychologists' perceived strengths and limitations of
using genograms in educational psychology practice. The study aimed to
answer the following research questions:

3) What are educational psychologists' perceived strengths of using
   genograms in educational psychology practice?
4) What are educational psychologists' perceived limitations around using
   genograms in educational psychology practice?

3.3. Philosophical Position

The current study used a critical realist stance as a guiding ontological and
epistemological position, to explore educational psychologists' perceived
strengths and limitations of using genograms in their practice. In this section
of the chapter, the researcher first introduces the concept of ontological and

epistemological positions in research and then discusses critical realism as a

guiding philosophical position in the current study.

3.3.1. Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology and epistemology form a researcher's core assumptions about

reality, which influence the research questions and methodological

approaches taken to gain knowledge about said reality (Fox 2003).

Ontology is defined by Blaikie (2000) as a "researcher's view about what the

nature of reality is" (p.8). For example, whether a researcher views reality as

one objective reality (positivism) or multiple realities, of which we can only

know our own (relativist) (Robson and McCartan, 2015). Ontology raises the

question, *what is there to know?*

Epistemological positions are inter-dependent with ontological positions and

are concerned with what is regarded as meaningful knowledge about reality

and how said knowledge can be acquired (Bryman, 2008; Willig, 2008).

Epistemological positions range from the idea that knowledge is entirely

objective, to the view that knowledge is entirely subjective. Epistemology

raises the questions of, *how and what can we know about reality?* Applied to

this topic, a researcher's epistemology would dictate how the researcher

views that they can gain knowledge about the strengths and limitations of

genograms (Fox, 2003; Matthews, 2003).

Epistemological positions directly affect methodological approaches in

research, in terms of which methodology is used to gain knowledge;

quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods (Bryman, 2008; Moriarty, 2011).

The epistemological position of a research study dictates which methodology

would be most suitable to answer specific research questions.

Historically, there has been debate between researchers regarding whether

professional practice should be based on an objective evidence base or

practice-based, subjective experiences and self-reflection (Fox, 2003). More

recently however, there has been a recognition and acceptance for different

methods of research being equally valid, each with its own strengths and

limitations (Robson & McCartan, 2015).

3.3.2. Critical Realism

Within the current study, the researcher used critical realism as a guiding

ontological and epistemological position, which is situated between realist and

constructionist paradigms (Maxwell, 2012; Robson, 2011). Critical realism

assumes that there is some real and knowable reality and therefore some

commonalities, however there are multiple subjective versions, which are

linked to the context that they occur in (Bhaskar, 1978; Maxwell, 2012;

Robson & McCartan, 2015). For example, historical, social or cultural

influences that can affect representations and perspectives (Archer et al.,

2016). Critical realists therefore reject the idea of a universal truth but accept

"the possibility of specific, local, personal and community forms of truth"

(Kvale, 1995, p.21). Hence, there are different valid perspectives of the real world.

Specific to the current study, it is argued that the genogram is compatible with a critical realist epistemology because the tool combines a graphic representation of some verifiable information (such as ages of family members) and some information that is constructed by family members (such as relationships) (Tobias, 2018).

Critical realism is aligned with the aims of the current research study, which endeavored to offer a better understanding of the strengths and limitations of using genograms in educational psychology practice. By adopting a critical realist position in the current study, the researcher perceived that there was a reality about the strengths and limitations of genograms within educational psychology practice that was relevant, and sought to gain knowledge about this through different subjective perspectives to see if a commonality could be found, which could then be used to inform the profession (Braun &Clarke, 2013; Robson & McCartan, 2015).

3.4. Rationale for Qualitative Research Methodology

Research design is guided by the best way to answer research questions and there are two main methodological approaches: qualitative or quantitative research. Quantitative research methodologies are predominantly designed to test causal relationships and measure the generalisability of phenomena objectively, in an objective external reality (Yardley, 2000). In contrast,

qualitative research is underpinned by the ontological position of no single

version of reality and instead, it argues that there are multiple versions, which

are linked to the context that they occur in (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative

methodologies therefore aim to gain knowledge via detailed subjective

accounts, which can be understood in the context they occur in, to build up a

comprehensive view of an element of reality (Creswell, 2014; Moriarty, 2011).

Research in to the use of genograms is currently limited within the

educational psychology field and qualitative methodology was therefore in line

with the research aims. Furthermore, it is argued that qualitative research

methods are appropriate for exploratory studies like the current study, which

are looking to understand a particular topic through participants' perspectives

(Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research often uses smaller participant sample sizes and has

been critiqued by quantitative researchers for not including a large enough

sample to allow findings to be generalised to a larger population (Willig,

2008). Within a critical realist stance however, it is argued that researchers

cannot generalise findings as they are limited by individual's different

interpretations of reality (Shipway, 2010). In the current study, the sample

was seven educational psychologists working within an inner- London, traded

educational psychology service, so was not deemed to be representative of

all educational psychology settings across the United Kingdom. Instead, the

researcher aimed to gather data that would help to build an understanding of

the strengths and limitations of genograms in educational psychology

practice, rather than attempting to make generalisations. The findings of this

study were therefore not perceived as representing reality in its entirety and

interpretation was necessary to consider possible contributory factors (Willig,

2013). For example, the impact of working for a traded service. It is therefore

argued that the qualitative methodological approach used within the current

study is consistent with a critical realist epistemological stance.

With these considerations in mind, the researcher chose a qualitative research

design as an appropriate methodological approach for the purposes of this

study and underpinning critical realist stance.

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection methodology is determined by a range of factors including the

researcher's underpinning ontological and epistemological position (Snape &

Spencer, 2003). The qualitative methodology selected for data collection in

the current study was one-to-one semi-structured interviews, which are

compatible with a critical realist stance and were viewed as being the most

appropriate qualitative method to answer the research questions.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were selected as this methodology

allowed flexibility for the researcher to explore unpredicted areas, whilst also

enabling the researcher to structure questions, prompt and encourage further

information on selected topics to obtain relevant data or follow interesting

responses (Coolican, 2004; Robson, 2011). In addition, this style of

interviewing was selected as it allowed participants to provide first-person

accounts of their experiences and to discuss those in detail, in line with the

aims of the research (WIllig, 2008).

The research involved one semi-structured interview between the researcher

and participant in a convenient, confidential room. The researcher allowed up

to an hour to complete the interview and debrief participants. Interviews were

recorded using a voice recorder.

3.6. Sample and Participants

The current study aimed to answer specific research questions related to the

educational psychology profession and therefore purposive criterion sampling

was used to ensure the participants included met a pre-determined criterion

(Willig, 2008).

Participants were recruited because of their expertise as educational

psychologists, practicing in the UK context. The researcher aimed to recruit a

minimum of six educational psychologists, who were employed by an inner-

London Local Authority, to provide an adequate amount of data for a thematic

analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Based on convenience, the researcher

initially approached the educational psychologists working within their inner-

London educational psychology service placement. If the researcher had

been unable to recruit six participants from their placement educational

psychology service, a similar educational psychology service in an inner-

London borough would have been approached to recruit additional

participants, however this was not required.

3.6.1. Inclusion Criteria

The finalised inclusion criteria may be seen below:

- o Educational psychologists practicing in the United Kingdom, who were registered with the Health and Care Professional Council (HCPC).

- o Educational psychologists working within an inner-London Local Authority.

- o Educational psychologists who described themselves as having experience of using a genogram in their educational psychology practice within the last year, to enable them to have recent experiences to draw upon in the interview.

3.6.2. Exclusion Criteria

Educational psychologists, who had been employed by the educational psychology service for less than 3 months at the end of summer term 2018, as interviews were planned to be held during the summer holidays of 2018. This was to allow sufficient time for educational psychologists to have used a genogram within their educational psychology practice, whilst working within the inner-London educational psychology service.

3.6.3. Recruitment

Participants were invited to participate in the research study via an email to an educational psychology service team, in an inner-London Local Authority. The inner-London educational psychology service was selected for convenience, as the researcher was undertaking their professional placement there. Please see Table 3 below for service employee statistics.

As part of the participant recruitment email, the researcher shared Tobias's

(2018) recently published article about applying a genogram in educational

psychology practice on an individual case study. This article was shared to

demonstrate that the current study would be extending on the knowledge

base in this area.

Table 3	
Inner-London Educational Psychology Service Employee Statistics	
Number of Educational Psychologists	Number of Trainee educational psychologists
24	10

3.6.4. Sample

The research consisted of a relatively small sample of seven educational

psychologists, working within an inner-London educational psychology

service, who offered to take part in the study. No participants, who

volunteered to take part in the study were excluded. This sample size allowed

the researcher to explore detailed accounts of participants and accounted for

29% of the employed educational psychologists within the service at the time.

Throughout this thesis, pseudonyms have been used for the participants to

protect anonymity.

All of the participants, who took part in the study (N=7), were female. The

participants had a range of experience working as an educational

psychologist from 1 to 29 years. Participants also disclosed a range of

relevant training and continued professional development in relation to using

genograms within educational psychology practice including; university

sessions during doctoral training (3), short courses on systemic work (1),

completing a Post-Graduate Diploma in Systemic Family Therapy (2) and

reading an article about genograms (1). One participant did not disclose

information about their years of experience working as an educational

psychologist, relevant training or continued professional development. It is

important to note that these demographics demonstrate varying levels of

years' experience working as an educational psychologist and relevant

training in relation to using genograms, prior to taking part in the current

study, which might have impacted upon the findings.

3.7. Materials

In this section of the chapter the researcher will detail the materials used in

the current study including consent documents and interview schedule.

3.7.1. Consent Documents

The participants involved in the research received an information sheet (see

Appendix 5) and were offered time to ask questions prior to the study.

Additionally, participants were required to sign a written consent sheet before

their involvement began (see Appendix 6) to ensure informed consent (BPS,

2009). The forms were checked for suitability at the time of ethical submission

and underwent revisions to ensure accessibility for the educational

psychology profession population that they were being distributed to.

3.7.2. Interview Schedule

The interview structure followed Robson's (2011) guidelines including:

- Introductory comments

- List of key questions

- Prompts

- Closing comments

The initial step in developing interview questions involved consideration of the information that was required to address the research questions. Based on this, open-ended questions were developed, which aimed to elicit information without constraining or leading participants' responses.

The researcher used the research questions as open-ended starter questions, which aimed to facilitate participants' sharing of their experiences (See Appendix 7 for Semi-Structured Interview Schedule). e.g. "What do you think are the strengths of using genograms in educational psychology practice?". These questions were used as a flexible guide only and further questions followed up these questions to prompt additional information, if required, based on the narratives produced, which were relevant to the research questions. For example, "Is there anything else that you would like to add?" and "Can you tell me more about that?". It was intended that data gathered from these questions would contribute to the overarching research questions regarding the strengths and limitations of using genograms in educational psychology practice.

3.8. Transcription

The interviews were transcribed by the researcher using the interview voice recordings and Microsoft Word. After transcription, the researcher checked and re-checked the transcript for accuracy against the original recordings. For examples of sections from the interview transcripts, please see Appendix 8. Full transcripts have not been included to protect anonymity.

3.9. Data Analysis

A variety of methods exist for the analysis of qualitative data however, after consideration of the aims, underpinning philosophical stance and methodological approach, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic analysis was chosen as the most appropriate analytical tool. This section of the chapter provides a comprehensive description of the data analysis process undertaken.

3.9.1. Thematic Analysis

Once transcribed, the data gathered from the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The version adopted for this piece of research, is outlined by Braun & Clarke's 2006 paper, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, which details the stages of analysis. Within the article, they define thematic analysis as, "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data", which centres on the interpretations of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

Thematic analysis can be used across theory and epistemology, because it is

"not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and therefore can be

used within different theoretical frameworks" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

Thematic analysis therefore fitted with the researcher's critical realist

epistemology, which aimed to gather data from different individual

perspectives and look for themes between these, whilst considering the

broader context (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Until more recently, thematic analysis was often critiqued for being

unstructured and lacking precision (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure quality

standards were met, whilst embracing researcher subjectivity, the researcher

used the six-phase guide to ensure rigor (Antaki, Billig, Edwards & Potter,

2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006). In accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2006)

six-phase guide, the following six stages of thematic analysis were used;

familiarising self with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes,

reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and selecting extracts and

producing the report.

The outcome of the thematic analysis was a set of themes, which represented

commonalities across the participant's accounts, but also aimed to

accommodate variations within the data set to hold sight of individual views

(Braun & Clarke, 2013). The themes and sub-themes were therefore not

bound by the number of participants that discussed them within the

interviews. This was in line with the researcher's underpinning philosophical

stance as individual views were thought to represent something about reality,

even if it is not seen by the majority of participants. The themes identified

provided the topic and focus for the research discussion and conclusions.

An account of the thematic analysis utilising Braun and Clarke's (2006)

stages follows:

3.9.1.1. Phase One: Familiarising self with data

In the first phase of data analysis, interview data was transcribed by the

researcher and listened to repeatedly during transcription to become "familiar

with the depth and breadth of the content" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

Throughout this process, it was possible for the researcher to become familiar

with the interviews of each participant and begin to think about how they

differed, as well as identify overarching similarities. Initial ideas included

differing areas of practice that individual participants were using genograms in

and an acknowledgement that a wide range of strengths and limitations had

been identified.

3.9.1.2. Phase Two: Generating initial codes

For the second stage of analysis, each transcript was read systematically and

codes were inductively identified. The coding was initially conducted at a

semantic level based on the sample of participants and research area, and

then re-read to establish additional latent codes. The researcher used an

inductive approach when coding data, which aimed to use participant's

responses to gain new insight and provide an explanation to the research

questions, rather than being guided by existing theories, research or

attempting to fit data in to a pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2013;

Robson & McCartan, 2015). Additionally, an inductive approach to coding

fitted with the research epistemology of critical realism.

During this phase, text was highlighted and annotated using comments

across the data set. Examples of initial codes included; 'Understanding family

structure', 'Understanding Relationships', 'Differentiation' and 'Practitioner

Confidence'. Please see Table 4 below for examples of quotes that were

coded as 'Differentiation' and 'Accuracy of Information' from participant's

transcripts.

Table 4

Examples of Coded Extracts

Data extract	Coded for
"I think you kind of have to adapt it depending on the age and the stage and the kind of understanding of the child." (Penny, p7)	Differentiation
*"You know with support, it's something that most children can engage with. So, I think that has a kind of… it's… that's one of the benefits for the child." (*Maria, p.3)	Differentiation
"… sometimes what I do use with children is using kind of physical representations. So, toys or animals… I find that especially with younger kids, or even with certain children it can be a little bit more playful and maybe a little bit less sort of challenging for those that think "Oh, I can't draw." (Maria, p.4)	Differentiation
"I guess it's… relying on, on people's memory… people's willingness to give you the full picture; give you the full story…. Sometimes people forget actually that members of the family who were there for brief periods of time and who have now gone. Or they might decide actually, we don't want to include them there because you know, you know for various number of personal reasons they may not want… to be reminded of that person." (Beatrice, p.2)	Accuracy of Information
"…for some… some children they might not… not know. And… or… yea, so I'm thinking like about in an adoptive family situation… you know they might know quite a lot about their' birth family depending on what they've been told and maybe they might not; again, depending on what they've been told." (Rose, p.7)	Accuracy of Information
"I used it with a girl with suspected autism. Her family is quite complicated so to kind of understand how her siblings related to her we kind of drew it out using symbols. She didn't quite know kind of, all of the links but it was helpful for me to see who was important to her." (Holly, p.1)	Accuracy of Information

Some of the data was assigned more than one code. For example, the excerpt below from Anna's transcript below (Anna, p.3), where she was discussing her use of genograms within a group supervision setting, was dually coded as 'Reflective Tool' and 'Hypothesising'.
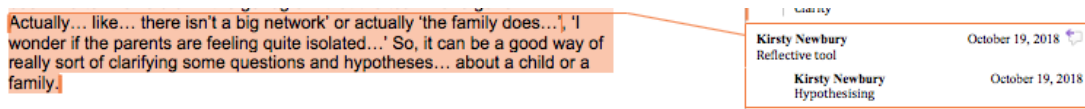
Some of the sections of the data were not assigned a code because they were acknowledgements to questions the researcher asked or had little content.

Following this stage, the identified codes from all participants were exported to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, where they were grouped and re-grouped, as part of the checking and editing process. For example, the codes 'Accuracy of information', 'Incorrect information' and 'Limited Information' were grouped together and merged as 'Accuracy of Information'.

Throughout the analysis process, the researcher acknowledged the influence of their perspective and the impact that prior training and experience in the use of genograms may have had on their inductive coding and interpretation. This will be further discussed in the 'Transparency and Reflexivity' section below.

3.9.1.3. Phase Three: Searching for Themes

The third phase of the thematic analysis involved searching for themes across the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Within this stage, the coded extracts were reviewed together to see how they could "combine to form an overarching theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). This process was data-driven, rather than coded around research questions to ensure that the entirety of participants' perspectives was reflected in analysis.

This process involved revisiting and amending themes and subthemes repeatedly. Manual approaches such as arranging highlighted printed extracts, using post it notes and drawing mind maps were used to facilitate this process. Being able to move codes around and visually representing themes was helpful to the researcher, and it was considered that using computer software would have lengthened the process. Initial ideas were changed, and codes moved between different preliminary themes. The researcher used post-it notes to place the codes in various arrangements, until it was felt main themes and sub-themes, which represented the data were being formed.

Researcher judgment was required in determining what constituted a theme, and the researcher considered these several times in conjunction with their research supervisor. Thematic maps were then created following perusal of examples provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) within their paper.

3.9.1.4. Phase four: Reviewing Themes

Within this phase, extracts were re-read multiple times to ascertain whether candidate themes were representative of the data. Through rearranging and re- labelling extracts, collapsing candidate themes into each other and removing others, the choice was made to arrange sub-themes into nine main themes.

Themes and subthemes were discussed with the researcher's supervisor and the researcher's personal university supervisor, who were not educational psychologists involved in the research, to ensure validity and to clarify the researcher's thinking. In this review stage, it was critically considered whether the themes were assigned justifiably, or if some should be combined because they did not stand alone as themes. During this phase, how the themes were fitting together was considered and amendments made until it was felt an "accurate representation" existed of all the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91).

3.9.1.5. Phase Five: Defining and Naming Themes

Once the themes had been mapped, time was spent thinking about the narrative each theme was recounting by reading through the extracts and narrowing down to the key conceptual idea of each theme. During this phase, names for themes became apparent, although these were only finalised on completion of the written account of themes. A thesaurus was used to refine theme names.

3.9.1.6. Phase Six: Selecting Extracts and Producing the Report

Finally, the themes were written up incorporating quotations from the participants, which epitomised each theme. The write-up sought to demonstrate the "validity of … analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). During this phase, electronically organised data extracts were printed and re-read to establish a coherent and broad narrative. A period of reflection followed this, in relation to the strengths and limitations of genograms identified by the participants. Key extracts from the transcribed interviews were then selected based on how well they captured the essence of each subtheme. Within the discussion of the findings, themes were considered at both a semantic and latent level.

3.9.1.7. Consideration of Other Methodologies

Qualitative research is compatible with a range of methodologies and there is no single accepted method of conducting qualitative research (Snape and Spencer, 2003). Methodological approaches adopted are however dependent on a range of factors including the researcher's ontological and epistemological beliefs, research aims and questions. It is recognised by the researcher that it would have been feasible to consider drawing on other forms of analysis such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) or Grounded Theory, which are capable of representing participants' perspectives, however it was felt that overall these approaches did not fully align with the research aims, questions and epistemological position underpinning this study.

Grounded Theory is an inductive approach, which is interested in generating

an explanatory, theoretical-level account of a given phenomenon (Charmaz,

2014). Grounded theory methodology was considered in the planning of this

research, however the researcher opted against using this approach, as it

was not seen as commensurate with the research questions; they were not

looking to create a single explanation to answer the research questions and

generate theory in this study, but instead to explore perspectives of

educational psychologists (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Charmaz, 2014).

IPA is a methodological approach which aims to provide detailed

examinations of personal lived experience, for example complex or

emotionally laden experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2015). IPA was not deemed

appropriate to use for the current study because the research aim was to

explore participant's perspectives in their professional practice, rather than

participant's lived experiences. However, IPA methodology may be

appropriate to use for future research exploring client's lived experiences of

genograms in educational psychology practice.

3.10. Assessment of Quality in Qualitative Research

There is a longstanding debate about whether measures of validity that are

used in quantitative research are appropriate for the assessment of quality in

qualitative methodologies (Creswell, 2009; Robson, 2011). The concept of

validity is concerned with the accuracy with which the methods and results of

research are presented (Lewis, Ritchie, Ormiston & Morrell, 2014). Different

components of validity are concerned with the extent to which; the tools

measure what they are trying to measure, the findings reported reflect the

data (internal validity), and the generalisability of conclusions (external

validity) (Lewis et al., 2014). A valid piece of research would therefore display

the reality of the study phenomenon which, given the position of multiple and

subjective realities often associated with qualitative research, demonstrates

the contentious nature of this concept (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Reliability is concerned with whether or not a study could be repeated and

produce the same results (Lewis et al., 2014). This concept is counter to

thinking in qualitative research, which hopes to capture the differences

between individuals, and therefore homogeneity in their accounts would not

be expected (Willig, 2013). When considering individual experiences and

ontological notions of multiple realities, this measure is problematic because it

implies one reality which can be measured and known (Braun & Clarke,

2013). It also disregards the role of the researcher in the process, which is

likely to create differing results, even when using the same sample (Braun &

Clarke, 2013).

The concept of trustworthiness was introduced by Guba and Lincoln (1981)

as a way of thinking about assessment quality in qualitative research. The

authors described four indicators of trustworthiness that a qualitative

researcher needs to establish; credibility, transferability, confirmability and

dependability (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The following section describes how

the researcher attempted to establish trustworthiness. Transparency and

reflexivity of the researcher will also be considered.

3.10.1. Credibility

Credibility is linked to the quantitative notion of internal validity and representing phenomenon accurately (Morrow, 2005). It is concerned with using the most appropriate method to collect data and, depending on the position taken by the researcher, confirming the analysis through use of various procedures (Bryman, 2008).

A decision a researcher makes which relates to credibility, is how much data they collect before they produce their findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Credibility is achieved by collecting in-depth data and utilising the researcher's experience of being close to the data for longer, and is more linked to constructivist work (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The current study encapsulated this notion through undertaking in-depth interviews with seven participants, followed by a thematic analysis which saw the researcher become immersed in the data.

3.10.2. Transferability

The concept most closely linked to external validity is that of transferability (Morrow, 2005). Qualitative research tends to be smaller scale and therefore lacks the power to be generalisable or representative of a wider population (Willig, 2013). Rather than attempting to produce generalisable findings, qualitative research provides details about the participants and context of the research so that others can ascertain the extent to which findings could relate to another situation (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

By thoroughly documenting the research and being explicit regarding how decisions were made, it would be possible for another person to ascertain the extent to which the findings are defensible (Bryman, 2008). Although it is not the aim that research is directly replicable, the researcher should give enough information that elements could be repeated (Morrow, 2005).

The researcher used a transparent, clear and structured research design throughout the research process. Details about the research process and the materials used are documented in the chapter and appended to achieve this. The researcher kept a record of all activities and a research diary; however, this will not be shared due to the personal nature of some of the reflections. This would enable replicability of the study within different contexts and for other researchers to compare findings and conclusions.

Using the Braun and Clarke (2006) method of thematic analysis, a transparent approach detailing the steps taken was possible. This enabled dependability as well as confirmability, as another person would be equipped to undertake the analysis in a similar manner, or understand how themes were generated (Morrow, 2005).

Furthermore, giving a rich description in the accounts presented of the views of participants, and the interaction which occurred between participant and researcher helps others to determine the relevance of the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The researcher provided rich and detailed descriptions of the

findings to enable others to evaluate this and consider how they could be transferable to other contexts. Direct quotes were used to give voice to participants, and the interview schedule is provided in Appendix 7. Descriptive information regarding participants and contextual information about the setting where the research was conducted is documented in the 'Sample' section of this chapter.

3.10.3. Confirmability

Confirmability ensures that the researcher uses methods of data collection and analysis correctly so that their findings represent the data and shares some of the tenets of the quantitative concept of objectivity whilst embracing subjectivity (Morrow, 2005). The role of the researcher is made known in qualitative studies, and they are an important part of the data collection and analysis (Ritchie & Lewis, 2014). Although the role of the researcher is not sought to be minimised to ensure confirmability, it is important that it does not unduly influence the research, or otherwise makes transparent the implications of researcher involvement through reflexivity (Bryman, 2008; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

In upholding a reflexive stance, a researcher will try and separate themselves from their personal beliefs/assumptions, and reflect on how their experiences and perceptions caused them to act in certain ways during the research (Willig, 2013). The researcher took a reflective and self-reflexive position in the research process and paid attention to this through reflexive field notes, a research diary and use of their research supervisor to ensure transparency,

reflect upon their role and discussed whether findings were plausible (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999; Yardley, 2008). To reduce bias in data collection, the researcher reflected on what had been shared by participants, to clarify understanding and ensure what has been captured in the data is reflective of this. An opportunity to add any additional points was also offered. Finally, in the analysis part of the research, the researcher discussed and explored the validity of their interpretations and emergent themes with their research supervisor and personal university supervisor.

3.10.4. Transparency and Reflexivity

Thompson (2003) recommends that researchers state their own background and values, as a way of avoiding bias, which might corrupt the research processes and to promote transparency. In the interest of transparency and reflexivity, this section of the chapter will share some additional information about the researcher.

The researcher was a white, British female, who was a student on a professional doctorate in a Child, Community and Educational Psychology programme at Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. At the time of submitting this research, she was thirty years old. Prior to starting the professional doctorate course, the researcher had completed a two-year post-graduate diploma in Systemic Family Therapy, where she had learnt about the theory and application of genograms in systemic family therapy. The researcher was open about their background training as a Systemic Practitioner throughout

the research and was aware that her existing knowledge may have an effect

during analysis of data. For example, the influence of pre-conceived ideas.

The researcher was on a two-year placement at the inner-London educational

psychology service, where the current study took place. This posed

advantages and disadvantages. Ongoing involvement with the participants

prior to and throughout the study meant the researcher had pre-established

rapport with participants, meaning that they presented as relaxed and open

when sharing views during interviews. Furthermore, the trusting and honest

relationship that developed over time between the researcher and participants

meant that it was possible to check out the meaning of participant's

comments and to reassure them that they could seek clarification if questions

were not understood. However, the researcher acknowledged that they may

have emitted unconscious cues or signals to indicate preferred responses or

participants may have answered in anticipation of the researcher's

preferences. Open-ended questions were used to counter this possibility in

providing participants with the opportunity to discuss ideas at length, with

minimal prompting.

Qualitative thematic analysis analyses data subjectively, and so acknowledges

the role of the researcher in interpreting the data (Robson & McCartan, 2015).

In upholding a reflexive stance, the researcher tried to separate themselves

from their personal beliefs/assumptions, and reflect on how their experiences

and perceptions caused them to act in certain ways during the research (Willig,

2013). A research supervisor oversaw the research project and to ensure that

the researcher conducted the research in the proper manner. If the researcher had any questions or was unsure about anything they consulted with their supervisor for any help and guidance that may be necessary.

3.10.5. Dependability

Dependability most closely resembles reliability in quantitative studies, and thus highlights the importance of keeping records of the research process including the analysis (Bryman, 2008). Although it is not the aim that research is directly replicable, the researcher should give enough information that elements could be repeated (Morrow, 2005). Details about the research process and the materials used are documented in the chapter and appended to achieve this. Moreover, Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis, is a transparent approach and the researcher has detailed the steps taken in the analysis. This enables dependability as well as confirmability, as another person would be equipped to undertake the analysis in a similar manner, or understand how themes were generated (Morrow, 2005).

3.11. Ethical Considerations

The British Psychology Society (BPS) (2009) ethical framework was used to ensure the research was good quality, whilst protecting participants. The researcher ensured consideration was given to reducing ethical risks throughout the study (BPS, 2009) and the BPS ethical codes of conduct (2009) were adhered to throughout the research process. The relevant ethical considerations for this study are detailed below:

3.11.1. Ethical Approval

The principle of competence is related to the need for a psychologist to ensure they are delivering high-quality research and to identify and address ethical issues (BPS, 2009). In line with this principle, issues which arose as being potentially ethically problematic were made explicit during the planning stage. This study was approved by the Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC) and conforms to the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009). Please see Appendix 9 for Ethical Approval Form. Permission was also sought verbally from the researcher's educational psychology service to undertake the research.

3.11.2. Informed Consent

The choice of voluntary participation was emphasised to all participants from the outset of the study (BPS, 2009). Through the researcher's pre-established rapport with potential participants it was hoped that they would find it easier to voice if they did not wish to be involved. It was made clear that non-participation from potential participants within the service would not adversely affect their relationship with me as a colleague.

Participants who volunteered to take part in the study were given an information sheet, which explained the purpose of the study and what it entailed, as well as information on rights to withdraw, anonymity of data and how data will be stored and used.

All participants were asked to provide informed, written consent to partake in the study and written consent was also sought for the recording of interviews. See Appendix 6 for Written Consent Form.

3.11.3. Protection from Harm

Psychologists must reduce risks in their research to ensure that participants are protected from harm (BPS, 2009). This principle specifies that research should be purposeful and not detrimental to participant well-being (Webster, Lewis & Brown, 2014). The research was undertaken with the "aim of avoiding potential risks to psychological well-being, mental health, personal views, or dignity" (BPS, 2009, p.19).

In qualitative research, it is possible that participants will take the study in an unanticipated direction and although not all potential risks can be predicted, contemplation of possible and potential risks was undertaken during the stage of ethical approval and throughout (Bryman, 2008; Willig, 2013). Interview methodology has inherent ethical challenges because it seeks to gather in-depth information about people's thoughts and feelings (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). Interviews can offer people the chance to speak in an open way about a topic they may not normally choose to speak about, for some offering an experience akin to a therapeutic conversation (Willig, 2013). Another concern relates to how participants feel following data collection because an in-depth conversation on a sensitive issue could leave a participant in an emotional state (Webster, Lewis & Brown, 2014). The researcher aimed to respond in a sensitive and reflective way to participants responses to questions.

It was not anticipated that the participants would suffer any adverse impact from their participation in the research study, however the researcher acknowledged that talking about family dynamics during the semi-structured interview, may have involved a potential psychological risk for participants. In order to mitigate this potential risk, the researcher acted in accordance with ethical principles appropriate to the Tavistock and Portman Trust and Essex University at all times.

Participants were made aware that they are able to withdraw from the research at any time until the analysis stage. At the beginning of each interview all participants were reminded that their involvement was voluntary, that they could choose not to answer certain questions, or to request that the interview finish at any point. Participants were also given an information sheet, which explained their right to withdraw and time was allowed for a debrief following the semi-structured interview.

Furthermore, participants were given the researcher's contact information if they wished to discuss the research further and signposted to relevant support services, as required. Any sign of distress, pain or indication of refusal would have been considered as implied refusal from participants. If the researcher perceived that a participant was becoming distressed during the interview, the interview would have been terminated or postponed. However, this was not required in the current study.

3.11.4. Debrief

Time was be allocated after each interview to debrief participants, discuss

any emotions brought up during the interview and contain any issues, which

may have been evoked by the interview process. The researcher endeavored

to signpost participants to relevant support services, if required. For example,

signposting participants to their supervisor, if they felt able to discuss the

issues with them, or alternatively external support in the Local Authority

counselling service would have been sought, if interviewees needed this.

However, this was not necessary. Participants were also provided with the

researcher's contact information, in case they wished to discuss anything in

relation to their participation in the research.

3.11.5. Dissemination of Findings

Data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and will

be shared in general terms with participants and the researcher's educational

psychology service. The researcher provided rich and detailed descriptions of

the findings to enable others to evaluate this and consider how they could be

transferable to other contexts.

Regarding future plans to disseminate the findings of the research,

participants were made aware that direct quotes might be reported, but only if

they did not include any information which could identify them. Furthermore,

the researcher plans to ensure that any data presented back to the team is

non-identifiable. In addition, to ensure that any participant's perspectives

around any limitations in relation to the service encountered are not owned by

individuals, they will be presented as formative themes, with the aim of aiding

the service to consider options to overcome these if they would like to do so.

3.11.6. Confidentiality, Anonymity and Data Protection

Ensuring the information given by participants was kept confidential was of

paramount importance and is embedded within the British Psychological

Society (2009) principle of respect. To abide with this principle, all information

collected was treated and stored in accordance with the data protection

legislation. This involved storing all information relating to the participants'

personal details, as well as the audio recordings, transcripts and

questionnaire data on password protected files. All email communications

were also sent via EGRESS (secure data transfer software).

For a study to maintain confidentiality, participants would not be identifiable by

the data (Webster, Lewis & Brown, 2014). Pseudonyms were therefore used to

refer to participants throughout the research study. Personal demographic

details of the individual participants were also not shared or made public, thus

retaining anonymity. Additionally, findings were reported anonymously by

removing all identifiable features.

Finally, in relation to data protection, paper copies of documents were

anonymised and stored safely, whilst computer files were password-protected

and encrypted. All information will be kept securely and destroyed in 3 to 5

years.

3.12. Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a description of the research aims and purpose, underpinning critical realist philosophical position, rationale for a qualitative methodological approach, participant information and sampling procedures. A comprehensive description of the data analysis and assessment of research quality and ethical considerations have also been provided. The next chapter will present the findings of the current study.

4. Findings

4.1.   Findings Chapter Overview

This study sought to explore educational psychologists' perceived strengths and limitations around using genograms in educational psychology practice. In this chapter, data collected from seven semi-structured interviews with educational psychologists are presented.

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the aim of the presentation of findings from a thematic analysis is to "provide a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell" (p.23). In line with this aim, quotes taken directly from the interviews are presented alongside themes and sub-themes to give context, promote transparency and ensure that participant voice is an integral part of the research, alongside an interpretation of the meaning. Please note that filler words in the quotes such as "kind of" or "sort of" have been replaced with ellipses throughout this chapter, due to word count limitations and to support the reader.

Aligned with the title of this thesis, "A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words", thematic maps will be used to support the findings presented. The number of participants which contributed to each theme is shown by the number in the boxes.

Throughout this chapter the term 'client' refers to "any person or persons with whom a psychologist interacts on a professional basis" (BPS, 2017, p.4). For

example, children, families, school staff or other professionals, who are

accessing the services of an educational psychologist.

4.2.   Themes Generated

Nine themes were generated from the data, which was collected via seven

semi-structured interviews with educational psychologists. Themes and sub-

themes are presented in Table 5 below, in relation to the two research

questions:

1. What are educational psychologists' perceived strengths of using

   genograms in educational psychology practice?

2. What are educational psychologists' perceived limitations around using

   genograms in educational psychology practice?

Two thematic maps, which summarise the overall findings of the thematic

analysis, in relation to the two research questions are presented below in

Figure 2 and Figure 3. Within the thematic maps, the grey sections represent

the themes and the blue sections represent the connected sub-themes. The

black lines represent themes or sub-themes, which have been linked in the

analysis. A table listing the number of participants identified in relation to each

sub-theme can be found in Appendix 10.

Table 5

Themes and Sub-Themes

<u>Main Themes</u>	<u>Strengths of using Genograms in educational psychology practice Sub-Themes</u>	<u>Limitations around using Genograms in educational psychology practice Sub-Themes</u>
Engaging Clients and Building Rapport	o Contracting o Collaborative Tool o Facilitates Rapport Building o Being more Present with Clients o Unobtrusive and Non-Judgemental	o Rapport Challenges o Obtrusive
Accessibility	o Child and Family Friendly Tool o Literacy Difficulties	
Information Gathering and Assessment	o Information Gathering o Graphic Representation o Family Composition o Changes of Circumstance o Obtaining Children's Views o Multi-Dimensional Perspectives o Assessment Feedback	o Accuracy of Information o Written Feedback
Case Formulation	o Understanding Family Relationships and Dynamics o Understanding Family Patterns o Wider Context o Hypothesising	

	o Reflective o Supervision o Containing o Generating Options for Intervention	
Therapeutic Tool	o Reflective for Clients o Empowering o Identifying Areas of Strength	
Specific Areas of Need	o Exploring the Impact of Loss o Exploring Identity o Children Looked After	o Vulnerable Groups
Ethical Considerations		o Emotive o Exposing o Empathetic Use
Practitioner Competence	o Knowledge, Training and Experience of using Genograms	o Knowledge, Training and Experience of using Genograms o Confidence
Systemic Considerations in Current Context	o Efficiency o Resources o Personal Role Expectations	o Trading and Commissioned Time available o Faciliatory School Staff o Personal Role Expectations o External Role Expectations

Figure 2: Perceived Strengths of Genograms in Educational Psychology Practice Thematic Map
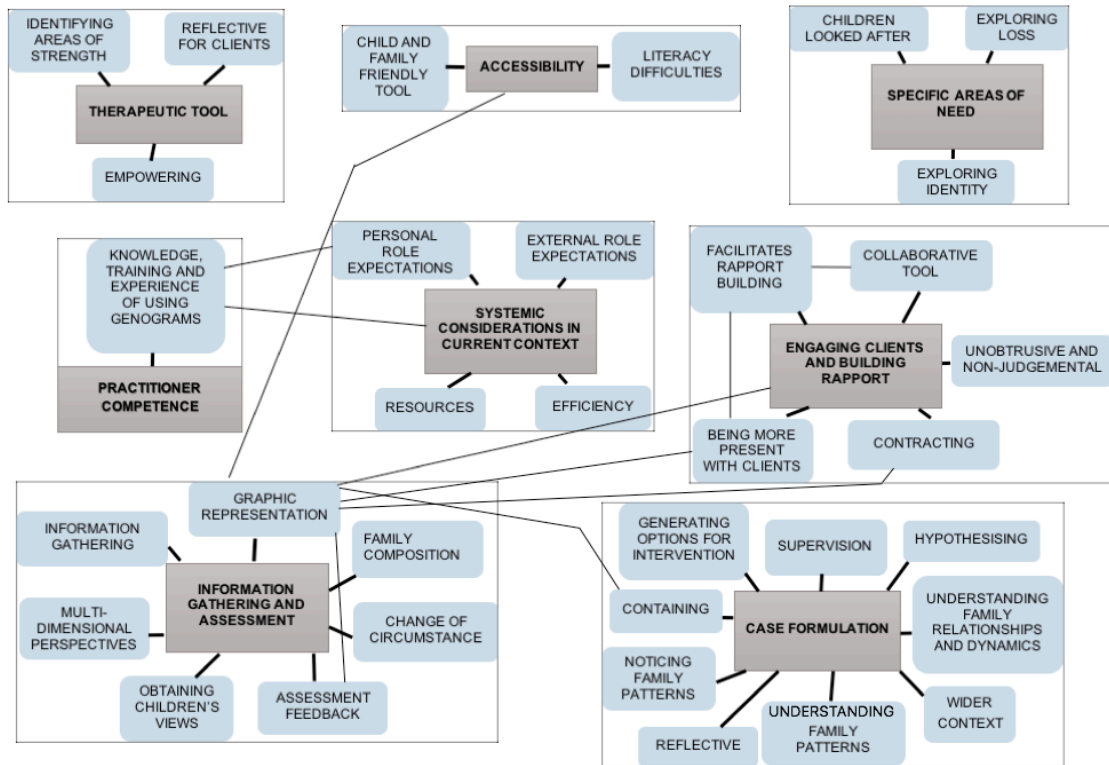
Figure 3: Perceived Limitations of Genograms in Educational Psychology Practice Thematic Map
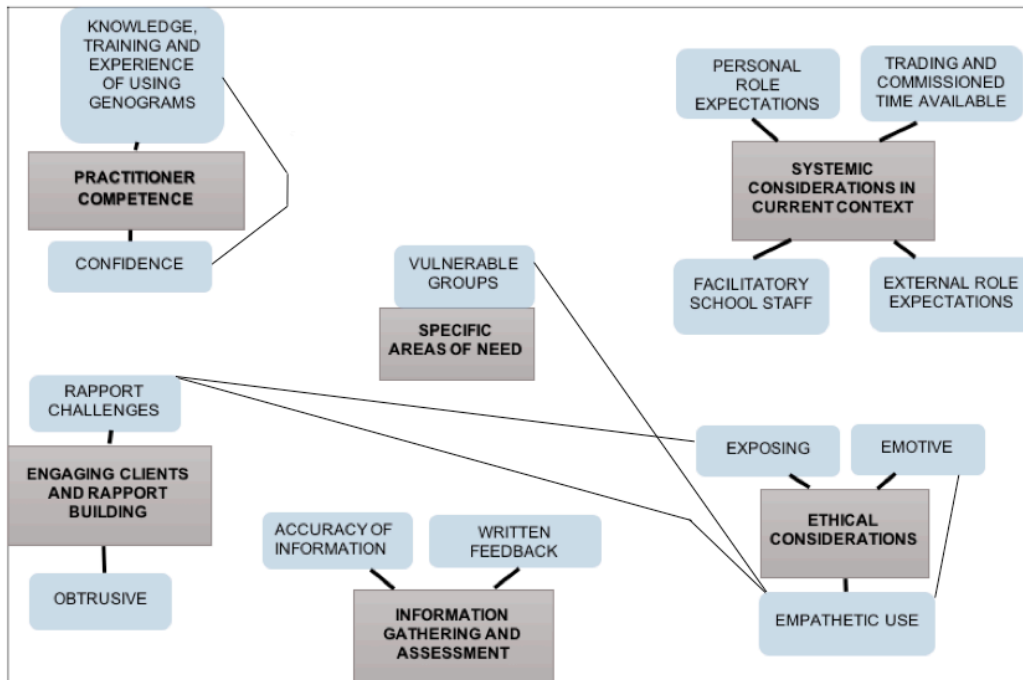
4.3.   Engaging Clients and Building Rapport

This theme encompasses educational psychologists' experiences and

perceived client experiences of using genograms to engage clients and build

rapport. Firstly, the theme includes the sub-themes; 'Contracting',

'Collaborative Tool', 'Facilitates Rapport Building', 'Being more Present with

Clients' and 'Unobtrusive and Non-Judgemental', which were identified as

perceived strengths of genograms, followed by 'Rapport Challenges' and

'Obtrusive', which were identified as perceived limitations. A thematic map

portraying the identified strengths and limitations of genograms in relation to

this theme can be found in Figure 4 below, which maps out the theme,

connecting sub-themes and links between sub-themes.

Figure 4: Engaging Clients and Building Rapport: Perceived Strengths and
Limitations Thematic Map
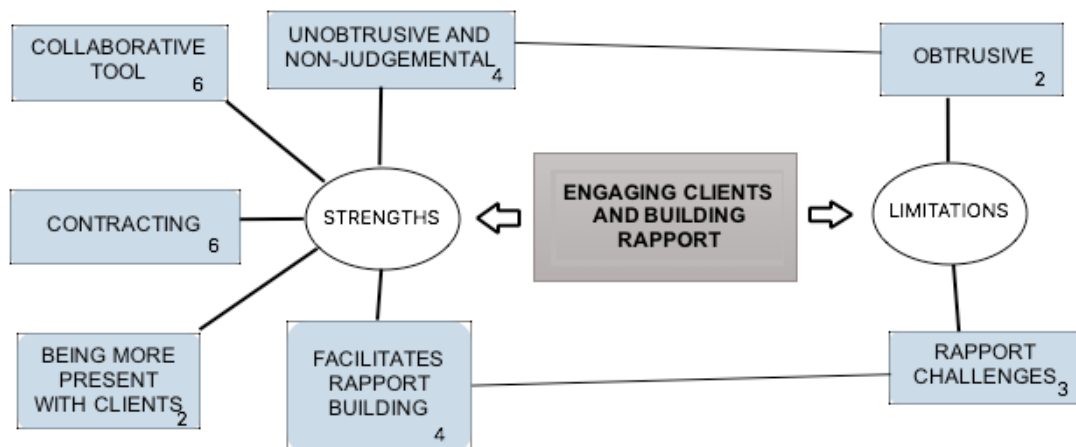
4.3.1. Engaging Clients and Building Rapport: Perceived Strengths

of Genograms Sub-Themes

4.3.1.1.   Contracting

Six of the participants commented on the ease of contracting for the use of

genograms with clients, due to family trees being commonly recognised and

the transparency connected to graphically representing verbally discussed

information. For example:

> *"… if you're mapping out the family they can see that you're just trying to build connections… it's a bit of a tool to explain what you're doing. It's quite transparent what you're doing… I probably have the same intention with my questions but it feels a bit more challenging I think."* (Holly, p.2)
>
> *"I don't think that there's ever a difficulty… if you're drawing it for a parent or young person, I don't think that they're ever confused about… what it is actually… they're kind of like "Oh yea, it's like a family tree … that makes sense."* (Anna, p.3)

This theme is closely linked with the perceived strength sub-theme 'Graphic
Representation', which will be reported below in section 4.5.1.2.

4.3.1.2.   Collaborative Tool

Six of the participants reported that they experienced genograms as a

collaborative tool, which promoted working together with children, families

and professionals, as part of educational psychology practice. Rose

described that if she was working with a child that she would, "get them to do

the genogram, or we'd do it together" (p.2). Similarly, Anna reported that she

would get children involved in drawing the genogram and Anna also gave a

similar sense of genograms being experienced as a collaborative tool with

families. Finally, Maria reported a different collaborative dimension, in that

she had perceived genograms to be helpful in her work with professionals, to

promote a shared understanding of the case.

4.3.1.3.   *Facilitates Rapport Building*

Four of the participants stated that genograms helped them to build rapport

and positive working relationships with clients, as part of educational

psychology practice. For example, in relation to direct work with children and

families, Maria commented that she thought genograms were a good way of

"developing the therapeutic relationship" (p.2) and similarly, Beatrice

commented, it's one of those things that you can use as… an opener…" (p.4).

In contrast to these perspectives, 'Rapport Challenges' were also identified by

three of the participants as a limitation of using genograms in educational

psychology practice, which will be described below in section 4.3.2.1.

4.3.1.4.   *Being more Present with Clients*

Two of the participants commented that they perceived genograms enabled

them to be more present with clients when gathering and recording

information, as part of educational psychology practice. Eleni commented that

completing a genogram with a client "allows … for… a lot to be recorded

without necessarily losing the immediate attention to the other person

talking..." (p.2). Similarly, Anna reported, "I think it means I'm there more

present, if I am using it with… a parent or young person… rather than having

to write 'divorced' or… 'doesn't see…'" (p.2). This sub-theme is closely linked

with the 'Graphic Representation' sub-theme, which will be reported in section

4.5.1.2.

4.3.1.5.   Unobtrusive and Non-Judgemental

Four of the participants perceived that genograms had not been experienced

as obtrusive or judgemental by clients, due to the graphic representation of

the information being discussed. For example, in relation to using genograms

with children and families, Holly commented, "… it…enables the family… to

talk about the family but in a safer way, rather than it feeling like a probing

question..." (p.2) and "…if you're mapping out the family they can see that

you're just trying to build connections rather than passing judgement

necessarily. I think… it's a bit of a tool to explain what you're doing. It's quite

transparent what you're doing" (p.2). Similarly, Anna reported a similar sense

that genograms were unobtrusive and non-judgemental. She commented that

she perceived genograms, "… can be quite an unobtrusive way of… probing

about 'Who is in the family? Who else lives in the family home and who

doesn't live in the family home?'" through drawing them (Anna, p.4).

In contrast to this sub-theme, two of the participants reported that they

perceived genograms may be experienced as obtrusive by clients. This data

will be presented in the 'Obtrusive' sub-theme in section 4.3.2.2. below.

4.3.2. Engaging Clients and Building Rapport: Perceived

Limitations of Genograms Sub-Themes

4.3.2.1.   Rapport Challenges

In contrast to the sub-theme 'Facilitates Rapport Building', which was

identified as a strength of genograms in section 4.3.1.3., three of the

participants also reported that they had experienced it as challenging to use

genograms on initial meetings with children and families, without pre-established rapport. For example, Eleni commented that genograms are "not necessarily a tool that you introduce to the family straight away" (p.4) and Penny reported that she felt her use of genograms was relationship dependent and "probably… not the question that you start off with" (p.6). Rose also identified rapport (or lack of) as a potential challenge, however, she commented that "it can be a challenge but you can work around it" (p.7), through being transparent with clients and explaining the relevance of the work. This sub-theme is closely linked to the perceived strength of genograms, 'Contracting' sub-theme in section 4.3.1.1. above. The sub-theme is also closely linked with the perceived limitations of genogram sub-themes "Empathetic Use' in section 4.9.3., "Emotive' in section 4.9.1. and 'Exposing' in section 4.9.2., which will be discussed in the 'Ethical Considerations' theme below.

4.3.2.2.   Obtrusive

In contrast to the perceived strengths of genograms sub-theme 'Unobtrusive and Non-Judgemental', two of the participants reported that clients may experience genograms as obtrusive, which could impact upon their relationship development with an educational psychologist. For example, Penny highlighted that clients may experience genograms as confrontational:

> *"I think that… when there are very complex family structures maybe that can be off putting that people maybe don't want to feel like they're "oh let's sit down and draw your family tree". That it could be a bit confrontational potentially."*
> (Penny, p.5)

Additionally, Penny commented, "I think that some people may be a bit nervous about asking too many, so… 'Who's in the family, what does the family look like?'" (p.5) questions. However, Penny later demonstrated some ambiguity about this when she reflected that genograms were "a non-confrontational way of asking people quite personal questions" (p.6).

This theme connects closely with the 'Empathetic Use' sub-theme in section 4.9.3. below, where this was identified by participants as a factor in how genograms are experienced by clients.

4.4. Accessibility

This theme encompassed the ways that participants perceived the accessibility of genograms as a strength, due to the ability to differentiate the task for clients. The sub-themes 'Child and Family Friendly Tool' and 'Literacy Difficulties' will be reported in this section. A thematic map portraying the identified strengths of genograms in relation to this theme can be found in Figure 5 below, which maps out the theme and connecting sub-themes.

Figure 5: Accessibility: Perceived Strengths Thematic Map
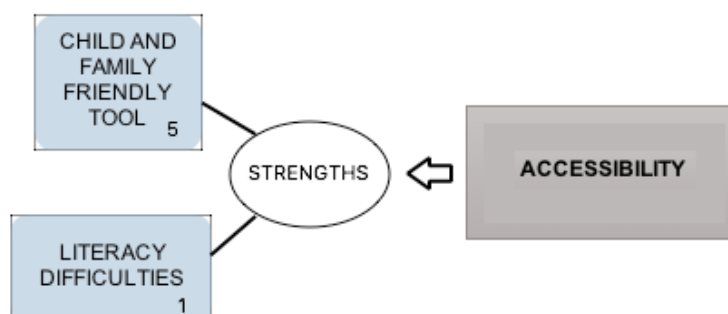
4.4.1. Child and Family Friendly Tool

Five of the participants identified that genograms are a child and family

friendly tool, and a tool which can be differentiated to suit different

developmental ages or stages of children in direct work.

In relation to direct work with children:

> *"…with support, it's something that most children can engage with. So, I think that has a kind of… it's… that's one of the benefits for the child."* (Maria, p.3)

> *"I do think they are… a useful tool … with children and young people because I think they're accessible and I think they're nice and clear and I think you can get children and young people… involved in… drawing it."* (Anna, p.4)

Additionally, the participants identified that genograms were a family-friendly

tool, that they had used in direct work with families, as part of whole family

consultations. For example, Holly commented:

> *"I think it's really helpful... and it just enables the family to reflect a little bit more and to talk about the family"* (Holly, p.2).

Participants also perceived that genograms were suitable to differentiate

visually or through using physical objects to support the task, and were

therefore accessible for a range of children and families. For example, Maria

and Holly commented:

> *"… with children… using kind of physical representations. So, toys or animals… I find that especially with younger kids, or even with certain children it can be a little bit more playful and maybe a little bit less… challenging for those that think "Oh, I can't draw".* (Maria, p.4)

"… you can be a bit creative with it if you wanted to be… like with… model animals…." (Holly, p.3)

4.4.2. Literacy Difficulties

One of the participants, Beatrice commented that genograms were accessible for families with literacy difficulties, who might not be able to access written information, as the visual image of a genogram made "it more accessible to them to have it there" (p.2). This sub-theme is closely linked to the 'Graphic Representation' sub-theme, which will be reported in section 4.5.1.2.

4.5.   Information Gathering and Assessment

This theme explains how participants have used genograms to gather information about children and families, as part of assessment in educational psychology practice. This theme includes the sub-themes of; 'Information Gathering', 'Graphic Representation', 'Family Composition', 'Changes of Circumstance', 'Obtaining Children's Views', 'Multi-Dimensional Perspectives' and 'Assessment Feedback', as identified strengths of using genograms in educational psychology practice. The theme also includes sub-themes of 'Accuracy of Information' and 'Written Feedback',
as perceived limitations of using genograms in educational psychology practice. Firstly, the strengths will be presented before exploring the limitations. A thematic map portraying the identified strengths and limitations of genograms in relation to this theme can be found in Figure 6 below, which maps out the theme, connecting sub-themes and links between sub-themes.

Figure 6: Information Gathering and Assessment: Perceived Strengths and

Limitations Thematic Map
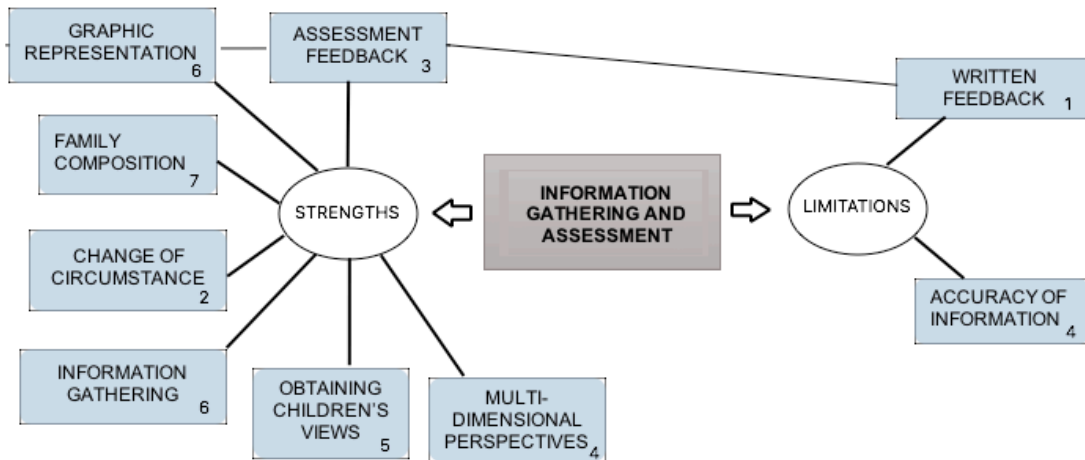
4.5.1. Information Gathering and Assessment: Perceived Strengths

of Genograms

4.5.1.1.   Information Gathering

Six of the participants identified that genograms were a helpful tool in terms of

gathering information about children and families, as well as their concerns,

either directly with the client or with professionals involved. Example quotes

are listed below:

> *"…I use a genogram…. quite a lot when… when I get the
> history of a case or … with a member of staff; school staff, or
> with the family themselves, if I'm asking about… who lives in
> the family… perhaps order of the siblings… contact with
> maybe parents who are not part of the family anymore… of
> the household..."* (Eleni, p.1)
>
> *"I feel… a genogram is… a… really helpful psychological tool
> in gathering information around… the presenting concerns…"*
> (Maria, p.1)

4.5.1.2.   *Graphic Representation*

Six of the participants commented that genograms provided a graphic

representation of a child and their family, which informed their assessments

and hypotheses above and beyond verbal enquiry alone, due to the visual

image capturing a gestalt of the information. Example quotes are listed below:

"… I think… when you draw it, you see it in a different way to necessarily using words and sometimes… it exposes things more quickly… because… it's just kind of quite glaring sometimes." (Rose, p.4)

*"Using… genograms… helps us to think… who are the significant… individuals… for this young person. Where there is… either stability or instability in a family. Where have there been relationships that have been broken down or maintained. And I think using the genogram can help you… to… visually… capture all that." (*Beatrice, p.2)

As highlighted within this sub-theme, graphic representation of genograms

was also linked to case formulation, which will be discussed in the 'Case

Formulation' theme. Furthermore, the visual nature of genograms was closely

connected by participants with the sub-themes 'Being More Present with

Clients' and 'Literacy Difficulties' as aforementioned, and also 'Assessment

Feedback' (section 4.5.1.7.), 'Empowering' (section 4.7.2.) and 'Containing'

(section 4.6.7.), which will be reported below.

4.5.1.3.   *Family Composition*

This sub-theme includes the identified ways that genograms can be used to

support information gathering of a client's family composition in terms of

family structure, household members and other important people or pets.

Participants identified that gathering information about a family's composition

was helpful for children and families, professionals and educational

psychologists. All of the participants commented that genograms supported

understanding of a child's family composition.

Participants commented that they perceived genograms supported children

and families to understand their family structures. For example, Penny

commented that she had used a genogram with a child, "…in terms of gaining

perspective for who is in their' family and their family structure…" (Penny,

p.7).

Furthermore, participants commented that they had used genograms to

obtain information about who a child lives with and whether they live with one

or more parents and/or siblings. For example:

> *"…to get the history of a case or when… asking about… who
> lives in the family… perhaps order of the siblings… contact
> with maybe parents, who are not part of the family
> anymore… of the household..."* (Eleni, p.1)
>
> *"gives an… insight in to the circumstances… that… a child
> is… living in… who's in the household, who's in the family…
> quite a lot of the cases might only have… one parent and one
> child, or a parent with a couple of children living in a
> household and then very often usually the father who… might
> be… separated from the family or living overseas…"* (Rose,
> p.3)

Additionally, Rose reported that she had used genograms to identify other

important in the child's network or animals that the child perceives as

important to them, and to support children to understand who is a part of their

biological family composition based on where they are located within the

genogram. She commented:

> *"I think with children… if they were telling me other people that they thought were part of their family I think I probably would put them in a space… not as part of the traditional sort of genogram but as other people who are important. So, quite often I find children like to put their' pets in, you know… when you ask them who's in their' family and they name their' dogs, cats, goldfish and bunny rabbits … I wouldn't exclude them but I would just try to… help them make those distinctions between… that person is somebody important to you, or who is living in your house or whatever it is, but then they're not… what we would call a… biological relative. But if they want to put them in their picture I wouldn't exclude them…"* (Rose, p.4)

Finally, Maria reported that she had experienced genograms helping

professionals to understand a child's family structure, as part of professional

consultation.

4.5.1.4.   Changes of Circumstance

Two of the participants identified that genograms can be a helpful tool as part

of information gathering and assessment when there has been a change of

circumstance for a child or family, either in current context or to discuss

historical changes. For example, parents separating or the birth of new family

members when starting family work. Maria commented:

> *"… perhaps when there've been changes to… families. So, maybe parents have separated or changes of home, or… those sorts of situations…."* (Maria, p.4)

4.5.1.5.   Obtaining Children's Views

Five of the participants identified that genograms were a helpful tool in

obtaining the views of children regarding their family system and identifying if

there are any differences with their parent's or other key adult's perspectives.

For example:

---

*"… a really good way of using them to gain their' view of what
their family structure is like and who they include as
important. Which might be quite different from who an adult
might say, well... 'This is their gran, this is their grandad' and
I think in terms of extended family it's been quite interesting
how much, you know, granny or grandpa… is really
important."* (Penny, p.7)

*"Maybe it's a chance for the child or young person to tell their'
story from their point of view. And to talk about things they've
not spoken about before perhaps. They might view
themselves in a certain role in the family that other people
are completely unaware of…"* (Holly, p.7)

*"…it's… a tool for trying to make sense of… the young
person's situation and… and… think about their'… point of
view on what those… individuals mean… another bit of the
puzzle…"* (Beatrice, p.2)

4.5.1.6.   Multi-Dimensional Perspectives

Four of the participants identified that genograms can be used to support

assessment and exploration of multi-dimensional perspectives with different

family members, as part of family consultations with more than one family

member. For example, Maria commented:

---

*"… I think doing it with the child and the parent…it enables…
the… parents and… the child to… learn from each other how
they see things… and then with… mentalising… questions,
you can support each other's thinking or understanding of*

each other's… view of… the family or… all sorts of things…"
(Maria, p.3).

4.5.1.7.   Assessment Feedback

Three of the participants identified that genograms are useful to support

feedback to clients following an assessment due to the graphic representation

of information, which removes the need for descriptive paragraphs in written

feedback or long verbal explanations. For example:

---

*"a really useful way of having conversations with people
about things",* as they are, *"a very accessible way of… having
that discussion without it being… a long… descriptive
paragraph which, let's be honest sometimes people aren't
going to have the time to read"* (Penny, p.5).

*"having a genogram visually represented would be a nice
way to facilitate the reader… so that someone who doesn't
know the family and is reading through that paragraph of
complexity, then it would be quite nice to have it as a… as a
helpful … diagram."* (Eleni, p.6).

This sub-theme is closely linked with the 'Graphic Representation' sub-theme,

discussed above in section 4.5.1.2.

In contrast to this sub-theme, 'Written Feedback' was identified as a potential

limitation regarding the use of genograms within educational psychology

practice, which will be reported in the next section.

4.5.2. Information Gathering and Assessment: Perceived

Limitations of Genograms

4.5.2.1. Accuracy of Information

Four of the participants identified accuracy of information, in relation to a

reluctance from clients to share information, lack of knowledge about family

members, forgotten or incorrect information, as limitations of using

genograms in educational psychology practice with some children or families.

For example:

> "… relying on, on people's memory… people's willingness to give you the full picture; give you the full story…." (Beatrice, p.2).
>
> "Sometimes people forget actually that members of the family who were there for brief periods of time and who have now gone. Or they might decide actually, we don't want to include them there because you know, you know for various number of personal reasons they may not want… to be reminded of that person" (Beatrice, p.2-3).
>
> "… sometimes people might not know about… their' families… some children they might not… know…. So, I'm thinking… about in an adoptive family situation… they might know quite a lot about their' birth family depending on what they've been told and maybe they might not; again, depending on what they've been told." (Rose, p.7)

4.5.2.2. Written Feedback

One of the participants, Eleni, identified a potential challenge of genograms

as whether or not to include them in written feedback such as reports, which

may be seen by other professionals. She commented on the dilemma faced

around how a genogram would be represented if included in reports, due to

the personal nature of the image:

*"…it would be quite interesting to think about how you…
represent … the genogram… when it comes to the EP
reports… Because my instinct would be that it doesn't quite
fit with the style of the EP reports we're writing. I've used in
my practice therapeutic letters, so I would see that more
fitting with a therapeutic letter afterwards… to… to capture
what was reported through… the genogram with maybe the
original genogram scanned at the back… But I can't see a
report going to panel, let's say…. And… having such a
personal representation of what's going on put at the back as
an appendix."* (Eleni, p.5)

4.6.   Case Formulation

This theme includes the identified strengths of genograms identified by the

participants in relation to case formulation in educational psychology practice

in relation to a child's family system; 'Understanding Family Relationships and

Dynamics', 'Noticing Family Patterns', 'Wider Context', 'Hypothesising',

'Reflective', 'Supervision', 'Containing' and 'Generating Options for

Intervention'. All of the participants reported that they perceived genograms

as a helpful tool to inform case formulation across several areas of

educational psychology practice including; direct work with children and

families, supervision, group supervision and multi-professional work. A

thematic map portraying the identified strengths of genograms in relation to

this theme can be found in Figure 7 below, which maps out the theme and

connecting sub-themes.

Figure 7: Case Formulation: Perceived Strengths Thematic Map
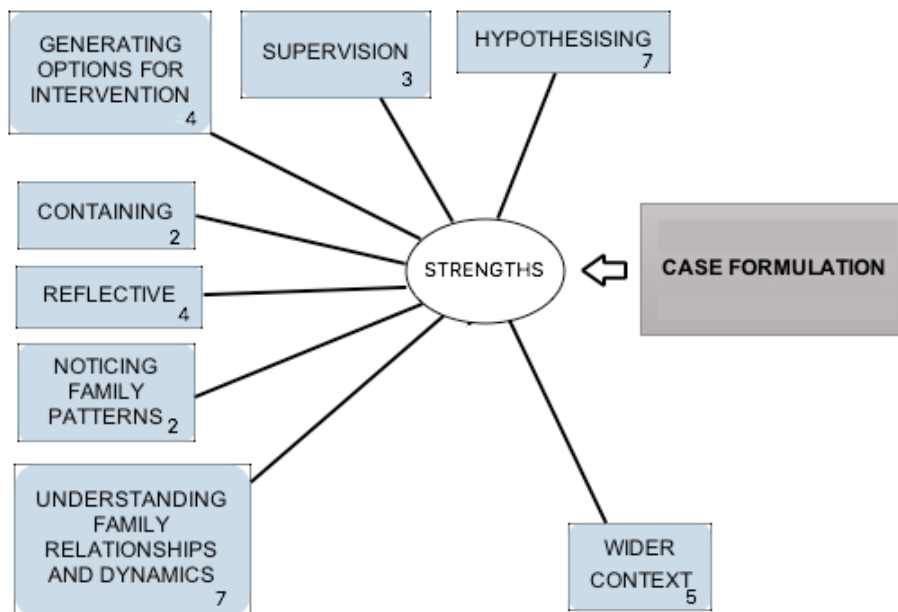
4.6.1. Understanding Family Relationships and Dynamics

This section reports on the sub-theme 'Understanding Family Relationships',

which was identified as a perceived strength for educational psychologists

and clients. All of the participants identified that genograms helped them to

assess and understand family relationships. For example, participants

commented:

> *"Using… genograms just help us to think… who are the significant… individuals… for this young person. Where there is… either stability or instability in a family. Where have there been relationships that have been broken down or maintained."* (Beatrice, p.2)
>
> Genograms are *"… a way to represent… symbolically information about… the relationships between individuals… in terms of who's in the family, what's their' relationship to each other…" (*Eleni, p.1)
>
> Genograms are *"… a visual representation so you can… demonstrate the relationship and … the… parentage but also the… different… generations… and… use it to… distinguish*

*where maybe a relationship might of broken… So… a visual
representation… of relationships."* (Anna, p.1)

Three of the participants also identified that they perceived genograms to be

helpful to support clients to understand their family relationships, the

connections and how they fit with those people in their lives. Rose

commented how when working directly with children they can be confused:

*"… quite often children are quite confused… about who's in
their family, who is maybe… a biological blood relative and
who is just somebody else that they might call dad, or
grandma, or auntie, who lives in their' home but isn't a
biological family member... So, I think it can be quite helpful
for them in just seeing how they fit with different people that
they… come in to contact with and helping them to know a bit
more about who they are and who is their family and who
isn't their' family."* (Rose, p.4)

Additionally, Maria identified that genograms can be helpful for other

professionals to understand family relationships as part of professional

consultation with an educational psychologist. She commented:

*"I think it's… helping my colleague to … reframe or… gather
more information about dynamics in the family and patterns.
So again, it's …a way of putting it on paper and… seeing…
the relationships and… so that's… a benefit." (*Maria, p.2)

Five of the participants also commented that genograms were helpful for

educational psychologists to assess and understand family dynamics. For

example:

Genograms, *"…get you to look at things in… a different way
than a… linear way of asking the questions… would… and…
exposes some things for you to think about in relation to the
family and what a child at the centre of that kind of
experience might… be having to… deal with in terms of
family dynamics…"* (Rose, p.3).

Furthermore, one participant, Maria, also identified that they perceived

genograms to be helpful to in supporting clients to understand family

dynamics. In relation to supporting professionals to understand family

dynamics, she commented:

*"I think it's… helping reframe or … gather more information
about dynamics in the family and patterns… So, it's… a way
of putting it on paper and…seeing… the relationships."*
(Maria, p.2)

Finally, three of the participants reported that genograms were a helpful tool

when working with "complex" cases. For example, Maria commented that

genograms help to "make sense of… family systems… when the system is

really complex; sort of messy. Actually, trying to break it down and put it on

paper can be really kind of helpful." (Maria, p.2)

4.6.2. Noticing Family Patterns

Two of the participants highlighted that genograms helped them to assess

and understand family patterns which have occurred from one generation to

the next, in direct work with children and families, and also as part of

supervision. For example, in relation to direct work with children and families,

Rose reported:

"I think you might notice patterns more when you have the genogram… I think when you draw things out you might see… cycles of generation abuse for example. Or, when you look at a genogram, sometimes I notice… this is… a family where the relationships are strong… where… people got married and they all had… they only got married once and they stayed together and you get a genogram with… solid relationships. Or, you might get a genogram where everybody has separated and … grandparents separated, parents separated…. I think the genogram does really highlight some of those… things that you can… notice when you see it in a visual way… that it's different to when you hear about it in words." (Rose, p.6)

Furthermore, regarding using genograms in supervision, one of the

participants, Rose, identified that genograms are a useful tool for trying to

understand family patterns within the supervisory dyad. For example, Rose

stated that genograms are a useful tool to think "about the patterns and about

the systems… around a child or children in the family." (Rose, p.3)

4.6.3. Wider Context

Five of the participants reported that using genograms supported them to

consider children within their wider context and think systemically about their

case formulations. For example:

"… when you're thinking about an individual child and you're very focused on the child, I think it helps refocus you back into the idea that this child… doesn't exist in isolation and… the fact that they're part of a familial structure and a community structure, so that it's not just this child… on their own learning…" (Penny, p.1).

---

*"…a person does not exist in isolation … they belong in
structures… family structures with… generations of influence
whether negative or positive but quite a few generations that
come before them and… the individual… is always affected
by the people around them and… the strength or the distance
of those relationships will have an impact."* (Eleni, p.2).

4.6.4. Hypothesising

All of the participants reported that they had used genograms to support the

process of case formulation and generating hypotheses regarding a child and

their family system. For example, in direct work with children and families,

Rose reported:

*"… in educational psychology you might be trying to make
sense of a child's behaviour at school or how a child you
know, might be feeling… so either a child who's very
withdrawn or maybe not coping very well in school, or who is
maybe quite challenging… and I think… trying to understand
that, that family system around them… very often can shed
quite a lot of light on why they might be behaving… the
way… that they are."* (Rose, p.5)

4.6.5. Reflective

Four of the participants identified that genograms assisted them to be

reflective and therefore promoted psychological thinking about a child or

family in their educational psychology practice. Additionally, participants

identified that genograms supported them to think about things that might not

have been explored and how this can impact upon case formulations in

educational psychology practice. Example quotes included:

*"… a good prompt in terms of have I got enough…
background information that is relevant to this young person?*

*Because if I don't know who they're living with, if I don't know
where… anything about where they are… then, is there
something that could be having an impact or is likely to have
some impact at some level, that I haven't explored? … I think
that, that it… draws your mind back to that."* (Penny, p.4)

"I'm doing it as a tool for reflection." (Rose, p.2)

*"… I think that…a lot of educational psychologists, even
though they collect their information in that kind of gathering
information question kind of asking way… I don't think they
necessarily always think about those kind of family systems
in the same way… as using a genogram can help you do."*
(Rose, p.5)

4.6.6. Supervision

Three of the participants commented on the use of genograms as part of case

formulation in supervision, due to have something that both people in the

supervisory space can look at and think about together. For example, in

relation to using genograms as a tool for case formulation within the

supervisory dyad, Eleni and Rose commented:

*"… when someone… speaks about a case… especially a
really emotive case; something that's… created a lot of
emotions in them… and maybe confusion as well … I
perceive that that gives a bit of a… useful distance from the
case… having something represented on paper… in a way
that means that the person then doesn't then hold everything
in their' mind… my impression is that it frees up some
space… in their' thinking if… the information is there, it's on
the paper, both people can see it… it becomes almost a little
bit… the third space" (*Eleni, p.3).

*"… in supervision it's definitely been really useful as a tool
for… identifying things for me to ask questions about once
I've started… recording it... and… to think with somebody
else..."* (Rose, p.3)

Additionally, in relation to group supervision, Anna reported that using a

genogram can help with case formulation. She commented that genograms:

> *"can be a really helpful way to make it quite clear what the situation is… it's sometimes been… after we've drawn the genogram that the team have gone 'Ah. Actually… there isn't a big network' or 'Actually, the family does…', 'I wonder if the parents are feeling quite isolated…' So, it can be a good way of… clarifying some questions and hypotheses… about a child or a family"* (Anna, p.3).

4.6.7. Containing

Two of the participants reported that genograms provided a containing space

to graphically hold information, whilst discussing and thinking about emotive

or anxiety provoking information. For example, Maria identified that

completing a genogram helped to contain anxiety about working with a family.

She commented, "Actually, trying to break it down and put it on paper can be

really… helpful. I guess help to contain… the anxiety about maybe working

with that family; the complexity…" (p.2). Eleni also reported that genograms

provide a "third space", which can provide a useful distance from emotive

information (p.3). This sub-theme is closely connected with the 'Graphic

Representation' sub-theme, which will be presented in section '3.5.1.2.'

4.6.8. Generating Options for Intervention

This sub-theme describes the different ways that participants perceived

genograms can be used to generate options for interventions based on

supportive options or identified areas of need, as part of assessment in

educational psychology practice. Four of the participants reported that they

had used genograms to generate interventions either directly with children

and families or as part of supervision. For example:

"Also thinking about…when working with parents and the school around ways forward and approaches that will be supportive." (Penny, p.2)

"it's a very quick way to remind ourselves and our clients that… an individual doesn't exist in a vacuum. Therefore, the solution cannot exist in a vacuum. The solution needs to be perceived within that structure…" (Eleni, p.2)

4.7. Therapeutic Tool

This theme highlights the potential therapeutic impact of using genograms

with clients in educational psychology practice and includes perceived

strength sub-themes; 'Reflective for Clients', 'Empowering' and 'Identifying

Areas of Strength'. A thematic map portraying the identified strengths of

genograms in relation to this theme can be found in Figure 8 below, which

maps out the theme and connecting sub-themes.

Figure 8: Therapeutic Tool: Perceived Strengths Thematic Map
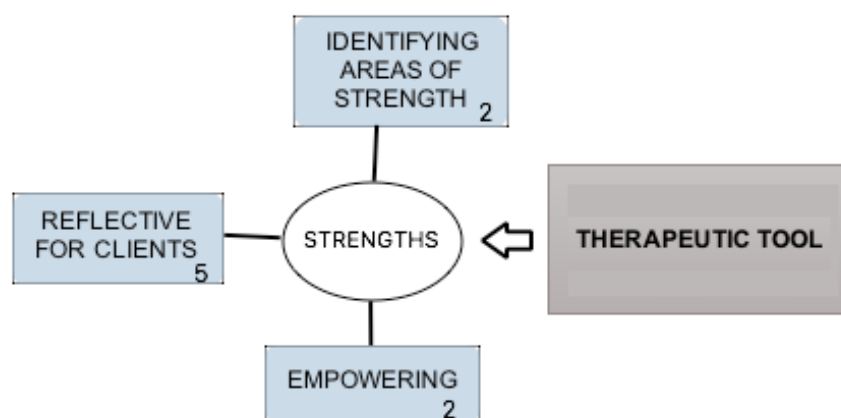
4.7.1. Reflective for Clients

Five of the participants perceived that genograms supported clients (including

children, families and professionals) to be reflective and consider information

about families that they may not have thought about before. For example,

Holly reported that genograms support:

> *"families to think about things that they may not have considered before"* and can *"be beneficial for all people involved… for the child and young person themselves in terms of who they've got around them and to reflect upon how that might have impacted upon their' feelings"* (Holly, p.7).

Additionally, genograms were perceived by the participants to promote

reflective thinking for professionals. In relation to facilitating reflecting teams

with a group of professionals, Rose commented:

> *"…when people bring cases to reflecting team I use it there, in terms of… getting them to think about what's been thought about already, what hasn't been thought about, what might… the possible gaps be."* (Rose, p.1).

4.7.2. Empowering

Two of the participants reported that completing a genogram was

empowering for clients, especially if they are encouraged to draw the

genogram themselves or it is drawn collaboratively. For example, Maria

commented that through using a genogram:

> *"…you're… empowering… the client… especially… if you… encourage them to draw or to draw with you."* (Maria, p.2).

4.7.3. Identifying Areas of Strength

Two of the participants, Penny and Holly, reported that genograms supported

them to identify strengths in a child's family, as part of their assessments. For

example, Holly commented that where a child had "a really happy home life…

that's a really nice starting point… to acknowledge strengths and things that

are going well" (p.5).

4.8.   Specific Areas of Need

This theme encompasses specific areas of need identified by the participants

during the interviews, where genograms were perceived to be a strength or

present with limitations within educational psychology practice. In this section,

the perceived strengths sub-themes 'Exploring the Impact of Loss', 'Exploring

Identity' and 'Children Looked After', will be reported. Following this, the

perceived limitation sub-theme 'Vulnerable Groups' will be reported. A

thematic map portraying the identified strengths and limitations of genograms

in relation to this theme can be found in Figure 9 below, which maps out the

theme, connecting sub-themes and links between sub-themes.

Figure 9: Specific Areas of Need: Perceived Strengths and Limitations
Thematic Map
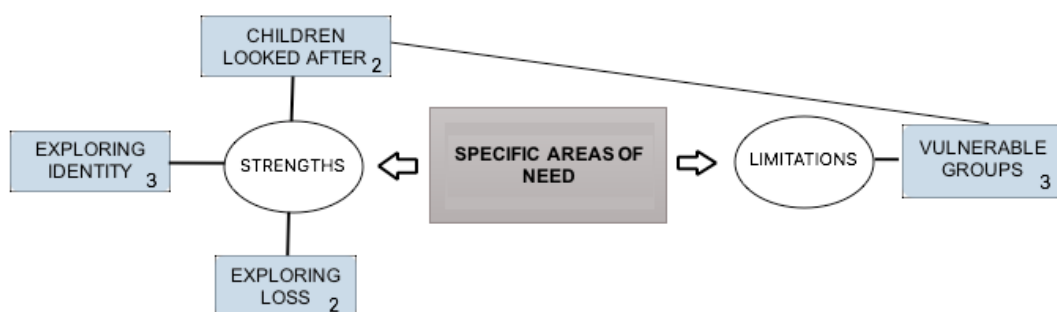
4.8.1. Specific Areas of Need: Perceived Strengths of Genograms

4.8.1.1. Exploring the Impact of Loss

Two of the participants identified genograms as a helpful tool when talking

with clients about the impact of loss of family members through separation or

divorce. For example, Beatrice commented:

> *"…it helps with hypotheses around what's gone on, who's in the family and how they appeared or… moved on… a tool for trying to make sense of… the young person's situation and… trying to think about their'… point of view on what those… individuals mean and… what sort of impact that their' loss, or loss of that person… so just another… bit of the puzzle really."* (Beatrice, p.2)

4.8.1.2. Exploring Identity

Three of the participants commented that they perceived genograms are a

helpful tool to explore and think about a child's identity, in relation to the

child's family of origin and significant adults in their life, if they were

experiencing emotional distress or confusion, in relation this. For example,

Beatrice commented that using a genogram with a "young person…

displaying distressed behaviours, challenging behaviours, [who] had

confusion about her identity… was helpful to think about who was who in the

family and who were the significant adult in her life (Beatrice, p.1).

4.8.1.3. Children Looked After

Two of the participants, Holly and Penny, reported that completing a

genogram with a child, who is living in Local Authority care, may be helpful to

explore their understanding of their family or origin and foster family

relationships. For example:

> *"I sketch an informal… what the ages of young people… that are in the family home. Are they you know, brothers, sisters, are they relatives? Are they, you know, foster family."* (Penny, p.4)

However, two of the participants (including Holly), also identified that it might

be challenging to use a genogram with a child, who is living in Local Authority

Care, which will be discussed in the 'Vulnerable Groups' section 4.8.2.1.

below.

4.8.2. Specific Areas of Need: Perceived Limitations of Genograms

4.8.2.1.   *Vulnerable Groups*

Three of the participants reported that it can be challenging to use genograms

with "vulnerable groups" of people including children looked after in local

authority care, refugees or emotionally vulnerable clients. For example, Holly

commented:

> *"I think you'd have to be very careful… Because in one sense it might be quite liberating for them, but on the other hand it could be very distressing."* (Holly, p.7).

Similarly, Beatrice stated that she perceived a client's emotional vulnerability

might prevent them from sharing information with an educational

psychologist, or prevent the educational psychologist's exploring difficult

experiences with the client:

"… for some families, someone's emotional vulnerability may prevent them from sharing or might mean that… the EP might not want to explore some issues because it would bring up a lot of painful experiences for the person." (Beatrice, p.3)

This sub-theme links closely to the sub-theme 'Empathetic Use' (Section 4.9.3.) and 'Emotive' (Section 4.9.1.), which will be reported below.

4.9. Ethical Considerations

This theme encompasses ethical considerations, which might present as potential challenges or limitations in relation to using genograms within educational psychology practice. This theme includes the sub-themes 'Emotive', 'Exposing' and 'Empathetic Use'. A thematic map portraying the identified limitations of genograms in relation to this theme can be found in Figure 10 below, which maps out the theme, connecting sub-themes and links between sub-themes.

Figure 10: Ethical Considerations: Perceived Limitations Thematic Map
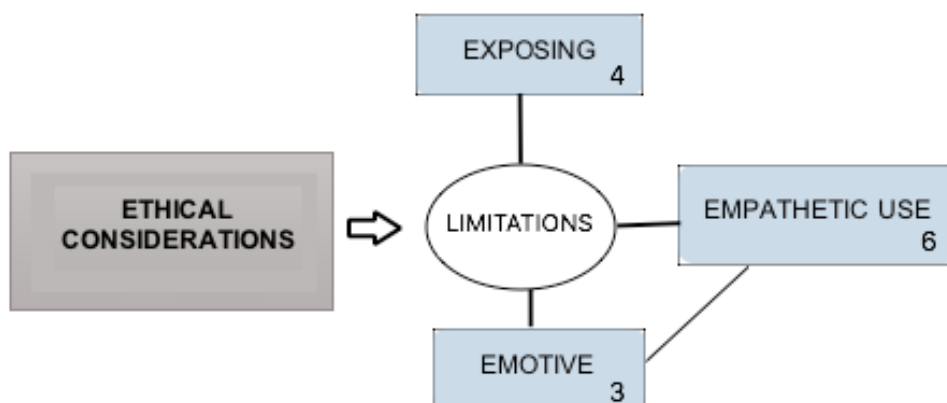
4.9.1. Emotive

Three of the participants reported that completing a genogram might be

emotive for clients due to experiencing difficult family circumstances such as

painful experiences, difficult relationships with family members or traumatic

childhoods including; children looked after, refugees or emotionally vulnerable

clients. Example quotes highlighting emotive components of genograms

identified by Holly, Beatrice and Rose are listed below:

---

*"I think… if I child has been through a really traumatic
childhood or if they're adopted or looked after… I think you'd
have to be very careful using that too. Because in one sense
it might be quite liberating for them, but on the other hand it
could be very distressing."* (Holly, p.7)

*"… the EP might not want to report some issues because it
would bring up a lot of painful experiences for the person."*
(Beatrice, p.3)

*"I think it can be quite upsetting … eliciting… highlighting
things to families about relationships in and patterns in their
families. So, you've got to be able to almost get them to
notice that, rather than you pointing it out to, to them… And
be, or… be sensitive in the way that you are thinking about
those… relationships."* (Rose, p.10)

This sub-theme is closely linked to the perceived limitation sub-themes

'Rapport Challenges' (see section 4.3.2.1.) and 'Empathetic Use' (see section

4.9.3.), in relation to how genograms are used with clients and therefore

experienced (see section 4.9.3.).

4.9.2. Exposing

Four of the participants commented that genograms might be experienced as

exposing by clients due to eliciting potentially sensitive information, which

consequently could prevent engagement with the task. For example, Maria

commented that genograms can be "…quite exposing…" due to the task

"eliciting… quite sensitive information" (Maria, p.4). This sub-theme is closely

linked with 'Rapport Challenges' (see section 4.3.2.1.).

4.9.3. Empathetic Use

Six of the participants commented on the importance of using genograms

empathetically with clients in educational psychology practice. For example,

being mindful that completing a genogram may be challenging for some

clients to access, considering how the task is contracted for and the

importance of responding to clients sensitively. Examples of participant

quotes demonstrating potential limitations in relation to this, are listed below:

---

*"I do think that maybe because it can feel quite personal.
That there may be a barrier around, you know, 'Why do you
want to know that? Why do you want to know about their
dad? Why do you want to know about their, you know, if their
grandparents are around?' I think… it's how you… use it
and… how that conversation is had."* (Penny, p.5)

*"… they might not know you very well and you are suddenly
asking all these questions about their'… family and this might
be… the first time you have met them so… I think you have
to be… sensitive in relation to that and you've got to be able
to… explain really why you're asking those kinds of questions
and why you think it might be helpful to know those things
that you are asking about in the piece of work that you are
doing.* (Rose, p.7)

*"I've worked with a parent recently and… I was having to be
quite sensitive about… because there were some issues
about the parent's history and so although I knew that there
were… things that would have been useful to have found out
through use of a genogram…. But I knew that she was…
very private and… quite closed and I knew that she was
doing that to protect herself so that's … another barrier as*

*well as something helpful. But I could see how it would be
really, really helpful in that situation but we didn't get there."*
(Beatrice, p.3)

4.10. Practitioner Competence

This theme describes how practitioner competence was perceived by participants to impact upon genogram use within educational psychology practice. Firstly, sub-themes of the perceived strengths of practitioner competence; 'Knowledge, Training and Experience of using Genograms', will be reported. The identified limitations in relation to practitioner competence; 'Knowledge, Training and Experience of using Genograms'' and 'Confidence', will then be presented. A thematic map portraying the identified strengths and limitations of genograms in relation to this theme can be found in Figure 11 below, which maps out the theme, connecting sub-themes and links between sub-themes.

Figure 11: Practitioner Competence: Perceived Strengths and Limitations Thematic Map
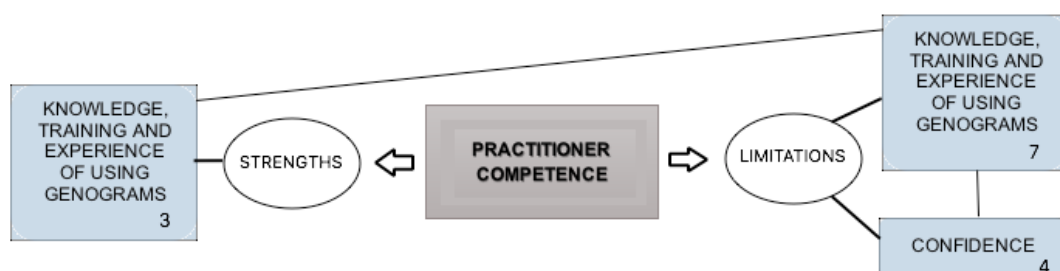
4.10.1.   Practitioner Competence: Perceived Strengths of Genograms

4.10.1.1. Knowledge, Training and Experience of Using Genograms

Three of the participants identified knowledge, training and experience in the use of genograms, as a perceived strength of using genograms in educational psychology practice. For example, Rose commented, "It's practice I guess… so it's practice, training… curiosity… and style" (p.6).

Two of the participants also reported that they had completed a part-time post graduate diploma in systemic family therapy after they qualified as educational psychologists, which embedded the use of genograms as part of their educational psychology practice. Knowledge, training and experience in the use of genograms was also identified as a perceived challenge or barrier, which will be reported in the next section.

4.10.2.   Practitioner Competence: Perceived Limitations of Genograms

4.10.2.1. Knowledge and Training and Experience of using Genograms

All of the included participants identified insufficient knowledge, training and experience of using genograms, as a potential limitation of using genograms within education psychology practice. For example:

> *"I think because I probably don't use them often enough…
> I'm not always a hundred percent sure that I use the same or
> what they should be… each time… sometimes I'm like… 'Ok,
> well do I definitely know what my dotted line means or what
> my double strike through means? Am I consistently using a
> box for this gender?' So, I think for me that's my biggest*

> *barrier … it's that I'm probably not…I don't remember if I actually have had… formal… genogram training…"* (Anna, p.3)

> *"I'd like to read more, which I have started to do…. Because I do think they fit with the wider approach that I'm still getting my head around… I'm thinking about… family therapy… that's something that I'm kind of upskilling myself on at the moment. So, more reading… looking at research or literature reviews that people have written. Yea, and just practising and speaking to other people who use them… Maybe asking other EPs to speak about how they use them and what they've found… Yea, so it's something that I definitely want to develop."* (Holly, p.8).

This sub-theme is linked to the theme 'Systemic Considerations', due to the training available to participants in current context. The sub-theme is also closely linked to the sub-theme 'Confidence', which will be reported the next section.

4.10.2.2. Confidence

Four of the participants identified their confidence and conscious incompetence in using genograms with clients, as a barrier to using them as part of their educational psychology practice. For example, Holly commented:

> *"I think my main barrier is just my own confidence… and that… whole thing about conscious incompetence I suppose. Because I know that I have had one session at university when I was training… I've done my own reading… but I think it's not… at the point where I could just fluidly just sit and do a genogram."* (Holly, p.3)

4.11. Systemic Considerations in Current Context

This theme comprises of systemic considerations in current context, which were identified by the participants as either strengths, or limitations of using genograms within educational psychology practice. All of the participants were working for an inner-London, traded educational psychology service practice at the time of interview. Firstly, this theme will report the sub-themes 'Efficiency', 'Resources', 'Personal Role Expectations' and 'External Role Expectations', as perceived strengths of using genograms within educational psychology practice. The theme will then report 'Trading and Commissioned Time Available', 'Faciliatory School Staff', 'Personal Role Expectations' and 'External Role Expectations', as perceived limitations of using genograms in educational psychology practice. A thematic map portraying the identified strengths and limitations of genograms in relation to this theme can be found in Figure 12 below, which maps out the theme, connecting sub-themes and links between sub-themes.

Figure 12: Systemic Considerations in Current Context: Perceived Strengths and Limitations Thematic Map
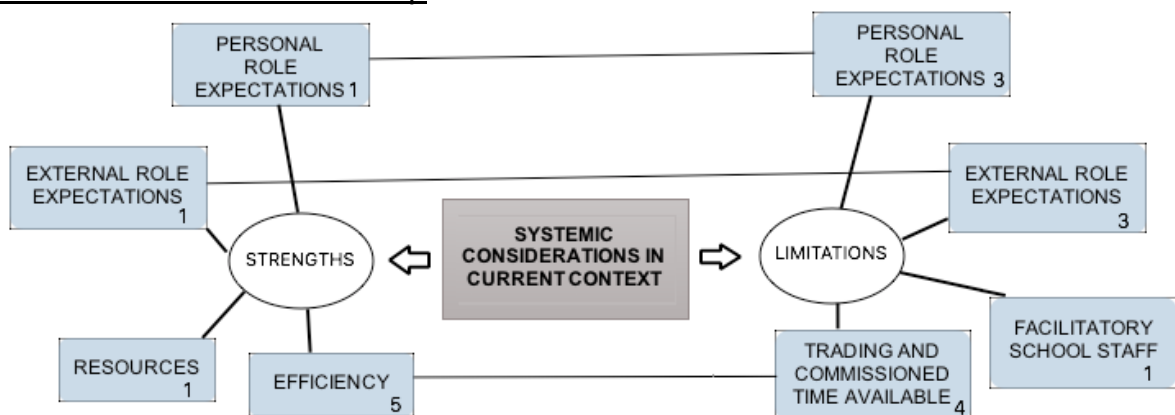
4.12. Systemic Considerations in Current Context: Perceived Strengths of Genograms

4.12.1.   Efficiency

Five of the participants reported that a strength of genograms is that they are an efficient tool and therefore do not require a significant amount of time to complete. For example, genograms were described as a "quick" tool by three of the participants. Rose also commented that genograms are a "much faster" representation of "whole family system and dynamic", than writing or "reading through a… page of text" (Rose, p.5). This sub-theme links closely with 'Trading and Commissioned Time Available', which will be discussed below in section 4.11.2.1.

4.12.2.   Resources

One participant, Holly, reported that genograms do not require much resource to be able to complete. For example, a pen and paper. She commented:

> *"I don't think I'd need, lots of materials to be able to do a genogram. I think it's something that you can use with what you've got with you"* (Holly, p.4).

4.12.3.   Personal Role Expectations

This sub-theme encompasses the impact of perceived personal role expectations on the use of genograms in educational psychology practice, which was identified as a perceived strength by Holly (p.6). She described that from her perspective the educational psychologist role is systemic and underpinned by theories such as Bronfenbrenner (1979), which impacts positively upon her using genograms within her educational psychology

practice. Personal Role Expectations were also identified as a perceived

limitation of using genograms in educational psychology practice, which will

be discussed in section 4.11.2.2. below.

4.12.4.   *External Role Expectations*

This sub-theme encompasses the impact of perceived external role

expectations on the use of genograms in educational psychology practice,

which was identified as a perceived strength by Holly. Holly reported that her

communication with others regarding the educational psychologist role and

systemic approaches, promotes the use of genograms in her practice. She

commented:

> *"I think some people have a misconception that EPs just look at cognition. So, I always talk about… systemic approaches. And sometimes use other mapping tools like Bronfenbrenner… I think… it's just really helpful and can be quite powerful."* (Holly, p.6)

External Role Expectations were also identified as a perceived limitation of

using genograms in educational psychology practice, which will be discussed

in section 4.11.2.4. below.

4.13. Systemic Considerations in Current Context: Perceived Limitations of Genograms

4.13.1.   *Trading and Commissioned Time Available*

Four of the participants identified the impact of working for a traded service

and having limited commissioned time available to use, as a perceived

limitation in relation to a genogram use in educational psychology practice.

This included the impact of schools commissioning time and therefore

influencing how this time will be used and also linked with time available to

build rapport with clients. For example:

"in one of my secondary schools I was told… that due to the… lack of commissioned time that had been bought in, I had one hour with the pupil. Which I knew already wasn't going to be enough… time… to kind of really delve deeper in to that aspect." (Holly, p.4)

"…those sorts of pieces of work… will be done over a period of time and a lot of educational psychologists don't have that time in the work that they're doing in schools... They're just very quickly kind of in and out with, with families, so I think then you're getting families to kind of give you a lot of information maybe about themselves and their' families and then you're disappearing out of their' lives again and I don't think that's very helpful." (Rose, p.10).

"... quite difficult to use it in situations where you've only got half hour…" (Eleni, p.3).

Furthermore, participants identified prioritising tasks based on the time

available, as a potential limitation around using genograms in educational

psychology practice. For example, whether a referral form has been

completed in advance or needs to be completed as part of an initial

consultation with a family dictated what needed to be prioritised in the time

available or choosing "which road to go down" when you have limited time for

a consultation (Maria, p.4).

4.13.2.   Faciliatory School Staff

Holly reported that resources available, in terms of availability of school staff

who could facilitate a meeting with a child and/or family, presented a limitation

to her use of genograms in educational psychology practice. She commented:

> "… there is an element of… resources… that's difficult in
> schools sometimes… by resources I think I'm meaning
> around people as resources and how the people are used in
> school…." (Holly, p.4)

4.13.3.   Personal Role Expectations

This sub-theme encompasses the impact of perceived personal role

expectations on the use of genograms in educational psychology practice,

which was identified as a potential limitation by three of the participants. For

example, Eleni commented that genograms "feel like they belong in… the

world of family therapy" (p.7) due to her perceiving there to be a contrast

between systemic family therapy philosophy and "the reality of being an EP in

the context of a local authority with… financial constraints and… safeguarding

responsibilities and etc…" (p.7). Additionally, Maria indicated that educational

psychologists may not give themselves "permission… to use a genogram"

(p.3).

4.13.4.   External Role Expectations

This sub-theme encompasses the impact of perceived external role

expectations on the use of genograms in educational psychology practice,

which three of the participants identified as a potential limitation. Examples

included perceiving others "not being used to EPs using genograms" (Holly,

p.5) and Eleni commented that a challenge regarding using genograms as

part of educational psychology practice is related to:

> *"… people's perception of what an EP's there to do… those of us who are interested would have to go against a… perception… you know, chipping away at somethings that's… consolidated, not only with outside of the profession, but also within the profession as well... It takes… a few like-minded colleagues for example… who… who really have thought about systemic approaches… and have experienced the benefits of bringing into the practice, to start changing a little bit… a) how that a team works and b) how schools perceive our work and then… you know, as a ripple effect… the rest of the… of people" (Eleni, p.7).*

4.12. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the nine themes and connected sub-themes, which

emerged from a thematic analysis of the data. The data collected included a

broad range of identified perceived strengths and limitations, in relation to

using genograms in educational psychology practice and nine themes

emerged: engaging clients and building rapport; accessibility; information

gathering and assessment; case Formulation; therapeutic tool; specific areas

of need; ethical considerations; practitioner competence; and, systemic

considerations in current context. Themes and sub-themes have been

presented throughout the chapter in relation to research questions one and

two, and have been supported with direct quotes from the participants.

4. Discussion

4.1. Discussion Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the findings of the current study will be discussed in relation to the two research questions, theory and previous research. Throughout the chapter, possible implications for educational psychology practice will be drawn out. Themes will be considered at both a semantic and latent level throughout the discussion. The number of participants, who contributed to each theme and sub-theme is included throughout the discussion to promote transparency for the reader, however equal weight has been given to each of the findings based on the researcher's underpinning critical realist philosophical stance. To conclude, the chapter considers the strengths and limitations of the current study and ideas for future research.

4.2. Discussion of Themes

This section of the chapter will discuss the nine themes identified in relation to the two research questions, theory and previous research. Implications for educational psychology practice will also be considered.

4.2.1. Engaging Clients and Building Rapport

This theme encompassed educational psychologist's experiences and perceived client experiences of using genograms to engage clients and build rapport. A thematic map, figure 4; is a visual aid of the theme and connected subthemes, in relation to the two research questions. The thematic map also

demonstrates the linked sub-themes 'Unobtrusive and Non-Judgemental' and

'Obtrusive', and 'Facilitates Rapport Building' and 'Rapport Challenges'.

Figure 4: Engaging Clients and Building Rapport: Perceived Strengths and

Limitations Thematic Map
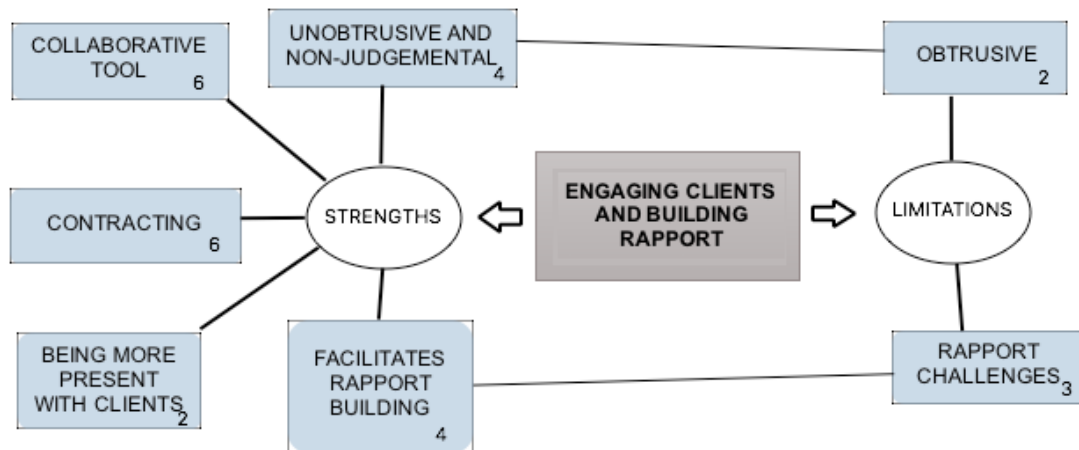
In relation to the identified strengths of genograms for engaging clients and

building rapport, participants perceived that genograms were: easy to contract

for; unobtrusive and non-judgemental; collaborative; facilitated rapport

building; and enabled educational psychologists to feel like they were being

more present with clients. In contrast however, two of the participants

perceived that genograms may be experienced as obtrusive by clients and

three of the participants reported that it can be challenging to use a genogram

in the first meeting with a client, without pre-established rapport.

Six of the participants commented on the ease of contracting for the use of

genograms, due to the concept of a family tree generally being a recognised

format and the transparency connected to representing information

graphically. This finding was supported by Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's

(2007) study, as discussed in the literature review. These findings are highly

relevant to educational psychology practice, as educational psychologists are

required to provide clients with the best information available to make

informed decisions about any assessment or intervention in educational

psychology practice (BPS, 2017; DECP, 2002; HCPC, 2015). The findings

indicate that the graphic nature of a genogram, and related transparency

regarding the tool, supports this process.

Six of the participants identified that they had experienced genograms as a

collaborative tool and perceived that clients also experienced genograms in

this way, which promoted working together with children, families and

professionals. Genograms emerged from within systemic family therapy

practice, where they were designed to be co-created between family

members and a family therapist, who acted as a facilitator of the task (Dallos

& Draper, 2010). It was therefore not surprising to the researcher that this

was a perceived strength in the current study as it is also identified as a

strength of genograms in all of the reviewed literature. However, it is

validating to see that the findings are transferable and applicable to

educational psychology practice.

Furthermore, four of the participants stated that genograms helped them to

build rapport and positive working relationships with clients, as part of

educational psychology practice. As aforementioned in the literature review,

this finding was also supported by all of the reviewed literature (Alexander,

Calaghan & Fellin, 2018; Pellegrini, 2009; Rempel, Neufeld & Kushner's,

2007; Schalkwyk, 2007; Tobias, 2018). In addition, something that has not

been identified in the reviewed literature is the notion two participants

presented in the current study; that they perceived genograms enabled them

to be more present with clients, without losing the immediate attention of the

client, when gathering and recording information, rather than writing a long

description of the information that was being shared by a client. It is likely that

this increased feeling of presence would directly link to the client's experience

of feeling heard by an educational psychologist and therefore promotes the

working relationship.

The graphic representation of the information being discussed was a key

element that four participants felt promoted transparency. In this way,

genograms were seen to not be experienced as obtrusive and were seen as a

non-judgemental tool. The notion of graphic representation enabling

transparency was also identified in the reviewed literature (Alexander,

Calaghan & Fellin, 2018; Rempel, Neufeld & Kushner, 2007; Schalkwyk,

2007; Tobias, 2018). Whilst the non-judgemental element is an interesting

addition, it is wondered by the researcher whether this finding is about the

tool itself or how it is applied in educational psychology practice.

In contrast to these findings however, three of the participants reported that

genograms were relationship dependent and challenging to use in initial

meetings with children and families, without pre-established rapport. It

appears that the identified perceived strengths of genograms may be

therefore be client, educational psychologist and relationship dependent.

The findings identified within this theme are of high relevance to the

educational psychology profession, as educational psychologists are required

to work in partnership, "build and sustain" relationships with clients in all areas

of educational psychology practice (HCPC, 2015, p.11). Furthermore, the

ability to engage a client and build rapport is an essential skill to promote

outcomes for clients (BPS, 2016); research suggests that relationships are

the key factor in achieving therapeutic goals (Beaver, 2011). The most

important element an educational psychologist can therefore offer to a client

is not the psychological model or tool, but their ability to engage the client and

build rapport (Beaver, 2011).

Due to the collaborative nature of genograms, it is argued that the ability of

the tool to be effective in engaging clients and building rapport is highly

dependent upon the educational psychologist, with whom the client is

working. Within psychological practice, effective relationship building is

considered to require Rogerian based principles such as warmth, empathy

and genuineness, which will be necessary to use in conjunction with the

genogram (Rogers, 1965). Although not directly identified as a limitation in the

current study's findings, the researcher has wondered whether these skills in

relationship building could be hindered if an educational psychologist is

feeling anxious about using a genogram with a client, perhaps due to a lack

of training or limited time to complete the task. This will be discussed further

in the knowledge, training and experience, and systemic considerations

section of this chapter.

Furthermore, one of the participants in the current study reported that

educational psychologists may worry that genograms would be experienced

as obtrusive by clients due to the necessity to ask a lot of personal questions

about the family. However, she later reflected that genograms are "quite a

non-confrontational way of asking people quite personal questions" (Penny,

p.5), which demonstrated some ambiguity about this. This suggests that there

may be other factors involved in how genograms are experienced by

educational psychologists and clients. In relation to implications for practice, it

is argued that it would be helpful for educational psychologists to consider

potential emotive elements of completing a genogram when manging risk and

also exploring client's experiences when evaluating involvement with clients,

to seek clarity regarding this. These findings are closely linked with the

emotive and exposing subthemes identified, which will be discussed further

below in the ethical considerations section of this chapter.

There is an emphasis on relationships and interpersonal skills in the

professional practice guidelines for educational psychologists (BPS, 2017)

and it is argued that the findings from the current study indicate that

genograms can facilitate and contribute to these aspects of professional

practice. However, the findings also indicate that other factors such as

individual differences of the client, educational psychologist and their

relationship, may impact upon this process.

4.2.2. Accessibility

This theme encompassed the ways that participants perceived the accessibility of genograms as a strength of the tool, due to the ability to differentiate the task for clients. The sub-themes of 'Child and Friendly Tool' and 'Literacy Difficulties' were identified from the findings. A thematic map can be found below to provide the reader with a visual aid of the theme and connected subthemes.

Figure 5: Accessibility: Perceived Strengths Thematic Map
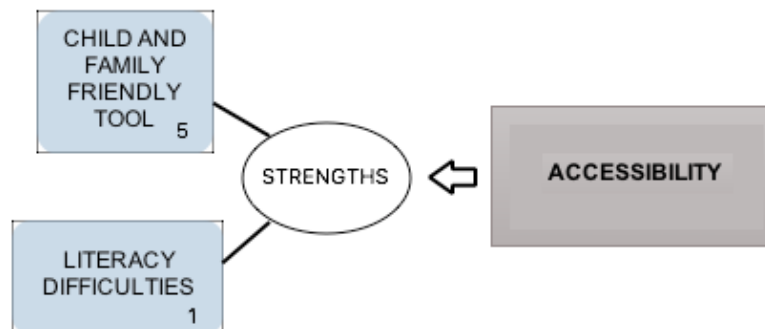
Within the current study, five of the participants perceived that the traditional paper-and-pencil genogram methodology of genograms was suitable to differentiate creatively or using physical objects, and therefore was a child and family friendly tool. Moreover, participants identified that genograms could also be differentiated to suit different developmental ages or stages. One of the participants also highlighted that genograms were accessible for families with literacy difficulties, who might not be able to access written information, as the visual image of a genogram made it more accessible. These findings were supported by the literature review, which highlighted that genograms were an accessible tool for participants from a range of different backgrounds and adaptable to different ages, genders, generations, cognition

levels, and command of the English language (Rempel, Neufeld & Kushner, 2007; Schalkwyk, 2007; Swainson and Tasker, 2005).

The identified strengths of genograms in relation to accessibility and differentiation are highly relevant to educational psychology practice, as educational psychologists are required to be flexible, make reasonable adjustments, "adapt practice to meet the needs of different groups and individuals" (HCPC, 2015, p.8) and offer a service, which is person-centered and respectful of individual needs (BPS, 2017). Additionally, educational psychology assessments are required to consider how they can develop ways of communicating with the child or young person that will be most effective in ensuring they can express their views and feelings (BPS, 2017). The findings of the current study suggest that genograms are a tool which can be adapted in this manner. However, educational psychologists work with a highly diverse range of clients, some of whom have learning disabilities, and upon reflection the researcher would argue that clients would need a degree of verbal comprehension and ability to reason in relation to symbolic information, to access genograms.

In relation to the limitations of genograms, three of the studies in the literature review found genogram symbols to be a restrictive format in some way. For example, the standardised symbols having a bias towards nuclear, heterosexual family norms (Swainson & Tasker, 2005) and needing to co-construct additional symbols to represent family experiences (Tobias, 2018). Although this was not highlighted as a limitation of genograms in the current

study, it is argued that this is an important consideration for educational

psychologists, as they are required to work with culturally and linguistically

diverse groups of people, in an inclusive and fair manner (BPS, 2017). These

finding are therefore a helpful area for reflection when using genograms and

considering individual differences with clients such as; gender, sexuality,

ethnicity, culture, religion and age on psychological wellbeing or behaviour

(HCPC, 2015, p.8).

4.2.3. Information Gathering and Assessment

This theme described how participants had used genograms to gather

information and assess children and families, as part of educational

psychology practice. A thematic map can be found below to provide the

reader with a visual aid of the theme and connected subthemes, in relation to

the two research questions. The thematic map also demonstrates the linked

sub-themes 'Assessment Feedback' and 'Written Feedback'.

Figure 6: Information Gathering and Assessment: Perceived Strengths and

Limitations Thematic Map
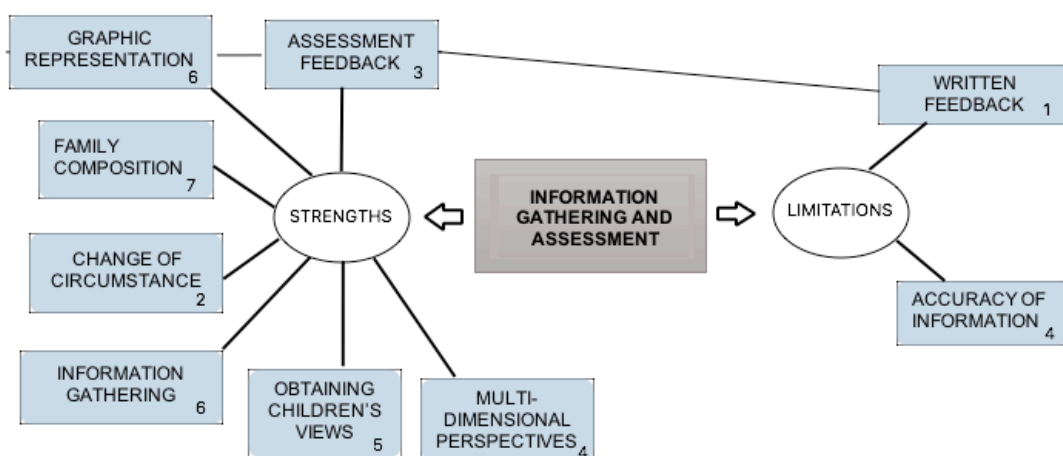
In relation to the strengths of genograms for information gathering and

assessment, participants identified that genograms were helpful in relation to:

gathering information about children and their families, family composition

and changes of circumstances; obtaining multi-dimensional perspectives and

children's views; providing assessment feedback and graphically representing

information.

Six of the participants identified that genograms were a helpful tool in terms of

gathering information about children and families, either directly or with

professionals involved. The current study also found that the graphic

representation of a child and their family, informed educational psychologist's

ability to gather information above and beyond verbal enquiry, due to the

visual image capturing a gestalt of the information. These findings were

supported by all of the included studies in the literature review, which

highlighted information gathering as a strength of genograms. As

aforementioned in the introductory chapter, within systemic family therapy,

genograms are used as part of assessment to gather information in a

manageable format and it appears that this strength is directly transferable in

to educational psychology practice (McGoldrick et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the current study found that genograms supported assessment

of a family's composition for educational psychologists and developed further

understanding of family composition for clients. For example, participants

reported that they had used genograms to obtain information about who a

child lives with and other important people in the child's network. This finding

is highly relevant to assessment in educational psychology practice, as

educational psychologists are required to "consult as widely as possible with

people who know the young person" (DECP, 2002, p.16). Gathering

information about a family's composition through a genogram can provide

insight for educational psychologists, in relation to who the child is interacting

with and therefore might be helpful to consult with. Furthermore, educational

psychology assessments acknowledge that children "develop as a result of an

interaction between themselves and their environment" (DECP, 2002, p.24)

and the information obtained from a genogram regarding a child's family

composition can provide helpful information in relation to this.

Moreover, in relation to consulting widely with people who know the child, four

of the participants in the current study identified that genograms can be used

to explore multi-dimensional perspectives within families regarding a

presenting issue. This finding was also supported by two of the studies

included in the literature review, which identified the ability of genograms to

include and promote discussion about different perspectives when used with

more than one participant, which allowed the family to see multi-dimensional

perspectives and allowed participants to share and discuss different

perspectives. This suggests that genograms can also be used as part of the

consultation process with different people in a child's life.

Two of the participants in the current study identified that genograms can be a

helpful tool when there has been a change of circumstance for a child or

family, either in current context or to discuss historical changes. For example,

parents separating. This is relevant to educational psychology practice as

psychological assessment of a child involves assessing change and stability

over time, which may be impacting upon current presentation (BPS, 2017).

Furthermore, it is argued that this is relevant in relation to identifying who has

parental responsibility of a child and therefore ability to consent for

educational psychology or other professional involvement. Parental

separation and divorce were also identified as a specific area of need, which

genograms could be used to explore with clients and will be discussed in

section 4.2.6.

The findings from the current study also indicated that genograms were a

useful tool in obtaining the views of children in the process of information

gathering and assessment. This is highly relevant to educational psychology

practice, as within the BPS (2017) professional practice guidelines it is stated

that all children, "whatever their age or status, have a right to express their

views freely and be involved in any decision-making that affects their lives"

(p.50). Additionally, educational psychology assessments are required to

"incorporate the child's understanding of his or her world" (DECP, 2002,

p.25). The findings of the current study suggest that genograms can be used

as a tool to obtain children's views about their model of the world and family

system, without the reliance upon verbal communication, which may be more

challenging for some clients (Beaver, 2011). This is an important

consideration for educational psychologists as research suggests that

listening to children may "hold the key to our understanding of the problem

and its resolution" (Tellis & Fox, 2016, p.328). The findings of the current

study suggest that genograms can be used to support this listening and

develop understanding of a child's perspective regarding their family system.

Within the current study, four of the participants identified accuracy of

information, in relation to information sharing, lack of knowledge or incorrect

information being shared by children and families, as potential limitations of

using genograms in educational psychology practice. These findings were

supported by two of the studies included in the literature review (Schalkwyk,

2007 & Swainson & Tasker, 2005). Upon consideration of the findings, the

researcher had wondered whether the concrete nature of a genogram image

might lead to information being perceived as factual once drawn, rather than

as a working document, which can represent ambiguity. Additionally,

perspectives regarding accuracy of information in genograms, may be

affected by a participant's underlying ontology and epistemology, in terms of

practitioners attempting to identify factual information about a child and their

family, rather than considering different perspectives as valid. However, the

researcher cannot be certain regarding this as the participant's ontologies and

epistemologies were not explored in the current study. In relation to

educational psychology practice, it is argued that identified gaps in

information might be helpful to consider curiously and reflect on what

information is less known and why this may be, in terms of case formulation

and opportunities for interventions.

Following completion of an assessment, educational psychologists are

required to communicate conclusions back to clients clearly and effectively

(BPS, 2017; HCPC, 2015) and within the current study, three of the

participants identified that genograms are useful to support feedback to

clients. However, written feedback was identified as a potential limitation

regarding the use of genograms within educational psychology by one

participant. Although only identified as a limitation by one participant, this is

important for educational psychologists to consider, in terms of the range of

audiences who might access written feedback about a child.

Educational psychologists are required to "inform parents of the probable

forms of written communication, which they are likely to produce" and follow

local and national guidance and statutory responsibilities regarding data

management (BPS, 2017; DECP, 2002, p.8). Also, clients are entitled to

expect that the information they share will remain confidential and should be

informed where information about them may be shared (BPS, 2017; HCPC,

2012). It is therefore argued that consent needs to be obtained from families

before integrating their genogram in to written feedback and due

consideration is required to sensitively presenting data, whilst bearing in mind

the potential audiences in educational psychology practice (DECP, 2002).

The purpose of an educational psychology assessment is to generate

understanding of "what is happening, who is concerned, why there is a

problem and what can be done to make a difference to the situation" (DECP,

2002, p.23). Specific to educational psychology practice, participants in the

current study identified that genograms can be used within the process cycle

of psychological assessment and intervention to support; problem definition,

initial hypotheses, generation of hypotheses and devising plans and

intervention regarding a child's family system and wider context (BPS, 2002).

Additionally, participants highlighted that genograms can be used to support

the method cycle of psychological assessment and intervention, which

describes stages in educational psychology consultation including; problem

clarification, assessment of affective/personal/social factors and selecting the

best intervention (Cline, Gulliford & Birch, 2015). The current study therefore

suggests that genograms are a helpful tool to support information gathering

and assessment as part of educational psychology practice.

4.2.4. Case Formulation

This theme encompassed the identified strengths of genograms identified by

the participants, in relation to case formulation in educational psychology

practice. A thematic map can be found below to provide the reader with a

visual aid of the theme and connected subthemes.

Figure 7: Case Formulation: Perceived Strengths Thematic Map
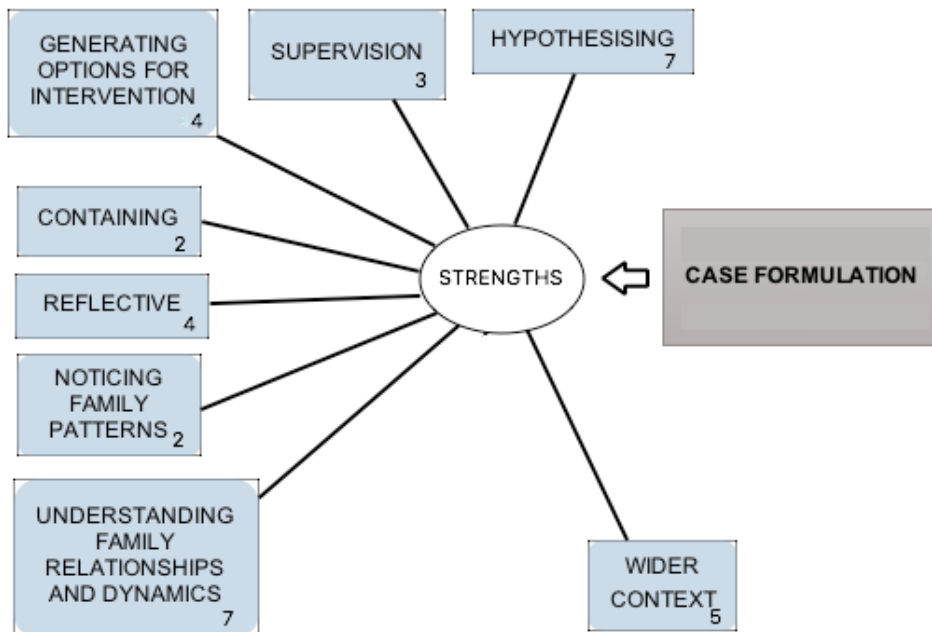
All of the participants in the current study reported that they perceived

genograms as a helpful tool to support the process of case formulation and to

generate hypotheses regarding a child's family relationships, relational

dynamics, and to notice family patterns in educational psychology practice.

Case formulation within educational psychology practice is the summation

and integration of the knowledge, that is acquired by the assessment process

(BPS, 2017). Educational psychologists are required to "develop

psychological formulations using the outcomes of assessment, drawing on

theory and research" to provide a framework for describing a client's needs

(BPS, 2017; HCPC, 2015, p.24).

Five of the participants in the current study reported that genograms

supported them to consider children within their wider context. Examples

included; refocusing the educational psychologist back to the idea that a child

does not exist in isolation, contextualising a child, consideration of other factors around a child, having an awareness of how the child fits in their wider microsystem and considering a child's life outside of school. This is highly relevant to educational psychology practice, as educational psychologists are required to see a child as one element within their wider context and understand the influence of family structures and processes, cultural and community contexts on their development (HCPC, 2015, p.17). Additionally, a child's wider context can play a significant role in shaping and maintaining difficulties, as well as supporting positive change (BPS, 2016). It is therefore important for educational psychologists to consider systemic and ecological influences on the development and maintenance of problems; the current study suggests that completing a genogram with a child and their family can support this process by mapping out and exploring key attachment relationships within their wider context.

The current research suggests that the information obtained from a genogram could support with case formulation in relation to wider context, family relationships and dynamics, and family patterns. Within the literature review however, Tobias (2018) and Alexander, Callaghan & Fellin's (2018) studies reported that at times genograms can locate blame within the family context or on one family member. It is argued therefore that it would be helpful for genograms to be used alongside tools such as the Interactive Factors Framework in educational psychology practice to display all of the problem dimensions identified together, which supports the integration of hypotheses

connecting the behavioural, cognitive, affective, environmental and biological

variables (Cline, Gulliford & Birch, 2015).

The findings of this study indicated that genograms were helpful in promoting

reflective practice and psychological thinking about a child or family, due to

the graphic representation prompting thoughts about the child and their family

system. Additionally, participants identified that genograms supported them to

think about things that might not have been explored. This finding was

supported by all of the studies included in the literature review and is highly

relevant to the profession, as educational psychologists are required to

demonstrate a reflective stance as part of their professional practice (BPS,

2017; HCPC, 2015).

Three of the participants commented on the use of genograms as part of case

formulation in supervision, due to having something that both people in the

supervisory dyad (or a group of people in group supervision) can look at and

think about together. It is suggested that this may be interconnected with the

finding that genograms can provide a containing space to graphically hold

information. Containment is the experience of "having someone recognise

your emotions, understand them and find them manageable" (Randall, 2010,

p,98). From this experience, individuals are then able to recognise and

understand their own emotions, and find them manageable (Bion, 1962;

Randall, 2010, p.98). The findings of the current study suggest that

genograms provide a psychological benefit by representing an educational

psychologist's thoughts and/or feelings about clients in a concrete way, so

that they are more understandable, whilst discussing and thinking about

emotive or anxiety provoking information in supervision (Bion, 1962). Thus,

genograms support psychological thinking during case discussion in

supervision. Supervision is a core component of an educational

psychologist's practice and educational psychologists are required to discuss

their case work as part of this process (BPS, 2017). These findings are

therefore highly relevant to the role.

Finally, within the current study, four of the participants perceived that

genograms can be used to generate options for intervention based on case

formulations, supportive options or identified areas of need, either directly

with children and families or as part of supervision. This finding was

supported by Tobias (2018) and Pellegrini's (2009) case studies, which also

identified that genograms highlighted areas for interventions. Case

formulations are an important part of educational psychology practice as they

are linked to the focus for intervention (Beaver, 2011). The findings of the

current study suggest that genograms can be used within the assess and

plan stages of the Assess-Plan-Do-Review approach to educational

psychology practice (SEND Code of Practice, 2015) in terms of assessing

and planning interventions based on case formulations. It is argued by the

researcher that this staged approach is also a helpful reminder of the

necessity to review any interventions, which are planned and delivered based

on case formulations generated from genograms.

4.2.5. Therapeutic Tool

This theme highlighted the potential therapeutic impact of completing a genogram with clients in educational psychology practice, in relation to promoting reflective thinking, empowering clients and identifying areas of strength. A thematic map can be found below to provide the reader with a visual aid of the theme and connected subthemes.

Figure 8: Therapeutic Tool: Perceived Strengths Thematic Map
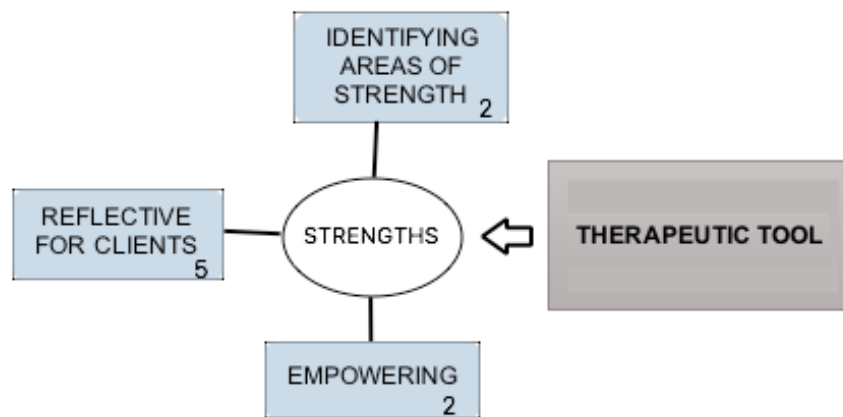
Five of the participants reported that they perceived genograms supported clients to be reflective about their families, think about things that they may have considered before and enable new narratives to emerge, which could be contributing to current or historical circumstances. This suggests that the process of completing a genogram can be a therapeutic experience for clients in educational psychology practice, which can promote change through reflective thinking about their family. For example, consideration of who they have got around them and to reflect upon how that might have impacted upon their' feelings. This finding was supported within all of the reviewed literature (Alexander et al., 2018; Pellegrini, 2009; Rempel et al., 2007; Schalkwyk,

2007; Swainson & Tasker, 2005; Tobias, 2018), which identified that

genograms enabled reflective consideration of family histories.

In addition, genograms were perceived by the participants in the current study

to promote reflective thinking about a child and their family for professionals,

either as part of a reflecting team or in professional consultation. The findings

of this study therefore suggest that genograms can also be used as a tool to

promote multi-professional and multi-disciplinary work in educational

psychology practice, which was not highlighted as a strength within the

literature review.

Furthermore, two of the participants reported that completing a genogram

was empowering for clients, especially if they were asked to draw the

genogram themselves. This suggests an emancipatory element of using a

genogram with clients, which may provide an additional therapeutic benefit of

genograms in educational psychology practice. This finding was supported by

Alexander, Calaghan and Fellin's (2018) study, which also identified an

empowering element of genograms, which was experienced by participants.

Two of the participants in the current study reported that genograms

supported them to identify strengths in a child's family, as part of their

assessments: for example, positives in the family system such as supportive

relationships or people that could help with interventions. Within the

descriptive literature, genograms have been identified as a therapeutic

intervention, which can facilitate change (McGoldrick et al., 2008). This

finding was also supported within the reviewed literature, where four of the

studies also found that the genograms enabled family strengths, resources

and possibilities for change to be identified (Alexander, Calaghan & Fellin,

2018; Pellegrini's, 2009; Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner, 2007 & Tobias,

2018).

Beaver (2011) argues that often clients assume that they do not have the

resources to resolve a problem or identify a solution. However, the findings of

the current study suggest that genograms can be used as a tool to support

clients to recognise strengths and qualities within their families, which in itself

can have an impact upon the presenting problem. Additionally, the findings

suggest that genograms could also be used alongside a solution focused

brief-therapy approach, which aims to construct solutions with clients through

identifying strengths and focusing on positives, and looking for exceptions

and solutions (Walter & Peller, 2013).

In recent years, there has been a revived interest in the use of therapeutic

educational psychology practice (Hoyne & Cunningham, 2019) and the

findings from the current study indicate strengths in the ability of genograms

to be used as a therapeutic tool within educational psychology practice.

Following changes embedded in the SEN Code of Practice (2015), the role of

educational psychologists now explicitly incorporates social, emotional and

mental health needs, and there is increasing interest in this area. There is

also scope for educational psychologists to increase the work they do with

individual pupils through therapeutic work in schools (Atkinson et *al.,* 2012;

MacKay, 2007). Educational psychologists represent a well-trained and

appropriate professional to fill this role. To enable this however, services may

need to invest further in the development of educational psychologists to

ensure they are working in safe and competent ways (Wade, 2016). This will

be further considered in the knowledge, experience and training section of

this chapter. Working therapeutically will also be discussed in relation to

systemic considerations in current context in section 4.2.9. below.

Finally, professional guidelines state that educational psychologists need to

be aware of and acknowledge the impact of assessment processes and

activities on the child or young person (DECP, 2002, p.25) and this is an

important consideration for educational psychologists, who may also be using

genograms with clients outside of a therapeutic space. This connects closely

with the ethical considerations theme, which will be discussed in section

4.2.7.

4.2.6. Specific Areas of Need

This theme encompassed specific areas of need identified by the participants

during the interviews. A thematic map can be found below to provide the

reader with a visual aid of the theme and connected subthemes, in relation to

the two research questions. The thematic map also demonstrates the linked

sub-themes 'Children Looked After' and 'Vulnerable Groups'.

Figure 9: Specific Areas of Need: Perceived Strengths and Limitations

Thematic Map
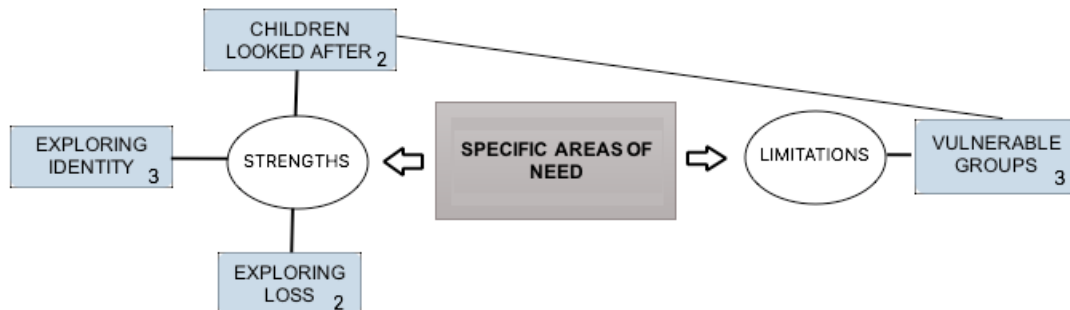
Participants in the current study highlighted that genograms were a helpful

tool for: exploring specific areas of need in educational psychology practice

including; loss of family members through separation or divorce, children

looked after by local authority care and for exploring identity, in relation to the

child's family of origin and significant adults in their life, if they were

experiencing emotional distress or confusion, in relation this. In contrast to the

strengths identified, three of the participants in the current study also reported

that it can be challenging to use genograms with "vulnerable groups" of

people including children looked after in local authority care, refugees or

emotionally vulnerable clients.

Two of the participants identified that genograms were a helpful tool to

explore loss of family members through separation and divorce. In current

context, separation and divorce of parents are highly prevalent and therefore

likely to impact upon many children whom educational psychologists work

with. It is estimated that 42% of marriages in England and Wales now end in

divorce (Office of National Statistics, 2018). Statistics for parental separation

are unknown as there is no formal registration of cohabitation, but it is thought

that out of the over 11 million children in England, three million will experience

a parental separation during their childhood (Bailey, Thoburn & Timms, 2011).

Separation or divorce of parents has been highlighted by research to impact

upon a child's emotional well-being and behavioural presentation (Bacon &

McKenzie, 2004). The findings of the current study indicate that genograms

may be a helpful tool to explore the impact of loss on children in educational

psychology practice.

Two of the participants in the current study, also suggested that genograms

are a helpful tool when working with children looked after in local authority

care, to support the exploration key attachment relationships within the child's

family of origin relationships or foster family. Children who have been affected

by traumatic experiences in their key attachment relationships can exhibit

insecurities in their relationships with themselves and others which can

impact upon their emotional, behavioural and social presentation, as well as

their learning in school (Bomber, 2007). It is more likely that children looked

after have experienced trauma in their key attachment relationships and

children looked after are four times more likely to have special needs

requiring assessment, support or therapy (Jackson & Simon, 2005). Local

authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote children looked after in local

authority care's welfare which includes promoting the child's educational

achievement (Department for Education, 2018). Children looked after are

therefore highly relevant to educational psychology practice. The findings of

the current study suggest that genograms can be used to explore attachment

relationships with a child to help understand the impact of these on their

current presentation.

The findings also suggested that genograms can be used to explore identity

with clients. Identity is the way that we see ourselves and can be impacted

upon by attachments with key adults and the messages that are received

from them about ourselves (Beaver, 2011). The findings of the current study

suggest that genograms can be used as a tool to explore how key

attachments have impacted upon how a child views themselves and help a

child to answer the question of *who are you?* in relation to family origin or

other important people (Beaver, 2011; Ravenette, 1992). Identity is closely

connected with a child's sense of belonging and acceptance with key

attachments, which is a key area of need identified in Maslow's Hierarchy of

Needs (1954). Maslow (1954) argued that a sense of belonging and

acceptance with key attachments needs to be achieved before higher order

needs can be achieved such as esteem, cognitive and self-actualisation.

Identity and belonging are therefore highly important to educational

psychology, as motivation for success in higher-order needs is reliant upon

emotional needs being met (Beaver, 2011).

Within the literature reviewed, genograms were also identified as a beneficial

tool for exploring specific issues including; selective mutism, eating

difficulties, medical concerns, homophobia and domestic violence (Alexander,

Calaghan and Fellin, 2018; Pellegrini, 2009; Rempel, Neufeld & Kushner,

2007; Swainson & Tasker, 2005 & Tobias, 2018). Although not highlighted by

the participants in the current study, these are areas of need that educational

psychologists might encounter within their practice and the included literature

suggests that genograms might therefore be a helpful tool to use in this

instance.

Within the current study, three of the participants identified nuances in relation

to using genograms connected to how they might be experienced as helpful

or potentially distressing by vulnerable groups. For example, Holly

commented "I think you'd have to be very careful… Because in one sense it

might be quite liberating for them, but on the other hand it could be very

distressing" (Holly, p.7) in relation to using genograms with children looked

after in local authority care. This suggests that genograms may be

experienced significantly differently depending upon the client, educational

psychologist or context. It is therefore suggested that it is important for

genograms to be used with caution with vulnerable client groups, as part of

educational psychology practice, whilst using professional judgement

regarding whether a genogram is appropriate to use or not, and holding in

mind professional practice ethical guidelines. Ethical considerations

highlighted within the findings of the current study and further consideration of

professional judgement in the use of genograms within educational

psychology practice will be discussed in the next section.

4.2.7. Ethical Considerations

This theme encompassed ethical considerations raised by the participants, in relation to using genograms within educational psychology practice and included the sub-themes; emotive, exposing and empathetic use. A thematic map can be found below to provide the reader with a visual aid of the theme and connected subthemes, in relation to the two research questions. The thematic map also demonstrates the linked sub-themes 'Empathetic Use' and 'Emotive'.

Figure 10: Ethical Considerations: Perceived Limitations Thematic Map
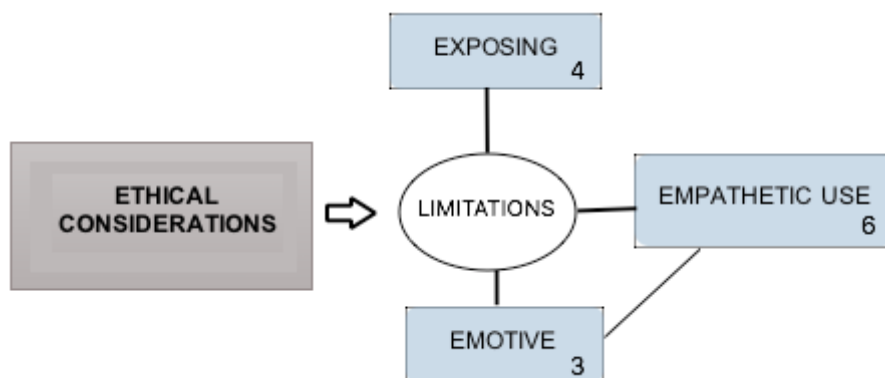
Within the current study, three of the participants reported that completing a genogram might be experienced as emotive by clients, due to difficult family circumstances such as painful experiences, difficult relationships with family members or traumatic childhoods. Additionally, four of the participants commented that genograms might be experienced as exposing, due to eliciting potentially sensitive information, which consequently could prevent engagement with the task. These findings were supported by several of the studies included in the literature review, which highlighted the emotive impact and potential risk of emotional upset or anxiety in relation to completing a

genogram (Alexander, Callaghan & Fellin, 2018; Swainson & Tasker, 2005;

Tobias, 2018). Alexander, Callaghan & Fellin (2018) also highlighted an

important ethical consideration when exploring personal issues or using a

therapeutic tool outside of a therapeutic space. The identified perceived client

experiences have implications for ethical use of genograms in educational

psychology practice and suggest that it would be helpful to manage the level

of risk when deciding on whether or not to use genograms with potentially

vulnerable clients. Furthermore, the findings highlight the need to consider

when, where and how genograms are being used with clients in educational

psychology practice, if they are not being used within a therapeutic space.

Six of the participants in the currently study commented on the importance of

using genograms empathetically with clients in educational psychology

practice. For example, being mindful that completing a genogram may be

challenging for some clients to access, considering how the task is contracted

for and the importance of responding to clients sensitively. These findings

suggest that the approach used with genograms is of high importance in

educational psychology practice and connects closely with the theme

'Engaging Clients and Building Rapport', as discussed earlier in the chapter.

This sub-theme is connected with the aforementioned sub-theme 'Emotive',

as it is likely that the clients' experiences of completing a genogram will be

affected by how they are responded to by educational psychologists.

Within the literature review, further ethical considerations were also identified

in relation to using genograms including; confidentiality due to including

multiple family members on the drawing, which may affect participant

anonymity. As discussed in the 'Gathering Information and Assessment'

theme section in this chapter, this has important implications for feeding back

written information to clients in educational psychology practice.

All educational psychologists should be aware of and adhere to the British

Psychological Society's *Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines*

(DECP, 2002, p.11), *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics* (HCPC,

2016) and the *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (BPS, 2009) in all areas of their

practice. Additionally, in 2016 the BPS published *Delivering Psychological*

Therapies in Schools and Communities guidance. These guideline

documents set out to provide a framework to support professional judgement

and should be held in mind when using genograms in educational psychology

practice (BPS, 2016).

4.2.7.1. Professional Judgement in the Use of Genograms

Ethical and professional practice guidelines are used as a basis for

consideration in the process of decision-making, together with the needs of

clients and specific circumstances in educational psychology practice (BPS,

2009). However, it is argued based on the identified limitations in the current

study that no guidance can replace the need for educational psychologists to

exercise their own professional judgement in relation to deciding whether or

not to use a genogram with a client (BPS, 2009). The findings of the current

study also highlight the need to consider when, where and how genograms

are being used with clients in educational psychology practice.

Professional judgement is defined as the application of accumulated

knowledge, skills and experience gained through a relevant training and

supervision, informed by professional practice guidelines and ethical

standards, which results in making informed decisions (judgements) about the

what should be done to best serve clients (Ivan, 2016). However, as

described by Rose in her interview, a professional judgement decision "is not

really scientific" and depends upon "what the case" is alongside "how you

feel" (p.8). Such a concept, as described by Rose, is not quantifiable and

requires educational psychologists to consider different factors such as

specific client needs and goals, situational context and relationships, and to

respond appropriately based on available information (Cohen, 2015). The

findings from the current study suggest that this process may be informed

through obtaining informed consent, building rapport and working

collaboratively with clients, and maintaining competent practice through

appropriate training and professional development.

Professional judgement is a skill which is developed and refined through

ongoing practical experience, training, reflective practice and supervision

(Cohen, 2015; Martindale, 2011). If educational psychologists are

experiencing ethical or professional practice dilemmas in relation to using a

genogram with a client, it may be helpful to consult the documents listed

above and/or to talk through the situation with other experienced colleagues

to inform their professional judgement and ensure they are working in safe

and competent ways (BPS, 2016; Wade, 2016).

Finally, to build an understanding of the tool and inform professional

judgement, the researcher would recommend practitioners completing their

own personal genogram, as part of their training in using the tool, to offer a

reflexive insight in to the process and experience. The researcher completed

her own personal genogram as part of her systemic practitioner training and

found the insight gleaned to be invaluable.

4.2.8. Practitioner Competence

This theme describes how practitioner competence in relation to knowledge,

training and experience was perceived by participants to impact upon

genogram use within educational psychology practice. A thematic map can be

found below to provide the reader with a visual aid of the theme and

connected subthemes, in relation to the two research questions. The thematic

map also demonstrates the linked sub-themes 'Knowledge, Training and

Experience of Using Genograms', which was identified as both a strength and

limitation of using genograms in educational psychology practice.

Figure 11: Practitioner Competence: Perceived Strengths and Limitations

Thematic Map
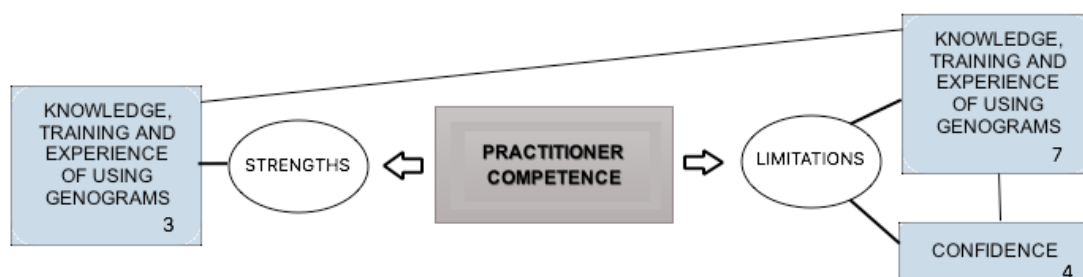
Educational psychologists are required to consider advances in the evidence base, and maintain technical and practical skills, and knowledge, as well as acknowledging the limits of their competence (HCPC, 2015). Based on this required competency in the profession, it is understandable to the research that practitioner competence was an area reflected upon by the participants in the current study.

Three of the participants identified knowledge, training and experience in the use of genograms, as a perceived strength of using genograms in educational psychology practice. Additionally, two of the participants reported that they had completed a part-time post graduate diploma in systemic family therapy after they qualified as educational psychologists, which embedded the use of genograms as part of their educational psychology practices.

All of the participants in the current study identified insufficient knowledge, training and experience of using genograms, as a potential limitation of using genograms within education psychology practice. Additionally, four of the participants identified their confidence in using genograms, as a barrier to using them as part of their educational psychology practice. This limitation was also highlighted in the literature in relation to lack of appropriate training (Alexander et al., 2018; Rempel et al., 2007; Pellegrini, 2009). The knowledge, training and experience that participants had regarding genograms tended to impact upon their views, and for those with less experience of using genograms or using the tool less often in their practice, it led to less confidence and increased anxiety in relation to using the tool.

Within the reviewed literature, Tobias (2018) argued that the genogram

approach would benefit from further research, examining the claims made

about its usefulness in a robust and trustworthy way, using some formalised

methods of enquiry in educational psychology practice. The literature

regarding genograms is predominantly descriptive and limited empirical

research has been conducted regarding genogram use, which might limit

opportunities for continued professional development through reading for

educational psychologists, who are interested in developing their knowledge

in this area. It is likely therefore that the lack of previous research conducted

in this area will have impacted upon educational psychologists' ability to

develop their knowledge in genogram use and ability to justify using the tool

based on research evidence (Fox, 2003).

Another important factor, which could have impacted upon knowledge,

training and experience of the participants was the time of training as an

educational psychologist. In 2006 the training criteria for educational

psychologist was extended to include applicants from a range professional

backgrounds (in addition to those with teaching experience), which has

created a more diverse profession in terms of previous experiences. In

current educational psychology professional doctoral courses, training in

systemic techniques is now included as part of many educational psychology

professional doctorate training courses e.g. Institute of Education, Tavistock

and Portman NHS Trust and University of East London (Cane, 2016;

Campion, 1984; Dowling & Osborne, 2003; Greenhouse, 2013; Jacobs, 2012;

Pellegrini, 2009). However, it is likely that there are differing levels of input across training providers nationally and differences over time, which may impact upon educational psychologists' theoretical knowledge, experience and confidence in applying systemic techniques in their practice. Within the current study's sample, the participants had differing training qualifications (Masters and Doctorate) based on their time of training and also were trained at different training providers, which is likely to have impacted upon their learning experiences in both educational psychology practice and genogram use. However, when considering if any specific groupings regarding educational psychology training could be identified in the current study based on the information shared by participants, no relationship groupings were identified. The number of years' experience working as an educational psychologist, also did not seem to impact upon the findings.

Prior or ongoing training in the use of genograms with participants was identified as a potential barrier of using genograms in the reviewed literature. As part of his discussion and reflections about the limited published literature around the use of systemic techniques in educational psychology practice, Pellegrini (2009) reported that further training in systemic ways of working can be expensive, if self-funded. Indeed, this was the experience of the researcher when they self-funded the systemic family therapy post-graduate diploma, which may make external further training in the use of genograms inaccessible for some practitioners.

Pellegrini (2009) also identified a need for more INSET training and

supervision for educational psychologists, as part of continued professional

development in the use of systemic techniques. Educational psychologists

may therefore not feel adequately trained and therefore competent to use

genograms, as part of their practice. In Tobias' (2018) study, nearly 10 years

later, it appears that this is still the case and genograms are not a commonly

used assessment or intervention tool in educational psychology. However, the

current study suggests something different; training in the use of genograms

is now emerging in doctoral training courses.

The importance of training was also discussed as a potential limitation in

Rempel, Neufeld and Kushner's (2007) and Alexander, Callaghan & Fellin

(2018) studies, in terms of the importance of researchers being trained to

respond to potential disclosure of sensitive or emotive issues from

participants whilst using the genogram as a research tool. Within educational

psychology practice, educational psychologists should ethically only use

assessment methods that they are competent in (unless they are receiving

appropriate supervision) (DECP, 2002, p.16). Training and practice of using

genograms would therefore need to feature as part of educational psychology

training, to promote the use of genograms within educational psychology

practice. Upon reflection of the current study's findings, the researcher has

wondered whether rather than the theoretical training in the use of

genograms, it is therefore perhaps opportunities to practice and master the

skill of using genograms competently and thus build confidence, that is the

dominant limitation in current educational psychology context.

It is argued by Burnham (1992) that the identified perceived limitations may be the result of educational psychologists borrowing tools from systemic family therapy, without a comprehensive understanding of the underpinning theory due to limited training and working outside of a family therapy clinic (Burnham, 1992). Burnham's (1992) article helpfully describes the different levels of approach-method- technique in systemic family therapy, which distinguishes between a systemic family therapy approach (family as a system), family therapy methods (different ways of practising family therapy) and family therapy techniques (different activities within a family therapy method). An approach may be considered as more abstract than the levels of method and technique, in the sense that techniques such as implementing a genogram are more immediately visible than an approach or method (Burnham, 1992).

Specific to teaching and learning as an educational psychology student, within the literature review, Schalkwyk (2007) found that creating a genogram enabled students to construct theoretical knowledge about genograms and develop new skills as active participants, in a way that went beyond textbook learning or passively receiving information. These findings suggest that training in the use of genograms could be beneficial beyond the direct application with clients and also develop reflexive thinking and understanding of psychological concepts for educational psychologists. It is argued by the researcher that this would be a helpful consideration for training providers.

4.2.9. Systemic Considerations

This theme comprised of systemic considerations in current educational

psychology context, which were identified by the participants as either

strengths, or limitations of using genograms within educational psychology

practice. A thematic map can be found below to provide the reader with a

visual aid of the theme and connected subthemes, in relation to the two

research questions. The thematic map also demonstrates the linked sub-

themes.

Figure 12: Systemic Considerations in Current Context: Perceived Strengths

and Limitations Thematic Map
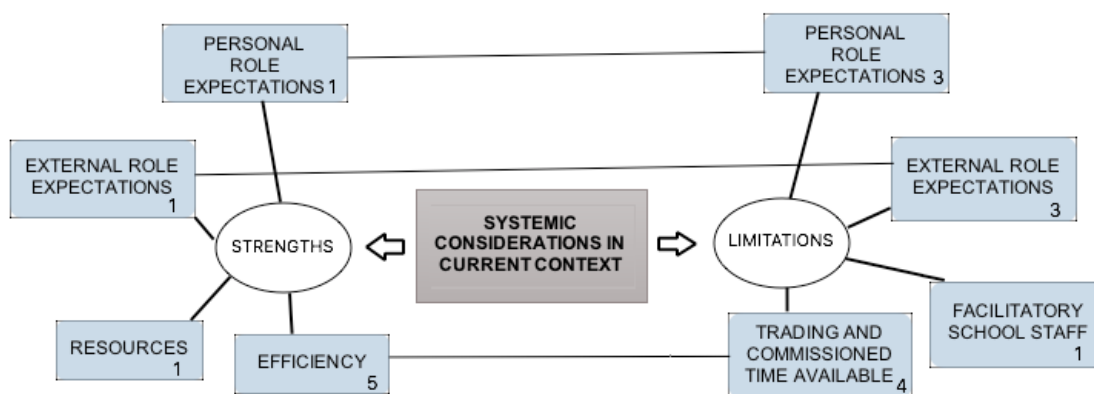
Personal role expectations were identified as a perceived strength of using

genograms by one participant, who described that from her perspective the

educational psychologist role is systemic and underpinned by theories such

as Bronfenbrenner (1979), which impacted positively on her ability to use

genograms within educational psychology practice. In contrast however, three

of the participants reported that personal role expectations were a limitation of

using genograms in educational psychology practice. This finding was

supported by Pellegrini's (2009) study, which suggested educational

psychologists' personal expectations of their role may also be a limitation.

Positively perceived external role expectations on working systemically to

support children and families in educational psychology practice, was also

identified as a facilitating factor by one of the participants. However, three

participants reported that external role expectations, which did not view the

role of educational psychologists as working systemically, created limitations

around the use of genograms. For example, Holly commented, "I think some

people have a misconception that educational psychologists just look at

cognition (Holly, p.6). This finding was supported by Pellegrini's (2009)

findings in the literature review, which also suggested that the perceived role

of educational psychologists and their unique contribution, may prevent

educational psychologists using systemic theory in their work.

Previously, educational psychology services tended to hold an assessment-

focused role in schools but over time the role has been restructured, and the

distinctive contribution of educational psychologists in the emerging context of

trading seems to be uncertain nationally (Lee & Woods, 2017). This has led to

educational psychologists and commissioners experiencing some confusion

about the distinctive contribution of educational psychologists (Lee & Woods,

2017), which may account for the identified limitations in relation to personal

and external role expectations in current context in the current study. This has

implications for practice in relation to educational psychologists developing

their understanding of genograms to be able to facilitate the understanding of

commissioners about the tool's strengths and limitations.

Trading has enabled schools to have greater autonomy over services they

commission, which has had a direct impact on the educational psychology

role and potential service delivery (BPS, 2016). Educational psychology

services have been required to respond to context to generate income and

different schools may value different contributions from educational

psychologists and therefore contract and negotiate different services (Ashton

& Roberts, 2006; Lee & Woods, 2017). Therefore, whilst educational

psychology practice is partly determined according to national context; local

context and individual service commissioner needs also impact upon the

delivery of educational psychology practice (Tobias, 2018).

Two of the participants, identified trading of educational psychology services

in the local authority, as a potential limitation regarding the use of genograms

due to schools commissioning time and therefore influencing how this time

will be used. This finding suggests that both schools and educational

psychologists may not have a full understanding of the benefits of using a

genogram as part of educational psychology practice, which could support the

justification of using the tool as part of commissioned time. This may be partly

accounted for by the current limited research evidence base. However,

educational psychologists are responsible for contributing to research into the

effectiveness of therapeutic approaches and translating key research findings

to practitioners working in schools and communities (BPS, 2016, p.5).

Within the current study, Rose reported that if a presenting issue is in relation to exploring family dynamics, she felt able to prioritise the use of a genogram. However, three of the participants identified prioritising, as a potential limitation around using genograms in educational psychology practice. For example, whether a referral form has been completed in advance or needs to be completed as part of an initial consultation with a family dictated what needed to be prioritised in the time available. This highlights the competing pressures within the educational psychology role.

In addition to the identified challenges, the move towards traded services has also created opportunities for a more personal and therapeutic approaches to practice (Lee & Woods, 2017). In a recent study conducted by Lee and Wood's (2017), educational psychologists reported that there had been a positive evolution of the role in relation to the context of trading, where educational psychologists have opportunities to use skills or interests that they have, or wish to develop. The move towards trading has offered opportunities for educational psychologists to engage delivering psychological therapies such as genograms. There are however implications due to the way in which educational psychologists are viewed by some commissioners and a need to address some of the traditional associations made with educational psychologists, and move towards becoming a profession more highly regarded in the area of mental health, support and promotion (Greig, MacKay, Roffey & Williams, 2016).

Trading is directly linked to commissioned time available for service delivery

and four the participants in the current study identified that time available, was

a potential limitation regarding using genograms in their practice. Educational

psychologists are required to be able to "recognise the need to manage their

own workload and resources effectively and be able to practise accordingly"

(HCPC, 2015, p.7). Four of the participants reported that a strength of

genograms is that they are an efficient tool. Additionally, Holly reported that

genograms do not require much physical resource to complete. She

commented, "I don't think I'd need lots of materials to be able to do a

genogram. I think it's something that you can use with what you've got with

you" (Holly, p.6). For example, a pen and paper. However, Holly also reported

that resources available, in terms of availability of school staff, presented a

limitation to her use of genograms in educational psychology practice. These

findings have positive implications for educational psychologists, who wish to

use a genogram within their practice.

However, the amount of time available or needed to complete a genogram

with participants was also highlighted as a potential challenge of using them

within the literature review. Pellegrini (2009) highlighted the need for ongoing

contact with clients over time, which may be difficult for educational

psychologists to organise. This was indeed the case in Tobias's (2018) case

study, where she completed 2 two-hour home visits to complete the

genogram with a family. Furthermore, Schalkwyk's (2007) study found that a

single lecture was not enough time to complete the activity and students were

required to complete their genograms at home and Alexander, Callaghan &

Fellin (2018) found completing a genogram with their participants to be time consuming. This is connected to the earlier points made regarding the strengths of information gathering via a genogram, which perhaps would not be possible within the time constraints of educational psychology practice and in addition to meeting the purpose of consultations.

4.3. Strengths and Limitations of the Research Study

4.3.1. Strengths of the Research Study

This study has successfully gained the views of a group of educational psychologists regarding their perceived strengths and limitations of using genograms in educational psychology practice. This study has therefore been able to extend the knowledge base in this area and develop a better understanding of the factors influencing the use of genograms in educational psychology practice. The study was able to capture new information about the strengths and limitations of using genograms within educational psychology practice and therefore make a distinctive contribution to the profession.

Participants shared a range of perspectives on the strengths and limitations of using genograms within educational psychology practice and the findings of the thematic analysis identified a number of themes including: engaging clients and building rapport; information gathering and assessment; case formulation; therapeutic tool; specific areas of need; ethical considerations; and practitioner competence.

Additionally, participants identified that current systemic considerations in relation to local and national context play a role in relation to using genograms within their practice. Based on the identified strengths of genograms, it has been argued that genograms can make a valuable contribution to educational psychology assessment, case formulation, intervention and therapeutic toolboxes, with a diverse range of clients.

The findings from this research can also be used to understand barriers and limitations around using genograms within educational psychology practice. Based on the identified limitations it is argued that an individualised and considered approach to using genograms within educational psychology practice, would be recommended as good practice. The findings have also highlighted the importance of considering how the tool is used with clients. Training in the use of genograms is now included as part of many educational psychology professional doctorate training courses. However, there is currently very little published literature in relation to the use of genograms in educational psychology practice and limited opportunities to practice using the tool seemed to impact upon the competence and confidence of the participants in the current study.

A key strength of this research has been the qualitative methodological approach adopted via semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013), which was implemented correspondingly to the quality criteria for qualitative research and enabled the overall aims for the research to be achieved. The sample size of seven educational psychologists

was appropriate for an interview study (Bryman, 2008), and enabled the

researcher to consider each account in great depth. A qualitative

methodology enabled the views of educational psychologists to be heard and

clearly represented in the findings (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Finally, the study was an ethical piece of research, which underwent rigorous

approval procedures. Adaptations made to the study design and materials,

show how decisions were made to ensure this (BPS, 2009).

4.3.2. Limitations of the Research Study

Alongside the strengths of the current research, it is also important to

consider the current study's bias and limitations. This section of the chapter

will first discuss potential interpretation bias, sample of participants and

inclusion criteria. The section will then consider limitations of the methodology

and underpinning philosophical stance.

4.3.2.1. Sample

One of the clear limitations of this study was the sample size of participants.

Whilst the aim of this study was exploratory, rather than attempting to explain

or generalise findings, it is unlikely that the study has provided a complete

picture of the strengths and limitations of genograms in educational

psychology practice. It is also important to note that participation in the study

was voluntary and perspectives were therefore not obtained from potential

participants, who may have an alternative opinion regarding the strengths and

limitations of genograms within educational psychology practice.

Furthermore, it is recognised that the sample of participants in the current study is not a representative of the educational psychology profession for many reasons. For example, the way they were recruited, gender, and their geographical location in inner-London. The researcher's choice of a small sample size of seven educational psychologists was based on convenience sampling and the time limitations around completing the study. Nevertheless, this could be perceived as a limitation of this research study as the findings do not represent the perspectives of educational psychologists' using genograms nationally or in other local authorities, and cannot be regarded as generalisable. The researcher's aim, however, was not to produce data that would be claimed to be representative of the educational psychology profession as a whole.

Further limitations to be considered when interpreting the results was the limited diversity of the participant group, which does not allow for generalisation. The gender bias could be deemed a methodological limitation of the data set, due to all participants being female, although it should be remembered that regardless of gender each participant would bring a different set of views (Willig, 2013). Furthermore, the sample was predominantly white females and although this is generally reflective of the educational psychology profession nationally, future research could consider using a larger sample size and wider representative sample across different settings.

Moreover, the included sample was limited to one educational psychology service, which has possible implications for the influence of localised training and service policy. Importantly however, the amount of data gathered from these participants was substantial and, the researcher would argue, provided the basis for a rich exploration of the research area. This is consistent with Fossey et al.'s (2002) view that "qualitative sampling may involve a small number of participants, while the amount of data gathered can be large..." (p.726). Furthermore, Yardley (2008) argues that since context can share some features, even if other features are quite dissimilar, generalisability in qualitative research is potentially wide- ranging and flexible. In line with this, it is hoped that although the findings from this study may not be exactly replicated in any other sample or context, insights derived can be usefully applied in similar contexts (Yardley, 2008).

A further limitation of the research was the threshold of inclusion criterion for the study being that the participants, who were required to have used a genogram within their practice within the last year, which may have skewed the results in favour of the strengths of genograms and away from those that experience limitations regarding the use of genograms within educational psychology practice. This decision was made to ensure that participants had engaged with genograms in educational psychology practice in recent context, rather than offering hypothetical suggestions. However, it is recognised that educational psychologists who had not used a genogram in their practice recently, may have experienced more significant limitations in

relation to use genograms in their practice and these perspectives are not

represented in this study.

4.3.2.2. Methodology

The researcher's role as a trainee educational psychologist within the service

where participants were identified, was a potential limitation in the current

study and may have shaped the data collected. This was addressed however,

by developing good rapport with participants and ensuring confidentiality. The

researcher believed the pre-existing relationships supported the

communication between them and the participants however, it was difficult to

ascertain whether this impacted upon participation and results positively or

negatively: for example, it is possible that some of the included participants

felt more comfortable sharing their perspectives, due to the pre-established

professional relationships, or in contrast, they may have felt a pressure to

please due to this. The researcher remained aware of such issues and

attempted to respond appropriately throughout the research study. It is

argued that one measure of the researcher's success in managing this, is

reflected in the depth of the data produced and the participants' willingness to

share their struggles as well as their successes in using genograms in

educational psychology practice.

A potential unintended consequence of obtaining the views through semi-

structured interviews is that the initiating questions were constrained within

parameters imbued with the values of the researcher (Winter, 2000).

However, steps were taken to minimise the impact of this through co-creation

of the semi-structured interview schedule with the research supervisor. It is

also argued that semi-structured interviews allowed scope for new concepts

to emerge, which were informed by the participants. This was further

prompted through asking participants if there was anything else that they

would like to say regarding their use of genograms before concluding the

interviews. Transparency has been promoted regarding the questions used

through including the interview schedule in Appendix 7.

A further limitation is that many of the identified perceived limitations were in

relation to the perceived experiences of clients. It would be helpful to explore

the views of clients in relation to their lived experiences of genograms as part

of educational psychology practice in future research.

4.3.2.3. Analysis

The data collected was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-stage

thematic analysis. Thematic Analysis is a flexible methodology and it is

important that researchers are clear in their approach and the theory and

methodology require rigorous application (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Many of the

limitations of thematic analysis are linked to poorly conducted analysis or

inappropriate research questions, however it is argued that the current study

took steps to avoid this (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, the flexibility of the

method allows for a wide range of analytic options, which means that the

interpretations of data can be broad (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Despite the

identified limitations, it was decided that thematic analysis was the best

methodology to answer the research questions due to its flexible approach

and ability to be used across a range of epistemologies and research

questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Further, the inductive analysis used in the

current study meant weight was given to the views of individual participants

and a rigorous six step approach was followed to produce an insightful

analysis, which has answered the research questions.

4.3.2.4. Trustworthiness

Careful consideration was given throughout the research process to Yardley's

(2000) principles of trustworthiness. Nevertheless, although this study was

supervised by a research supervisor, the study was conducted by the lead

researcher for their professional doctorate research it is likely that the

researcher's values, personal experiences and assumptions might have

impacted on the way data was collected, analysed and interpreted. The

claims of the analysis are therefore limited to this level of analysis and

interpretation.

The researcher's pre-training in genogram use and pre-established

relationship with the participants are likely to have influenced the study

consciously or unconsciously. In order to address the question of reflexivity,

the researcher's own reflections, assumptions and experiences throughout

the data collection and analysis stages were recorded in a research diary and

in memos which were shared and discussed with the researcher's supervisor.

Related to the researcher's critical realist approach, the researcher's biases

and preconceptions would have been a potential limitation to the research,

regardless of the methodology chosen. This may have caused bias even had

the researcher employed objective measures.

4.3.2.5. Philosophical Stance

Finally, the critical realist philosophical stance underpinning this research,

indicates that this study is bound to the time, socio-political and the specific

contexts in which it took place. Therefore, this study is bound by these

factors, which limits generalisability of the findings to other contexts.

4.4. Future Research

The strengths and limitations of genograms would benefit from further

research, examining the claims in the current study. Future research would

also be useful to continue to explore the findings of the current study. In a

larger study design, it would be useful to explore the views of more

participants. Future research may also focus on the use of genograms in

educational psychology practice, from a range of research paradigms.

Additionally, it might be helpful in future research to explore the use of

genograms in more depth in a specific area of educational psychology

practice. For example, supervision or the use of genograms within private

educational psychology practice. Finally, many of the perceived strengths and

limitations were perceived client experiences and it might be helpful for future

research to consider the lived experiences of clients in relation to the use of

genograms in educational psychology practice.

4.4. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have aimed to elaborate and consolidate the findings developed during the process of this research, as well as situate it against the existing literature and consider implications for educational psychology practice. In line with previous research literature, the findings from the current study generally reported positively on the use of genogram in educational psychology practice and identified a broad range of perceived strengths of genograms. Participants also reported using genograms across several areas of educational psychology practice including; consultation, assessment, direct work with children and families, supervision, group supervision, reflecting teams and multi-professional work. Within the previous research literature there were very few identified limitations of genograms. Within the current study, the participants highlighted similar challenges in relation to genograms and also highlighted unique challenges to using genograms within educational psychology practice within current context. The strengths and limitations of the study have been discussed and ideas for future research have also been considered and discussed.

5. Conclusion

This exploratory piece of research was aimed at eliciting the views of educational psychologists regarding the strengths and limitations of genograms in educational psychology practice. The findings of the current study aimed to fill research gaps that were identified in this field of research and the study represents a contribution to the knowledge-base in capturing the voices of seven educational psychologists, working within an inner-London traded local authority. The current study has shed light on the limited knowledge base in this particular area of research and has direct implications for educational psychology practice.

Participants shared a range of perspectives on the strengths and limitations of using genograms within educational psychology practice and the findings of the thematic analysis identified a number of themes including; engaging clients and building rapport, information gathering and assessment, case formulation, therapeutic tool, specific areas of need, ethical considerations and practitioner competence. Additionally, participants identified that current systemic considerations in relation to local and national context play a significant role in relation to using genograms within their practice. The research also identified that educational psychologists were using genograms across many areas of their practice including; consultation, assessment, interventions, supervision, multi-professional work and critical incident response.

Based on the identified strengths of genograms in the current study, it has

been argued that genograms could make a valuable contribution to

educational psychologists' assessment, case formulation, intervention and

therapeutic toolboxes with a diverse range of clients. However, based on the

identified limitations it is also argued that an individualised and considered

approach to using genograms within educational psychology practice, would

be recommended as good practice.

Training in the use of genograms is now included as part of many educational

psychology professional doctorate training courses. However, there is

currently very little published literature in relation to the use of genograms in

educational psychology practice. Implications for training have also been

discussed. This research may be of interest to trainee educational

psychologists and educational psychologists, who would like to develop their

use of genograms within their practice.

Future research would be useful to continue to explore the findings of the

current study. In a larger study design, it would be useful to explore the views

of a greater diversity of participants. Future research may focus on the use of

genograms in educational psychology practice, from a range of research

paradigms. Additionally, it might be helpful in future research to explore the

use of genograms in more depth in a specific area of educational psychology

practice. For example, supervision or the use of genograms within private

educational psychology practice. Finally, many of the perceived strengths and

limitations were perceived client experiences and it might be helpful for future

research to consider the lived experiences of clients in relation to the use of

genograms in educational psychology practice.

This study contributes towards the gap in existent research regarding the use

of genograms in educational psychology practice. It is hoped this knowledge

will assist professionals in having a deeper understanding around the

application of genograms in educational practice, including considerations for

casework and practice. The findings of this study may also open up new ways

of understanding the topic for the profession on a national level and be used

to guide practice or create new solutions for best practice and policy.

Generalising the results of this study will need to be done with caution.

However, it is hoped they will give an indication of how genograms can be

applied in educational psychology practice, in current UK context.

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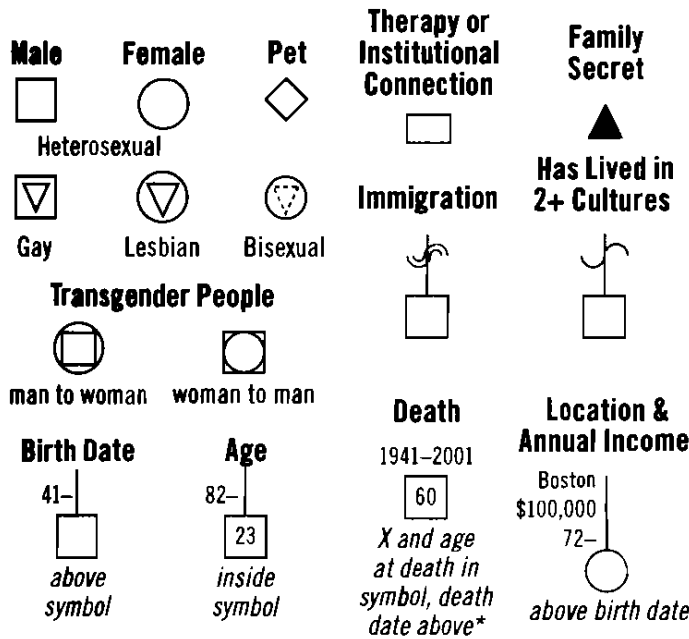(2nd Edition) (p.235-251). London: Sage Publications.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Guidance on the Application of the Genogram (McGoldrick, Gerson and Petry, 2008).

The genogram has not been manualised and it is important to note that the information below is only general guidance on the application of genograms. It is argued that every family is individual and therefore clinical judgment needs to be used to decide which aspects of any particular family's genogram or systemic ideas are explored in more depth.

Basic standardised format:
- Men are symbolized by squares, women by circles.
- In a partnership, men are shown on the left, women on the right with a 'U' shaped line connecting them (see below).
- Children are shown by a line vertically attached to their parents' line (see below).
- Children are drawn from left to right in order of age (eldest on the left, youngest on the right).
- Household membership is shown by circling members living together (see below).
- The 'identified patient' ('IP') is shown by a double lined symbol according to gender (see below) and is written lower than other siblings.
- Details are added, including names, date of marriage/cohabitation (written above the partnership line), date of separation/divorce (by date of marriage/cohabitation), date of birth (above symbol to the left) and age (inside the symbol), date of death (X through the symbol, age at death in symbol, and death date above symbol by date of birth), occupation (under name). Physical health, mental health and addictions are also added using shading of the symbols (see below).
- Relationships between people are illustrated using different connecting lines (see below).
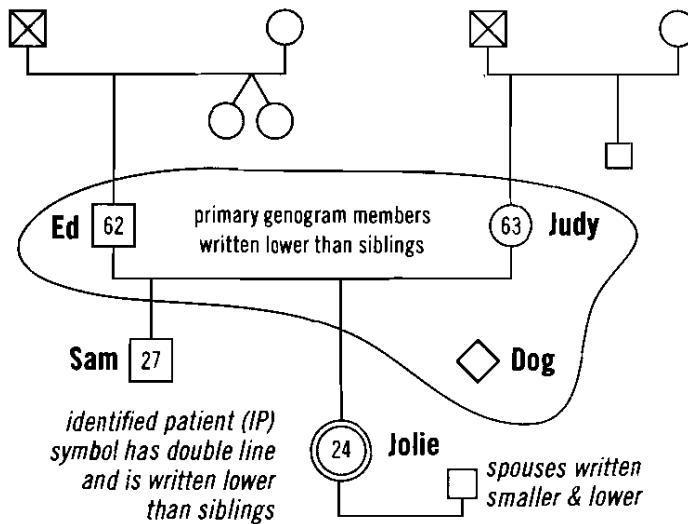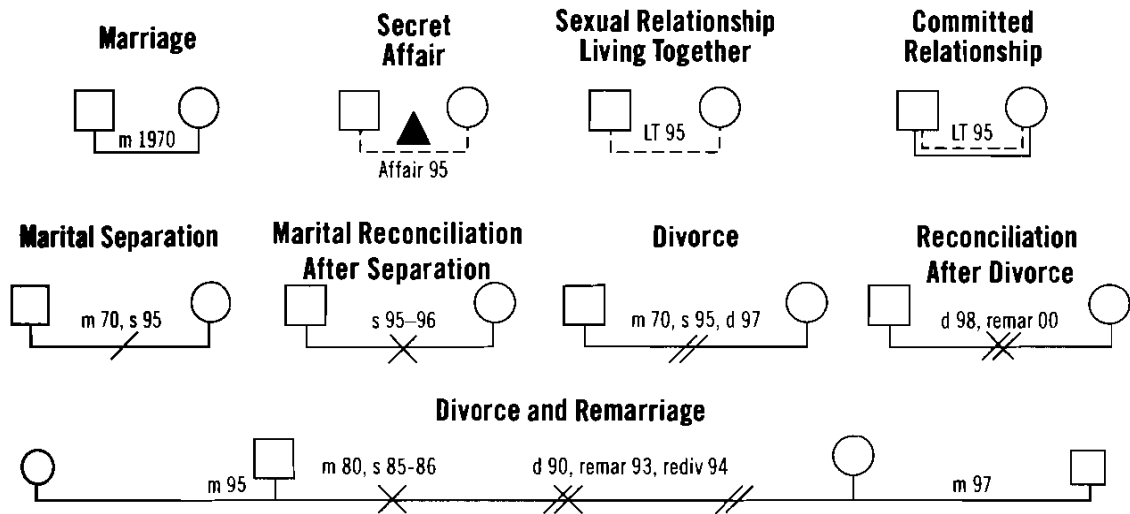
Genogram symbols

Male   **Female**   **Pet**   **Therapy or Institutional Connection**   **Family Secret**

Heterosexual

Gay   Lesbian   Bisexual   **Immigration**   **Has Lived in 2+ Cultures**

Transgender People

man to woman   woman to man

Birth Date   **Age**   **Death**   **Location & Annual Income**

41–   82–   1941–2001   Boston $100,000 72–

23

above symbol   *inside symbol*   60

X and age at death in symbol, death date above*   *above birth date*

*When multiple deceased generators are included, use an X only for untimely death.

Circling household family members
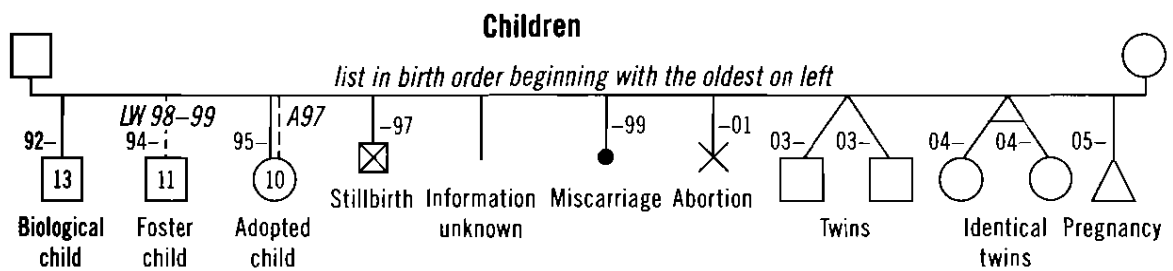
Household shown by circling members living together (couple living with their dog after launching children)

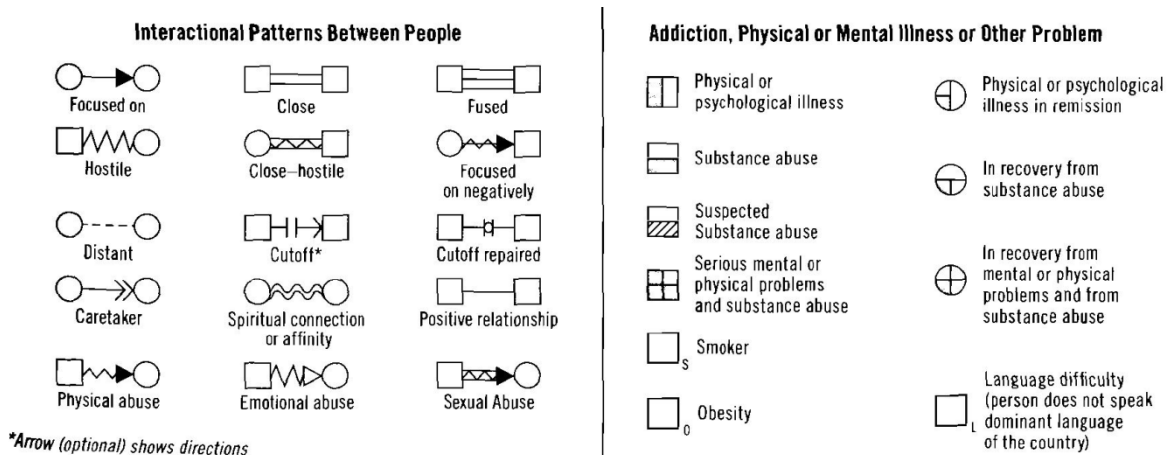Ed 62   primary genogram members written lower than siblings   63 **Judy**

Sam 27   **Dog**

identified patient (IP) symbol has double line and is written lower than siblings   24 **Jolie**   *spouses written smaller & lower*

Depicting couple relationships

Marriage

Secret Affair

Affair 95

Sexual Relationship Living Together

LT 95

Committed Relationship

LT 95

Marital Separation

m 70, s 95

Marital Reconciliation After Separation

s 95–96

Divorce

m 70, s 95, d 97

Reconciliation After Divorce

d 98, remar 00

Divorce and Remarriage

m 95   m 80, s 85-86   d 90, remar 93, rediv 94   m 97

Depicting children

Children

list in birth order beginning with the oldest on left

| 92– | LW 98–99 94–¡ | 95–¦ ¦A97 | –97 | | –99 | –01 | 03–/ 03– | 04–/ 04– | 05– |

13 — Biological child

11 — Foster child

10 — Adopted child

Stillbirth

Information unknown

Miscarriage

Abortion

Twins

Identical twins

Pregnancy

Depicting interactional patterns and functioning

Interactional Patterns Between People

Focused on

Close

Fused

Hostile

Close–hostile

Focused on negatively

Distant

Cutoff*

Cutoff repaired

Caretaker

Spiritual connection or affinity

Positive relationship

Physical abuse

Emotional abuse

Sexual Abuse

*Arrow (optional) shows directions

Addiction, Physical or Mental Illness or Other Problem

Physical or psychological illness

Physical or psychological illness in remission

Substance abuse

In recovery from substance abuse

Suspected Substance abuse

Serious mental or physical problems and substance abuse

In recovery from mental or physical problems and from substance abuse

Smoker

Obesity

Language difficulty (person does not speak dominant language of the country)

Appendix 2: Common symbols used in Genogram Construction

[Source: http://courses.wcupa.edu/ttreadwe/courses/02courses/standardsymbols.htm]

Standard Symbols for Genograms

Male   Female   Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgendered Person   Birth Date 1941 --- Age Inside Symbol   Death = X   Death Date --- 1996   Index Person

above left of symbol   above right of symbol

Marriage   Living Together or Affair   Lesbian Couple   Gay Couple

m 1999   LT 1997   m 1991   LT 1993

Marital Separation   Divorce   Back together after Divorce   Person's Relationship to Professional or Institution

m 1990 s 2001   m 1970 d 1985   d 1987 remar 1990   Institution   Professional

Children: List in birth order beginning with the o

1971 ---   1973 ---   1976 ---   1977 --- 1977   1979   1999   1983 --- 1983 ---   1985 --- 1985 ---   1998 ---

33   31   28   Stillbirth   Miscarriage   Abortion   21   21   19   19   Pregnancy

Biological Child   Foster Child   Adopted Child   Fraternal Twins   Identical Twins

Drug or Alcohol Abuse   Suspected Abuse   In Recovery from Drug or Alcohol Abuse   Serious Mental or Physical problem   Drug/Alcohol Abuse and Physical or Mental problem

Symbols Denoting Interactional Patterns between People

Positive   Distant   Close   Close-Hostile   Focused On   Fused

Hostile   Hostile Directed   Fused Hostile   Cutoff   Abuse (Physical or Sexual)

Appendix 3: Outline for a Brief Genogram Interview (McGoldrick et al., 2008, p.295)

Start with the Presenting Problem
- What help are they coming for at this moment?
- When did the problem begin?
- Who noticed it?
- How does each person view it?
- How has each person responded?
- What were the relationships in the family like prior to the problem?
- Has the problem changed relationships? How?
- What will happen if the problem continues?

Move to Questions About the Household Context
- Who lives in the household (name, age, gender)?
- How is each related?
- Where do other family members live?
- Were there ever similar problems in the family before?
- What solutions were tried in the past?
- What has been happening recently in the family?
- Have there been any recent changes or stresses?

Gather Information on Families of Origin
- Parents and stepparents (name, age, occupation, couple status, health status or date and cause of death)
- Siblings (name, age, birth order, occupation, couple status, children, health status or date and cause of death)

Inquire about Other Generations
- Grandparents (name, age, occupation couple status, children, health status or date and cause of death)

Cultural Variables
- Cultural heritage of family members
- Religious or spiritual orientation of family members
- Family's migration history
- Gender roles and rules in the family

Life Events and Individual Functioning
- Traumatic or untimely deaths
- Stressors such as illness or job problems
- Medical or psychological problems
- Addictions
- Legal problems (arrests, loss of professional license, current status of litigation)
- Work or school achievement or difficulty

Family Relationships
o Special closeness of any family members, ability to read the other's mind
o Serious conflict or cut-off of any relationships
o Quality of couple relationship, parent-child relationships, sibling relationships
o Physical, emotional or sexual abuse

Family Strengths and Balance
o Family roles: Who are the caretakers and the sick ones? The good ones and the bad ones? The successful ones and the failures? The warm ones and the cold, distant or mean ones?
o Family resilience: What are the sources of hope? Humour, loyalty, courage, intelligence, warmth?
o Ability to connect with resources: love, friends, community, money, religious community, work and so on.

Appendix 4: Excluded Literature (N=63)

Excluded Literature
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Appendix 5: Information Sheet

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Information Sheet

Research Title: The Use of Genograms in Educational Psychology Practice

My name is Kirsty Newbury and I am studying a course in Child, Community and Educational Psychology at Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. I am doing this piece of research as a part of my course and I would like to invite you to take part.

Before you decide whether you would like to take part, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the information carefully and decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the aim of the research?
The aim of the study is to find out about Educational Psychologist's experiences of using genograms in their practice. The research aims to answer the following research questions:
1. What are Educational Psychologists' perceived strengths of using genograms in educational psychology practice?
2. What are Educational Psychologists' perceived limitations around using genograms in educational psychology practice?

Who can take part in this research?
I am looking for Educational Psychologists, who have used genograms in their practice in the last year and are able to talk with me about their experiences and reflections regarding this.

Do I have to take part?
You do not have to take part in this study, and it is up to you to decide. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason up until the stage that the data is being analysed. This will not affect any relationships or work you are doing with the Wandsworth Schools and Community Psychology Service now, or in the future.

What will happen if I choose to take part?
If you choose to take part, you will be invited to come and meet me at a convenient location. When we meet, I will explain what we will do and we will talk for a short time (no longer than 1 hour) about your experiences of using genograms in educational psychology practice.

I would like to make an audio recording of our meeting so they can be transcribed to ensure I capture your thoughts accurately. The recordings will be stored anonymously, using password-protected software. You can ask for the recordings to be stopped or deleted at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
There is not much research that looks at how genograms can be used in educational psychology practice. Your opinions, thoughts and reflections are really important for my research and can add to the current knowledge base in this area. You may also benefit from the opportunity to reflect on your practice, in addition to your regular supervision.

What will happen to the findings from the research?
The findings from the research will be typed up and will make up my thesis, which will be part of my Educational Psychology qualification. I will share some of the findings with Wandsworth Schools and Community Psychology Service and there might be times where I share the findings with other professionals. If you would like to discuss the findings with me individually, I would be happy to meet with you or send you them via email.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with this research?
You can withdraw from the research at any time and if you want to stop, you can leave the interview at any time without explaining why. Following the interview, you still have the right to withdraw and your data can be removed from the study up until the stage that it has been transcribed, anonymised and analysis has started (likely to be within 6 weeks of interview). At that point, I can no longer retrieve or remove your data as it will not be traceable by anyone, including me.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Yes. I will follow ethical and legal practice and all information about you will be handled in confidence. All information that is collected will be kept strictly confidential. All records related to your participation in this research study will be handled and stored appropriately. Your identity on these records will be indicated by a pseudonym rather than by your name. The data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years. Data collected during the study will be stored and used in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act (1998).

Are there times when my data cannot be kept confidential?
If you tell me something that makes me concerned about the safety of you or someone else, then I might have to share that information with others in order to keep you or someone else safe. However, I would always aim to discuss this with you first when possible. Because I am meeting with between 6 to 8 professionals, there is a chance that you may recognise some of the things you said in my research. To protect your identity, your name will be a pseudonym so that others are less likely to be able to recognise you and what you said.

Who has given permission for this research?
The training institution that I am studying at Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust has given me ethical approval to do the research.

Anything else I should know?
My interest in the use of genograms stemmed from a post graduate diploma in systemic family therapy, which I attended before starting on the Child, Community and Educational Psychology doctorate course.

Further information and contact details
If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the research, please contact me:
Email: knewbury@tavi-port.nhs.uk

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

If you have any concerns about the research then you can contact Louis Taussig who works for the Tavistock and Portman research department. His contact details are:
Email: ltaussig@tavi-port.nhs.uk
Telephone: 020 7435 7111

Appendix 6: Written Consent Form

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Consent Form

Research Title: The Use of Genograms in Educational Psychology Practice

- I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the chance to ask the researcher questions.

- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

- I agree for my interviews to be recorded.

- I understand that my data will be anonymised to reduce the chance of people linking the data to me.

- I understand that my interviews will be used for this research and cannot be accessed for any other purposes.

- I understand that the findings from this research will be published and available for the public to read.

- I am willing to participate in this research.

Your name………………………………….............Signed…………………….Date_____/….. /…..

Appendix 6: Written Consent Form

Appendix 7: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Research Title: The Use of Genograms in Educational Psychology Practice

1. How would you define what a genogram is?

2. Can you tell me about a time where you have used a genogram in your practice in the past year? Are there further examples which come to mind?

3. What do you think are benefits and strengths of using genograms in educational psychology practice?

4. What do you think are the challenges and barriers around using genograms in educational psychology practice?

5. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Additional Prompt Question Examples
- Can you tell me more about that?

Appendix 8: Examples of Transcriptions

I: How would you define what a genogram is?

P: I think of a genogram as a pictorial representation of somebody's family and the connections between the members of the family.

I: Can you tell me about a time where you have used a genogram in your practice within the last year?

P: Yes. I used it with a girl with suspected autism. Her family is quite complicated so to kind of understand how her siblings related to her we kind of drew it out using symbols. She didn't quite know kind of, all of the links but it was helpful for me to see who was important to her I suppose, that was the other thing. And then it allowed me to talk a bit more about how often she sees those people, what the relationship's like, what they're like when they're together… just to kind of understand. Yea, how her relationships outside of school are like in comparison to those inside of school. I suppose that's how I used it, yea.

I: Are there any other examples that come to mind?

P: Yes, one recently in family consultancy… and we used objects rather than symbols which was really helpful actually then because the little girl, she was positioning people and kind of putting people next to each other and then that kind of, not in terms of what their link was relationship was but in terms of how close they were. And then that was really helpful to kind of talk about why she'd done that and all that kind of stuff. So, that wasn't necessarily the wider family but it enabled us to explore the immediate family, so that was really interesting.

I: And what type of object did you use?

P: They were safari animals because she really liked animals and farm animals and things like that. So, we had a collection of different animals and she chose safari animals. She was thinking about the animal characteristics and how they represented the person she was thinking of, so that was quite interesting in itself.

(Holly, p.1)

The Use of Genograms in Educational Psychology Practice – Interview 5

I: How would you define what a genogram is?

P: I think a genogram, in my understanding… the way I've kind of used it… is where you are having some sort of like a visual map of a family thinking about… who's related to whom… you know, kind of, who they parents are, grandparents are… Yea, just having a visual map of the family, including the child and young person that you're working with. So that you can see what the relationships are like between … between people.

(Beatrice, p.1)

I: So, next question… What do you think are the benefits of using genograms in educational psychology practice?

P: Ok, so, so I think like I said before, so I think it's really helpful in… thinking about the family system and thinking about… patterns of relationships in the family system that might be contributing to… a child's presentation in some way. I think it gives… well… it sort of, gives an, an insight in to the circumstances… that… a child is, is living in. Because when I ask about… you know, household and who's in the household, who's in the family… quite a lot of the cases might only have… you know, one parent and one child, or a parent with a couple of children living in a household and then very often usually the father who… might be… separated from the family or living overseas… And… I guess what it does, is it just sort of… it forces you I think, to think about the network and kind of the… the network in terms of the family and sort of just expanding… expanding that out so that you get to see… so when I see it visually I very often see… oh…. There's no support around the family, or… or there are family members but they're not living nearby… or… that kind of complex pattern of relationships where maybe mum has had, you know, two or three partners… maybe there's the current partner living in the house but that partner's not the father of the children living in the household. So, it just, I kind of think…gets you to look at things in maybe a different way than a kind of linear way of asking the questions… would… and, maybe exposes some things for you to think about in relation to the family and what a child at the centre of that kind of experience might, might be having to sort of deal with in terms of family dynamics especially… so… what was your question again?

I: What are the benefits of using genograms…

P: … what else is relevant… so… well, in supervision it's definitely been really useful as a tool for… identifying things for me to ask questions about once I've started, you know, kind of recording it… recording it… and… to think with somebody else about… about the patterns and about the systems kind of around a child or children in the family. What else is it useful for…? Well, potentially I think when you do that, then it's also useful in thinking about

where you might intervene in a family system so it might throw up some ideas about where's the most helpful place to, to intervene and to change something for the family and improve things for the family… And maybe where not, where not to… And… And for when you're working directly with children and families and you're using it, I think it's very helpful for them… especially for children to make sense of who's in their' family because quite often children are quite confused I think about who's in there family, who is maybe sort of a biological blood relative and who is just somebody else that they might call dad, or grandma, or auntie, who lives in their' home but isn't a biological family member… So, I think it can be quite helpful for them in just seeing how they fit with different people that they… come in to contact with and helping them to know a bit more about who they are and who is their' family and who isn't their' family.

(Rose, p.3-4)

I: Ok, thank you. What do you think are the benefits of using genograms in educational psychology practice?

P: I think because they're pictorial, I think that, that can instantly give you a lot of information without writing. You know, kind of... you can jot things down that are quite quickly. And you know, and that you can, it kind of places a person. It, it naturally forces you, whether, you know, to see that person as part of the structure rather and as a system, rather than in isolation and it contextualises them, kind of, instantly through the kind of... and the fact that you're asking, it, asking these questions I think it's a good prompt in terms of have a got enough, like... not have I got enough, but have I got the background information that is relevant to this young person? Because if I don't know who they're living with, if I don't know where, you know, what, anything about where they are... then, is there something that could be having an impact or is likely to have some impact at some level, that I haven't explored? Or that we haven't explored as, as a group... I think... did you say the challenges and barriers?

(Penny, p.1)

I: What do you think are the benefits of using genograms in educational psychology practice?

P: I think it's a really good way… as I said… a really good way for me to make sure I've got a clear understanding of kind of, the family… and kind of, the network and kind of, the relationships without writing lots and lots of notes. Like the power of being able to do kind of like a dotted line to represent something that actually would have taken you ages to write. I think it means that you… it's clear so that when you go back to it… as long as you can remember what the symbols mean… when we come to the challenges and barriers that might be one of them, but like, as long as kind of, I can look back and kind of know, okay that's what I meant by this…. It is a really clear way and I think it means I'm there more present, if I am using it with kind of, a parent or young person… I'm more present… rather than having to write 'divorced' or you know, 'doesn't see'… or you know… so, I think it can be a

really good way of kind of help… be more present. But also, then have something really clear… I think sometimes for, I think it can, especially within the group supervision setting… I think it can be a really helpful way to make it quite clear what the situation is, which I think… it's sometime, it's sometimes been… after we've drawn the genogram that the team have gone 'Ah. Actually… like… there isn't a big network' or actually 'the family does…', 'I wonder if the parents are feeling quite isolated…' So, it can be a good way of really sort of clarifying some questions and hypotheses… about a child or a family.

I: Are there any other benefits that come to mind at all?

P: No, I think those are probably the main ones.

(Anna, p.2-3)

I: Any other challenges or barriers around using genograms that you can think of?

P: Well I just thought of one… but again, I can't say that, "Oh… I've reflected on this and that's why I'm not doing them". But now as we're talking I'm thinking… well, it would be quite interesting to think about how you… represent then the genogram… what happens when it comes to the EP reports… and the genogram? Because my instinct would be that it doesn't quite fit with the style of the EP reports we're writing. I've used in my practice therapeutic letters, so I would see that more fitting with a therapeutic letter afterwards… to… to capture what was discussed through the, the genogram with maybe the original genogram scanned at the back… But I can't see a report going to panel, let's say…. And, and, and having such a personal representation of what's going on put at the back as an appendix.

(Eleni, p.5)

I: What do you think are the limitations, challenges and barriers around using genograms in educational psychology practice?

P: Possibly, maybe, sort of… maybe EPs allowing; giving themselves permission to kind of, use a genogram. Particularly perhaps maybe when the EP is positioned in schools and has a very sort of you know, classic learning-based referral and is meeting with the parent. Kind of, sort of… you know, I would… you know, I have experienced that too… like, you know… is this ok to kind of do? But actually, I've found that once you've explained the purpose about why you're asking those questions or asking to do this then actually you know, typically response is quite positive… So maybe it's the confidence and the kind of, the permission.

(Maria, p.3)

I: Is there anything that I haven't asked that would like to share or anything else that you would like to add in relation to using genograms in your practice?

P: Not that I can think of. I mean, I guess the other thing. I don't know if it's actually called a genogram but sometimes what I do use with children is using kind of physical representations. So, toys or animals. So, kind of, a bit like a genogram but kind of using, using toys and physical objects. I find that especially with younger kids, or even with certain children it can be a little bit more playful and maybe a little bit less sort of challenging for those that think "Oh, I can't draw". So, yea.

P: yea, yea… yea.

I: Anything else that you would like to add?

P: That's all I think…

I: Thank you.

(Maria, p.4)

Appendix 9: Ethics Form

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

This application should be submitted alongside copies of any supporting documentation which will be handed to participants, including a participant information sheet, consent form, self-completion survey or questionnaire.

Where a form is submitted and sections are incomplete, the form will not be considered by TREC and will be returned to the applicant for completion.

For further guidance please contact Paru Jeram (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

PROJECT DETAILS

Current project title	The Use of Genograms in Educational Psychology Practice		
Proposed project start date	June 2018	Anticipated project end date	June 2019

APPLICANT DETAILS

Name of Researcher	Kirsty Newbury
Email address	KNewbury@tavi-port.nhs.uk
Contact telephone number	███████████

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above their normal salary package or the costs of undertaking the research?
  NO

Is there any further possibility for conflict of interest? NO
If **YES**, please detail below:

FOR ALL APPLICANTS

Is your research being conducted externally* to the Trust? (for example; within a Local Authority, Schools, Care Homes, other NHS Trusts or other organisations). *Please note that 'external' is defined as an organisation which is external to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (Trust)	YES ☐ NO ☒
If **YES**, please supply details below: The research will be conducted in ███████████████ with educational psychologists employed by the ██████████████████ Psychology Service.	

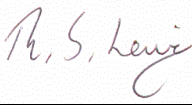| Has external* ethics approval been sought for this research? **(i.e. submission via Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) to the Health Research Authority (HRA) or other external research ethics committee)** *Please note that 'external' is defined as an organisation/body which is external to the Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC) If **YES**, please supply details of the ethical approval bodies below **AND** include any letters of approval from the ethical approval bodies:	YES ☐ NO ☒
If your research is being undertaken externally to the Trust, please provide details of the sponsor of your research? **N/A**	
Do you have local approval (this includes R&D approval)?	YES ☐ NO ☒

COURSE ORGANISING TUTOR • Does the proposed research as detailed herein have your support to proceed? YES ☐ NO ☐	
Signed	
Date	

APPLICANT DECLARATION I confirm that: • The information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and up to date. • I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research. • I acknowledge my obligations and commitment to upholding our University's Code of Practice for ethical research and observing the rights of the participants. • I am aware that cases of proven misconduct, in line with our University's policies, may result in formal disciplinary proceedings and/or the cancellation of the proposed research.	
Applicant (print name)	Kirsty Newbury
Signed	
Date	01.05.2018

FOR RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENT APPLICANTS ONLY

Name and School of Supervisor/Director of Studies	Richard Lewis – Research Supervisor Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust
Qualification for which research is being undertaken	Child, Community and educational psychology professional doctorate

Supervisor/Director of Studies –	
• Does the student have the necessary skills to carry out the research? **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐	
▪ Is the participant information sheet, consent form and any other documentation appropriate? **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐	
▪ Are the procedures for recruitment of participants and obtaining informed consent suitable and sufficient? **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐	
▪ Where required, does the researcher have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance? **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐	
Signed	*M. S. Lewis*
Date	04.05.18

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

1. Provide a brief description of the proposed research, including the requirements of participants. This must be in lay terms and free from technical or discipline specific terminology or jargon. If such terms are required, please ensure they are adequately explained (Do not exceed 500 words)
The proposed research is a small-scale, qualitative, exploratory study which aims to extend the current knowledge base in the application of genograms in educational psychology practice. Genograms are visual representations of a person's family relationships and a tool frequently used in systemic family therapy to explore relationships between various family members across time, whilst also considering behavioural, psychological and hereditary aspects of these (Borcsa & Stratton, 2016; Burnham, 2012; Tobias, 2018). Genograms can also be used as a tool to explore family narratives, values and sources of shame or pride and to formulate case hypotheses (Burnham, 2012; Tobias, 2018). Within educational psychology practice, genograms might be drawn up with children and/or their family members to explore these relationships (Pellegrini, 2009; Tobias, 2018). The researcher aims to collect data for this study by inviting educational psychologists, who work for the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Psychology Service in ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Local Authority to partake in a semi-structured interview. The researcher aims to recruit a minimum of six educational psychologists, who are currently employed by ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Local Authority. The research will involve one semi-structured interview in a convenient location for participants, which lasts no longer than 1 hour. The research will relate directly to the work participants are involved in as part of their job. The research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are educational psychologists' perceived strengths of using genograms in educational psychology practice?
2. What are educational psychologists' perceived limitations around using genograms in educational psychology practice?

The researcher has opted to keep the research questions broad to allow for an exploration of participant's experiences, rather than using more specific questions, which may direct what is discussed.

2. **Provide a statement on the aims and significance of the proposed research, including potential impact to knowledge and understanding in the field (where appropriate, indicate the associated hypothesis which will be tested). This should be a clear justification of the proposed research, why it should proceed and a statement on any anticipated benefits to the community (Do not exceed 700 words)**

This research is a small-scale study, aimed at exploring the use of genograms in education psychology practice. The research study will be exploratory due to limited identified published literature in this area, following a systematic literature review completed in January 2018.

Current legislation highlights the importance of parental involvement to promote and enhance positive outcomes in educational psychology practice and most recently and within the research literature family systems have been identified as a critical factor in outcomes for children and young people such as academic performance, behaviour and psychological wellbeing in education (Campion, 1984; Carlson & Christenson, 2005; Crespi, 1997; Pellegrini, 2009; Star Snyder, 2010). The British Psychological Society Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP, 2002) professional practice guidelines state that educational psychology assessment "should consult as widely as possible with other people who know the young person" (p. 16), "involve parents and/or carers as essential contributors" (p. 24). The SEND Code of Practice (2015) also placed a 'duty' on EPs to include the views, wishes and feelings of parents (Department for Education, 2015).

The researcher recognises that many parallels can be drawn between case formulation in systemic family therapy and current educational psychologist (EP) practice. For example, within educational psychology practice, methods of enquiry and hypothesis generation tend to be eco-systemic and include consideration of the impact of the family system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kelly, Woolfson & Boyle, 2017; Wicks, 2013). Genograms focus on relationships and understanding individuals in context and may therefore be a helpful tool to support EPs working children and their families (AFT, 2017; Dowling & Osborne, 2003; Greenhouse, 2013; Salomon, 1991).

Training in systemic techniques such as the use of genograms is also now included as part of many educational psychology professional doctorate training courses (e.g. Institute of Education, Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, University College London and University of East London). However, following attempts to locate published literature in the area of the

application of genograms in educational psychology practice, it became apparent to the author that there is very little published literature in this area (Pellegrini, 2009; Tobias, 2018).

The researcher will interview educational psychologists, who have used genograms within their practice, to gain insight in to the perceived strengths and limitations around using this approach. The study aims to add value by revealing information in this relatively un-researched area, which will develop and extend the knowledge base for the EP profession and considerations for practice and casework.

Once the data has been analysed and written up as part of the author's thesis, findings from the study will be presented back to participants and t███████████████████ Psychology Service, in a clear and accessible manner. Generalising the results of this study will need to be done with caution. However, it is hoped they will give an indication of how genograms can be applied in EP practice, in current UK context. It is hoped this knowledge will assist professionals in having a deeper understanding around the application of genograms in EP practice, including considerations for casework and practice. The findings of this study may also open up new ways of understanding the topic for the profession on a national level and be used to guide practice or create new solutions for best practice and policy. The study may also identify areas for development or further research.

3. **Provide an outline of the methodology for the proposed research, including proposed method of data collection, *tasks* assigned to participants of the research and the proposed method and duration of data analysis. If the proposed research makes use of pre-established and generally accepted techniques, please make this clear. (Do not exceed 500 words)**

The research study will be qualitative.

The researcher will be taking a critical realist ontology and epistemology, which will aim to gain knowledge through understanding educational psychologists' different perspectives on the use of genograms in educational psychology practice (Robson & McCartan, 2015).

Participants will be invited to participate in the research study via an email to the ███████████████ Psychology Service team, in ███████ Local Authority. The researcher will also recruit via word of mouth and inform the team about my research study during a team business meeting in summer term 2018. During a team business meeting, the researcher will also share Tobias's (2018) recently published article about applying a genogram in educational psychology practice on an individual case study.

Semi-structured interviews have been selected for data collection as this methodology allows flexibility for the researcher to explore unpredicted areas, whilst also enabling the researcher to structure questions, prompt and encourage further information on selected topics to obtain relevant data (Coolican, 2004). The researcher will use the research questions as

open-ended starter questions. Further questions will then follow up the starter question to prompt additional information, if required, based on the narratives produced.

Interviews will be conducted at a convenient, confidential and private room for researcher and participant. It is likely that this will be within ▮▮▮▮▮▮ Town Hall, where the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Psychology office is based and rooms can be booked. It is estimated that the interview will take up to an hour to complete. Interviews will be recorded using a voice recorder and then transcribed. All participants will be interviewed by the end of October 2018 to ensure that the study is completed within the required timeframe.

Once transcribed, the data gathered from the interviews will be analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher will use Braun & Clarke's (2006) 6-phase guide to doing thematic analysis to ensure rigor. The author will use an inductive approach when coding data, which aims to use participant's responses to gain new insight and provide an explanation to the research question (Robson & McCartan, 2015). This method of analysis has been selected as it fits with the research epistemology, which aims to gather data from different individual perspectives and look for themes between these (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thematic analysis searches for themes across the entire data set, which will provide the reader with predominant themes, whilst allowing for flexibility to describe the data in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The themes identified will provide the topic and focus for the research discussion and conclusions.

The researcher will provide rich and detailed descriptions of the findings to enable others to evaluate this and consider how they could be transferable to other contexts. The researcher will use a transparent, clear and structured research design throughout the research process. The researcher will keep a record of all activities and a research diary. This will enable replicability of the study within different contexts and for other researchers to compare findings and conclusions.

PARTICIPANT DETAILS

4. Provide an explanation detailing how you will identify, approach and recruit the participants for the proposed research, including clarification on sample size and location. Please provide justification for the exclusion/inclusion criteria for this study (i.e. who will be allowed to / not allowed to participate) and explain briefly, in lay terms, why this criteria is in place. (Do not exceed 500 words)
This study aims to answer specific research questions and therefore purposive criterion sampling will be used to ensure the participants included meet a pre-determined criterion. The researcher hopes to recruit a minimum of 6 participants from the team to provide an adequate amount of data for a thematic analysis (Braun &

Clarke, 2013). Participants will be identified based on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

<u>Inclusion Criteria</u>
- Educational psychologists working within the ████████ ████████ Psychology Service within ████████ Local Authority.
- Participants will have used a genogram in their' educational psychology practice within the last 6 months, to enable them to have recent experience of case work to draw upon in the interview.

<u>Exclusion Criteria</u>
- Educational psychologists who have been employed for less than 3 months at the end of summer term 2018, as interviews are planned to be held during the summer holidays of 2018.

There are currently 21 employed educational psychologists at the ████████ ████████ Psychology Service. If the researcher is unable to recruit 6 participants from the service, a similar local authority in an inner-London borough will be approached to recruit additional participants.

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5. Will the participants be from any of the following groups?*(Tick as appropriate)*

☐ Students or staff of the Trust or the University.
☒ Adults (over the age of 18 years with mental capacity to give consent to participate in the research).
☐ Children or legal minors (anyone under the age of 16 years)[1]
☐ Adults who are unconscious, severely ill or have a terminal illness.
☐ Adults who may lose mental capacity to consent during the course of the research.
☐ Adults in emergency situations.
☐ Adults[2] with mental illness - particularly those detained under the Mental Health Act (1983 & 2007).
☐ Participants who may lack capacity to consent to participate in the research under the research requirements of the Mental Capacity Act (2005).
☐ Prisoners, where ethical approval may be required from the **National Offender Management Service (NOMS).**
☐ Young Offenders, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).
☐ Healthy volunteers (in high risk intervention studies).
☐ Participants who may be considered to have a pre-existing and potentially dependent[3] relationship with the investigator (e.g. those in care homes, students, colleagues, service-users, patients).
☐ Other vulnerable groups (see Question 6).
☐ Adults who are in custody, custodial care, or for whom a court has assumed responsibility.
☐ Participants who are members of the Armed Forces.

[1]*If the proposed research involves children or adults who meet the Police Act (1997) definition of vulnerability[3], any researchers who will have contact with participants must have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance.*
[2] *'Adults with a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, or a reduction in physical or mental capacity, and living in a care home or home for people with learning difficulties or receiving care in their own home, or receiving hospital or social care services.' (Police Act, 1997)*
[3] *Proposed research involving participants with whom the investigator or researcher(s) shares a dependent or unequal relationships (e.g. teacher/student, clinical therapist/service-user) may compromise the ability to give informed consent which is free from any form of pressure (real or implied) arising from this relationship. TREC recommends that, wherever practicable, investigators choose participants with whom they have no dependent relationship. Following due scrutiny, if the*

investigator is confident that the research involving participants in dependent relationships is vital and defensible, TREC will require additional information setting out the case and detailing how risks inherent in the dependent relationship will be managed. TREC will also need to be reassured that refusal to participate will not result in any discrimination or penalty.

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6. Will the study involve participants who are vulnerable? NO ☒

For the purposes of research, 'vulnerable' participants may be adults whose ability to protect their own interests are impaired or reduced in comparison to that of the broader population. Vulnerability may arise from the participant's personal characteristics (e.g. mental or physical impairment) or from their social environment, context and/or disadvantage (e.g. socio-economic mobility, educational attainment, resources, substance dependence, displacement or homelessness).   Where prospective participants are at high risk of consenting under duress, or as a result of manipulation or coercion, they must also be considered as vulnerable.

Adults lacking mental capacity to consent to participate in research and children are automatically presumed to be vulnerable. Studies involving adults (over the age of 16) who lack mental capacity to consent in research must be submitted to a REC approved for that purpose.

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7. Do you propose to make any form of payment or incentive available to participants of the research? NO ☒

If **YES**, please provide details taking into account that any payment or incentive should be representative of reasonable remuneration for participation and may not be of a value that could be coercive or exerting undue influence on potential participants' decision to take part in the research. Wherever possible, remuneration in a monetary form should be avoided and substituted with vouchers, coupons or equivalent. Any payment made to research participants may have benefit or HMRC implications and participants should be alerted to this in the participant information sheet as they may wish to choose to decline payment.

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8. What special arrangements are in place for eliciting informed consent from participants who may not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information provided in English; where participants have special communication needs; where participants have limited literacy; or where children are involved in the research? (Do not exceed 200 words)

N/A

RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

9. Does the proposed research involve any of the following? *(Tick as appropriate)*

☐ use of a questionnaire, self-completion survey or data-collection instrument (attach copy)
☐ use of emails or the internet as a means of data collection
☐ use of written or computerised tests
☒ interviews (attach interview questions)
☐ diaries (attach diary record form)
☐ participant observation
☐ participant observation (in a non-public place) without their knowledge / covert research
☒ audio-recording interviewees or events
☐ video-recording interviewees or events
☐ access to personal and/or sensitive data (i.e. student, patient, client or service-user data) without the participant's informed consent for use of these data for research purposes

☐ administration of any questions, tasks, investigations, procedures or stimuli which may be experienced by participants as physically or mentally painful, stressful or unpleasant during or after the research process

☐ performance of any acts which might diminish the self-esteem of participants or cause them to experience discomfiture, regret or any other adverse emotional or psychological reaction

☐ investigation of participants involved in illegal or illicit activities (e.g. use of illegal drugs)

☐ procedures that involve the deception of participants

☐ administration of any substance or agent

☐ use of non-treatment of placebo control conditions

☐ participation in a clinical trial

☐ research undertaken at an off-campus location (risk assessment attached)

☐ research overseas (copy of VCG overseas travel approval attached)

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10. Does the proposed research involve any specific or anticipated risks (e.g. physical, psychological, social, legal or economic) to participants that are greater than those encountered in everyday life? YES ☐
If **YES**, please describe below including details of precautionary measures.

It is not anticipated that the participants will suffer any adverse impact from their participation in the research study, however the researcher acknowledges that talking about family dynamics during the semi-structured interview, may involve a potential psychological risk for participants. In order to mitigate this potential risk, the researcher will act in accordance with ethical principles appropriate to the Tavistock and Portman Trust and Essex University at all times. In addition to this, participants will be given an information sheet, right to withdraw and time will be allowed for a debrief following the semi-structured interview. Participants will be given the researcher's contact information if they wish to discuss the research further and signposted to relevant support services, as required. If the researcher perceives that a participant is becoming distressed during the interview, the interview will be terminated or postponed.

The researcher will ensure that data presented back to the team non-identifiable to ensure that participant's perspectives around any limitations encountered are not owned by individuals but are instead presented as formative themes, with the aim of aiding the service to consider options to overcome these, rather than critiquing individual practice.

A research supervisor will oversee the research project and to ensure that the researcher conducts the research in the proper manner. If the researcher has any questions or is unsure about anything they will consult with their supervisor for any help and guidance that may be necessary.

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11. Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress for participants, please state what previous experience the investigator or researcher(s) have had in conducting this type of research.

The researcher does not have direct experience of conducting this type of research, however she has previous experience responding to adults in distress in her previous role as a Family Support Worker and whilst on placement in a CAMHS team in her first and second year placements.

12. Provide an explanation of any potential benefits to participants. Please ensure this is framed within the overall contribution of the proposed research to knowledge or practice. (Do not exceed 400 words) **NOTE:** Where the proposed research involves students of our University, they should be assured that accepting the offer to participate or choosing to decline will have no impact on their assessments or learning experience. Similarly, it should be made clear to participants who are patients, service-users and/or receiving any form of treatment or medication that they are not invited to participate in the belief that participation in the research will result in some relief or improvement in their condition.
During the interviews, participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their practice of using genograms in educational psychology practice. Relevant to the purpose of this study, the use of systemic approaches in EP practice, such as genograms, has been highlighted as an area for development in the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Psychology service, owing to interests within the team (EPS Development Plan 2016-2019, unpublished). The use of genograms in participants practice, may also contribute to the team's targets around continued professional development. Permission to undertake the research has been sought verbally from the Schools and Community Psychology Service Principal educational psychologist.
13. Provide an outline of any measures you have in place in the event of adverse or unexpected outcomes and the potential impact this may have on participants involved in the proposed research. (Do not exceed 300 words)
• Participants who volunteer to take part in the study will be given an information sheet, which will explain the purpose of the study and what it entails, as well as information on rights to withdraw, anonymity of data and how data will be stored and used. All participants will be asked to provide informed, written consent to partake in the study. Any sign of distress, pain or indication of refusal will be considered as implied refusal from participants. • Participants will be made aware that they are able to withdraw from the research at any time until the analysis stage. • The researcher will ensure that non-participation from potential participants within the service will not adversely affect team dynamics. • The researcher will explain to participants that the do not have to answer a question if they do not wish to and can ask to stop the interview at any point. • During interviews, the researcher will reflect on what has been shared by participants, to clarify understanding and ensure what has been captured in the data is reflective of this. An opportunity to add any additional points will be offered. • The researcher aims to respond in a sensitive and reflective way to participants responses to questions. • The research will be undertaken with the "aim of avoiding potential risks to psychological well-being, mental health, personal views, or dignity" (BPS, 2009, p.19). Steps will be taken to present research findings in a way that shows care for the participant and avoidance of harm. The research will aim to minimise pain, fear or discomfort and will be constantly monitored.

- Personal details of the individual participants personal information will not be shared or made public, thus retaining anonymity. All information will be regarded as confidential and kept securely. Information will be destroyed 3 to 5 years after the research has been completed.
- Debrief time will be allocated after each interview to debrief participants and contain any issues, which may have been evoked by the interview process. The author will endeavor to signpost participants to relevant support services, if required.
- Physical, psychological and emotional safety implications for the researcher will be considered together as part of the research design and throughout the study, during supervision.

14. Provide an outline of your debriefing, support and feedback protocol for participants involved in the proposed research. This should include, for example, where participants may feel the need to discuss thoughts or feelings brought about following their participation in the research. This may involve referral to an external support or counseling service, where participation in the research has caused specific issues for participants. Where medical aftercare may be necessary, this should include details of the treatment available to participants. Debriefing may involve the disclosure of further information on the aims of the research, the participant's performance and/or the results of the research. (Do not exceed 500 words)

- The researcher will debrief participants at the end of their semi-structured interview, giving them the opportunity to discuss and issues or emotions brought up during the interview.
- Participants will be provided with the researcher's contact information if they wish to discuss any thoughts or feelings brought about through their participation in the research.
- If participants feel the need to discuss thoughts or feelings brought about following their participation in the research they will be signposted to their supervisor if they feel able to discuss the issues with them, alternatively external support in the ▮▮▮▮▮▮ Local Authority counseling service, if participation in the research has caused specific issues for participants.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND WITHDRAWAL

15. Have you attached a copy of your participant information sheet (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials. YES ☒

**16. Have you attached a copy of your participant consent form (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials.
YES ☒**

17. The following is a <u>participant information sheet</u> checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

☒ Clear identification of the sponsor for the research, the project title, the Researcher or Principal Investigator and other researchers along with relevant contact details.
☒ Details of what involvement in the proposed research will require (e.g., participation in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio/video-recording of events), estimated time commitment and any risks involved.
☒ A statement confirming that the research has received formal approval from TREC.
☒ If the sample size is small, advice to participants that this may have implications for confidentiality / anonymity.
☒ A clear statement that where participants are in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers that participation in the research will have no impact on assessment / treatment / service-use or support.
☒ Assurance that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
☒ Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.
☒ A statement that the data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy.
☒ Advice that if participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)
☒ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

18. The following is a <u>consent form</u> checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

☒ University or Trust letterhead or logo.
☒ Title of the project (with research degree projects this need not necessarily be the title of the thesis) and names of investigators.
☒ Confirmation that the project is research.
☒ Confirmation that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
☒ Confirmation of particular requirements of participants, including for example whether interviews are to be audio-/video-recorded, whether anonymised quotes will be used in publications advice of legal limitations to data confidentiality.
☒ If the sample size is small, confirmation that this may have implications for anonymity any other relevant information.
☒ The proposed method of publication or dissemination of the research findings.
☒ Details of any external contractors or partner institutions involved in the research.
☒ Details of any funding bodies or research councils supporting the research.
☒ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

> **19. Below is a checklist covering key points relating to the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Please indicate where relevant to the proposed research.**
>
> ☒ Participants will be completely anonymised and their identity will not be known by the investigator or researcher(s) (i.e. the participants are part of an anonymous randomised sample and return responses with no form of personal identification)?
> ☒ The responses are anonymised or are an anonymised sample (i.e. a permanent process of coding has been carried out whereby direct and indirect identifiers have been removed from data and replaced by a code, with <u>no</u> record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers).
> ☒ The samples and data are de-identified (i.e. direct and indirect identifiers have been removed and replaced by a code. The investigator or researchers <u>are</u> able to link the code to the original identifiers and isolate the participant to whom the sample or data relates).
> ☒ Participants have the option of being identified in a publication that will arise from the research.
> ☒ Participants will be pseudo-anonymised in a publication that will arise from the research. (I.e. the researcher will endeavour to remove or alter details that would identify the participant.)
> ☒ The proposed research will make use of personal sensitive data.
> ☒ Participants consent to be identified in the study and subsequent dissemination of research findings and/or publication.

> **20. Participants must be made aware that the confidentiality of the information they provide is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality (i.e. the data may be subject to a subpoena, a freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions). This only applies to named or de-identified data. If your participants are named or de-identified, please confirm that you will specifically state these limitations.**
>
> **YES ☒**

NOTE: WHERE THE PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVES A SMALL SAMPLE OR FOCUS GROUP, PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT THERE WILL BE DISTINCT LIMITATIONS IN THE LEVEL OF ANONYMITY THEY CAN BE AFFORDED.

DATA ACCESS, SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT

> **21. Will the Researcher/Principal Investigator be responsible for the security of all data collected in connection with the proposed research? YES ☐**

> **22. In line with the 5th principle of the Data Protection Act (1998), which states that personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes for which it was collected; please state how long data will be retained for.**
>
> ☐ 1-2 years   ☒ 3-5 years   ☐ 6-10 years   ☐ 10> years
>
> **NOTE:** Research Councils UK (RCUK) guidance currently states that data should normally be preserved and accessible for 10 years, but for projects of clinical or major social, environmental or heritage importance, for 20 years or longer. (http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/reviews/grc/grcpoldraft.pdf)

23. Below is a checklist which relates to the management, storage and secure destruction of data for the purposes of the proposed research. Please indicate where relevant to your proposed arrangements.

☐ Research data, codes and all identifying information to be kept in separate locked filing cabinets.

☐ Access to computer files to be available to research team by password only.

☒ Access to computer files to be available to individuals outside the research team by password only (See **23.1**).

☒ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically within the European Economic Area (EEA).

☐ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically outside of the European Economic Area (EEA). (See **23.2**).

NOTE: Transfer of research data via third party commercial file sharing services, such as Google Docs and YouSendIt are not necessarily secure or permanent. These systems may also be located overseas and not covered by UK law. If the system is located outside the European Economic Area (EEA) or territories deemed to have sufficient standards of data protection, transfer may also breach the Data Protection Act (1998).

☐ Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers.

☐ Use of personal data in the form of audio or video recordings.

☐ Primary data gathered on encrypted mobile devices (i.e. laptops). **NOTE:** This should be transferred to secure UEL servers at the first opportunity.

☐ All electronic data will undergo secure disposal.

NOTE: For hard drives and magnetic storage devices (HDD or SSD), deleting files does not permanently erase the data on most systems, but only deletes the reference to the file. Files can be restored when deleted in this way. Research files must be overwritten to ensure they are completely irretrievable. Software is available for the secure erasing of files from hard drives which meet recognised standards to securely scramble sensitive data. Examples of this software are BC Wipe, Wipe File, DeleteOnClick and Eraser for Windows platforms. Mac users can use the standard 'secure empty trash' option; an alternative is Permanent eraser software.

☐ All hardcopy data will undergo secure disposal.

NOTE: For shredding research data stored in hardcopy (i.e. paper), adopting DIN 3 ensures files are cut into 2mm strips or confetti like cross-cut particles of 4x40mm. The UK government requires a minimum standard of DIN 4 for its material, which ensures cross cut particles of at least 2x15mm.

23.1.   Please provide details of individuals outside the research team who will be given password protected access to encrypted data for the proposed research.

N/A

23.2.   Please provide details on the regions and territories where research data will be electronically transferred that are external to the European Economic Area (EEA).

N/A

OVERSEAS TRAVEL FOR RESEARCH

24. Does the proposed research involve travel outside of the UK?   NO ☒

PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

25. How will the results of the research be reported and disseminated? *(Select all that apply)*

☒ Peer reviewed journal
☒ Conference presentation
☐ Internal report
☒ Dissertation/Thesis
☐ Other publication
☐ Written feedback to research participants
☒ Presentation to participants or relevant community groups
☐ Other (Please specify below)

OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES

26. Are there any other ethical issues that have not been addressed which you would wish to bring to the attention of Tavistock Research Ethics Committee (TREC)?

Prior to starting the child, community and educational psychology professional training doctorate course, the researcher had completed systemic practitioner training and has experience of applying systemic techniques in their previous role with children, families, schools and multi-agency professionals, under supervision. The researcher will be open about their background training as a systemic practitioner throughout the research and will be aware that this may have an effect during analysis of data, such as the influence of pre-conceived ideas.

Data will be analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013) and will be shared with participants. Qualitative thematic analysis analyses data subjectively, and so acknowledges the role of the researcher in interpreting the data (Robson & McCartan, 2015). The researcher will be aware of their own theoretical background, due to historically training as a systemic practitioner and will discuss and explore the validity of their' interpretations and emergent themes with the author's research supervisor. The researcher will also take a reflective and self-reflexive position in the research process and pay attention to this through reflexive field notes, a research diary and use of their research supervisor to ensure transparency, reflect upon their role and discuss whether findings are plausible (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999; Yardly, 2000).

CHECKLIST FOR ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

27. Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

☐ Letters of approval from ethical approval bodies (where relevant)
☐ Recruitment advertisement
☒ Participant information sheets (including easy-read where relevant)
☒ Consent forms (including easy-read where relevant)
☐ Assent form for children (where relevant)
☐ Evidence of any external approvals needed
☐ Questionnaire
☐ Interview Schedule or topic guide
☐ Risk Assessment (where applicable)
☐ Overseas travel approval (where applicable)

27.1.   Where it is not possible to attach the above materials, please provide an explanation below.
N/A

Appendix 10: Number of Participants Identified for Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Perceived Strengths of Using Genograms	Number of Participants	Perceived Limitations of Using Genograms	Number of Participants
Engaging Clients and Building Rapport	Collaborative Tool	6	Rapport Challenges	3
	Failitates Rapport Building	4	Obtrusive	1
	Being more Present with Clients	2		
	Unobtrusive and Non-Judgemental	4		
Accessibility	Child and Family Friendly Tool	5		
	Literacy Difficulties	1		
Assessment	Information Gathering	6	Accuracy of Information	4
	Graphic Representation	6	Written Feedback	1
	Family Composition	7		
	Changes of Circumstance	2		
	Obtaining Children's Views	5		
	Multi-Dimensional Perspectives	4		
	Assessment Feedback	3		
Case Formulation	Understanding Relationships and Dynamics	7		
	Noticing Family Patterns	2		
	Wider Context	5		
	Hypothesising	7		
	Reflective	4		
	Supervision	3		
	Containing	2		
	Generating Options for Intervention	4		
Therapeutic Tool	Reflective for Clients	5		
	Empowering	2		
	Identifying Areas of Strength	2		
Specific Areas of Need	Exploring the Impact of Loss	2	Vulnerable Groups	3
	Exploring Identity	3		
	Children Looked After	2		
Ethical Considerations			Emotive	3
			Exposing	4
			Empathetic Use	6
Practitioner Competence	Knowledge, Training and Experience of Using Genograms	3	Knowledge, Training and Experience of Using Genograms	7
			Confidence	4
Systemic Considerations	Efficiency	5	Trading and Commissioned Time	4
	Resources	1	Facilitatory School Staff	1
	Personal Role Expectations	1	Personal Role Expectations	3
	External Role Expectations	1	External Role Expectations	3