Reflecting Teams in practice: Educational Psychologists' experiences of using Reflecting Teams as part of their doctoral training

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Abstract

This thesis explores Educational Psychologists' experiences of using the reflecting team model during doctoral training and its influence on professional practice development. Originally developed by Andersen (1987) for use in family therapy and clinical settings, the reflecting team model is now applied within psychology fields. However, it remains under-researched in educational psychology, particularly in trainee contexts. To address this gap, the current research conducted semi-structured interviews with six Educational Psychologists who engaged with the model throughout their three-year doctoral programme at a designated training institution, and reflected on their experiences. Data were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis and six overarching themes were developed, illustrating how the reflecting team model influenced professional development. These included emotional and relational experiences, the value of structured and supportive environments and the development of professional identity. In addition, the model's adaptability across varied learning contexts, engagement with multiple perspectives, and the role of reflexivity and ethical awareness in navigating difference and diversity were also explored. The findings suggest the reflecting team model is a valuable experiential learning tool that supports key areas of professional development, including communication, systemic thinking, reflective practice and equality, diversity and inclusivity. The boundaried nature of the model fostered self-reflexivity and awareness of group dynamics. It also created opportunities to hear alternative perspectives, broadening understanding and enhancing contributions to wider systems to create effective change. The research highlights the potential of the reflecting team model to enrich training for Educational Psychologists by supporting the integration of theory and practice through lived experience. Implications for incorporating the model into

wider training programmes are discussed, alongside directions for future research to explore its broader use and potential role in developing culturally sensitive and inclusive practice.

Acknowledgements

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Contents

Tables

Figures

Abbreviations

Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP)

British Psychological Society (BPS)

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Children and Young People (CYP)

Discourse Analysis (DA)

Educational Psychologist (EP)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI)

Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)

Thematic Analysis (TA)

United Kingdom (UK)

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of Chapter

This research sought to explore Educational Psychologists' experiences of using the reflecting team model as part of their educational psychology doctorate training. This chapter presents the rationale for undertaking this research. It begins by introducing the origins of the reflecting team model, followed by an overview of the model's process. The next section explores the theoretical background and relevant context of the reflecting team model, including its use across disciplines in training programmes and professional practice development. This is followed by a review of the national and legislative context of Educational Psychologist (EP) doctoral training in the United Kingdom (UK). The emerging use of the reflecting team model in EP practice is also explored. I then discuss my personal motivation and experiences that influenced my interest in the research topic before the chapter concludes with an overview of the research rationale, aims and chapter summary.

1.2 The Reflecting Team Model: Origins and Key Concepts

The reflecting team model was originally created by Tom Andersen (1987) in family therapy practice. As an approach, it aimed to open up the dialogue between a therapist and a client. This was achieved through the addition of a team of professionals who observed the conversation to increase collaboration and inclusivity in consultation. The model was developed from the Milan therapy model (Haley, 2002) and was influenced by the ideas of Humberto Maturana and Gregory Bateson, who argued that there were many possible meanings that constituted people's worldviews. They emphasised the importance of clients creating their own meaning through multiple perspectives (Andersen, 1987; Brownlee et al., 2009). The process involved including clients in reflecting on the discussion through listening more and talking less. It drew from the expertise of both the client and the therapist,

recognising them as experts in their own lives. The therapist and client talked openly about their observations and thoughts of a situation. Clients had direct access to hearing a team of professionals' reflections, the reflecting team, and their ideas on a given situation (Biever & Gardner, 1995). Clients were supported to take from the reflecting team what felt most helpful to them. This enabled a collaborative and sensitive process through which they could create their own change experience alongside the therapist and the team (Andersen, 1991). The reflecting team model is a well-recognised model in family therapy practice and has since extended to use in wider professional fields, including educational psychology.

1.3 The Reflecting Team Process

The reflecting team process involves three stages (Brownlee et al., 2009). The first stage involves dialogue between the therapist and client to establish the circumstances and family structure. During this stage, the reflecting team, made up from a range of professionals including social workers, psychologists and therapists, gathers data through listening. The team sits either behind a one-way mirror or in a separate space in the room from the family (Andersen, 1991). The second stage is initiated when the dialogue shifts to the reflecting team. The therapist invites the members to offer their hypotheses and suggestions for the family to consider. Each reflecting team member reflects tentatively, in turn, on their understanding of the given situation, offering alternative perspectives of both problems and possible solutions for the family. By using a 'both/and' approach to open up possibilities, families are able to take up the reflections most pertinent to them (Andersen, 1987; Lax, 1995). Additional thoughts are shared in the form of unanswered questions to direct the family towards a future orientation (Andersen, 1987; Brownlee et al., 2009). The final stage involves the therapist inviting the family back into the dialogue to explore what they thought

of the reflections and what they found helpful. The reflecting team returns to a listening position at this stage.

Cox et al. (2003) highlighted the reflecting team process may vary depending on setting and discipline, but it will always consist of an interview team. This team is made up of an interviewer i.e. a therapist or consultant and a client/s, consultees or service user (e.g., a family) and a reflecting team made up of professionals or trainees. The terms "client" or "consultee" are adjusted depending on the professional context. In training scenarios, trainees can take on different role positions to support learning. A visual representation of the organisation of the therapeutic space for the reflecting team during stage one and two of the process can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, using an illustrative number of four clients and four reflecting team members. The actual number of each is variable.

Figure 1

The Reflecting Team Model Stage One of Therapist/Client Dialogue

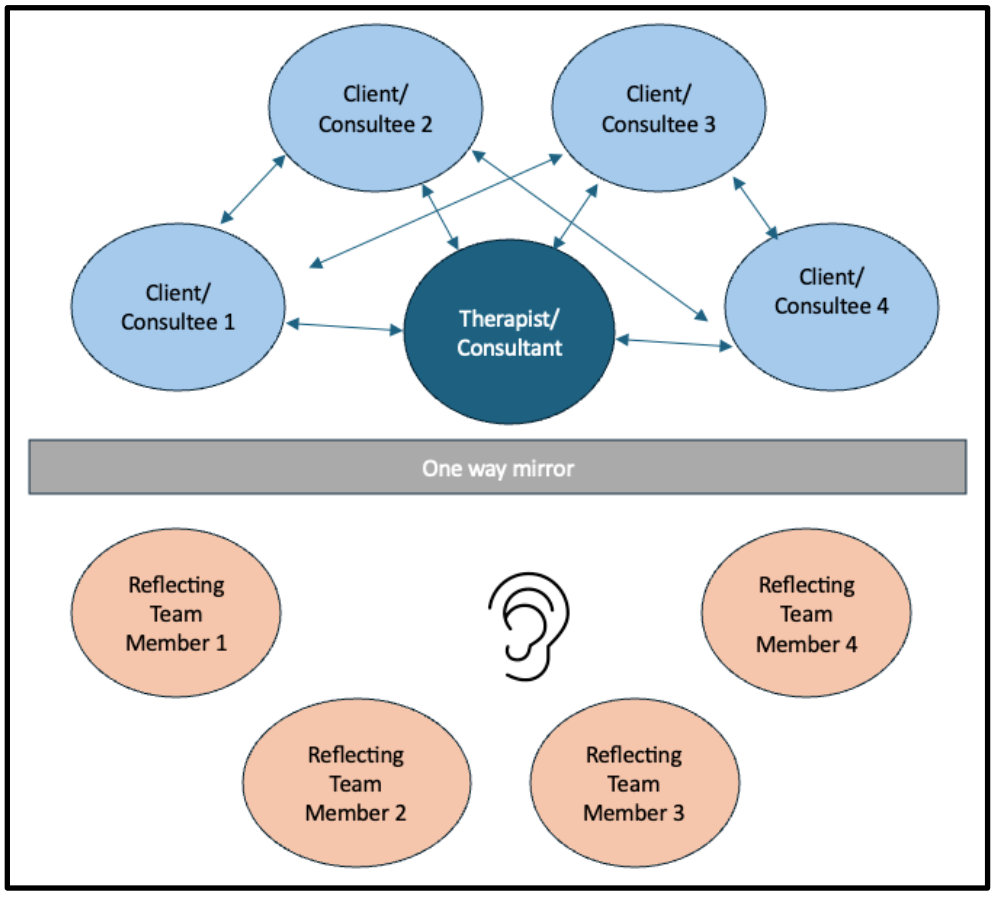
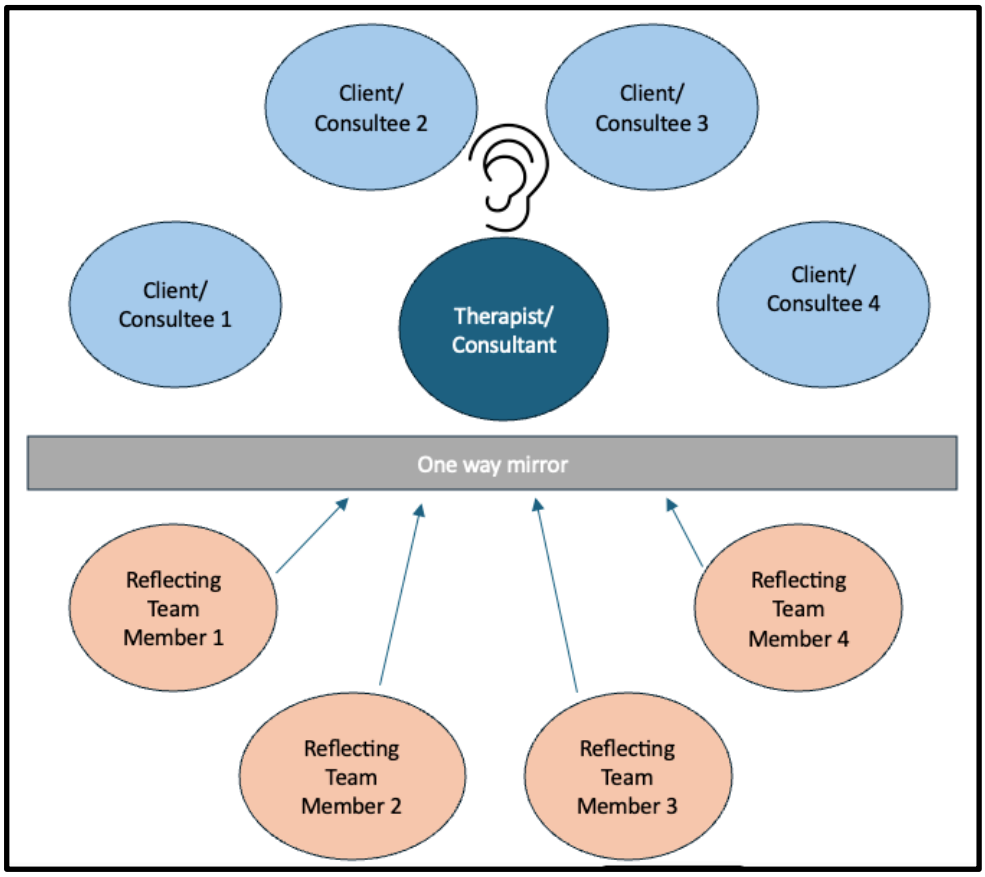


Figure 2

The Reflecting Team Model Stage Two of Reflecting Team Reflections



1.4 The Use of Reflecting Teams Across Disciplines

Across the literature on the reflecting team model, there has been research involving a number of disciplines, highlighting the wide reach and development of its use since Andersen's (1987) initial conception (Sidis et al., 2025). These included research on the use of the reflecting team model with psychologists, social workers, family therapists, group workers and those of multi-disciplinary teams. Within the literature, both strengths and challenges have been identified when reflecting teams are used as part of the therapeutic process. One such strength was the collaborative nature of the reflecting team model, where the reflecting team served as a sounding board for clients. It also supported a reduction in

hierarchy when working with professionals by offering space for clients to contribute equally (Cox et al., 2003; Friedman et al., 1995). However, several challenges were also experienced by clients. The use of a one-way mirror and the presence of additional professionals often increased client nervousness. Despite the collaborative nature of the approach, clients sometimes perceived a power imbalance and felt unable to challenge the reflections presented. The diverse professional expertise and backgrounds of the reflecting team were viewed as beneficial for both clients and therapists. This diversity enabled exploration of new areas and multiple perspectives through respectful and exploratory dialogue (Biever & Gardner, 1995). Whilst other studies found that clients felt the reflections from the team were not useful, particularly when rapport had not been established (Griffith et al., 1992; Lax, 1995), differences in professional reflection offered clients the opportunity to see that there is no 'right' way to engage a stuck system, but rather different opportunities to try (Haley, 2002). Clients also found the positive, strength-based perspectives and language used by the reflecting team to be empowering. This approach supported change making, particularly in areas that might otherwise be avoided by the family system (Haley, 2002). The implications for using the reflecting team model in different capacities continue to be explored with clients and also as part of practitioner trainee development (Sidis et al., 2025).

1.4.1 Reflecting Teams in Training

The use of the reflecting team model continued to expand following its development and has since been implemented in various contexts internationally (Mitchell et al., 2014; Sidis et al., 2025), including as part of practitioner psychologist practice (Smith, 2019). Reflecting teams have been adapted and used increasingly in allied psychology professions. This has included their use in professional practitioner training as an experiential learning tool, encouraging clinicians to bring their in-the-moment reflections into the dialogue (Biever &

Gardner, 1995; Brownlee et al., 2009). More contemporary studies have begun to explore the use of reflecting team practice in training institutes. These studies have focused on developing students' practical knowledge of systemic theory, self- development and reflection in relation to clients and self in role (Chang, 2010; Sindlinger, 2011; Taylor et al., 2023). In therapist training, the experience of being a reflecting team member supported understanding the mechanisms of the reflecting team model and was seen as beneficial for practice to experience the reflecting process (Cox et al., 2003; Lowe & Guy, 1996).

1.4.2 Adult Learning Theory

Underlying the incorporation of the reflecting team model as an experiential learning element in practitioner training was the consideration of adult learning models. Knowles' (1980) andragogical model presented core principles of adult learning, including sensitivity to the timing of learning to ensure trainees' readiness and motivation. It also involved the ability to diagnose trainees' learning needs and the use of a learning environment that drew on learner's prior experiences and created space for the application of knowledge, such as through the reflecting team model. Learning within the reflecting team was found to support trainees through modelling and theoretical understanding (Brownlee et al., 2009).

Experiential learning places life experience and learning by doing at the centre of the learning process (Kolb, 2015). Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, building on the learning theories of Lewin (1951) and Dewey (1963), stated that effective learners required four different kinds of abilities: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Learners engaged directly with experiences, actively participated in the learning process, and took risks when facing novel challenges, much like the inevitable uncertainty found in real-world contexts (Munge et al., 2018). In reflecting team practice, reflection and analysis are two central features of the experiential

learning process (Gibbs, 1988), where dialogue in collaboration with instructors and peers allows for critical reflection (Asfeldt et al., 2017). Critique of Kolb's (1984) theory highlighted a lack of rigorous examples of experiential learning. Morris (2020), for example, presented adaptions to the model, offering insight into how training providers could better facilitate experiential learning through elements, such as reflecting teams.

1.4.3 Reflecting Teams in Psychology Training Context

The reflecting team model has been incorporated as part of training programmes to support the development of trainee psychologist practice. The use of reflecting teams as a pedagogical method to develop skills such as systemic and reflective practice in practitioner psychologists has been the subject of several recent studies. Reflecting teams offer the opportunity to teach systemic concepts by exploring the continuous process of the individual's role in context. This approach supports moving away from pathologizing the child and towards working with the child as part of the family and organisational systems (Chang, 2010). Andersen's (1987) method, as stated by Frake & Dogra (2006), appeared to fast-track student learning by exposing them to the perspectives of several experienced professionals. This supported trainees in developing an understanding that there is not merely one truth, but rather multiple valid perspectives (Andersen, 1987).

There has been some critique of the method's use with psychology trainees, as the process has the potential to cause anxiety in the consultant role due to being observed by the reflecting team (Amod & Miller, 2009). The reflecting team process was found to also exacerbate performance pressure, thereby hindering trainees' learning (Meekums et al., 2016). To enhance learning potential, explaining the rationale for having multiple people in the room helped trainees understand the effectiveness of the reflecting team model as a tool for practitioner development (Harris & Crossley, 2021).

A key area of development for trainee practitioner psychologists within systems work is self-reflexivity (Totsuka, 2015). Reflective practice development involves learning from experience and gaining new insights into the self and one's practice through examining assumptions and critically evaluating one's own responses (Finlay, 2008). Reflective practice is considered both an individual and collaborative process (Beal et al., 2017). The reflecting team created opportunities to support trainees' self-reflection and attunement with their internal processes (Stedmon & Dallos, 2009), as well as with their clients, which helped develop effectiveness in their work (Carmichael et al., 2020; Schön, 1983). However, it has been argued that learners may not always want to be challenged in their learning (Frake & Dogra, 2006). Experiential learning, such as reflecting team practice, can be an emotionally intense experience. This is especially true in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity issues, which should be considered when incorporating the model into trainee development (Larsen, 2017). Reflecting team practice was also seen to develop multicultural competencies for trainees by encouraging systemic perspectives that recognise the impact of social, political, and environmental factors on individuals (Hill, 2003).

The use of the reflecting team model has been emerging within the field of educational psychology (Amod & Miller, 2019; Niven, 2023) amongst qualified EPs and trainees. Currently, this remains an under-researched area in the reflecting team literature, especially within the UK. In educational psychology research, examples of more established experiential learning pedagogical methods include the use of Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) (Murray & Leadbetter, 2018), supervision (Hill et al., 2015; Kennedy et al., 2018), reflective practice groups (Ohara, 2021), consultation problem-based learning (Kennedy et al., 2009) and practice placements (Woods et al., 2015) to support practice development. More recently, the reflecting team model (Andersen, 1987) has begun to be

used as an experiential learning tool in trainee EP competency and professional practice development at select training institutions in the UK.

1.5 National Context and Legislation for Educational Psychologist Training

In England, the number of Educational Psychologists trained each year is limited to funding allocation by the Department of Education. Applications for the doctoral training course are regulated through the Association of Educational Psychologists (2024). In the most recent application year, a total of 204 training places were available across English institutions (AEP, 2024). Wales and Northern Ireland have comparable doctorate-level courses funded by the Department for Education and the Welsh Government. Each doctoral-level training course is accredited and confers eligibility to apply for registration as a practitioner psychologist with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC) and the British Psychological Society (BPS). Training in Scotland requires the completion of a BPS-accredited Masters in Educational Psychology, followed by a one-year qualification in Educational Psychology - Scotland (Stage 2) (AEP, 2025). This ensures a standard of practice for Educational Psychologists trained in the United Kingdom.

In England, trainee EPs are required to complete three years of doctoral training. They must provide evidence of continual professional development to reach the accreditation standards and competencies set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2023) and the Health Care and Professionals Council (HCPC, 2023). The title of Educational Psychologist is a protected and regulated title by law. The HCPC registration is a legal requirement, and practitioner psychologists must be registered and continue to meet the required standards of practice. This is also the case for other practitioner psychologist titles, such as, Clinical Psychologists and Counselling Psychologists. Therefore, the skills trainees develop as part of

their doctoral training are essential in qualifying as EPs and practicing at the regulated standard in their roles across a wide range of educational, social care, health and other community settings (BPS, 2023).

The Educational Psychologist role involves working with children and young people (CYP) from the ages of 0-25 years. It also requires work with families, a range of professionals, organisations and wider communities. EPs have statutory duties in relation to individuals with special educational needs and disabilities, as well as the systemic application of psychological theory and research. Training institutions must meet standards as education providers (BPS, 2023; HCPC, 2017), to ensure qualified EPs are effectively prepared for the role. This includes the use of inclusive teaching strategies and appropriate programme design and content, providing trainees with experiences in different styles of working: direct, indirect and multi-disciplinary. Trainees are entitled to expect a learning experience that meets their needs and is underpinned by competent, research-informed teaching and an enabling learning environment (BPS, 2023, standard number 2.2.4). Practice-based learning must take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners (HCPC, 2017, standard number 5.4).

An awareness and understanding of the diversity of the social, economic and cultural context of EP work is vital for training EPs and underpins the development of the core curriculum (BPS, 2023). Increasingly, EPs are being held accountable and monitored for their complex roles and their work with individuals, families and children, where socio-cultural external factors create barriers in effecting change for children (Williams & Greenleaf, 2012). The current climate in which qualified EPs work is one of constant change, therefore standards of training must reflect this deconstruction and reconstruction through continuous review and revision of the EP role to keep up with the current context (Atkinson et al., 2015;

BPS, 2023; Gersch, 2009). As part of this continual monitoring, many areas of proficiencies are addressed by the BPS (2023) and HCPC (2023) in programme and practitioner development.

Currently in the UK, the role of the Educational Psychologist is in demand. There is a rising number of CYP in need of Education, Health and Care Plans and increase in special educational needs and disabilities alongside budget cuts to school provision (Department for Education, 2023). Additionally, a shortage of Educational Psychologist professionals has increased the pressure associated with the role. This requires trainees to be equipped with the necessary skills to engage in complex systems work with culturally sensitive practice. They must also develop self-reflective skills to adapt with the shifts in socio-political contexts (Fallon et al., 2010). While adhering to the standards of training, providers currently vary in their experiential learning approaches to practice development. This includes the use of the reflecting team model, which this research aims to explore as an experiential learning tool as part of trainee EPs' experience during their doctoral training.

1.6 Author's Background and Motivation

My interest in this research topic came from personal and professional experiences during my training as an Educational Psychologist. This included my work as part of a reflecting team within a family therapy clinic during a clinical placement. This exposure introduced me to the potential impact of systemic and reflective practice in professional development. I bring a background in education to the research, having trained and worked as a teacher. This has shaped my keen interest in adult learning theory, especially regarding how trainees' knowledge and practice is developed to prepare them for their role, where emotional reflection and curiosity are paramount. I view the preparation of EPs of high importance and

responsibility, given the skill and sensitivity required in the profession to work with children, families and wider communities.

As part of my Masters programme I conducted research on the mental health experiences of Early Years practitioners and became interested in how EPs can influence and support the wider systems around children and young people with reflection and support. Throughout my doctoral training, I have become increasingly aware of the value of supervision and structured reflection spaces in fostering growth, confidence and personal identity. These experiences deepened my interest in the reflecting team model as a potentially powerful experiential learning tool and how this might support trainees to develop the required competencies and standards of practice in the EP role.

As the researcher of this study, I share the same training context and professional identity as the participants. This offers valuable contextual understanding but also presents the potential for shared assumptions. I approached this research with an awareness of how my own beliefs, expectations and emotional responses would inevitably influence the research process. The values I hold around collaboration, equity, curiosity and the importance of hearing diverse voices aligned with the ethos of the reflecting team model and influenced my approach to both data collection and thematic interpretation. These values informed my interest in how such a model can nurture inclusive, relational practice in future EPs.

1.7 Rationale of Research

In conclusion, the reflecting team model has been used across disciplines, with a growing body of research in clinical and counselling doctoral training institutions highlighting its use to develop professional practice. However, research remains limited

regarding how the reflecting team model is used in educational psychology (Niven, 2023) and trainee EP students' experiences of using the reflecting team model (Amod & Miller, 2019). It is therefore felt the experiences of trainees using the reflecting team model as part of learning, and its role in developing professional practice, should be further explored. Whilst few doctoral institutes currently use the reflecting team model, a select designated training institution that integrated the method consistently throughout its three-year course as an experiential learning approach was chosen for this research. This institution provided the context to explore EPs' experiences of using the model during training as a tool to support practitioner development.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines the reflecting team model process, its theoretical background and an overview of relevant literature. The national and legislative context of Educational Psychologists' training is described and reflection on the current research of reflecting teams within the educational psychology field, providing the conceptual basis for introducing the research focus. The following chapter presents a review of relevant literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Chapter

The introductory chapter provided background information on the context of this research, the rationale, and main aim for the study, including an outline of the national context. This chapter begins by addressing the purpose of conducting the literature review and the literature question it seeks to explore. It is followed by an outline of the method used for the literature review, including the systematic search strategy and the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A systematic literature review was conducted to establish what knowledge and understanding exist within the current research body on how the reflecting team model is used in doctoral psychology training, in order to develop an understanding of how reflecting teams may influence the development of professional practice during doctoral training. Due to the limited nature of research in the educational psychology field on reflecting teams, relevant research from clinical and counselling psychology research was also explored to consider the use of the model in practitioner psychologist doctoral training. The literature identified was appraised and the findings were synthesised systematically. This chapter concludes by summarising how this study could contribute to the existing field of research and expand the current knowledge base.

2.2 Purpose of the Literature Review and the Literature Question

A literature review enables the synthesise of research findings in a systematic, transparent and reproducible way (Davies & Hughes, 2014), allowing for the identification and critical appraisal of relevant research (Snyder, 2019), as well as providing a contextual background to support the research and address the literature review question (Siddaway et al., 2019). The literature review for this research aimed to provide context and a rationale for

this study by exploring the use of reflecting teams in doctoral psychology training, while addressing the following question:

- What does the literature tell us about the influence reflecting teams have in supporting doctoral psychology trainee professional development?

2.3 Literature Review Methodology

The literature review used a clear and methodological approach, enabling replicability using a systematic search with transparent criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of studies to address the literature review question (Siddaway et al. 2019).

2.3.1 Literature Search Strategy

This search took place over a twelve-month period, ending in February 2025. The search began by exploring resources at the designated training institutes library and those available through the British Library inter-library loan service. A scoping review was conducted with the aim of isolating key terms. Databases such as PsycINFO, and grey literature from EThOS (The British Library's e-theses online service), the designated training institutes' library repository. Due to the limited nature of research in the educational psychology field on the reflecting team model, the search was expanded to include clinical and counselling psychology research for practitioner psychologist doctoral training to explore and examine if it could be applied to EP practice.

A total of four searches were carried out in September 2024 on the electronic research EBSCOhost platform of the relevant disciplines' databases, psychology and education. These included Education Resource Information Centre (ERIC), Education Source,

PsycINFO and Psychology and Behavioural Sciences. These databases were selected to ensure all relevant research was obtained alongside Google Scholar hand searches. The snow-balling technique was also used, of reviewing an article's reference list for sources, which is deemed an effective strategy (Greenhalgh & Peacock, 2005), due to research having already been completed on the topic by the authors (Hempel, 2020). An additional search was conducted in February 2025.

2.3.1.1 Defining the Search Terms. I aimed to gather a diverse array of studies to explore the breadth of the existing literature, with the intention of refining the selected studies based on a predefined inclusion criteria. The literature review question informed the development of specific search terms (Hempel, 2020), including terms related to 'reflecting teams', 'training', and 'doctoral' level of study (see Table 1). To account for variations in the specified search term, such as plurals, I used truncation symbols.

Relevant literature was identified using the Boolean/Phrase search mode containing 'reflecting teams', 'training' and 'doctoral' search terms connected by the Boolean operator AND, across the abstract and main body of text. Each of the three subject mapping terms were combined with equivalent key word search terms using OR.

Table 1

Literature Review Search Terms

Subject mapping terms	Key word search terms	Rationale
"Reflecting Team" AND	"Reflecting Team*"	This review intended to find studies that specifically explored reflecting teams, described by Andersen (1987).
"Training" AND	Train* OR Program* OR Educat*	This review intended to focus on reflecting teams use in training professional practitioners.
"Doctoral"	Doctor*	This review intended to focus on reflecting teams used as part of doctoral training.

2.3.1.2 Limiters and Expanders. Several limiters were applied to the searches to funnel research in order to obtain relevant literature to the literature review question (see Table 2).

Table 2

Search Limiters

Limiter	**Rationale**
Articles written in English	To ensure texts were available for reviewing and critique.
Peer reviewed journals	Due to the limited number of retrieved studies, I considered the inclusion of unpublished literature. Whilst grey literature can offer additional insight and help mitigate publication bias, its variable quality and limited transparency may introduce inconsistencies when comparing findings across studies. I therefore decided to restrict the literature review to peer-reviewed journal articles to prioritise a consistent standard of methodological rigour and quality assurance of the included research. The potential influence of publication bias is acknowledged as a limitation of this review. Relevant grey literature sources were referenced in the Introduction section to support contextual understanding.
Papers published between 1987- 2025	This is to ensure consideration all of research published since Andersen's (1987) publication on the method of reflecting teams.

To account for literature that may not have been identified through the key search terms on the EBSCOhost platform, the expander 'apply equivalent subjects' was used for the four searches conducted on the EBSCOhost platform. The literature review aimed to provide a current overview of available research through a comprehensive and systematic search, rather than an exhaustive evaluation of all material on the use of reflecting teams. This approach offers readers a clearer understanding of current literature trends, knowledge gaps, and potential directions for future research.

2.3.2 Literature Selection

2.3.2.1 Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion. To ensure the articles selected in the literature review were the most relevant, an inclusion and exclusion criteria was developed and used. Table 3 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied to each EBSCOhost search and the Google scholar search.

Table 3

Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion

Criteria Area	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Rationale
The quality of the research	Research is published in a peer reviewed journal.	Research is not published in a peer reviewed journal.	To ensure the quality of the research being reviewed.
Subject of interest	Research studies were selected if the focus of the research was on reflecting teams in doctoral training institutes for educational, clinical and counselling Psychology Practitioners or included trainees from these professions.	Research that focused on clients' experiences of reflecting team practice or training of other disciplines, such as family therapists or undergraduate or Masters level trainees. Research that did not focus on reflecting team practice.	I aimed to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant. Focus on research of applied practitioner psychology professions with regulated and protected titles in the UK and a required standard of practice, was felt to be most transferable to the educational psychology field.
Location	Primary focus is on research from the UK. International studies will be considered if the		Due to the limited research in the given topic area. Studies

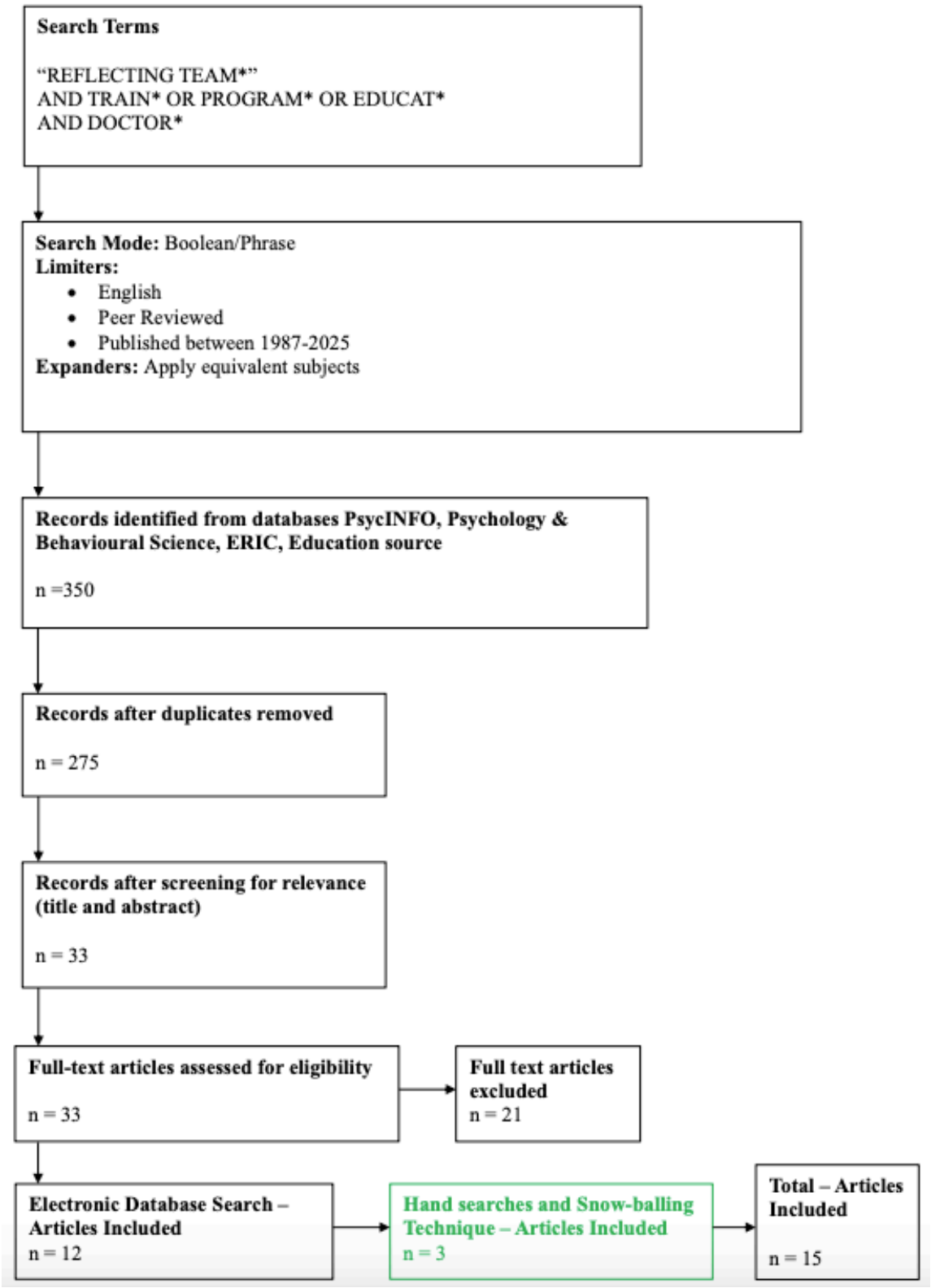
	findings can be applied to a UK context, such as Western countries that use the English language.		conducted globally were explored.
Language	Research conducted and published in English.	Research not conducted or published in English.	I was interested in studies in the English language.
Publication date	Year of publication between 1987 to present.	Year of publication before 1987.	Studies were selected if they had been published in a journal over the last 37 years to provide a contemporary and comprehensive review since Andersen's (1987) reflecting team model was published.
Publication type	Research journal article.	Theoretical, editorial, opinion piece, policy literature and dissertations.	To answer the literature review question appropriate studies were selected i.e. studies that have gathered data about the use of reflecting teams in doctoral psychology training.

The strict inclusion of the term 'reflecting teams' was used to ensure studies using reflecting team methodology originally coined by Andersen (1987) were the focus. Studies conducted globally were included, as the descriptive and explanatory nature of Andersen's (1987) reflecting team model was considered applicable across different contexts. This literature review explored the broader implications of using reflecting teams within the applied psychology professions of clinical and counselling psychology, due to the limited number of studies examining Educational Psychologists' use of reflecting teams in doctoral training, to see how it could be applied to EPs.

2.3.2.2 Literature Selection Process. The systematic literature review process consists of several stages and is represented in Figure 3 below, using the 'Preferred Reporting of Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis' (PRISMA) flow diagram (Peters et al., 2015). From the systematic database and grey literature search carried out in September 2024, a total of 350 articles were found. A reference software called EndNote was used, where the articles were imported to support the organisation of literature into four distinct categories labelled: articles to include, articles to exclude, background literature and borderline articles (Hempel, 2020). At this stage duplicate articles were removed leaving a total of 275 articles, which were next evaluated against the inclusion and exclusion criteria (See table 3 above). The title and abstract were first read from the articles to review the relevance of the subject research area, where those irrelevant were excluded at this point, leaving a total of 33 articles. Next the full text was read to explore how the article addressed the literature review question and whether the criteria for inclusion was met. Following a review of the full article text, 21 articles were excluded (see Appendix A for an overview of the 33 articles and the decision for exclusion). A total of 12 articles were left for inclusion and hand-searches identified an additional three articles, totalling 15 articles for inclusion in the literature review (see Appendix B for the list of included articles).

Figure 3

PRISMA Flowchart Illustrating the Search Process



2.3.2.3 Borderline Cases. Within the literature review, several articles were relevant to the topic of reflecting teams but did not meet the inclusion criteria, specifically, those that focused on Master-level or undergraduate-level students rather than doctoral-level trainees. It was decided that studies exploring the influence of reflecting team practice on doctoral level trainees, either solely or alongside Master level trainees, would be included. However, those that focused exclusively on undergraduate or Master-level training, with no mention of doctoral-level trainees, were excluded (Hale & Sindlinger, 2017; Lamprecht & Pitre, 2018; Landis & Young, 1994; Taylor et al., 2023).

Studies from disciplines outside of counselling, clinical and educational psychology were also excluded, such as family therapists, in order to focus the review on research from applied practitioner psychology professions with regulated and protected titles in the UK, and with defined standards of professional practice. This was considered more relevant and applicable to the field of educational psychology. An exception was made in relation to the field of educational psychology papers due to the very limited number of findings. There was one paper found for trainee Educational Psychologists, based in South Africa, where the training requirement is not a three-year doctoral training but a Masters level course (Amod & Miller, 2019). The study focused on students' experiences in their internship year before qualification and it was deemed appropriate to include this study to explore the influence of reflecting team practice within the educational psychology profession.

2.3.3 Organisation of the Literature Review

Key information from studies in the literature review was recorded in a table, extracting data detailing each study's population, methodological design, findings and researcher critique (Hempel, 2020). The data extraction table can be viewed in Appendix C.

The articles were then critiqued using framework checklists for qualitative studies, mixed methodology studies and literature reviews to support the evaluation of strengths and limitations and assess the quality and relevance of the 15 papers (see Appendix D for the critical appraisal review tables). The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2018) Qualitative research checklist was used for 13 qualitative studies, the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) Version 18 (Hong et al., 2018) for the one mixed methods article and the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2018) Systematic Review checklist for the review article. An overview of the literature review will be discussed in the following section.

2.4 Overview of Literature Review Findings

2.4.1 Overview of Articles and Quality

The studies included in the literature review primarily used qualitative methodology to explore the use of reflecting team practice during doctoral training in the fields of clinical, counselling and educational psychology. This methodology allowed for an in-depth exploration of experiences with the reflecting team model across a range of settings and study foci, employing a variety of research designs (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Among the selected articles, case studies were the most common methodological approach, with eight out of 15 articles from clinical and counselling fields adopting this methodology (Davis, 2012; Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Hale & Sindlinger, 2017; Harrawood et al., 2011; Maggio, 2014; McGovern & Harmsworth, 2010; Randall-James & Head, 2017; Taylor et al., 2023). This method was appropriate given the aim of these studies to explain contemporary circumstances (Yin, 2014).

Schramm (1971) defined a case study as a method that illuminates a decision or set of decisions by exploring why they were taken, how they were implemented and what the

outcomes were. Yin and Davis (2007) described case studies as a way to understand a real-world case, whether an individual, organisation, programme or event, based on the assumption that such understanding could improve the contextual conditions surrounding the case. Yin (2014) also noted that case studies benefit from the development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection and analysis. The theoretical propositions underpinning the case studies reviewed were all rooted in Andersen's (1987) use of the reflecting team model and its influence on the development of family therapy practice.

Each case study focused on an aspect of using the reflecting team model within doctoral education for Clinical or Counselling Psychologists, with varying degrees of contextual detail. While this methodology allowed for a rich, detailed understanding of complex contexts and experiences, it was important to remain mindful and analytical of the potential for researcher bias and subjectivity. This was particularly evident in studies where recruitment strategies and researcher-participant relationships (e.g., involving course tutors and students) varied. Case study data collection typically involves multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents and reports. The reviewed articles employed a range of data collection methods and analysed data by describing the case and themes that emerged. The overall quality of the research varied. Some offered rich contextual detail and clarity, whilst others lacked transparency or demonstrated potential bias. A more detailed critique of each study is discussed alongside the literature review themes.

Four studies used a narrative approach (Duch, 2017; Lamprecht & Pitre, 2018; Shurts et al., 2006; Yim, 2022), originating from clinical and counselling fields. Each study explored the experiences of the author (Clandinin, 2022) using the reflecting team model during their training or as part of developing a training programme. Physical, emotional and social

contextual details were described by the authors in an autoethnographic account, providing high-quality research with in-depth description. This level of detail enhances the transferability of findings, enabling readers to consider their applicability within their own contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The aims of all 15 articles were appropriate and held value in exploring the experiences of either trainees or course trainers and developers using the reflecting team model in various ways with doctoral students from clinical, counselling and educational psychology. In some studies, the reflecting team model was used alongside another model or teaching method, which was concurrently explored (Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Harrawood et al., 2011; Maggio, 2014; Shurts et al., 2006). Across the literature, however, there was variation in the reporting of ethical issues and researcher reflexivity, factors that should be addressed to ensure high-quality qualitative research.

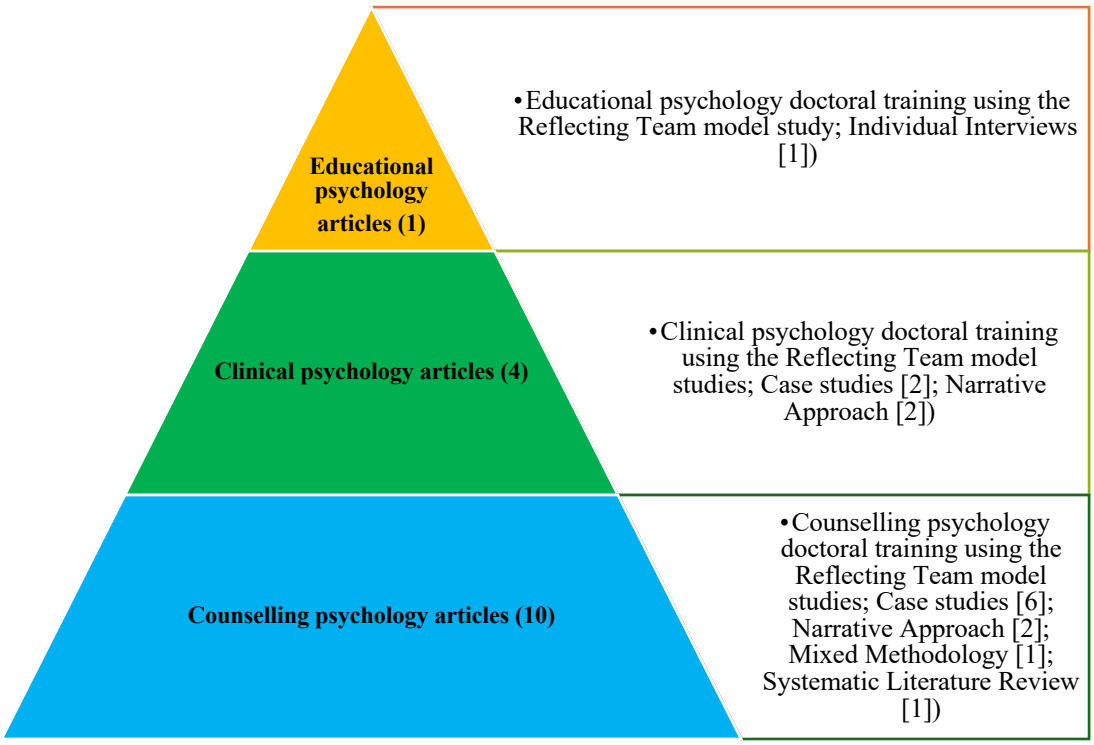
Amod & Miller's (2019) study was the only article from the field of educational psychology and used a qualitative approach involving semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis to explore trainee experiences of using the reflecting team model. The study was considered high-quality due to the thorough description of the analytic process. Landis & Young (1994) used a mixed-methods approach, while Meekums et al. (2016) conducted a scoping review of reflecting team methods in initial therapist training. The scoping review by Meekums et al. (2016) was included in the current literature review due to its methodological rigour and direct relevance to the research focus on experiential learning approaches within applied psychology training. While scoping reviews are secondary sources, their inclusion is appropriate when they meet established quality criteria and offer valuable insights into trends, gaps and patterns across a body of literature. In this case, Meekums et al. (2016) synthesised findings from multiple primary studies, providing a

contextual foundation and supported the rationale for further investigation of the reflecting team model in educational psychology training. The review was critically appraised for its quality and relevance and was not used in place of primary data, but rather as a complementary source that enriched the understanding of experiential and reflective practices in professional training contexts.

The articles selected for review were from a global field and questions of applicability were considered in relation to different contexts. It was decided that, due to the descriptive nature of Andersen's (1987) reflecting team methodology and its adaptability, the data from these articles would still be relevant for exploring the experiences of doctoral trainees from psychology disciplines in different countries. Eight studies were conducted in the United States of America, five in the United Kingdom and one in South Africa. The differing standards of proficiency that psychologist practitioners are required to meet in various country contexts were also considered. It was felt that, due to the high level of education and the review of professional practice bodies' standards and proficiencies within course training in the United States and South Africa it was appropriate to include these articles in relation to the current research project. Figure 4 below visually represents the number of articles drawn from educational, clinical and counselling psychology disciplines.

Figure 4

Pyramid of Research Articles Included from Educational, Clinical and Counselling Psychology



2.4.2 Literature Review Themes

The literature review employed a thematic synthesis approach informed by Thomas and Harden (2008), which is widely used for synthesising findings from qualitative research. This approach was selected to support an in-depth and interpretive exploration of how reflecting teams are used in applied psychology training contexts, and to identify patterns across studies that reflect experiential learning practices and their impact. The review aimed not only to collate findings but also to move beyond primary data to develop new insights relevant to educational psychology training. The broader process was also informed by

guidance from Hempel (2020), who emphasised a structured, transparent, and analytical approach to synthesising literature in the social sciences.

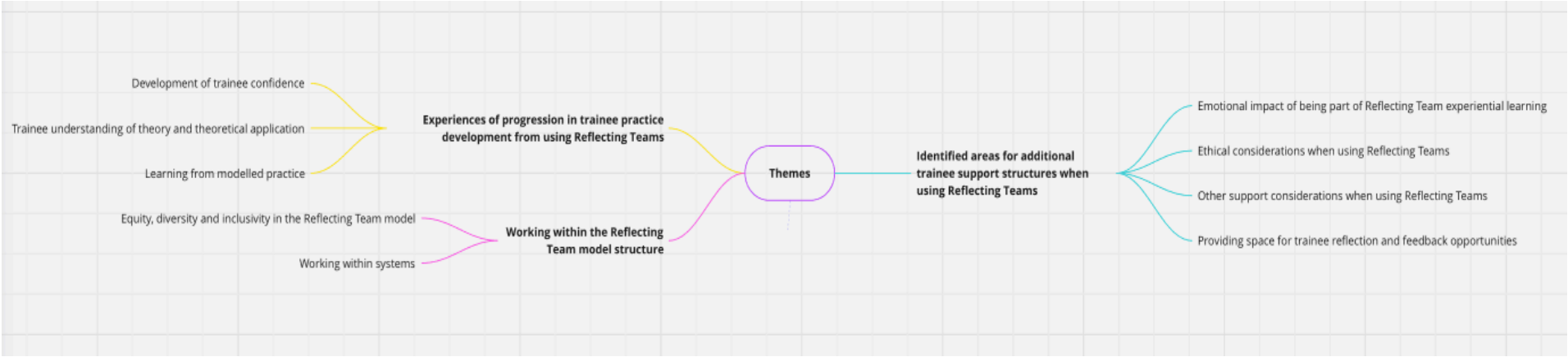
The synthesis followed a multi-stage process. First, the included studies were imported into NVivo software, which supported a line-by-line coding process. This inductive coding involved applying conceptual labels to excerpts of data that reflected participants' experiences, researcher interpretations, and contextually relevant outcomes. NVivo was used to organise and manage large volumes of qualitative data systematically, allowing for easier comparison across studies and the identification of recurrent patterns. Coding remained close to the original language and meaning to preserve participants' perspectives.

In the second phase, related codes were grouped into descriptive themes, offering a framework for organising and understanding key areas of focus across the literature. In the final phase, analytical themes were developed to interpret patterns in relation to the current research question and relevant psychological theory. The theme development process was iterative and interpretive, supported by reflective writing to note analytical decisions.

Study quality played a central role in shaping the interpretation and synthesis of findings, consistent with Hempel's (2020) emphasis on methodological transparency and credibility in review work. While studies were not excluded based on quality, those with clearer links between data and interpretation, strong contextual grounding, and transparent analysis contributed more substantially to the analytical themes. This approach allowed the review to incorporate a range of sources while maintaining interpretive depth and analytic rigour. Three main themes and subsequent sub themes about the use of reflecting teams in professional psychology training were developed. See Figure 5 for a visual representation of the literature review thematic map.

Figure 5

Literature Review Thematic Map



2.4.2.1 Experiences of Progression in Trainee Practice Development from Using Reflecting Teams.

There were several areas discussed regarding how using reflecting teams in practice supported the development of professional skills. Andersen (1987) highlighted that reflecting teams provide multiple opportunities for practitioners to develop reflective practice, listening skills and improved ability in the co-construction of meaning in clinical practice. Cox et al. (2003) also highlighted the benefits of using a reflecting team with trainee 'group workers', where students gained a greater understanding of the value of multiple perspectives, as well giving and receiving feedback.

In the current literature review on doctoral psychology training and the use of the reflecting team model, it was found across studies that trainees made progress in their professional practice and development towards qualifying competencies. This included studies by Landis and Young (1994), McGovern and Harmsworth (2010), Davies (2012), Hale and Sindlinger (2017), Lamprecht and Pitre (2018) and Amod and Miller (2019), where trainee progression was noted in areas of confidence development, understanding of theory and its application and learning through observing modelled practice, which are discussed in the sub-themes below.

2.4.2.1.1 Development of Trainee Confidence. McGovern and Harmsworth's (2010) case study presented the authors' perspective on using the reflecting team model as part of a doctoral training course in clinical psychology, both from a course facilitator and a trainee standpoint, as one of the authors was a trainee at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom. They described their 'in the moment' reflecting team practice with 18 clinical psychology doctoral trainees. One author reflected on their personal experience as a trainee using the reflecting team approach and described developing confidence and courage in reflection, as

well as increasing their use of self to build connection with the role-play family as part of the reflecting process. While it was valuable to hear directly from a trainee's experience using the reflecting team model, the study lacked sufficient detail to offer deeper understanding.

In comparison to other studies included in this literature review, McGovern and Harmsworth's (2010) study does not provide detailed theoretical background to the reflecting team approach, resulting in a lack of context within the study. They also did not specify how the reflecting team session fits within the broader context of the trainee's clinical psychology training. Yin (2018) highlighted that context provides analysis and rigour within case study designs. This study would therefore benefit from greater contextual framing of the reflecting team approach, alongside increased reflexivity, to strengthen both discussion and analysis. Issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity were not reflected on, which limits the transferability of the case study findings to other training contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A further two studies found that trainees developed confidence through using the reflecting team model. The focus of these studies was on Masters students' experiences, but they also included how the reflecting team process influenced doctoral students. In these studies, doctoral students took on the role of facilitator or member of the reflecting team, and the authors reflected on their own experiences as doctoral students using the model before implementing it in their current training practice with students.

The study by Hale and Sindlinger (2017) explored the use of reflecting teams in postgraduate counselling supervision at Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania. It integrated choice theory and reality therapy to develop a learning environment that promoted reflection in a non-defensive manner and aimed to increase their clinical skill and confidence using Wubbolding's (2000) questioning technique. They provided detailed explanations of Andersen's (1987) reflecting team model and Glasser's (1998) choice theory and reality

therapy to contextualise the case study, positioning these within a supervisor/supervisee relationship to show how the reflecting team model supported trainees in meeting Glasser's (1998) basic needs. Feedback from Masters-level students was discussed and presented as 'informal answer writing prompts' based on their experiences using the supervision model. Quotes were provided and summarised as evidence of improvement in clinical skills and personal growth. The authors also detailed trainee requirements of 100 hours of fieldwork and supervision sessions. However, it was unclear how the student quotes were selected, aside from the authors' agreeing with the statements. This introduced potential bias, as alternative perspectives were not considered and the basis for selecting specific student quotes was not made explicit.

Lamprecht and Pitre's (2018) autoethnographic narrative approach explored a faculty members' ambition to change an existing educational model for a counselling programme to include an experiential learning component at Idaho State University in the United States. The author chronologically discussed their own reflective experiences as a doctoral student before beginning their career as a counselling course facilitator. They described students' engagement with the reflecting team model and live supervision to develop practice and confidence as it was incorporated onto the counselling programme, using doctoral students to support the development of postgraduate beginner counselling trainees. The practicum aimed to support beginner counselling students with developmental concerns through peer-client practice under supervision.

Lamprecht and Pitre (2018) highlighted that multiple studies supported the effectiveness of implementing reflecting teams into counselling training during early stages of student development (Buono et al., 2011; Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Landis & Young, 1994). The authors also found that students reported increased confidence in implementing

counselling skills in interpersonal settings. Lamprecht and Pitre's (2018) study, due to its narrative approach, offered a detailed account of their work, however, little alternative perspective was discussed regarding other teaching practices that might support beginner counselling trainees. Whilst the study provided a chronological analysis, a known challenge of narrative research is ensuring there is sufficient information about the narrator (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Greater detail addressing the author's reflexivity would have been beneficial to understand the personal context and background shaping how they 're-story' (Edel, 1984) the account of making a change in educational approaches, and how this was embedded within social, cultural and institutional dimensions.

2.4.2.1.2 Trainee Understanding of Theory and Theoretical Application. Several studies reflected on the development of trainees' theoretical understanding and application of theory through their experiences of using reflecting teams. This included McGovern and Harmsworth (2010), who discussed how clinical psychology trainees developed a greater appreciation of theory and were able to apply it practically in clinical settings. A study by Harrawood et al. (2011) described how counselling trainees at Idaho State University, United States, improved their understanding of systems theory and recognised the importance of re-visiting the philosophical underpinnings of the reflecting team model to support their processing of the experiences.

The only study found in the literature review on the EP population was Amod and Miller's (2019) research at a social services organisation in Gauteng, South Africa, which provided insight into EP trainees' experiences of using the reflecting team model. The study explored the perceptions and experiences of 12 EPs and a family therapy trainer using Andersen's (1987) reflecting team model. It employed a qualitative, descriptive, exploratory research design to facilitate the collection, analysis and interpretation of rich, interpretivist

data. Purposive sampling was used, inviting students trained during the past five years to participate. Individual semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted to explore their experiences of working systemically and within a reflecting team. The Head of Counselling services, who facilitated the reflecting team, was also interviewed. Whilst interviews can yield rich, nuanced data, they offer limited applicability and may introduce the potential for bias. Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and the discussion focused on upholding the authenticity of the findings.

Amod and Miller (2019) highlighted a strength of their study as the inclusion of multiple perspectives to enhance the dependability and credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), as well as the author maintaining a reflexive diary to monitor potential researcher bias. The study was well situated, with details provided on the cultural significance of the South African context when using reflecting teams. They found that trainees had desired more in-depth theoretical training in family therapy and reflecting team practice as part of their course. Anonymous quotes from students were included, along with reflections on how, since qualifying, EPs had been using reflecting teams in their current practice.

The authors reflected on limitations affecting the credibility of their findings. This included the time delay, of varying degrees, between the participants' internship training year and their accounts of their reflecting team experiences, which may have influenced the accuracy of their recollections. It was also suggested that participants may have been cautious in their responses due to their relationship with the internship site and the universities at which they were trained. These are important considerations noted by the authors in evaluating the study's credibility and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Overall Amod

and Miller (2019) highlighted reflecting teams as a beneficial way of engaging trainees in systemic intervention and application of theory in a practical learning environment.

2.4.2.1.3 Learning from Modelled Practice. Trainee observation of practice has been found to support adult learning through opportunities to shadow and learn from qualified and experienced team members (Leberman & McDonald, 2016). Four studies in the literature review found that the reflecting team model supported opportunities for trainees to apply practice after observing it modelled by more experienced members of the course team (Davies, 2012; Hale & Sindlinger, 2017; Lamprecht & Pitre, 2018; Landis & Young, 1994).

Landis and Young's (1994) study was the only mixed methods approach within the literature search. Their research focused on the use of the reflecting team model in counselling education supervision at postgraduate level and employed a case study design with quantitative data collection. The course was a marriage and family counselling class with 20 students, one instructor and a doctoral student assistant at Stetson University, Florida in the United States. Landis and Young (1994) provided detailed contextual information, outlining the step-by-step reflecting team approach (Andersen, 1987) used in the study. They reported that students were able to learn from more experienced peers through modelling skills in reflection, client feedback and communication styles within the structured reflecting team framework.

The first author used The Family Therapist Trainee Rating Scale (FTTRS) (Amatea, 1986) with 14 students as a pre- and post-intervention measure to assess the perceived impact of the model on skill development. The 34-item instrument was adapted from Piercy et al.'s (1983) Family Therapy Rating Scale and from competencies identified by Tomm and Wright (1979). Trainees rated themselves on a 0 to 6 Likert scale. Landis and Young (1994) found that students rated themselves significantly higher in all areas, with the most important in

structuring and relationship skills. They described the reflecting team model as encouraging students to generate alternative frameworks and behavioural responses while receiving immediate peer group feedback. However, they were surprised that students did not report greater gains in structural process behaviour overall.

Limitations of the study's quantitative approach included the small sample size of 14 students and the use of closed question Likert scales, which restricted the depth of response. The factors limited the transferability of the findings, as they may not reflect a broader range of trainee experiences. Additionally, the scale measured students' perceived progress, which may have introduced bias, as students may have been reluctant to report negative outcomes. The experiences of the doctoral student assistant were only briefly mentioned, and the study would have benefitted from the triangulation of methods or perspectives, such as incorporating qualitative reflections from trainees or input from supervisors, to provide a richer understanding of the reflecting team experience.

Lamprecht and Pitre's (2018) study also involved doctoral students to support model practice with trainees and in supervisory roles to facilitate learning. They highlighted how experiential learning can foster the development of skills and confidence through continued exposure to the practice environment, course facilitator modelling and encouragement of supervisory feedback. The authors described their pedagogical design of an experiential laboratory in which students were placed into groups of four to six, supported by a supervising doctoral student assistant. The learning environment included a counselling room and an observation room equipped with in-ear technology and recording devices to facilitate modelling and feedback. Hale and Sindlinger (2017) also emphasised the value of supervisors modelling reflective practice and reducing trainee anxiety through the reflecting team model.

They noted the ability to monitor trainees' developmental needs using a choice theory/reality therapy technique.

Davies' (2012) case study used a dialogical approach to present their experience of applying Andersen's (1987) reflecting team model with post graduate counselling psychology students in family therapy context at the University of Massachusetts' Counselling Centre in the United States. Davies (2012) described the technique as a self-reflexive immersive experience that enabled the trainer to model in-the-moment practice. They detailed the process of involving student trainees in case discussions, using the reflecting team, with sessions recorded and shared with clients and those present during the consultations.

Davies (2012) followed up this account with a presentation of a "live interview" transcript, noting that minimal annotation was a deliberate choice to allow the transcript to 'speak for itself'. The case included an invited faculty member, also a friend of the author, as part of the reflecting team, alongside a group of students. However, the study did not address the consent process or ethical considerations regarding the presentation of transcripts involving students, and it also did not clarify whether names were changed to protect anonymity. Yin (2018) described a case study's analytical rigour as being shaped by the context provided, something Davies (2012) offered in detail. However, a limitation of the study was the absence of researcher reflexivity. Davies (2012) did not include alternative viewpoints or reflect on their positionality as course facilitator, and they also did not acknowledge their role in selecting which transcript to present. Additionally, the inclusion of a friend and colleague as part of the reflecting team introduced the potential for bias.

2.4.2.2 Identified Areas for Additional Trainee Support Structures when Using Reflecting Teams. This theme encompasses findings within the literature review relating to

areas of identified need in delivering reflecting teams as part of the training course. This includes the emotional impact on trainees participating in reflecting teams and the importance of ethical practice, including the creation of a safe learning environment. It also incorporates the need for additional support structures identified by course facilitators when using reflecting teams as an experiential learning tool, as well as the considered use of evaluation and feedback within reflective practice.

2.4.2.2.1 Emotional Impact of Being Part of Reflecting Team Experiential Learning. Researchers across the literature review discussed the emotional impact of participating in reflecting team experiential learning for trainees. Specifically, Harrawood et al.'s (2011) case study explored student emotions when engaging in role play and reflecting team models over a ten-week period in a graduate-level counselling families class at Idaho State University, United States. Although the study focused on a Masters-level class, the authors also included reflections from the course facilitator and two doctoral students who delivered the class. These individuals offered their perspectives on the students' experiences.

The study included a brief literature overview of each method, followed by details of the reflecting team structure and the role play model used. Harrawood et al. (2011) transcribed video-recorded data in which trainees' described their emotional experiences while participating in various roles; co-counsellor, family member, reflecting team member, and observation team member. The findings indicated that students most commonly reported fear when acting as co-counsellors, due to the perceived level of responsibility. Some students, however, reported feeling more comfortable when working alongside a co-counsellor, as it helped support the therapeutic process. In the reflecting team role, students felt they learned the most but also found it to be the most anxiety inducing, largely due to feelings of self-consciousness.

Harrawood et al. (2011) highlighted the challenges expressed in student feedback, particularly the anxiety associated with participating in the reflecting team, and discussed how best to support trainees in managing these emotional responses. They suggested that future research should explore how emotional experiences when using the reflecting team model influenced trainee learning and development.

In McGovern and Harmsworth's (2010) case study on the experiential role-play reflecting team, they found that students initially became unsettled by the strangeness of not addressing 'clients' directly, highlighting the need for support in developing trainee confidence when using the reflecting team model. In agreement, Lamprecht and Pitre (2018) and Amod and Miller (2019) both discussed the anxiety and decreased feelings of self-efficacy that trainee psychologists may experience when beginning systemic work. Similarly, Griffith and Frieden (2000) reflected on the importance of a supportive approach to help trainees manage difficult emotions during the development of reflective and systemic practice, which they described as involving feelings of 'loss and disorientation'. Trainees from Amod and Miller's (2019) study agreed that becoming more familiar with systemic approaches was essential to mobilising change for the children they worked with as EPs. Davies (2012) also highlighted the reflecting team model's potential to reduce trainee anxiety when learning a new approach, by offering opportunities for reflection rather than defensiveness.

Taylor et al.'s (2023) study explored the use of the reflecting team model as an experiential learning tool with postgraduate counselling students using solution-focused therapy at Texas Christian University in the United States. The authors acknowledged that reflecting teams and experiential group learning could initially provoke anxiety for learners. Taylor et al. (2023) gathered student feedback through Zoom or telephone interviews lasting

35 to 45 minutes. They provided their interview questions, and eight students from the experiential group responded, along with four from the reflecting team. Students' ethnic background were also noted. Taylor et al. (2023) situated the study effectively by outlining programme accreditation requirements, which included a minimum of ten hours of group participation. They also explained key theoretical foundations, such as solution-focused therapy, group systems theory and the reflecting team process, followed by a step-by-step guide to their experiential group practice and associated course content.

Although trainees initially felt discomfort adjusting to the reflecting team setup, Taylor et al. (2023) found that validation from peers helped them develop confidence, and familiarity with other students reduced anxiety. The authors noted the need for greater heterogeneity in their sample to enrich the reflecting team experience. The study provided rich qualitative data, presenting multiple perspectives, a clearly defined research question, ethical considerations, appropriate data collection methods, and thoughtful reflection on the study's limitations, including those related to equality, diversity and inclusivity. While the findings are context specific, they offer valuable insights that may inform similar training settings.

2.4.2.2.2 Ethical Considerations when Using Reflecting Teams. Psychologists are required to ensure ethical practice within their work, and this is especially important when working with vulnerable individuals, such as trainees on a training course. Ethical standards were adhered to in the countries from where the literature of this review took place including, South African Professional Conduct Guidelines in Psychology (2007); APA Ethical Principles for Psychologists and Code of Conduct, (2016) section 7 and the HCPC standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2024). Schein's (1999) consideration of power imbalance is particularly relevant within adult learning institutes, where course providers

hold a relative position of power compared to trainees, who occupy a one down learning position. It is therefore essential, when facilitating experiential learning environments such as reflecting team practice, to uphold ethical standards, including the creation of a safe learning environment. This sub-theme was highlighted in several of the studies reviewed in the literature, such as Duch's (2017) study, and was also evident in how the researchers conducted ethical research with their students.

Duch (2017) described her experiences as a female trainee supervisor in a family therapy clinic team working in a 'male context', alongside two experienced male family therapists and a male clinical psychology doctoral trainee at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom. She discussed the challenges of confronting inequality and gender discrimination, as well as being challenged on aspects of difference, while trying to create a safe supervision space built on trust for her supervisees within the reflecting team. Duch's (2017) reflexive account of her ethnicity, age, professional experience and gender provided a detailed insight into the impact of working in a male-dominated reflecting team.

Narrative-form research is often critiqued for its limited transferability, as a specific case may not be representative of other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2014). The subjectivity of the author and the interpretation nature of narrative analysis also present limitations in terms of how findings are constructed. However, Guba and Lincoln (1994) argued that the quality of qualitative research can be assessed through trustworthiness. To support this, they recommended the use of detailed, rich descriptions of culture to allow readers to make informed judgements about the transferability of the research. They also emphasised the importance of making value preferences explicit at the outset and engaging in ongoing reflexivity. While this study provided a valuable and in-depth account of the

supervisor's experiences, it offered more limited discussion on the impact of the reflecting team on the clinical psychology trainee and wider team.

Additional studies that highlighted the importance of providing a safe learning environment for trainees include Landis and Young (1994), who described the reflecting team model as a safe and non-threatening approach that supported skill development through feedback. Shurts et al. (2006) and Harrawood et al. (2011) similarly emphasised that the reflecting team created an inclusive peer learning environment, enhancing clinical effectiveness and self-efficacy. As part of their role as researchers, Harrawood et al. (2011) also considered ethical aspects of their study and outlined the steps taken to ensure ethical data collection from the 21 Masters students enrolled in their class. This included providing an informed consent pack for the use of students' statements and video recordings. They clarified that participation would not impact students' course grades and delayed identifying which students had provided consent until after the class experience was completed, thereby reducing the risk of bias.

Griffith and Frieden (2000) also considered ethical implications related to trainee development, emphasising the importance of adhering to the American Counselling Association's Code of Ethics (American Counselling Association, 1995). They followed guidelines on informed consent when using reflective training practices, clearly outlining both the benefits and potential risks of taking part, as well as the importance of maintaining confidentiality. They also discussed that academic evaluation should not be influenced by the extent to which students chose to self-disclose during practice. Finally, Taylor et al. (2023) reflected on the ethical considerations of experiential group participation, acknowledging the potential risks for students and the importance of protecting individual rights. They ensured

that consent was obtained from all participants before the activity began, and confidentiality was emphasised as a key component of the reflecting team experience.

2.4.2.2.3 Other Support Considerations when Using Reflecting Teams. Using the reflecting team model as an experiential learning method was found by several studies to require additional implementation support when used as part of postgraduate psychology training. This included its integration with other teaching methods, supervision spaces, practical guidelines, financial resources and preparation factors. For example, Harrawood et al. (2011), noted the importance of clarifying to students that participation in the experiential learning would not affect their course grade, but was intended to support skill development. The authors also emphasised the imperative need to support trainees in processing performance anxiety.

Shurts et al. (2006) suggested that individual supervision should be offered, if needed, to support students with any difficulties that may arise. Meekums et al.'s (2016) systematic literature review found that reflecting teams are generally welcomed by students, however, they recommended providing clear guidelines and a rationale for use in training. This recommendation was addressed by Taylor et al.'s (2023) study, which provided trainees with structured guidelines to support their engagement in the reflecting team process and highlighted the benefits of doing so. They also acknowledged limitations in their study, including the need for sufficient preparation time to establish the reflecting team structure and the importance of supporting teams to develop constructive, rather than negative, responses.

Hale and Sindlinger (2017) discussed the use of the reflecting team model as part of the supervision framework they implemented for trainees. They provided a step-by-step guide for applying their new model of reflective supervision. However, Hale and Sindlinger

(2017), as both authors and course supervisors, also reflected on their own experiences of using the reflecting team model during their doctoral training. They noted that their views on using reflecting teams in supervision aligned with those of their students, which reinforced their motivation to introduce the model into their teaching practice. While they provided useful context, they did not engage in reflexivity to explore potential bias arising from their dual roles as course supervisors and advocates of the model they had previously experienced in their own training.

An additional consideration from Lamprecht and Pitre's (2018) autoethnographic narrative study is the issue of securing financial resources to implementing experiential learning changes within their course programme. Their counselling programme transitioned to include an experiential learning component. One author shared a chronological account of their reflective experiences as a doctoral student prior to becoming a course facilitator, describing their efforts to obtain funding for developing technology-enhanced practice laboratories. The author also emphasised the personal significance of the course changes and the importance of remaining responsive to student needs and the practicalities of course implementation.

Three studies explored the influence of reflecting teams on trainee practice alongside other teaching methods in counselling postgraduate training, using case study or narrative approaches. Each incorporated two or more methods in addition to reflecting teams (Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Maggio, 2014; Shurts et al., 2006). Maggio's (2014) case study examined five training methods used in a counselling psychology doctoral programme at Springfield College, Massachusetts in the United States. These methods included reflecting teams, post-therapy trialogues, "as if" listening, internalised other interviews, and client-informed outcome measures. Maggio (2014) explained that students on the doctoral program were

required to complete 1500 hours of practicum experiences, with the first 100 hours involving in-house counselling practicum classes in which the methods were applied. The case study described each method's developmental history and its application within the programme, followed by a student's account, transcript or quote.

Using five methods created opportunities to identify issues within the methods, develop patterns of meaning that transcend individual cases and highlight key learning points (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2006). However, this broad scope could also be viewed as a limitation, as the inclusion of multiple examples restricted the depth of analysis for each method, resulting in a less detailed exploration of individual approaches. Furthermore, Maggio (2014) did not address any challenges encountered with the different training methods, limiting the inclusion of alternative or critical perspectives.

Griffith and Frieden (2000) explored four teaching practicums, Socratic questioning, journal writing, Inter-personal Process Recall and reflecting teams in developing doctoral counselling students' reflective thinking during training at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee in the United States. Griffith & Frieden (2000) used the Reflective Judgement Model (King & Kitchener, 1994) to explore how the different training techniques supported students' reflective development. They provided an overview of each teaching method, along with a case example of a student learning experience and example questions that a supervisor could ask to support trainee development. The study concluded by identifying which areas of student development each technique supported, with reflecting teams helping students to view problems systemically and co-construct meanings.

Shurts et al. (2006) used a narrative approach to describe how they implemented the experiential learning opportunities of role play and reflecting teams for Master's and doctoral

counselling trainees at Montclair State University, in the United States, across several semesters. The authors of the paper occupied various roles; course facilitator, graduate assistant and a student. A brief literature review and overview of reflecting teams and role-play experiential approaches were provided, accompanied by student quotes and described experiences. Doctoral students acted as graduate assistants to support the learning of Masters students'. Shurts et al. (2006) described both the strengths and challenges experienced by the students to present a well-rounded account of the approaches used. Identified strengths of reflecting teams included gaining new insight and perspective during counselling sessions, while a key challenge was the importance of supervision in helping students manage defensiveness when engaging with the reflecting team approach.

A critique of three studies that used reflecting teams alongside other methods (Griffith & Frieden, 2000; Maggio, 2014; Shurts et al., 2006) was the inclusion of verbatim quotations from students or case examples of student experiences without explanation of how these were obtained. The analytic methods were not explained, and quotations were not attributed to participant codes, making it difficult to assess how representative they were or to identify potential researcher bias in the reporting of student experiences.

2.4.2.2.4 Providing Space for Trainee Reflection and Feedback Opportunities.

Several studies discussed within this theme also emphasised the importance of providing space for trainee reflection and feedback as part of their experiential learning, discussed within this sub-theme. Amod & Miller (2019) found trainee EPs benefitted from the practical application of reflecting teams in developing their self-evaluation skills and contributing to broader team evaluation discussions. Shurts et al.'s (2006) study similarly found that the reflecting team framework enabled students to engage with feedback openly, particularly through supervisory input, as also highlighted by Lamprecht and Pitre (2018).

In Taylor et al.'s (2023) study, both doctoral level and Master's level students participated in the reflecting team. Both groups attended four-hour weekly sessions that included reviewing reflecting team literature, taking part in experiential group work and engaging in feedback discussions. The results indicated that reflecting team members benefitted from observing group dynamics, learning to give constructive feedback and understanding how feedback influenced the wider group system to remain open and supportive of all members.

2.4.2.3 Working Within the Reflecting Team Model Structure. Two key aspects of working within a reflecting team structure frequently appeared in the literature as influential to trainees; equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) practice and systemic working.

2.4.2.3.1 Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity in the Reflecting Team Model. A study that explored the perspective of a Clinical Psychologist trainee was Yim's (2022) personal narrative, which focused on systemic theories such as circularity, coordinated management of meaning and reflecting teams in countering oppressive practice. The study was conducted during Yim's (2022) training as a doctoral Clinical Psychologist at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom. Yim (2022) addressed their ethnicity and marginalised aspects of identity, as well as issues of power imbalance, using examples from theory and practice in relation to anti-oppressive work they encountered and delivered during their clinical experience. They discussed how systemic ideas can resist and counter oppression and provided examples and analysis of how reflecting teams may help to do so.

Reflecting teams were described as 'microcosm of societal opinions', where the diversity of team membership could help ensure that all clients have advocates with shared beliefs, opening up alternative narratives. Yim (2022) also critiqued the existing reflecting team literature, calling greater reflexivity from authors and more awareness of privilege and

power. They also explored how issues of power and difference within reflecting teams are often under-addressed and suggested that including discussion of the Social GRRRAAACCEEESSS (Burnham, 2012) could support anti-oppressive practice. Finally, Yim (2022) acknowledged the influence of power imbalance, personal values and researcher bias to support the rigour of their study through contextual understanding.

Additional studies that explored aspects of EDI included Davies's (2012) study, which discussed the diversity of trainee students and provided examples of cultural heritage and the role it played for individual students within their reflections as part of the reflecting team. In Taylor et al.'s (2023) study, the authors felt the structure of the reflecting team model supported trainees to reduce bias and address power dynamics, as well as promote group inclusivity. Shurts et al. (2006), however, highlighted a potential limitation in their study due to using a heterosexual couple as part of their role-play reflecting team throughout the course. They argued that by using only one type of client could limit students' appreciation for diversity in their practice and suggested that a more inclusive role-play should be used.

Duch's (2017) clinical psychology study provided an example of how being a reflecting team member could influence a trainee participant's EDI practice. Duch (2017) chronologically explored their experiences through a narrative approach, explaining their reflexivity regarding power imbalances, gender discourse, positionality, clinical skill and experience and ethnicity from the start of their trainee supervisor journey across an academic year, using reflecting teams as part of a family therapy clinic. Duch (2017) concluded with reflections on changes to their own practice, including the development of a unique feminist stance, as well as changes observed within the reflecting team, with acknowledgement of the need to remain open and supportive of female colleagues. Duch (2017) offered a unique

account of working in a male-dominated reflecting team and the personal and professional impact this had.

2.4.2.3.2 Working Within Systems. The final sub-theme encompasses trainee experiences of working within systems as part of their practice development through participation in reflecting teams. Many studies recognised this as key to the development of systemic skills, both in working with the client system and within the reflecting team itself. Lamprecht and Pitre (2018) and Hale and Sindlinger (2017) both highlighted that trainees developed clinical skills in systemic practice by participating in a collaborative process and by practicing alongside their peers. Shurts et al. (2006) and Maggio (2014) also recognised that being part of a reflecting team supported the development of new insights and awareness of multiple perspectives, particularly through privileging the client's voice, which was seen to positively influence the therapeutic process. Similarly, Taylor et al. (2023) found that trainees learned to recognise group dynamics and benefitted from hearing multiple perspectives, which helped reveal personal blind spots.

Meanwhile, Amod and Miller (2019) and Landis and Young (1994) reflected on the impact that working systemically can have on trainees when working with clients. Specially, Amod and Miller (2019), in the context of South Africa, discussed the importance of systemic work within multicultural and diverse communities, particularly in deprived and marginalised communities. Landis and Young (1994) described students as being able to create multiple realities, rather than viewing situations through a linear lens, through co-creation and idea generation within reflecting team practice. This was also found in Davies' (2012) study, where trainees were described as developing "double vision", appreciating not only their clients' issues but also those evoked in their own lives. Similarly, Griffith and

Frieden (2000) concluded that reflecting teams support students to view problems systemically and co-construct meanings.

One study that examined the use of the reflecting team model systemically was conducted by Randall-James and Head (2018), two trainee doctoral Clinical Psychologists at the University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom. They described their experience of implementing a reflecting team alongside a systemic exercise devised by Smyly (2006) during a CAMHS teams' staff away day. The exercise was used with a multi-disciplinary team of 15 practitioners. Randall-James and Head (2018) described their position as trainees as 'curious outsiders' when working with a professional placement team. This unique positioning was seen as ideal for acting as 'conductors' of discussion within a clinical team that had experienced organisational merging and disruption. Their use of the reflecting team approach facilitated reflexive practice.

Randall-James and Head (2018) discussed how the reflective space potentially encouraged clinicians to take more risks by fostering trust, deconstructing and reconstructing narratives of belonging between the different teams, and exploring cultural identity while celebrating difference. The trainee authors also reflected on how the process challenged their own development and competence in leadership, in line with the clinical psychology training competencies (Division of Psychology, 2010). This study provided a unique insight into how clinical psychology trainees used reflecting team practice with a multi-disciplinary team as part of their learning and professional development.

Finally, a study by Meekums et al. (2016) explored two separate teaching methods by conducting a scoping literature review of peer-reviewed articles on Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) and reflecting teams used in counselling and therapist development. The aim was to explore their pedagogical effectiveness and inform practice. Six papers were found

(four IPR and two reflecting teams), all from the United States. Meekums et al. (2016) provided an overview of the background literature and detailed their search criteria for the review. The reflecting team papers included Harrawood et al. (2011), which has been discussed earlier in this literature review and Hawley (2006). Meekums et al. (2016) discussed how the critiques and strengths from each study highlighted the benefit of mutual learning among novices peers through gaining new perspectives systemically and engaging in reflective challenge while participating in reflecting teams. They also noted the lack of UK-based research on trainee development using these methods and the difficulties posed by the limited number, which prevented confident conclusions being drawn from the review.

2.5 Conclusion and Implications

This literature review aimed to answer the question, 'What does the literature tell us about the influence reflecting teams have in supporting doctoral psychology trainee professional development?' In exploring the existing literature through a systematic search, a contextualised understanding and rationale for the current study was provided. The key themes identified in the literature firstly included trainee progression in skill and experience, from observing modelled practice, gaining an understanding of theoretical application and the development of confidence in approach. Secondly additional factors to apply and consider when using reflecting teams as part of trainee development was identified such as emotional impact, support and ethical considerations. The final theme identified was the impact of working within the structure of the reflecting team model has in supporting EDI practice and working systemically.

Whilst the literature offered detailed insights into implementing reflecting teams with doctoral trainees, there was a notable absence of trainee voice within educational psychology specifically. Most studies employed qualitative methodologies but often took the form of case

studies or narratives. As such, there is a compelling need for a more nuanced and in-depth exploration of doctoral trainee experiences of using reflecting teams, using idiographic approaches that prioritise the individual perspectives of educational psychology trainees.

The varying levels of reflexivity demonstrated across studies highlighted the importance of researcher transparency in providing context, particularly relevant in reflective practice research, such as studies on reflecting teams. Notably, several studies did not acknowledge researcher reflexivity, which is an important element that will aim to be addressed as part of the current research project. There is also a clear gap in UK-based research on the use of reflecting teams in doctoral psychology training. It is therefore hoped the current research will address these areas by offering a platform for Educational Psychologists to share their training experiences. I aim to contribute to the UK literature on educational psychology doctoral training, while actively acknowledging my own interpretive role and positioning within the research process.

3. Methodology

3.1 Overview of Chapter

This chapter presents an overview of the methodology used in the current research and will first outline the research's purpose and aims, followed by the research question. Then, the underpinning ontological and epistemological positions of the research are outlined. This is presented alongside an explanation for the qualitative approach of the study and the use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) methodology versus other considered methods. The chapter continues with a description of the research process by providing details of participant sampling and selection. This is followed by a description of the data collection and analysis design. The quality of the research is discussed, including issues related to it, such as rigour and transparency through the discussion of Yardley's (2000) criteria as well as the importance of ensuring reflexivity. The chapter ends by addressing the ethical considerations, such as respect for anonymity and confidentiality and informed consent used throughout the current research.

3.2 Research Purpose and Aims

The literature review findings highlighted a current gap in the research knowledge. This gap concerned the use of reflecting teams within the Educational Psychology profession, particularly in relation to training and practice development during the doctoral course. There was a need therefore, for further in-depth investigation into this area. The purpose of the research was exploratory, which was appropriate given the limited research on this topic (Robson, 2011). The research sought to explore in depth Educational Psychologists' experiences of using reflecting teams and how this supports adult practitioner development.

The research's aim was to develop an understanding of Educational Psychologists' experiences of using reflecting teams as part of their doctoral training. The intention was to increase professional understanding of using the reflecting team model as an experiential learning technique in developing professional practice and individuals' experiences. The model is currently used by only a handful of educational psychology training institutes in the United Kingdom and has begun to emerge within the field as an approach to developing professional practice. By facilitating a platform and engaging with EPs' voices, it was hoped this study would provide a contribution and support EPs understanding of the experiences of using reflecting teams.

3.3 Research Question

The research question addressed by this study was:

- What are Educational Psychologists' experiences of using reflecting teams as part of their doctoral training?

3.4 Rationale for the Research Design

3.4.1 Researcher's Philosophical Assumptions

It is important the alignment of the current research study's design fit with the research question. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) highlighted that research questions inform the research methods and answers. Cohen et al. (2011, p.115) also stated that "research design is governed by the notion of 'fitness for purpose'. The purposes of the research determine the methodology and design of the research". Key, therefore, was ensuring the paradigm fit the aims of the research and that assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge underpinned the research (Crotty, 1998).

3.4.1.2 Ontology. Crotty (1998) defined ontology as the study of 'being' and was concerned with 'what is' such as the beliefs individuals hold about the nature of reality and what exists (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Snape & Spencer, 2003). The perspective taken philosophically by a researcher determines the research paradigm and informs considerations for the research design (Boyle & Kelly, 2017). Two ontological positions, realism and relativism, are often considered as being at opposite ends of a continuum. Other established positions, such as critical realism, are situated along the realist-relativist continuum. From a realist position, it is assumed knowledge can be reduced to a single objective truth. This truth exists independently of individual interpretations, beliefs, or understandings, and is characterised by a discovery orientation (Willig, 2012).

The ontological position proposed in this study was relativist. In contrast to realism, relativism states that there is not one objective truth but multiple truths and perspectives (Mertens, 2010). Al-Saadi (2014) stated realities are subjective, and the same phenomena could be understood in various ways, where reality is not fixed, but continually evolving (Harper, 2011). I accepted that knowledge was subjective and relative for both the participants and myself as the researcher (Robson, 2024). In relation to the proposed study, the aim was to explore Educational Psychologists' experiences of using reflecting teams as part of their learning during training. Through this process, it was recognised that reality was socially constructed and contingent on an individual's experience.

3.4.1.3 Epistemology. Epistemology refers to the assumptions individuals make about the kind or nature of knowledge that is acquired and communicated (Cohen et al., 2007; Richards, 2003). It is also acknowledged that the epistemological assumptions researchers have about knowledge affect how they go forward in uncovering knowledge of social behaviour (Al-Saadi, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The underlying epistemological

stance of the current research study was social constructivist. This position held that there is not an objective knowledge, but rather that knowledge is constructed through individuals' experiences within social contexts (Mertens, 2010). This differed from social constructionism, which views knowledge as a product of historical and cultural contexts, shaped through interactions, language and discourse between individuals (Crotty, 1998; Fruggeri et al., 2022). In social constructivism multiple truths can exist at any point. Individuals construct meaning in various ways for the same phenomenon, through developing subjective meaning of their experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Through the proposed research, the intention was to understand the various constructions of meaning made by individuals, through exploring participants' views of the study's phenomena (Mertens, 2010). I understood knowledge to be created through an interactive process, in which both the participants and I influenced each other (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The constructivist perspective aligned with the relativist ontology position and supported the aim of the current research to explore Educational Psychologists' individual experiences of using reflecting teams during their doctoral training. From this perspective, I believed that knowledge was constructed through individuals' interpretations of their experiences with the reflecting team model. These interpretations reflected various meanings derived from the same social context phenomenon and were shaped by personal and relational influences.

3.5 Rationale for Research Method Used

The research design of a study is the chosen approach that a researcher takes in addressing the research question of their study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This research employed a qualitative methodology and sought to gather rich and detailed explanations for EPs' responses (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). The focus on participant's subjective

experiences hoped to develop an understanding of their differing responses. It sought to explore why individuals might have experienced the same situation differently (Smith, 2008). Due to this, using quantitative methodology was deemed inappropriate, as it assumes a single truth rather than multiple subjective realities. This approach risked losing the individual perspectives central to the research focus (Willig, 2012). Quantitative studies often aim to identify numerical connections between variables, using hypothesis testing to predict outcomes or explain findings. This approach can be reductive in nature (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Qualitative findings, however, strive to maintain the complexity of participants' perspectives. This is achieved through direct reference to and reporting of participants' accounts, where meaning and interpretation are understood as situated practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). To support engagement with the research question at a greater level of depth from the participants, a small sample size of a distinct group of individuals is suggested. This is to support gaining a rich and in-depth understanding compared to a larger sample (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Methodology choice is constrained by the ontological and epistemological positions within research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The qualitative design proposed for the current research aligned with the relativist ontology and social constructivist epistemology.

There were several qualitative designs that were considered for this piece of research. The approach that was deemed most appropriate was Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The next section will review considered alternative methodological approaches, their data analysis approach and how compatible they were with the current research's aims. The rationale for selecting RTA as the methodology is then detailed, including an overview of RTA.

3.5.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis (DA) studies the ways in which social reality and identity are produced through language construction (Willig, 2012). This involves examining elements such as sequence of utterance, voice pitch and intonation (Gee, 2004). The current research aimed to explore Educational Psychologists' experiences of using reflecting teams during their doctoral training. Discourse analysis could have shed light on the various discourse constructions of 'reflecting team practice' and 'trainee development' through the analysis of participants' language (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The aim of the research, however, was not to analyse the language of participants. Therefore, DA was not consistent with the current research, as the language participants used was viewed as a direct channel for expressing the thoughts and feelings individuals had about an experience and was rejected as a choice.

3.5.2 Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis aims to explore and understand an individual's story creation of their personal experiences including the context the narrative is constructed in (Sparkes, 2005). This involves a recognition of the influence on storytelling such as historical, cultural and social factors and how individuals make sense of the world around them. It also considers how participants tell their stories from beginning to end and the order of the experiences (Reissman, 1993). Narrative analysis can focus on the processes of storying e.g. linguistic devices, the content of stories or both (Reissman, 1993). Whilst the purpose of a narrative approach in sense-making of an individual's story was relevant to the current research, the focus on the narrative's structure and organisation was not considered pertinent (Murray, 2018). RTA was considered more relevant, as it allowed for the exploration of participant's experiences of a phenomenon, without focusing on narrative structure and organisation.

3.5.3 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was considered as a methodological approach given its emphasis on exploring how people make sense of major experiences in their lives, their reflections and understanding of a particular phenomenon (Smith, 2017). IPA is informed by hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation and has a theoretical background in phenomenology and ideography i.e. focusing on a particular person. Whilst this approach explored individual experiences, it was decided it was not an appropriate methodology for the current research as its main focus is to explore experiences at the individual level (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This was a key consideration in the current research to develop themes across participants to explore the wider narrative of EPs' experiences of using reflecting teams during their doctoral training at the designated training institute. Consideration for the contextual backdrop was also explored. Additionally, the amount individuals are willing to disclose about their experiences was also seen to be a limiting factor in accessing experiences (Smith, 2017). A broader descriptive analysis was deemed most appropriate to address the research question of RTA, which also provided a practical framework, enhancing the rigour and transparency of the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

3.5.4 Reflexive Thematic Analysis Overview

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) as described by Braun and Clarke (2022) sits under the overarching Thematic Analysis (TA) family of methods, rather than TA being a singular method. While each TA approach involves practices of coding and theme development, they differ in how they capture semantic and latent meaning, inductive or deductive data orientation and designating TA as a theoretically-flexible method. Braun and Clarke (2022) used a conceptual distinction of small q and Big Q when discussing typology. Small q qualitative data uses methods of data collection and analysis within the (post-) positivist frame, which has an emphasis on procedures ensuring objectivity, reliability and

accuracy of coding to control for researcher bias. Big Q qualitative instead uses analysis methods from a non-positivist framework. Researcher subjectivity is used as a tool and is actively reflected upon during the research process. Reflexive Thematic Analysis in particular embraces the subjectivity of a researcher as a source for the research (Braun & Clarke, 2024). It rejects the idea that coding is entirely accurate, framing it instead as an interpretive practice shaped by the researcher, rather than something fixed within the data. Braun and Clarke (2024) emphasised that themes are actively constructed, not discovered, through the lens of the researcher's theoretical orientation and engagement with the data. This recognises the researcher is not a neutral observer, but an integral part of the knowledge production process.

The methodology for this research was a Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) approach, a method suited to identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning across a data set through the process of active researcher engagement and reflexive analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Inductive RTA aims to explore participants' experiences and meaning-making, where analysis is located within the data content. It often draws on experiential and essentialist theoretical frameworks to understand individuals' perspectives and capture what participants perceive as their reality (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In contrast, deductive RTA tends to be aligned with critical and constructionist theoretical positions to interrogate and unpack the meanings expressed in the data set.

The research question of the current study was experiential and exploratory, and used a primarily experiential, inductive form of RTA. Braun and Clarke (2024) highlighted during the analysis stage the importance of the researcher's reflection and acknowledgment of their own subjective involvement and responses to the participants' accounts. Braun and Clarke (2022) described the analytic orientation of an experiential approach as informed by hermeneutics of empathy, seeking to capture participants meaning in a way that is

recognisable to them. This is compared to a critical approach where patterns of meaning are interrogated. The effects and implications of patterns of language use are explored, informed by hermeneutics of suspicion asking critical questions of the meanings in data. RTA is described by Braun and Clarke (2022) as being theoretically flexible across both experiential and critical orientations. Braun and Clarke (2024) have recently introduced their values-based reporting guidelines, Reflexive Thematic Analysis Reporting Guidelines (RTARG), specifically designed for Reflexive Thematic Analysis, to encourage coherence between research values, theoretical orientation, and reported methods. The current research used Braun and Clarke's (2024) Reflexive Thematic Analysis Reporting Guidelines (RTARG) to inform the analytic process. These guidelines supported transparency in reporting, theoretical coherence, and reflexive engagement with the data, aligning with the study's experiential and inductive analytic orientation.

3.5.4.1 Reflexivity. Reflexive research acknowledges that knowledge is shaped by the process of production and the practices of the researcher. Analytic rigour in RTA uses researcher reflexivity as the primary tool, as knowledge generation is subjective and situated. Critical appraisal of the researcher's role is central to RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2024). This involves exploring what the researcher brings to the research through their personal identity, values and an awareness of their socio-demographic positioning in relation to intersections of culture, race and gender. Alongside this are the beliefs and feelings the researcher holds about how the world should be understood and studied and the effect this has on the object of study, the questions asked and how data is collected and analysed (Luttrell, 2019).

In order to do this, it was important for myself, as the researcher, to routinely reflect on my assumptions, decisions and expectations throughout the research process (Finlay & Gough, 2008). I identified my positionality and choices through self-questioning and

reflection, including how my perspective may have influenced the knowledge constructed by making that perspective explicit (Folkes, 2023). One approach recommended to support this practice is the use of a research journal (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As part of this research process, I kept a reflexive journal to acknowledge my experiences and develop greater self-awareness of my subjectivity (Finlay & Gough, 2008).

The beliefs, experiences and personal values that I considered to have influenced this research study are outlined below:

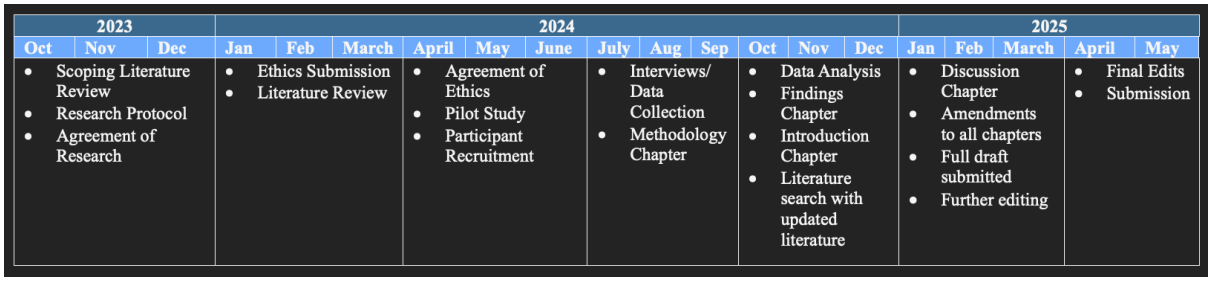
- I am currently in my third year of training as an Educational Psychologist at the designated institute that was targeted within this research. My experiences are therefore closely aligned with those of the participants, who have also trained at the same institute.
- I experienced using the reflecting team model in a multi-disciplinary clinical team during an academic placement in a family therapy clinic, where I used the model directly with clients and other professionals.
- I previously worked as a teacher and have a strong interest in adult learning theories, which influenced the direction of this research. My earlier academic background in anthropology also shaped my interest, particularly in human interaction and social practices, including teaching.
- I have a keen interest in reflective practice, which has been central to both teacher training standards and educational psychology standards of practice. This interest has informed my skill development and the way I practice professionally.
- I identify as white British and I am a first-generation university graduate.

3.6 Research Process

The timeframe for the current research is presented in Figure 6 below and was flexible to allow for any changes to participants' schedules or unexpected factors. Data analysis started in November after the end of the data collection process in October.

Figure 6

Research Timeframe



3.6.1 Participants

3.6.1.1 Sampling Method and Recruitment Process. Clarke and Braun (2013) suggested six to ten participants was acceptable for a 'small' qualitative project using Reflexive Thematic Analysis for doctoral-level research. I used purposive sampling in this research to ensure that participants met the criteria below and could provide insight into the specific phenomena of the reflecting team model as used in trainee educational psychology practice at the designated training institution. This approach was chosen over randomised probability methods (Patton, 2014). RTA can accommodate sample sizes larger than the suggested ten, adapting to the nature of the research (Fugard & Potts, 2015). The course director of the designated training institute was approached and in discussion it was decided to target newly-qualified Educational Psychologist alumni from the institute. This group met the criteria for having completed their training at the same designated institute and were able to reflect back on the whole experience.

The decision to focus participant selection from one particular training institute was deliberate. The selected training institute focuses on reflective and systemic practice as a core facet in its approach to trainee development and used the reflecting team method throughout all three years of teaching, as discussed in the Introduction section. Seeking participants from other training institutions would have changed the focus of the research and could have introduced an element of comparison between institute teaching approaches and methodology used in trainee development. This was not the aim, as the research question was exploratory rather than evaluative. My own position, as someone connected to the designated training institute, was also central to the research process and was reflected on throughout.

Consent from the course director was sought before the recruitment process commenced and the research received ethical clearance (See Appendix E). A comprehensive

recruitment email and information sheet was sent out to Educational Psychologist alumni from the designated training institute. This was sent by the course administrator through a blind email for those who had graduated in the past two years. If not enough participants had chosen to join the study from the newly-qualified cohorts (within two years of qualification), a contingency plan was in place. This involved widening the recruitment pool to include qualified EPs within three years of their training at the institution. Qualified EPs were selected on a first-come first-serve basis for fairness and to remove potential for bias.

3.6.1.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. Participant recruitment followed a set of strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, as seen below:

- Participants needed to be newly qualified EPs (qualified within the last two years) who had trained at the designated training institute.
- Participants were required to have used the reflecting team model (Andersen, 1987) during their course on a consistent basis of either weekly or biweekly opportunities for a period of at least three months. The language of roles e.g. therapist/client could have been used interchangeably with consultant/consultee to suit the Educational Psychology profession.
- Trainees currently in training i.e., years 1, 2 and 3, were excluded as the study sought participants who had developed professional competencies and could reflect on their personal development up to the point of qualification. Additionally, due my position as a Year 3 trainee at the designated training institution it was important to maintain distance from the participants in my role as researcher.
- As a contingency, if there had not been enough participants, qualified EPs up to three years post-qualification from the designated training institute would have been sought and

invited to reflect back on their training experiences. It was anticipated that proximity to their training would support reflection of their experiences.

3.6.1.3 Participant Sample Information. Participant recruitment resulted in a sample size of six participants. All participants had completed their three-year doctoral training and were employed in their first post in a local authority as qualified EPs (See Table 4). Throughout all stages of the research process, I remained extensively mindful of confidentiality and anonymity, particularly as the research focused on the experience of training while I was completing my own doctoral training at the same institute. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participant numbers for all participants were used throughout the research and markers of identification were removed or altered. Background details that could have identified an individual were also excluded from the thesis. My prior knowledge of and contact with participants was minimal, limited to meeting annually for three 'all years' lectures, a welcome lunch and an end of year presentation event. I also considered the potential of participants from the local authority where I was on placement with might have wanted to take part, and I reflected on whether to exclude those participants. However, this scenario did not arise.

Table 4

Participant Demographics

Participant Number	Years since qualification	Working Pattern
Participant 1	2	Full Time
Participant 2	2	Full Time
Participant 3	1	Full Time
Participant 4	1	Full Time
Participant 5	1	Full Time
Participant 6	1	Full Time

3.6.1.4 Relationship to the Participants. I carefully considered my relationship to the participants from both ethical and professional perspectives. This was to ensure full transparency and reflexivity about my position as a doctoral student currently attending the designated training institute that served as the recruitment focus of the study. This was outlined and identified to participants in the second paragraph of the introductory email (See Appendix F) and in the information sheet sent prior to participants agreeing to take part (See Appendix G). Participants were also offered an invitation to ask questions or express concerns prior to the interview. One potential advantage of my position as a current trainee on the designated training institute was that interviewees may have felt I had some understanding and awareness of their experience. Although RTA did not require an 'insider' status, unlike Farrell's (1993) ethnographic study of their peer group, it was important for me to consider the potential dynamics that could have influenced the interview process and my interpretation of participants' accounts. For example, if the interviewees believed that I held a particular view about the designated training institute, it could have inhibited them from

freely expressing their views and experiences. It was therefore particularly important for me to remain sensitive to the context (Yardley, 2000). I aimed to ensure that participants felt sufficiently reassured by my genuine interest and position of curiosity, my commitment to confidentiality and my prioritisation of participants' experiences and views by creating a safe space.

3.6.2 Data Collection

3.6.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews. In accordance with qualitative research, the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was used to gather data. Smith et al. (2022) stated an interview is a 'conversation with a purpose', informed by the research question. Structured interviews were deemed inappropriate for this research due to the standardised stimuli and pre-determined questions (Diccio-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The focus of the current research was to explore in-depth the experiences of Educational Psychologists during their doctoral training. A semi-structured interview approach fit best, as it allowed flexibility to explore areas of interest raised by participants (Coolican, 2017) and to follow up on emerging topics during the interviews (Robson & McCarten, 2016). Establishing a good rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee is considered an important aspect of high calibre qualitative analysis (Willig, 2012). Semi-structured interviews are reliant on participants' active participation and engagement. They also depend on establishing a sensitive and ethical rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. This is due to the open-endedness of questions and the emphasis on experience (Willig, 2012), with reminders for participants to only share as much as they feel comfortable.

3.6.2.2 Interview Agenda. I developed an interview agenda to elicit participants' experiences and help maintain focus on the research topic, while still allowing space for conversational tangents led by the participants. I asked questions such as, 'What was your

experience of being in a reflecting team with peers, hearing other's experiences and reflecting collectively as part of a team?' Interesting aspects were explored further using a flexible approach with open-ended questions. It is recommended to have approximately six to ten questions for a one-hour interview (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Questions that were leading, over-empathetic and closed were avoided. The order of questioning was also considered where Willig (2012) highlighted the importance of using more public questions to begin and moving to more personal matters as rapport builds.

3.6.2.3 Pilot Interview Schedule. A pilot interview was arranged and carried out with an EP who had used reflecting teams as part of their doctoral training but did not belong to the interview cohort. The data gathered from the pilot interview was not used within any data analysis. Conducting the pilot enabled me to reflect on the questions asked and the type of follow up questions that arose within the semi-structured format. Areas of strength and development were acknowledged, where insights into interview process were reflected on. This was discussed with the interviewee, supporting a fine-tuning of my methodological approach. This included providing greater clarity in structure of the questions about the different positions that can be taken within a reflecting team model, as well as allowing time to discuss the varying experience of those roles. The importance of active listening was also considered at this point and space holding in the role of interviewer. The interview question prompts were revised, following on from the pilot interview. See Appendix H.

3.6.2.4 Interview Procedure. All six interviews were conducted online through the Zoom platform in a password-secured meeting accessible only to myself and the participant. Zoom is considered secure for research purposes (Archibald et al., 2019) and I adhered to the BPS Internet-Mediated Research guidelines (BPS, 2021c) ensuring participant privacy. Each

interview was audio-recorded and was stored securely and password protected. Participants were prompted to use a private location to complete the Zoom interview and I also used a private location. This was considered the most suitable given the potential for participants to be living around the UK since qualifying, making travel for individual interviews a barrier for inclusion. Before beginning the recording, I reviewed the information sheet with the participant. This included the research purpose and aims, my position as a Year 3 trainee and aspects of the research process including anonymity and confidentiality of both the participants and designated training institute. An explanation was given about the need to break participants' confidentiality if they were deemed at risk of any harm and participants could end the interview at any point. I also provided a space for participants to ask any questions before and after the recording. The interview times ranged from 38 minutes to 50 minutes. I ensured I stayed sensitive to participants' displayed feelings and reminded participants they could take a break when necessary and also of their right to withdraw. I have prior experience of working with vulnerable children and adults and addressing difficult conversations in my role as a trainee EP and previous work in a family therapy clinic. My previous work with supporting interpersonal dynamics, rapport-building and emotional containment supported the interview process. A participant debrief was offered at the end of each interview for reflection and processing of the interview experience. Reasonable adjustments were also made for participants, such as typing the interview questions in the chat feature on the Zoom platform and adopting a slower pace for processing time, as and when needed.

3.6.2.4.1 Reflecting on the Interviews. I kept a reflective diary to record the initial reactions and feelings experienced before and after each interview. I also noted any later reflections that arose to support the reflexivity of the research process. The diary supported my reflection on my assumptions and experiences while undertaking the project.

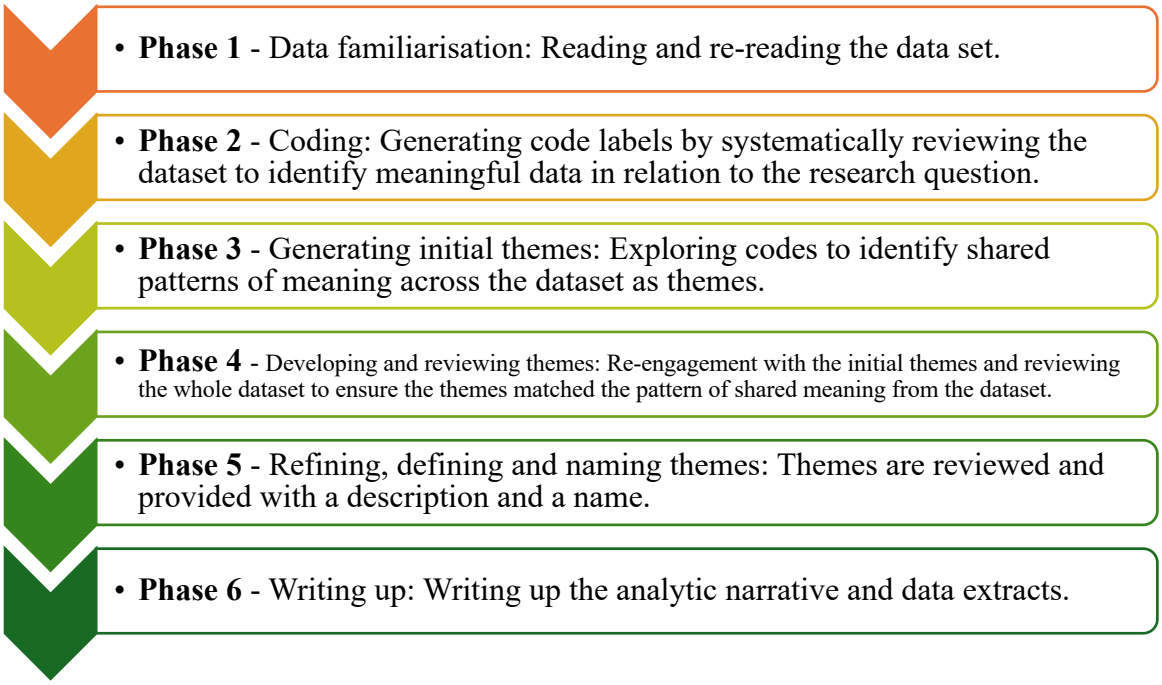
3.6.2.5 Details of ICT Resources or Software Utilised. As part of the interview process a voice recorder was used with each participant. The recordings were then stored on a secure laptop, only accessible by myself. Transcriptions were transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word and kept on the secure laptop. Data will be stored for ten years, as per the Research Councils UK (2023) guidance that doctoral project data should be stored for ten years.

3.6.3 Data Analysis

I transcribed the collected data verbatim myself. It was reviewed multiple times to ensure accuracy before being analysed using RTA after completion of all the interviews across a three-month period (between August and October 2024) (Braun & Clarke, 2022). All identifying names and identifying features were removed from the transcript, including the name of the designated training institute and identifying aspects. The transcripts from all the interviews were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase Reflexive Thematic Analysis. An acknowledgement of Braun and Clarke's development of the thematic analysis approach has taken place since initial publication. This research followed the 'practical guide' to guide the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The phases are presented as linear in the section below, however during analysis the process was iterative, reflexive and recursive (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Figure 7

Six Phases of Braun and Clarke's (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis



3.6.3.1 Phase 1: Familiarising Yourself with the Dataset. Braun and Clarke (2022) outlined that the researcher should begin the analysis process by familiarising themselves with the content of the dataset through the immersive process of reading and re-reading the data. I followed this guidance by listening to the interview recordings multiple times and transcribing the data myself to become familiar with each participant's account. I also made notes of any analytic ideas that formed in relation to individual data items and the dataset as a whole. I recorded my preliminary reflections and interpretations in a reflective journal as I engaged with the dataset.

3.6.3.2 Phase 2: Coding. Once I transcribed the interview data, I worked systematically through the dataset line by line. This allowed me to identify interesting and relevant content as codes related to the research question using a label format of analytically-

meaningful descriptions. Through this detailed coding process, I was able to capture significantly more detail than a broad approach would have allowed (Howitt & Cramer, 2010). Braun and Clarke (2022) stated these code labels are actively created by the researcher, who formulates ideas around the data from semantic, surface level meanings to more implicit, latent meanings. I utilised an inductive approach, avoiding pre-existing frameworks in developing codes. I also used Microsoft Word and NVivo coding software to work on the transcripts and assist coding and analysis in an iterative process, creating flexibility whilst working through the six phases. Braun and Clarke (2022) suggested revising the codes a minimum of two times, which was followed to refine, rename, merge and delete codes as appropriate.

3.6.3.3 Phase 3: Generating Initial Themes. After coding, code labels were grouped based on similarity across the interview datasets. Clusters of codes that share a core idea or meaning in relation to the research question were grouped into candidate themes or larger meaning patterns. This stage involved analysing and organising data sets to explore potential clusters of meaning and develop preliminary themes. Braun and Clarke (2022) made a clear distinction between a theme and a 'topic summary'. A 'topic summary' captures a range of responses, which may include varied or even contradictory data, whereas a theme is defined as 'a pattern of shared meaning organised around a central concept' (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.77). I used NVivo software to support identification of shared patterns of meaning across the dataset, compile clusters of codes and collate coded data relevant to each candidate theme. Braun and Clarke (2022) highlighted that in developing themes the researcher aims to tell a particular story about how the data addresses the research question rather than summarising everything participants said. This also avoids a 'question and answer' orientation to the data, which could have limited pattern exploration and constrained the development of meaningful themes in the early stages. Braun and Clarke (2022) also

recommended using a visual mapping technique to capture potential themes, the relationships between themes and to review the overall grouping of themes. Building on this guidance, I developed a thematic map (See Figure 8 below for the visual map for the current data).

3.6.3.4 Phase 4: Developing and Reviewing Themes. The fourth phase of RTA involved developing and reviewing the initial candidate themes constructed in relation to the coded extracts and the full dataset, ensuring avoidance of 'topic summaries' (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This was achieved by holding in mind whether the themes highlighted the most important pattern of shared meaning related to the dataset. At this stage I merged some themes together, spilt others into new themes or discarded them as necessary. I also considered the relationships between themes alongside the wider context of the research. I proceeded to phase five when I felt the themes were sufficiently representative of the dataset.

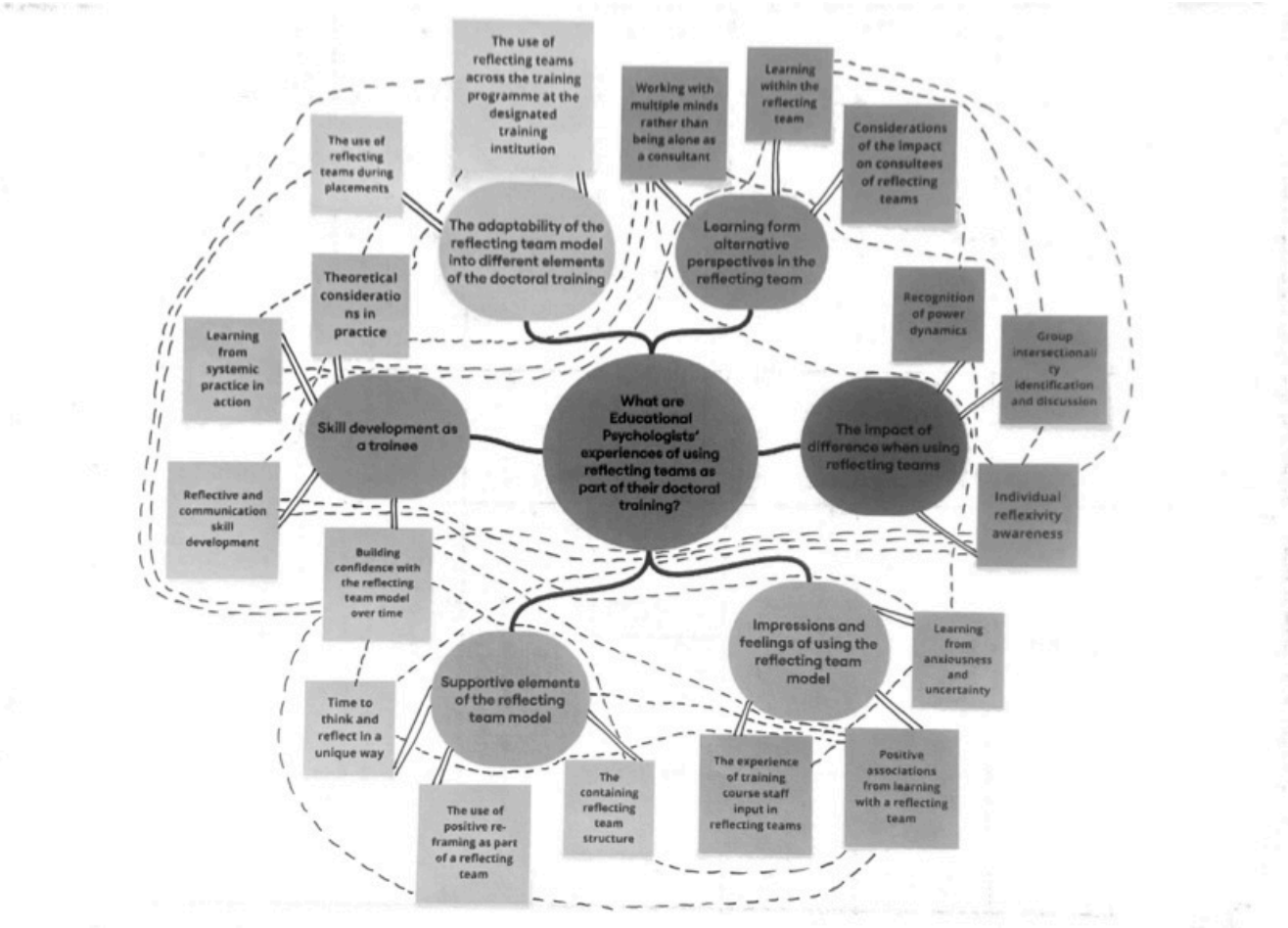
3.6.3.5 Phase 5: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes. Braun and Clarke (2022) suggested that phase five is the opportunity for the final analysis of the dataset, ensuring themes are built around strong core concepts. This stage also involved reviewing the quality of themes and removing any that were not consistent with the dataset. As part of this process, I wrote a definition for each theme and assigned a name that was concise and informative. I ensured each theme conveyed the intended meaning and captured the main point reflected in the dataset. At this stage, I also began mapping the structure and flow of the analysis, which is illustrated in the Findings chapter.

3.6.3.6 Phase 6: Writing Up. The final stage of Braun and Clarke's (2022) RTA reviews the previous phases and weaves together the analytic narrative of the entire dataset. This was achieved through the use of data extracts to provide the reader with a coherent and persuasive account that addressed the research question. Braun and Clarke (2022) highlighted

that writing plays a crucial role in the analysis process. I selected participant quotes that represented the main idea of each theme and reflected a range of participants' voices. I also considered the most appropriate order in which to present the themes. I then synthesised the findings to produce an accurate representation of the dataset, completing the sixth phase of analysis, which is presented in the Findings chapter.

Figure 8

Preliminary Thematic Map of Themes and Sub-themes Across the Dataset



3.6.4 Research Quality

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is used to evaluate how rigorously a study has been conducted, considering its credibility, dependability and usefulness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative psychology there is no 'one' true perspective on reality as studies are understood to be shaped by the context and experiences of individuals. Yardley (2024) stated that conventional criteria used to assess validity in quantitative research, such as objectivity, reliability and generalisability, are not appropriate for qualitative research. In quantitative psychology researchers aim to minimise sources of error and bias to obtain an accurate observation of reality. This is achieved through the standardisation of administration and the analysis of measures to eliminate error and identify predictable causal relationships. Qualitative psychology, however, is interested in the effects of context and individual differences and views researcher influence as inevitable within the process of knowledge production. This is explained by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) and Yardley's (2000) proposed criteria through broad principles for assessing qualitative research's value and quality. Yardley (2024) highlighted four key dimensions for enhancing and evidencing high standard qualitative research quality and the generation of useful knowledge. This included the sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. Yardley's (2024) criteria were chosen to evaluate the current research, as they align more closely with RTA. The next sections explore how the current research's quality was considered.

3.6.4.1 Sensitivity to Context. The sensitivity to context of qualitative data has several important factors which have been explored and outlined as part of this research. These include recognition of the existing theoretical and empirical literature (Yardley, 2000). As part of this research, a relevant systematic literature review was conducted and presented

in the Literature review chapter. It explored existing research and the socio-economic and cultural contexts within which the project and the subsequent findings were situated. Familiarisation with the literature was also pertinent for formulating the research question to address the gaps in current knowledge (Yardley, 2024). I considered the possible impact of my identity on the research and included a description of my own background in the Reflexivity section 3.5.4.1**,** to reflect on the social and cultural context (Braun & Clarke, 2024; Shaw, 2010).

Consideration of power dynamics in this research was crucial given the nature of EPs' discussing aspects of a training institute course they had recently completed. I reflected on the power differentials using Burnham's (2018) Social GRRRAAACCEEESSS framework to explore the visible and invisible differences between myself as the interviewer and the participants as interviewees, as well as the ethical implications of these dynamics. This element was addressed as part of the interview process, ensuring participants did not feel the need to give a 'correct' answer in relation to their experiences of using reflecting teams as part of their experiential learning. To address this, I aimed to reduce power imbalance by reiterating to the participants that the study's purpose was to illuminate their experiences. I positioned myself as a researcher seeking understanding, in contrast to the participants, who were regarded as experts in their own lived experiences. Extensive consideration was given to the fact that I am a current trainee at the designated training institution used in the research. I also reflected on aspects of my identity and how this may have been perceived by participants. It was ensured participants were made explicitly aware their identity would not be made known to others and the training institution would also be de-identified.

The influence of sensitivity to context affected the planning of the research to ensure the prioritisation of confidentiality, anonymity and rapport-building for participants.

Specifically, ensuring transcripts were not shared amongst course colleagues and declaring researcher roles and institute affiliation from the outset. I made participants aware of the limits of my confidentially, given my position as a trainee within the designated training institute. I also ensured clarity regarding the sharing of data transcripts with my supervisor, who was a member of the same institute, as well as with wider thesis examiners. I explicitly considered any personal relationships I may have had with graduates of the course. Where appropriate, if a prior relationship had existed those individuals would have been excluded from the research. However, this situation did not arise with the participants who were recruited.

At the start of the interview session, participants were instructed not to use any names of colleagues within the institution during the interview. Participants were made explicitly aware that the research focus is on the experiences of using reflecting teams as an experiential learning method to develop core competencies for educational psychology practice. The study was not about the designated training institute as an institute more generally, which reduced the likelihood of any conflict of interest. During the interview stage participants were highlighted to particular aspects of the interview that might cause distress or discomfort. This included specific research questions and I reminded the participants they could move past any questions or end the interview at any point. I used open-ended questions to allow participants to explore what was important to them, rather than being constrained by my perspective as the researcher (Wilkinson & Dokter, 2023).

Finally, as part of the analysis phase, I demonstrated sensitivity and critical reflection toward the data by considering the participants' positions and social contexts. I reflected on why certain views may or may not have been expressed and recognised the complexities within their accounts. In line with Yardley's (2000) principle of commitment and rigour, I

aimed to ensure a rich and inclusive analysis by representing varied participant voices in both the findings and discussion, particularly those that diverged from the dominant perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2024; Tracy, 2010).

3.6.4.2 Commitment and Rigour. Commitment and rigour involve sustained engagement with the research project to ensure thorough data collection with depth and breadth of analysis, as well as providing a convincing account (Yardley, 2000). Participants were appropriately selected based on their ability to meet the research requirements and provide a complete interpretation through their own lives. I used semi-structured interviews as a method to collect rich, idiographic data. I also drew on skills such as active listening (Schein, 1999) to create an open, curious and inviting atmosphere where participants felt safe discussing their experiences. I transcribed the data myself, which allowed for deep immersion into the participants' accounts and supported a transparent approach to the RTA process (Braun & Clarke, 2022), as discussed in the Reflexive Thematic Analysis section 3.5.4 above. I also used supervision spaces for critical reflection, which were essential for exploring reflexivity and interpreting participants' contexts and experiences in a fair and thorough manner. The demonstration of rigour was also strived for by following Braun and Clarke's (2022) principles essential to high quality Reflexive TA during data analysis;

- Reflexive journaling
- Allowing plenty of time for analysis
- Gaining insights from others such as peers or supervisors
- Carefully developing themes
- Demonstrating quality through an electronic or paper trail

3.6.4.3 Transparency and Coherence. Coherence describes the clarity of the argument of the research, its power and the consistency as a whole (Yardley, 2024). It also

includes the alignment, or "fit", between the research question, the adopted ontological and epistemological perspectives and the data analysis methodology. The research orientation for this study was addressed in the Researcher's Philosophical Assumptions section 3.4.1 above, discussing how the research question fits with a social constructivist epistemological position and relativist ontological position, as well as a Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach.

The transparency of the research can be achieved through detailed explanation of what was done and why in a clear and coherent argument (Yardley, 2024). The current research has been developed by detailing each aspect of the data collection and analysis, through the use of paper or digital trails as evidence (Braun & Clarke, 2024). Examples of this transparency include text excerpts used within the Findings chapter from the data analysis and additional extracts within the appendices, as well as the use of figures to summarise themes (Yardley, 2000).

Yardley (2024) described researcher reflexivity as an important part of the transparency of a study. Researcher reflexivity has been explored for readers to understand the experiences which led to the study and the impact of my worldview and the potential influence of this on the research, through a reflective diary (Knight, 2002). Nightingale and Cromby (1999) highlighted that reflexivity recognises participants' experiences may influence the researcher, where the researcher's positionality is not independent from the research process. The researcher also influences the social world and research with their views, values and biases and is considered a part of quality qualitative research to explore data reflexively (Braun & Clark, 2024).

My experiences of education, culture and the explicit use of reflecting teams as part of my educational psychology training have all inspired my interest in the importance of reflective and systemic practice. Having the opportunity to participate in reflecting teams

helped me develop reflective and systemic competencies during my first year of training. It supported a better understanding of myself and how I approach situations. I also deepened my understanding of the importance of continued professional development in the role of the EP (Gersch, 2009). I discussed advice from my research supervisor to support reflection on themes and patterns that arose during the analysis and throughout the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2024).

3.6.4.4 Impact and Importance. The impact and utility of a piece of research is arguably one of the most important considerations of quality (Yardley, 2000). The current research aimed to address a gap in the literature for EPs' experiences of using the reflecting team model (Andersen, 1987). The potential impact for this research aimed to practically address how EPs train and prepare in systemic and reflective practice, which will ultimately have an impact on the communities they serve. By preparing trainee EPs with methods and tools, such as the reflecting team model, this research aimed to highlight the value of experiential learning opportunities that can better equip EPs for real world scenarios. It was hoped this research would impact both local and national practice in developing trainees toward meeting competency and proficiency standards that support individuals, families and communities. As found within the literature review the reflecting team model is used within both clinical and counselling psychology with perceived benefits to trainees for developing practical skills and confidence. The use of reflecting team model in educational psychology is under-researched and the current study aimed to address this gap in knowledge and provide the experiences of those who have used it within their training and development.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration was carefully integrated throughout the research across the different stages in anticipation of ethical issues that could have arisen from using human

participants (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The research gained ethical approval from the designated training institutes research and ethics committee, following a submitted proposal in June 2024 (See Appendix E). The BPS (2021b) Code of Ethics and the Code of Human Research Ethics (2021a) stated the purpose of ethics is to protect participants' interests and ensure research is safely and appropriately conducted. These principles were adhered to throughout the research alongside the HCPC standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2024) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (2016). Key ethical considerations are addressed in the sections below.

3.7.1 Respect for Autonomy, Privacy, Confidentiality and Dignity for Individuals and Communities

Participant anonymity was prioritised throughout the research due to the small size of the participant pool of Educational Psychologists from the designated training institute who had graduated within the past two years. Anonymity was also important given the small sample size recruited for the research. A robust plan for confidentiality and anonymity was developed with support from the designated training institutes' research team to manage the risks associated with interviewing graduates of the same course. Feedback was given by research supervisors, the course lead and the course director for research who supported in adapting and shaping aspects of the proposed research. This included specifically to not interview current trainees at the designated training institution but to use graduates, who would be one step further removed from my position as a current trainee. Graduates from the designated training institute could have been considered a vulnerable group, as they were colleagues from a single institute. However, they were not individuals I had worked with in close proximity on a regular basis, such as in an office environment but were instead part of a wider professional network and course community.

To avoid issues around colleagues being involved, the data used was de-identified and anonymised. This was made clear to participants in the consent form and reiterated before and throughout the interview process. McDermid et al. (2014) provided guidance on how to navigate and approach issues when undertaking research with colleagues, which was explored and reflected upon. Consideration and steps were taken to ensure that there were no conversations or reporting about individuals' data or interviews with colleagues, except with my research supervisor, who was also unaware of the participants' identities. This included ensuring transcripts were not shared amongst course colleagues. I emphasised and declared my role and institute affiliation from the outset. Participants were reminded of this in the information sheet and consent form before the interview began and again during the debrief. Personal relationships between graduates of the course were explicitly considered and where appropriate if a prior relationship had existed these participants would not have been invited to participate, on this occasion this was not necessary.

To safeguard anonymity, participants were assigned numbers. Any identifying features were removed, including for example, ethnicity, the local authorities they currently worked in and the designated training institute. As part of conducting interviews online, I maintained confidentiality throughout and aimed to ensure optimal environmental conditions. I drew on the principles of attunement (Schein, 1999) to help create a safe, respectful and containing environment for the participants to share their experiences (Bion, 1985). The recorded data collected and interview transcripts were stored on a secure, encrypted device, accessible only to me. The limits of confidentiality were also explained clearly that if there was a safeguarding concern for the participants' wellbeing, safeguarding procedures would be strictly followed.

3.7.2 Informed Consent and Right to Withdraw

Before participants agreed to take part, I provided them with an introductory email that introduced myself and the research, along with an information sheet outlining the aims, purpose and details of the study. Transparency from the outset was paramount. I acknowledged that I was a student at the designated training institute, conducting research on the use of reflecting teams at the designated training institute. I made it clear that participants were under no obligation to take part. The information sheet contained details of the methodology, data handling and storage, confidentiality measures, as well as information about the rights of the participants to withdraw from the study at any point. This was then re-read with the participants before the interview commenced to answer any questions participants had about the research. A detailed consent form was also provided to gather participants' written consent to be involved with the research (Please refer to Appendix I for the consent form, Appendix G for the information sheet and Appendix F for the introductory email).

Participant consent for the interviews was outlined as completely voluntary, to ensure that participants did not feel obliged as graduates of the designated training institute to take part. During the interview stage participants were also highlighted to particular aspects of the interview that might cause distress or discomfort, specifically particular research questions. If participants had appeared to find any interview questions distressing or uncomfortable, I would have reminded them that they were not required to answer. I would then have either moved on to the next question or paused the interview to check on their wellbeing. Participants were reminded they could ask questions throughout the interview process and that their participation was entirely voluntary. Consent was also sought from the EP course director for the research to take place with alumni graduates from the designated training course.

3.7.3 Minimising Harm

As part of conducting research in line with the BPS code of ethics, psychologists are required to mitigate risks to prevent participants from experiencing any form of harm (BPS, 2021b). In addition to the ethical considerations previously discussed, I took precautions to prevent harm to the participants.

The interview questions were carefully considered and no questions deemed harmful or likely to cause discomfort were included. However, it was not possible to anticipate how each participant would respond to a question. Due to the constructivist lens used, it was assumed that participants would interact with and reflect on the questions differently, based on their previous experiences.

Participants were reminded to only share as much information as they wanted to and participants were signposted to additional support services as part of the debrief session (See Appendix J). It was possible participants had negative experiences of using reflecting teams during their training, and I was mindful of this. I remained ethically aware of participant responses and monitored for any signs of emotional or physical discomfort. Ensuring participant's wellbeing was a primary focus throughout the entirety of the research process. I took precautions to create a sensitive, respectful space where participants felt genuinely listened to. If I had deemed the participant was at risk of distress, I would have terminated the interview and provided post-interview support, including signposting, a debrief and the opportunity to speak more openly with me.

The consideration of power dynamics in this research has been crucial given the nature of EPs' power differentials as participants discussing elements of a training institute

course that they were recently part of. This was addressed during the interview process, where care was taken to prevent participants from feeling a need to give a 'correct' answer in relation to their experiences of using reflecting teams as part of their experiential learning. To address this I reiterated to the participants that the purpose of the study was to illuminate their experiences. I was also mindful of my verbal and non-verbal responses so that my position as a researcher did not influence how participants responded. I had prior experience posing similar questions in my role as a trainee EP, including work within a family therapy clinic through consultations with parents and education professionals. This work involved skills such as active listening and providing a safe and inviting environment for discussion.

The rationale for this research was considered to outweigh the potential managed risks associated with using Educational Psychologists from one designated training institute as participants. A robust plan for confidentiality and anonymity was developed, with support from the research team, to manage the risks associated in interviewing graduates of the same course. There are very few doctoral institutes using reflecting teams, especially in educational psychology. The designated training institute was one of the few that used the reflecting team method continuously throughout the course as an experiential adult learning approach. This would make considerations for using other institutions graduates more challenging, due to the lack of consistency across institutions use of reflecting team methodology and lack of homogeneity of sample.

As I was a third-year trainee EP still developing my competencies and skills, the research project was supervised by a qualified EP to ensure that competent ethical practice was maintained throughout.

3.7.4 Data Protection

The Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2021a) was followed throughout the research. Potential risks related to electronic data security were mitigated in adherence to the United Kingdom Data Protection Act (2018) and General Data Protection Regulation guidelines (2016), with data stored on a locked, encrypted device protected by a password. Participants' identities and all identifying features were anonymised and participants were made aware of the duration of data storage in the information sheets (See Appendix G). Throughout the research process these steps were taken to safeguard the confidentiality and integrity of data collected from participants.

3.7.5 Debriefing

Participants were provided with a debriefing session immediately after the interview and had the opportunity to ask any questions they had. Following the interview, each participant received a debrief information sheet with details of supporting services (See Appendix J). Participants were invited to share their reflections on the research process, along with any thoughts or feelings they wished to discuss further. They were also signposted to independent counselling services outside of their organisation or local authority, if needed. Participants were also provided with my contact information in case they wished to discuss any aspect of their involvement in the research further.

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines the researcher's philosophical stance and the methodological approach used in the research including data collection and analysis. Alternative research methods were considered and discussed before the research quality and ethical consideration were outlined.

4. Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter will explore and outline the qualitative findings of the research following the Reflexive Thematic Analysis of the data gathered from the six participants to answer the following research question:

- What are Educational Psychologists' experiences of using reflecting teams as part of their doctoral training?

The research themes are shown in a visual overview in a thematic map (see Figure 9 below), illustrating the relationship between the themes and sub-themes. The process of theme development is evidenced through the use of quotations from the data to support theme and sub-theme analysis. An example of the coding process is provided in Appendix K and L to ensure transparency in the analysis process. In this chapter, quotes from participants' interviews are presented with specific typographic conventions utilised as follows:

- Participant's verbatim quotes are italicised.
- The participant number will follow the quotes.
- Square brackets are used [pause] to indicate a pause in speech.
- Quotations that have been truncated will be indicated with ellipses in square brackets […].
- Anonymised participant information was replaced with an X.

Figure 9

Thematic Map Containing Themes and Sub-themes from RTA

4.2 Overview of Findings

The themes developed in this research reflect how Educational Psychologists made meaning of their experiences using the reflecting team model during their doctoral training. Taking a reflexive thematic analysis approach, the findings emphasised the relational, emotional, and developmental nature of this experiential learning method, shaped by social context and professional identity formation.

Participants described the reflecting team as both supportive and challenging. It created a space where emotional risk and discomfort were part of the learning process. These early feelings of uncertainty gradually shifted to confidence as trainees gained experience, with many describing the model as central to their development as reflective and relational practitioners. A consistent theme was the value participants placed on learning with and through others. Reflecting teams were experienced as collaborative spaces where multiple voices offered insight, challenge, and affirmation. This supported the development of reflective and communication skills and deepened understanding of systemic dynamics and relational power within consultation.

Participants described the importance of structure, safety, and positive framing in enabling authentic engagement and professional risk-taking. Participants also reflected on how the process encouraged self-awareness and reflexivity. They considered their identities, positioning, and assumptions, particularly in relation to equality and inclusion. Working with difference in group settings enabled richer conversations and supported the development of ethical, anti-oppressive practice.

Overall, the findings illustrated how reflecting teams were experienced not simply as a training tool, but as a transformative learning process. The themes captured shared patterns of meaning co-constructed between participants and myself as the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2024). A total of six themes were developed and include: 1. Holding Discomfort – Navigating Emotional Risk and Relational Learning, 2. Safety, Structure and Voice – Foundations for Reflective Learning, 3. Becoming the Psychologist I Want to Be – Developing Professional Identity in Reflective Spaces, 4. Adapting to Who We Were in a Shifting Learning Environment – The Reflecting Team Model as a Developmental and Contextual Tool, 5. Expanding Practice Through the Eyes of Others – The Reflexive Power of Shared Perspectives, 6. What Am I Bringing? – Navigating Difference, Reflexivity and Ethical Engagement. Table 5 presents an overview of these themes alongside the sub-themes that helped shape them. The interpretive relationship between themes, sub-themes and codes is illustrated in Appendix M. A detailed exploration of these themes, supported by participant quotes and interpretative analysis, is presented next.

Table 5

Themes and Associated Sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
Holding Discomfort – Navigating Emotional Risk and Relational Learning	"The Safest Space We Had" – Affirming Connection and Collective Meaning Making
	Working With Discomfort – Growth Through Uncertainty
	Blurring Roles – Tutor Presence and the Dynamics of Power and Support
Safety, Structure and Voice – Foundations for Reflective Learning	Pausing With Purpose – Making Space for Thoughtful Reflection
	Curious Voices That Invite, Not Judge
	Boundaries That Hold – Structure as Safety and Empowerment
Becoming the Psychologist I Want to Be – Developing Professional Identity in Reflective Spaces	"Confidence Came With Doing It" – Trusting the Process Over Time
	Reflecting While Speaking, Listening While Thinking
	I'm a Cog Too – Seeing the System From Within
	Bringing Theory Into the Room – Thinking Together in Practice
Adapting to Who We Were in a Shifting Learning Environment – The Reflecting Team Model as a Developmental and Contextual Tool	"It Fit the Focus of Each Year" – Layered Learning Through the Reflecting Team Model
	"More Authentic" – Expanding Reflective Practice Beyond the Classroom
Expanding Practice Through the Eyes of Others – The Reflexive Power of Shared Perspectives	Learning With "Multiple Minds"
	"Take It or Leave It" – The Uncertainty and Power of Offering Reflection
	Intention Versus Impact – Holding Space for the Client's Voice
What Am I Bringing? – Navigating Difference, Reflexivity and Ethical Engagement	Whose Reflections Are Heard? – Power, Presence and Silence in the Team
	Permission to Explore – Reflecting Teams as a Catalyst for Cultural and Identity Dialogue
	The Reflective Mirror – Self-Awareness, Identity and Practitioner Growth

4.3 Theme 1: Holding Discomfort – Navigating Emotional Risk and Relational Learning

In engaging with a new model as part of their doctoral training, participants reflected on their emotional and embodied experiences of participating in reflecting teams. They shared a range of accounts, offering insight into both the rewarding and challenging aspects of taking up a novel position within an experiential learning context. The reflecting team model brought together elements of group work, reflective practice and adult learning, particularly around adapting to new situations and learning through experience. Participants also described their experience of working with peers and how tutor facilitation shaped their engagement with the reflecting team model, which I present in the sub-themes below.

4.3.1 "The Safest Space We Had" - Affirming Connection and Collective Meaning-Making

A shared recognition among all participants was the positive meaning they associated with the experience of being part of a reflecting team. I interpreted participants' accounts as indicating that the reflecting team model offered a valuable and affirming learning experience. This was reflected in the strong language they used to describe the model. Participants described reflecting teams as "*very useful, very positive […] I always finish it with something to do next with a clearer understanding*," (Participant 5, lines 39-42), "*enlightening*" (Participant 4, line 102) and "*invigorating and kind of exciting and enlivening*" (Participant 1, lines 72-73).

During consultation, the inclusion of the reflecting team element was described by participants as contributing to the co-construction of a "*very positive […] accepting environment*," (Participant 2, lines 47-48). One participant reflected on this space as a "*key part of training […] the safest space we had,*" (Participant 3, lines 360-366), highlighting how shared experience shaped the perceived value of the model. Participants discussed how

engaging in the reflecting team process contributed to a developing sense of relational connection, with one commenting that it helped to "*enhance your relationship with your cohort*" (Participant 2, lines 99-100). Trainees described a shared experience of "*all in a similar boat*" (Participant 4, line 51) and how, over time, they began "*feeling more comfortable*" (Participant 3, line 81) as familiarity and trust within the group grew.

Additionally, participants shared deeply personal and reflective accounts of their experiences. Participant 1 described the reflecting team as offering a "*whole new way of thinking about yourself as a practitioner*" (line 37), expressing how the experience continued to shape their evolving identity in practice, "*you keep it with you […] holding that reflecting team as part of me"* (lines 48-51). Similarly, Participant 6 stated, "*the reflecting teams then has lived on inside of me*" (lines 238-239) explaining how the model supported ongoing reflection by prompting questions such as, "*what are the different ways in which I could look at this?*" (lines 240-241).

4.3.2 Working with Discomfort – Growth Through Uncertainty

Whilst recognising the positive associations participants shared in relation to using reflecting teams during their training, they also described the tension of holding both appreciation for the model and an awareness of the emotional challenges it brought. This is reflected in their evolving understanding of learning and development as trainees. As participant 2 explained, "*It's both […] it's nerve wracking but it's such an amazing learning experience*" (lines 116-118), while participant 6 described it as "*a mixed cocktail, it's quite enriching but it can also be challenging*" (lines 87-88). I noticed that participants often followed reflections on difficulty with descriptions of how these moments led to personal or professional growth. This suggested that the discomfort they experienced was not seen as a barrier but rather as an opportunity for deep learning. One participant captured this dynamic

clearly, "*there is an anxiety around it but there is also a lot of learning that can come from it […] you've got to be uncomfortable to learn, don't you?*" (Participant 2, lines 137-139).

Participants particularly highlighted the early stages of using the model, when familiarity and exposure impacted their willingness to engage. As one participant described, "*as a first-year trainee it's quite nerve wracking […] being observed by your peers*" (Participant 2, lines 42-47). Another reflected, "*there is a nervousness when you first start to use it […] quite daunting*" (Participant 3, lines 30-35) and participant 5 added, "*knowing that a group of people will listen to what you say and then they will reflect on what you say […] it can be intimidating at times*," (lines 214-217). Despite this, participants recognised the reflecting team space as one of vulnerability and learning, "*this is a reflective practice and we're all quite vulnerable in it*" (Participant 3, line 233-235) though, over time, "*you got used to it*" (Participant 4, line 17) and developed a clearer sense of "*what the purpose is,"* (Participant 5, line 24).

As trainees progressed, they moved from an initially "*exposing position*" (Participant 2, line 103) and began to place greater emphasis on the relational dynamics within the group. This development appeared to rest on "*how containing the group make it for each other*" (Participant 2, lines 104-105), which supported more collaborative and boundaried engagement as relationships evolved. A key part of this was feeling more comfortable in the space and recognising that "*bringing an issue […] takes courage, it takes openness*" (Participant 6, lines 113-114) and that there may be "*underlying fears that people are going to make assumptions*" (Participant 6, lines 114-115) about how the individual may handle a situation. The shift from wanting to be, "*everyone's friend*" (Participant 1, lines 81-82) to engaging with a non-judgemental approach and critical stance highlighted a deepening awareness of the purpose and practice of the mode. It was framed as an "*opportunity […] to*

be a critical friend […] to expand their thinking out of the box" (Participant 6, lines 99-100). This development in practice was highlighted as an important learning process, to recognise the feeling and working with uncertainty, where "*as EPs we have a duty to be conscious and be advocates for […] those who could find it [consultation] […] anxiety provoking*" (Participant 6, lines 335-337).

The importance of supporting the challenging feelings that trainees may be feeling before beginning to use the reflecting team model was highlighted, "*name that this is going to feel really weird, […] uncomfortable, this is going to be something different to what you've done before and really put it out there*" (Participant 1, line 236-238). The structure of the reflecting team model itself was described as a supportive framework. As participant 3 stated, "*you […] want to give that amount of time to make sure it stays structured*" (lines 146-147). However, structure also brought moments of tension. Participant 1 discussed feeling frustrated by being in the reflecting team and needing to wait to present their ideas in the group space, "*it can be like quite like frustrating and sort of [pause] restraining, but […] trust the process […] you have to be a reflecting team […] that restriction and boundary and restraint around it is actually really helpful"* (lines 136-140). This dual experience of restriction and support reflected a central theme across the participants' accounts, the emotional and relational challenges of the reflecting team model were not only acknowledged but embraced as meaningful elements of their development.

4.3.3 Blurring Roles – Tutor Presence and the Dynamics of Power and Support

Whilst participants spoke of their feelings of learning with fellow trainees in using the reflecting teams, participants also discussed the impact of tutor input during module and supervision elements of the doctoral training when using reflecting teams. As part of educational psychology doctoral training, trainees undertook local authority placements in

each of the three years, where opportunities to engage with the reflecting team model varied. This is in conjunction with learning days at the designated training institute, where the model was embedded into course modules and used exclusively with peers, lecturers and supervisors. Participants described how course staff engaged as participants within reflecting teams across various learning spaces. One participant shared that, "*the person leading […] very much became a participant*" (Participant 6, lines 372-373). Another reflected on the flattening of perceived power dynamics, "*there isn't that hierarchy and everyone can bring as much experience as they want*" (Participant 3, lines 393-394), further noting the value in creating spaces where "*everyone's voice is heard*" (line 401). This in turn offered trainees the chance to directly shadow more experienced members of the group and have the opportunity to put their observations into practice, "*when tutors would join, I'd always find their wisdoms […] interesting and helpful but also a good model for like how I might take on a role*" (Participant 6, lines 379-381).

However, participants also reflected on the nuanced experience of tutor presence. For some, this introduced a heightened awareness of self-presentation, *"added element of […] performance […] that's not […] authentic or organic because we can see someone's there*" (Participant 4, lines 313-318), where they could feel an element of monitoring of their practice by staff members to "*see how the group is running*" (line 337). They expressed the need to "*really set up the safety that is required for […] the reflecting team to take place*" (lines 364-365), especially for new trainees to feel confident to contribute. In response to these complexities, participants discussed the value of having separate supervision spaces with staff. These spaces offered time for individual reflection and facilitated deeper exploration of emotional and professional responses to reflecting team participation. For example, participant 4 noted, "*there's more reflection that you could do"* (line 204) following

participation in a reflecting team, where reflection and challenge could be provided in a one-to-one confidential space. Another described how supervision allowed them to explore internal reactions and potential blind spots, "*my supervisor raised and said why did you not say about that*" (Participant 5, lines 240-241). These reflective conversations were seen as supporting ongoing self-awareness and a deeper engagement with the process of experiential learning.

4.4 Theme 2: Safety, Structure and Voice – Foundations for Reflective Learning

The reflecting team model was seen as a supportive addition to trainees' learning experiences, described by several participants as a "*really supportive space*" (Participant 1, lines 93-94). Participants shared that particular elements of the model offered opportunities to engage with learning in new and meaningful ways. These included having structured time to reflect, experiencing positive framing of feedback and working within the containing structure of the model. I explore these insights further in the sub-themes outlined below.

4.4.1 Pausing with Purpose – Making Space for Thoughtful Reflection

A key feature I identified in the participants' accounts of the reflecting team model was the additional time and space created for the reflecting team, the consultant and the consultee to pause, reflect and engage more deeply. One participant described this as, "*mental space, space to really think and reflect*" (Participant 2, line 73). Initially, the reflecting team listened to the consultant and consultee dialogue. Then, when offering their reflections the consultant and consultee were given the opportunity to pause and listen. The process concluded with the conversation returning to the consultant and consultee, who could respond to what had been shared. Participant 1 captured this dynamic by noting how the experience, "*moves your thinking on, it was the process of stopping and […] stepping away and listening*

to other people talking" (lines, 106 -112) highlighting the value of stepping back to support the development of ideas.

In the Educational Psychology profession, participants recognised that thinking time for reflection is not often afforded, due to the "*the busyness*" (Participant 2, line 68) of the role and feeling "*quite rushed*" (Participant 3, line 52). Across the interviews participants emphasised the value of collaborative reflection in contrast to more solitary tasks such as report writing or note-taking. Participant 3 spoke about appreciating, "*time that we're just talking*" (line 195) and "*being able to pause as well as listen to someone else's sort of point of view*" (lines 38-39). Participant 2 also described the benefit of having, "*space to speak to another colleague […] about what they've observed*" (lines 74-75). Participant 6 gave the example, "*there's those lovely awkward pockets of silence that may come up which […] can be helpful for a reflecting team to consider […] what is happening in the nothingness*" (lines, 363-366), this perspective pointed to the significance of embracing pause and uncertainty as part of meaning-making. Participants described these moments as enabling them to hold in mind less explicit dynamics and to reflect across multiple systemic layers of their work.

4.4.2 Curious Voices That Invite, Not Judge

The reflecting team model emphasised the use of positive re-framing within team reflections, which helped create a supportive and encouraging environment for those involved. This was recognised by participants who discussed forming reflections in a "*curious non-judgmental way that's just helping*" (Participant 4, lines 302-303), where holding a "*position of curiosity and not judging any views of other people*" (Participant 5, lines 121-122) created an inviting, supportive and reassuring space, to develop engagement. It was noted that having others "*acknowledging your […] experience […] was a really important part of it*" (Participant 3, lines 107-109), which provided reassurance to the

problem-bringer. Through my interpretive engagement with the participants' accounts, I understood that being held in mind by a reflecting team, who offered up positive re-framing of discussion points, created space for feeling understood and valued. This experience contrasted with more evaluative or judgemental interactions, and it created space for relational safety and openness.

Having the opportunity to train using positive re-framing in the context of the reflecting team appeared to open up opportunities for exploring consultees' experiences in a non-judgemental way. This supported a sense of freedom and safety in acknowledging both challenge and complexity. Participants reflected on the importance of this in EP practice, particularly when moving from child-focused problem narratives toward exploring the impact of the wider system. This shift was seen to reduce defensiveness and resistance to the professional in the room and foster a sense of empowerment for the individual involved, "*the main thing that I got out of it was just that reassurance*" (Participant 3, lines 110-113). Participant 6 summarised key elements of positive re-framing as the ability to, "*identify things that have gone well […] compliment what they've noticed […] reflect in a way that was kind and gentle, like wondering aloud and giving me food for thought to modify my interaction*" (lines 45-50). These reflections highlighted the co-constructed, relational nature of meaning-making that underpins the reflecting team approach.

4.4.3 Boundaries That Hold – Structure as Safety and Empowerment

In exploring the participants' experiences of using the reflecting team model, I interpreted the structured nature of the model as contributing to a shared sense of emotional containment. Participants described how the model's boundaries, such as the set timings between the initial consultant/consultee interaction, the reflecting teams' contributions and

the final return to the consultant/consultee, created space for everyone to contribute. Participant 6 noted that the timings helped, "*keep everybody […] on task and on track*" (line, 354), suggesting that structure supported group focus and participation.

Participants also reflected on how this format differed from other professional group contexts, where certain voices could dominate or others might not be heard. In contrast, the reflecting team model appeared to foster more equitable participation. For example, participant 6 expressed that the model allowed for "*equality […] each issue gets the same kind of grace and time*" (lines 360-363), while participant 3 commented, "*reflecting teams can teach you […] about taking your time and […] having the time for each part […], as separate contracted aspects is really helpful*" (lines 274-279). These insights suggest that participants experienced the model as supportive of shared voice and mutual respect.

In having set timings to refer to, participants experienced a boundary creation, which supported emotional containment within the group. Participant 3 reflected, "*the template helped us support each other and I think it was a space that I felt safe, like safer than probably most other spaces in my like trainee experience*" (lines 102-104). Participant 6 further articulated that the structured format created space for sensitivities to emerge, "*it's like an anchor […] it's something to boundary the conversation*" (lines 339-341). This sense of safety over time and boundaries was also noted as being particularly supportive when tension or disagreement arose. The supportive structure helped hold the emotional weight of difficult conversations allowing for exploration of disagreement with balanced time. Participant 3 shared, "*It's protected so it's not just turning into a big discussion*" (lines 58-59), suggesting that the structure prevented conversations snowballing and dominating the focus of the session.

Participant 1 highlighted the role of boundaries in promoting both support and challenge within the group, "*using the boundaries of reflecting teams to give people platforms to empathise and support you and also critique you. I think we need those like structures to then give people licence to critique you and also that give that person licence to hear the critique in a safe space*" (lines 209-213). This comment pointed to a co-constructed understanding of learning, where critique was made possible through relational trust and agreed-upon boundaries.

Several participants contrasted their experiences in the reflecting team with other experiential learning spaces. Participant 3 emphasised the potential for emotional challenge during the consultation process and being able to work with discomfort.

"*Containment doesn't mean it has to be comfortable the whole time but it's safe enough to have these difficult conversations at times or have vulnerabilities and talk about them within […] a space and within sort of protected time. It was always quite nice and felt quite celebratory space in that way, whereas you know it's not always the case that these conversations happen in that way*" (lines 344-350).

The contracting stage at the beginning of the reflecting team process was also interpreted as contributing to a sense of containment. Participant 3 described how, "*contracting beforehand […] helped guide us but also protect us within it [the consultation] and support with what the aim was and so we could work together as a team in a better way*" (lines 239-242). Participant 4 added that when disagreements occurred, it was important to "*recontract*" (line 368) in order to ensure the space remained "*safe enough for everybody in the group*" (line 365).

4.5 Theme 3: Becoming the Psychologist I Want to Be – Developing Professional Identity in Reflective Spaces

Participants shared that using reflecting teams consistently throughout their training contributed to the development of their professional skills across a range of areas, supporting their development of competencies and proficiencies towards doctoral standard. Participants discussed positively the key areas they had made progress, providing illustrative accounts that informed the sub-themes below.

4.5.1 "Confidence Came with Doing It" – Trusting the Process Over Time

Participants described how repeated engagement with reflecting teams across the three years of doctoral training supported their growing confidence in using the reflecting team model and helped to, "*hone our skills*" (Participant 1, line 18). They reflected on how familiarity and fluency for using the model developed gradually, suggesting that their learning was shaped by a process of immersion and embodied experience, consistent with an experiential learning approach. As participants became more experienced with the model, they expressed a sense of growing ease and capability, "*you get better […] with experience*" (Participant 6, line 179). Due to the reflecting team model being an experiential learning element of the training, participants had an understanding that strengthening their skills required an immersion in the practice, being fully present in the space to adapt and gain the most from their practice. Participant 1 referred to this as building muscle memory, describing how the practice became integrated into their way of being, "*you use that muscle a lot […] it's not just in your mind it's in your body and you kind of just learn how to quickly steer conversations into a reflective space instead of a defensive space"* (lines 181-185). This emphasis on presence, adaptability and learning through doing reflected participants' awareness that experiential learning extended beyond cognitive understanding.

Over time, the opportunity for adult experiential learning offered trainees understanding and the development of their preferred practice style. They began to integrate aspects of their personal and professional identities into their use of the model, allowing them to engage more authentically in the role of the Educational Psychologist. Participant 3 shared, "*once you have the confidence to kind of be able to do it in a way that works for you […] it can work really well."* (lines 378-381). For many, this growing confidence was closely tied to their ability to tolerate uncertainty, take interpersonal risks and remain open in reflective dialogue, qualities seen as essential in using reflecting teams effectively. Through analysing participants' accounts, I interpreted that it often took time for participants to appreciate and find the greatest value in the uniqueness of the reflecting team model, to develop a greater understanding and perceived purpose for the use of reflecting team practice. However, once participants were able to gain an appreciation for the opportunities the model could present when working with consultees, participants began to see its potential in supporting trainee confidence and reflective depth. "*The more I practice and the more I was equipped to kind of be aware of my feelings and what I wanted to bring and the purpose.*" (Participant 5, lines 33-34).

4.5.2 Reflecting While Speaking, Listening While Thinking

Two key areas of skill development that participants valued from using the reflecting team model were reflective and communication skills. Educational Psychologists are required to demonstrate proficiency in reflective and communicative practice. Participants highlighted how reflecting team spaces contributed meaningfully to their ongoing development in these areas during training. Rather than viewing them as discrete skills, participants spoke about reflective and communicative practice as evolving, relational processes embedded in their learning and interactions with children, families and wider organisational systems.

Participants frequently described how their ability to communicate with clients and consultees developed through their engagement in reflecting teams. Key skills included the use of active listening, attunement and sensitivity to non-verbal cues, such as pauses and body language, to support collaborative dialogue. Participant 2 reflected on being able to, "*hone in your ability to observe and really listen and kind of promote those active listening skills,*" (lines 68-70), which supported the consultee in feeling contained and helped move the discussion forward in a constructive way. Value was also emphasised in participants' recognition of their responsibility for what is communicated and how, to consultees and clients, *"we learn about how things come across […], we have to sort of think about what we're saying and make sure we're articulating it well enough for them to be able to take it on."* (Participant 3, lines 228-233). This awareness was present in both the consultant and reflecting team roles, with participants recognising a need for sensitivity when delivering the reflections, due to how they entered and exited the consultation space. This was a shared understanding that the reflecting teams' contributions were temporary but impactful, and that care was needed when offering reflections before returning to the primary consultant-consultee dialogue.

Integral to effective communication is the ability to reflect on what has been heard and forming a considered response. Participants articulated that being able to reflect was an essential skill developed by taking part in reflecting team practice and being able to reflect in action, "*reflecting teams can help […] give you the space to learn about how you might act on those reflections […] helping you to know or reflect on what action you're going to take*." (Participant 2, lines 187-190). Emotional insight also emerged as a significant aspect of reflection. Participant 5 highlighted, "*defences can be in play*" (line 179), signalling awareness of the relationship dynamics between the consultant, consultee and reflecting team

members. The importance of "*reflection in the moment*" (Participant 5, lines 182-183) during an evolving consultation was a key skill, in being able to recognise individuals' responses to dynamics in the space and support in creating a containing environment. Participant 5 stated the aim was, "*to make the consultee feel comfortable and contained enough to talk about their problem*" (lines 183-184). As with confidence, reflective and communication skills developed over time for participants to feel, "*equipped enough to recognise the dynamics of the relationship with different people*," (Participant 5, lines 187-188) to enhance their practice to support consultees. Finally, ongoing learning beyond the reflecting team sessions was also viewed as central to learning. Participant 4 emphasised that reflection extended into broader aspects of training stating, "*the learning doesn't have to just stop within that reflecting team*" (line 199-200). This suggests that participants did not view reflective practice as confined to structured settings, but rather, as a continuous evolving part of their professional development.

4.5.3 I'm a Cog Too - Seeing the System from Within

The significance of developing systemic practice through experiential engagement in reflecting teams was expressed by participants, particularly in relation to understanding core systemic concepts such as circular causality and identifying punctuation points. A central aspect of this learning was the evolving awareness of positioning, both in relation to others and within systems. For example, participant 1 reflected on recognising, "*where does the consultee sit within the system*" (line 191) alongside their own position as "*a cog as part of the system*" (line 203) highlighting a growing understanding of interconnected roles when working with families and schools. The recognition that the reflecting team and consultant create a new system with the consultee was a key area of learning for participants to support understanding of systems and the impact each role in the system can have upon one another.

Participants also conveyed that approaching consultation with a systemic lens and within a reflecting team structure enabled them to hold multiple perspectives and questions in mind. Participant 4 described how the, "*working out of group dynamics can be quite a difficult part of a reflecting team,"* (line 146), pointing to the complexity and value of moving beyond the traditional dyad of consultant and consultee to enrich the understanding of a system. Instead, participants described how reflecting teams opened up space for deeper engagement with systems thinking to support the wider system around the CYP with greater consideration for different contributing aspects.

The importance of systemic skill development for Educational Psychologists was reflected on through participants' recognition of their role to "*work at different levels,*" (Participant 6, line 276) including, at the level of the individual, group and organisation. Some participants referred to their increased awareness of the "*exosystem*" (Participant 4, line 230) surrounding the child. This supported a shift from viewing a problem as located within the child to a recognition of how the wider system, including families and school systems, may be contributing to a CYPs' needs. Reflecting team practice was viewed as a useful way to support this re-framing. One participant shared that the process helped in, "*being able to upskill professionals in education settings to be able to come together and think, problem solve collectively […] considering how the system that supports the child may be contributing to what is perceived as a problem*" (Participant 6, lines 242-246).

4.5.4 Bringing Theory Into the Room – Thinking Together in Practice

In using reflecting teams, participants spoke about the different theoretical considerations they developed through practice. They referred to a greater understanding of systems theory, as discussed in section 4.5.3, alongside concepts drawn from psychodynamic,

psychoanalytic, attachment, behavioural and humanist theory. Participant 2 reflected that using reflecting teams:

> "*Can highlight concepts […] which are quite difficult to learn […] quite abstract ideas, which I think when you're practising in reflecting teams […] it makes it a bit more concrete […] more visual and it's a bit easier to kind of pick up those concepts*" (lines, 221-224).

Participants described how reflecting teams offered a space where different psychological theories could be drawn upon collaboratively during the reflection process. Participant 5 stated, "*different psychological theories underpin the reflections*" (line 51), suggesting that this theoretical diversity supported meaning-making and offered opportunities to consider multiple conceptual frameworks. As trainee psychologists, participants viewed the presence of theoretical references and reminders from the reflecting team as beneficial, particularly given their limited experience in practical application of theory in novel situations. Participant 4 summarised this as, "*you're wrapped up in the situation, you're not always taking the time to […] wonder what lens I could use to help me think about that,*" (lines 38-41). This quote highlighted the value of team members introducing alternative theoretical perspectives in real time to support learning in the moment. One participant also recognised the benefit in revisiting the theoretical foundations of reflecting teams throughout training, stating it was helpful, *"to do a reminder of the theory and […] why we do it"* to support engagement and understanding of trainees' use of reflecting teams across different learning modules (Participant 1, lines 241-242).

4.6 Theme 4: Adapting to Who We Were in a Shifting Learning Environment - The Reflecting Team Model as a Developmental and Contextual Tool

The use of reflecting teams as a model was adapted for use across the educational psychology doctoral training three-year course as part of different learning elements. Use of the reflecting team model was variable for each trainee, giving opportunities as part of a consultation learning model, group supervision spaces and work discussion groups, as well as on placement in various Educational Psychology Services. Participants discussed their differing experiences in years one, two and three as well as their different placements and how these experiences compared. The difference in using the model with other trainees or with families and other multi-disciplinary professionals was also discussed, ultimately highlighting the adaptability of the reflecting team model to be used across various learning scenarios to have a consistent model for reflective practice and group experiential learning. These are discussed in the sub-themes below.

4.6.1 "It Fit the Focus of Each Year" – Layered Learning Through the Reflecting Team Model

The reflecting team model was discussed by participants as being used in varying ways across their three years of training at the designated institution. The main contexts in which reflecting teams were used included a consultation module, group supervision spaces and work discussion groups amongst trainees. As one participant explained, "*it can be adapted to suit the need of whoever the users are*" (Participant 6, lines 260-261). Reflecting teams were used within teaching modules involving only trainees and staff members, rather than in direct work with children, families or school staff. Participants reflected on the flexibility and adaptability of the model across the different stages of their doctoral journey, "*I appreciated throughout the training how the reflecting teams' model kind of sifted through the years*." (Participant 6, lines 264-265). Participant 6 elaborated;

> "*It fits the model of whatever the focus was for each year so you know it was focussed on us as individuals in first year, thinking about groups in second year and then in third year thinking about becoming an EP and taking ownership of our own workload, what do we want to bring to a discussion and how do we want to contract our use of reflecting teams. So, yeah it took us on a good a journey*" (lines 387-393).

Across all participants, the initial opportunity to engage with the reflecting team model typically occurred in the first year, primarily as part of developing consultation practice. Participants described bringing example cases to these sessions to, "*practice the process of reflecting teams*" (Participant 3, lines 17-18) and to support our "*using the reflecting team to help our […] growth and development around consultation*" (Participant 4, lines 15-16). These early experiences often involved role play to "*enhance our skills in learning how to take on roles, such as the consultant and the consultee*" (Participant 6, lines 8-9). This allowed trainees to explore how it may feel to occupy the consultant role in the presence of a reflecting team. As participants continued using the model in their second and third years, they brought real-life scenarios into the discussions. Several participants shared that the ongoing use of the model across different learning spaces contributed to a developing sense of continuity and personal growth. One participant reflected on, "*a feeling of […] reassurance […] that there were so many things that I was progressing with just by how I was consistent in my own approach*" (Participant 6, lines 79-80).

A few participants, depending on the year they trained, experienced some elements of their training online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which required temporary remote delivery of the programme. Participants who experienced this acknowledged it altered how the reflecting team approach was experienced, it also offered a different perspective on how the model might be adapted for virtual practice. Participant 6 highlighted:

"*There was a difference in how in some spaces we would be on screen and cameras would turn off and in some spaces we'd be in a room and chairs would turn around […] I think that that probably had its own influence and impact*" (lines 402-406).

4.6.2 "More Authentic" – Expanding Reflective Practice Beyond the Classroom

As part of the doctoral course, trainees had varying placement experiences depending on the training institution. While on placement, participants described using the reflecting team model "*as part of the work with the family*" (Participant 2, lines 9-10) and within multidisciplinary teamwork, "*part of a reflecting team […] there was a family therapist and a psychotherapist*," (Participant 2, line 20). Participants also described engaging in reflecting teams during peer supervision with "*other qualified EPs*" (Participant 5, line 11), and spoke about supporting others who were, "*struggling with the work environment and […] reflect on what the person is bringing*" (Participant 6, lines 20-21).

Participants also discussed using reflecting teams "*with school education staff to support them to […] unpick […] what's happening, thinking about the situation together*," (Participant 6, lines 14-17) specifically mentioning emotional literacy support assistants in the context of group supervision. These varied experiences suggested that participants viewed engagement with the reflecting team model during their training as valuable, particularly given its relevance in local authority contexts post-qualification. Participants reflected that using the model on placement provided the opportunity to explore the "*impact that might have had*" (Participant 4, line 213) in collaborative work with families and schools, expanding their experience beyond that of working solely with training peers. One participant expressed that it felt "*more authentic […] a real-life problem scenario that we are going to have some sort of impact or influence in*" (Participant 4, lines 74-76). This sense of

authenticity appeared to contribute to participants' confidence in applying the model when working with children, families and the wider systems in their future role as EPs.

4.7 Theme 5: Expanding Practice Through the Eyes of Others – The Reflexive Power of Shared Perspectives

The fifth theme explored the unique nature of reflecting teams in providing alternative perspectives during direct work with consultants and consultees. Reflecting teams created opportunities for all members of the session to contribute reflections and to observe how these where engaged with, whether taken up by the system or left aside. The experience of having "*multiple minds*" (Participant 6, line 41) contribute to the consultation process was identified as a key point of interest for all of the participants, along with the influence the multiple perspectives had on the dynamic of the consultation. Participants described their experiences of reflection both from the position of consultant and as members of the reflecting team, which are explored in the following sub-themes.

4.7.1 Learning with "Multiple Minds"

A key feature of reflecting teams that participants acknowledged as having a unique impact on their training was the opportunity to work with "*multiple minds*" (Participant 6, line 41). Traditionally, consultation in educational psychology is positioned as an interaction between a consultant and a consultee (or consultees), often leaving the consultant to work independently. The idea of not being alone in this role was identified and raised by participants, particularly in relation to knowing that others would offer contributions to broaden thinking and share alternative perspectives. These additional voices allowed the consultant to "*step out of the consultation*" (Participant 1, lines 18-20) and access thinking beyond their own, "*you're not alone, you're using someone else's mind*" (Participants 1, lines

37-40). Participant 6 described this sense of group support as helping to, "*add to my dialogue of thinking and […] navigate the situation*" (lines 41-45), while Participant 4 commented that, "*a reflecting team […] centres your own thoughts, […] steers what avenue you should be going down […] that was kind of a really positive part*" (lines 41-46). These reflections highlight how the presence of a reflecting team was experienced as beneficial. The element of having additional team members offered a sense of security for participants by providing a supportive structure and containment to the consultant role. Participants described feeling reassured that others would contribute, either by affirming the current direction or offering new insight, "*it really helps being felt attuned to*" (Participant 2, lines 55-56) and being thought of within a reflective space.

However, creating space for alternative perspectives from the reflecting team was not always straightforward. Participant 4 reflected on the challenge of remaining silent and holding space during the reflections, "*step back and say nothing, which I also find really difficult*" (lines 33-34), despite recognising the benefits. Participant 1 shared their frustration when the reflecting team did not offer new or stimulating ideas, "*the additional thinking didn't really push me*" (lines 104-105). I interpreted this as highlighting the complexity of engaging with differing perspectives, particularly when working in a profession that often positions the practitioner as a lone-problem solver. In some cases, reflections that felt too simplistic or familiar were experienced as unhelpful, suggesting that perceived value depended on the degree of contrast or insight offered. Nevertheless, participants reported that working in a systemic way with a reflecting team led them to consider alternative perspectives more actively, even in situations where the reflecting team was not present. Participants reflected on the longer-term impact of carrying others' perspectives into solo consultation work, and how this supported a broader and more reflective approach to their practice.

4.7.2 "Take It or Leave It" – The Uncertainty and Power of Offering Reflection

Alongside discussing their experiences in the role of the consultant with a reflecting team, participants also shared their experience of learning within the reflecting team, "*it's learning on both ways*" (Participant 3, line 287). They described how being a team member shaped their understanding of consultation. Participants reflected on the benefits of occupying an observing position during the consultation process, noting how it offered the opportunity to shadow another psychologist in role and observe consultation practices, "*It had a big impact on me*," (Participant 1, line 143). Members of the reflecting team were able to identify consultation techniques that supported the consultation process. Additionally, they described how the reflecting team space enabled them to notice aspects of the consultation that may have limited the conversation, and to suggest areas for development, "*reflecting on you as a consultant […] what should you do next the consultant*." (Participant 1, lines 14-16). Participants also spoke about moments in which the reflecting team could revisit topics that may have been overlooked or were difficult to raise in the initial exchange between consultant and consultee. For example, participant 6 described identifying "*what's not being said and what's being felt as it's happening",* which they found, *"really powerful*" (lines 58-59).

The reflecting team was seen as offering space to surface topics that might otherwise be avoided, as highlighted by participant 2, "*other people in the room who can also bring it up to try […] there is opportunity*" (lines 263-265). This was experienced as a way to introduce challenge in the space. In contrast to a traditional consultation dyad, participants valued the opportunity for the reflecting team to "*hypothesise out loud*" (Participant 4, lines 67-68) with other team members, using those reflections as stimuli for their own sense-

making. This process supported extended thinking and provided additional scope in the consultation.

Participants also described the value of the reflecting team's emphasis on positive framing and non-judgemental delivery of reflections. Participant 4 referred to this expectation directly, stating that reflections should be offered in a "*non-judgemental way*" (line 68). Engaging in the reflecting team helped participants develop a greater awareness of how their reflections or questions were shared and perceived. This led to a more thoughtful consideration of what they chose to bring into the reflecting space. Participant 6 illustrated this point, describing how they became more mindful of the relational dynamics involved, "*the pace in which I'm asking the question, do the questions make sense, am I establishing a therapeutic alliance? […] am I paraphrasing and connecting with what the person is saying, […] being part of a reflecting team has allowed me to see that*" (lines 231-234).

I also recognised that participants acknowledged the experience of offering a reflection which may not be taken up by the consultant or consultee. This aspect of the process was described as an opportunity for learning, particularly around managing feelings of disappointment and reflecting on why a contribution might not have been responded to. Participants expressed an understanding that the role of the reflecting team was not directive, but rather offered reflective input that others could choose to engage with, or not. Participant 4 described this experience, "*take it [reflection]or leave it and it can be quite hard if it is a leave it*." (lines 169-170). Similarly, Participant 5 shared, "*choose the one [reflection] that they feel more comfortable, more acceptable or suitable for the situation*" (lines 193-194).

4.7.3 Intention Versus Impact – Holding Space for the Client's Voice

Finally, participants reflected on how consultation using a reflecting team might be experienced differently by consultees, particularly in contrast to more traditional dyadic consultation form. Participant 6 described their experience of being in the reflecting team and how it offered the potential to shift thinking for consultees, "*to help to create some shifts, hopefully in the problem bringers thinking*" (lines 202-203). They also reflected on how their contributions might be received whether a "*person has taken it in a way that it was intended, not to be judgemental but to spark the thought*" (lines 108-109). These reflections suggested that the reflecting team structure could open up space for alternative understanding and new ways of thinking.

Participants also expressed concern about the extent to which consultees or clients might feel able to question or challenge reflections offered within this framework, given the inherent power differentials in such spaces. The presence of multiple perspectives in response to a consultee's situation had the potential to feel overwhelming, particularly when reflections touched on emotional or sensitive areas. Participant 4 questioned how consultees might voice discomfort, asking "*how can you say, 'actually I was really hurt by something*?'" (lines 369-372). Within the current use of the reflecting team model, there appeared to be limited structured opportunities for consultees to offer feedback unless this was explicitly invited by the consultant. Participant 4 emphasised the importance of enabling dialogue that allows for disagree, "*intention versus impact and you never quite know what the impact is unless you are certain that your client can feed that back*" (lines 395-397). This prompted further reflection on the value of building space for feedback from consultees and service users, particularly when misunderstandings occur, to support shared understanding.

Participants also recognised the importance of advocating for the voice of the child as central to the role of the EP, especially during consultation. They described this as a key skill,

requiring deliberate space and time to reflect on the perspectives of CYP. As part of the reflecting team process, participants noted the importance of considering those who were not physically present in the consultation space. Participant 2 reflected on the opportunity the model provided to, "*highlight a perspective that might not be in the room*," (lines 209-211), such as bringing attention to the views or needs of the child or young person.

4.8 Theme 6: What Am I Bringing? – Navigating Difference, Reflexivity and Ethical Engagement

As part of working in a larger group of professionals within a reflecting team, participants reflected on the influence of individual differences, particularly in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity practices. They discussed the importance of recognising and thoughtfully exploring the role of intersectionality, both for themselves and the CYP they worked with.

4.8.1 Whose Reflections are Heard? – Power, Presence and Silence in the Team

Power dynamics were interpreted as a consistent feature of any consultation context, particularly when a professional role was perceived to hold greater authority. Participants described how, as Educational Psychologists', part of their role involved critically reflecting on and responding to perceived power imbalances, and embedding anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in their practice. Through their experiences working in larger professional groups using the reflecting team model, participants became more attuned to the relational dynamics present in consultation between consultant, consultee and reflecting team members. They noted that power was often shaped by, "*the role in which you take up*" (Participant 6, lines 89-90). Using the model helped participants to "*address […] or highlight power in the room in terms of who is speaking, when they are speaking*" (Participant 2, lines

238-239). The different layers of dynamics the participants considered included how power imbalance was held within the reflecting team, with Participant 4 stating it should "*not be underestimated*" as to whose reflections were responded to or taken up by the group in comparison to others. They questioned who might hold, "*more of a dominant role?*" (line 328) or considered the implications of "*someone absent from the reflecting team?*" (line 329), highlighting the complexity of team dynamics.

Some participants described feeling in a one-down position due to their identities as trainees, "*because you are a trainee*" (Participant 5, lines 42-48), especially when working alongside qualified professionals and managing uncertainty. The diversity of professional backgrounds within the team was also raised as a contributing factor to perceived differences in confidence and voice. As participant 1 noted, "*everybody's coming from different previous careers*" (line 89) and participant 4 added, "*other disciplines*" (line 131), both suggesting that prior experience shaped participants perceptions of power within the team context. This developing awareness of relational power supported participants in reflecting on whose perspectives were included or overlooked in their work. It helped them to consider how they might better support families, schools and young people they worked with by paying attention to, "*whose narratives are not being told and […] what's being silenced or what's being unsaid*" (Participant 2, lines 240-242).

4.8.2 Permission to Explore – Reflecting Teams as a Catalyst for Cultural and Identity Dialogue

As part of developing trainee Educational Psychologists' anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice on the doctoral course, working with reflecting teams was experienced as creating opportunities to explore the influence of group intersectionality and to engage in open, collaborative dialogue. "*All that intersection […] comes together to enrich*

the conversation" (Participant 1, line 217) and "*develops everybody's understanding of EDI*" (Participant 4, line 282). Participants described the value of engaging reflectively with group differences to support their ongoing awareness and engagement with issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity in their work with families, schools and CYP with differing and intersecting identities. One participant reflected that, "*reflecting teams gives us permission to […] delve into aspects of equality, diversity and inclusivity"* (Participant 6, lines 331-332) in a safe space shaped by, "*curious questions, framed within the skeleton of this [reflecting team structure] […] where you can share what is coming up for you.*" (Participant 6, lines 334-335). Participants described feeling, "*more empowered to continue on this line of questioning*" (Participant 4, lines 283-284) within their consultation practices.

Participant 4 also considered the discomfort that can arise when reflecting on aspects of intersectionality, especially with families and school systems. They described situations where they introduced "*something new that might not have been surfaced in relation to EDI*" (lines 285-286) and acknowledged the challenge involved in this, "*there can be so many reasons why you wouldn't want to bring up kind of aspects of identity […] visible or invisible*" (lines 277-278). However, participants described that due to the reflecting team being a step removed from the consultation it allowed these topics to surface with more safety, "*it's not a direct challenge […] being removed feels like you can maybe surface some conversations that could be difficult in other spheres*" (Participant 4, lines 288-289). This positioning appeared to offer space for introducing alternative perspectives and gently challenging existing narratives through tentative hypothesis formulation and a recognition of the impact on the wider system of different areas of intersectionality.

I understood that working collaboratively in diverse teams was viewed by participants as supporting their development of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice. They

shared how having a, "*diverse panel of professionals that are looking at a problem*" (Participant 2, lines 266-267) "*allows the opportunity to […] ask those questions around culture and cultural responsiveness*" (Participant 2, lines 257-258). However, there was also awareness that "*it's down to the practitioners*" (Participant 2, lines 254-255) to initiate and sustain, "*more open conversations*" (Participant 3, line 311). Participants reflected that without opportunities to explore EDI in greater depth, important aspects of experience may be overlooked. One participant explained, "*when discussions are not richer you miss some elements […] you don't consider different factors that can you know contribute*" (Participant 5, lines 110-113) in developing formulations for CYP, their families and community.

4.8.3 The Reflective Mirror – Self-Awareness, Identity and Practitioner Growth

Participants shared that they were able to develop self-awareness in role "*in order to be a reflective practitioner you need to have self-awareness*" (Participant 2, lines 172-173) and described their engagement with individual reflexivity. In recognising the "*enormous power*" (Participant 1, line 228) the role of the EP can hold when working with CYP, families and the wider systems around them, participants highlighted the importance of trainees engaging in individual reflexivity. They discussed the value of developing awareness of one's own "*biases and assumptions*" (Participant 2, lines 75-76), especially when working with the reflecting team model. This model offered opportunities for "*seeing what you're drawn to and what you notice and […] being able to learn about yourself and […] what you might need to pay more attention to*" (Participant 2, lines 77-80).

Participant 2 reflected that "*you don't know what you don't know*" (line 131), and that "*being in a reflecting team is a real mirror in terms of learning about yourself and learning about how you interact with other people*" (lines 131-133). This model created space for

"*thinking about aspects of our identity that we are more consciously aligned with*" (Participant 6, lines 221-222), and for developing awareness of those aspects that may be less consciously acknowledged, especially through "*live hypothesis making*" (Participant 4, line 296). It also supported practitioners to "*take a step back and think about what's going on*" (Participant 4, lines 190-191) to consider, "*what is it that I'm bringing*" (Participant 4, line 191) and to reflect on whether what is discussed is, "*resonating with me because of my particular identity or experiences*" (Participant 4, lines 193-194), and how they might respond to that awareness.

Participants reflected on the importance in consultation of "*how you come across to other people, how you form that relationship […] and being able to see other ways of interacting in those settings*" (Participant 2, lines 133-135), as well as practicing "*being humble and reflective*" (Participant 1, lines 227-228). They discussed developing awareness of both, "*intrapersonal and interpersonal factors*" (Participant 2, lines 178-179) and the "*blind spots*" (Participant 4, lines 107-108) that can emerge in practice. I interpreted these accounts as demonstrating how the reflecting team model supported participants in developing reflexivity within their work, especially in relation to EDI and enhanced their awareness of identity and intersectionality. These experiences appeared to be significant in shaping their development during training. As summarised by Participant 3, "*I learned a lot using reflecting teams, about EDI, about how to ask the questions, about how to listen and how to express myself as well in those situations*" (lines 351-353), which contributed to supporting trainees to "*better ourselves as professionals*" (line 330) when working with children, families and communities.

4.9 Reflexivity

The importance of reflexivity was embedded throughout the RTA process. I kept a reflective diary to document thoughts, feelings and reflections during the research. An illustrative example recorded during the analytic process is included in Appendix N.

I recognised that some of my own experiences resonated with those described by participants, particularly in relation to the sub-theme 'Working With Discomfort – Growth Through Uncertainty' and 'The Reflective Mirror – Self-Awareness, Identity and Practitioner Growth'. This prompted reflection on how my own position and experiences may have influenced my interpretations during data analysis. To remain critically engaged and avoid privileging my own perspective, I actively reflected on both the similarities and differences expressed by participants. This process supported a more nuanced engagement with the data, particularly when navigating areas of uncertainty in the analytic process (Braun & Clarke, 2024).

My ongoing interest in reflective practice and group learning as a means of developing both personal and professional skills also influenced the direction of the research. This motivation informed my decision to pursue a dissemination strategy that could contribute to supporting others' practice development through the use of the reflecting team model.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the qualitative findings obtained from the study. A total of six themes were discussed and supported with quotes extracted from the interview transcripts. These data provided rich insights into trainee EP experiences, highlighting the role of reflecting teams within learning. The themes explored how reflecting teams supported

trainees' development of self-awareness, working with others and the ability to recognise power imbalance and aspects of group difference in role and the influence on professional practice development. The findings will be discussed in the next chapter, in the context of current literature and relevant theoretical frameworks, and implications for EP practice. This thesis will conclude with reflections on the research process.

5. Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the findings outlined in the previous chapter for the research project within the broader context of current literature and theoretical frameworks to address the research question. The strengths and limitations of the findings are discussed, with consideration given to the impact on finding interpretation. The implications for EP practice are discussed alongside future research suggestions and the dissemination strategy for the research is considered. The chapter concludes with reflections on the research process and a final summary.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The findings in chapter four were presented in relation to the outlined research question:

What are Educational Psychologists' experiences of using reflecting teams as part of their doctoral training?

In the subsequent sections, I discuss the findings in the context of existing literature and theories on reflecting teams, as previously explored in the Literature Review chapter. I also incorporate further relevant literature by drawing on my existing knowledge of psychological frameworks and theories. I use a snowballing approach from studies identified in the literature review and conduct targeted searches for pertinent research. The findings are outlined below in the same order presented in the Findings chapter, where I developed six themes from analysing the interview data of the six participants.

Holding Discomfort – Navigating Emotional Risk and Relational Learning

This theme explored participants feelings of using the reflecting team model. This included both positive and more challenging learning opportunities in a novel position of an experiential learning element on the doctoral course. Participants also reflected on the experience of working alongside other trainees and the impact of tutor input into the use of reflecting teams.

Safety, Structure and Voice – Foundations for Reflective Learning

The reflecting team model was seen as a supportive addition to trainees' learning experiences. Particular elements of the model were seen as unique opportunities for trainees to learn and develop in a different way from other elements of their course. This included the containing structure of the model, boundaried timings and the space and time to think and reflect. Participants also discussed the nature of reflecting teams to positively frame reflections and invite challenge from a position of curiosity. This was seen to support consultees to explore areas of difficulty without feeling defensive, thereby creating a supportive space.

Becoming the Psychologist I Want to Be – Developing Professional Identity in Reflective Spaces

Participants found that using reflecting teams repeatedly during their training practice supported their skill development across a range of areas, supporting their development of competencies and proficiencies towards doctoral standards. Participants positively discussed the key areas in which they had made progress, indicating the reflecting team model being a successful element of their training. The key areas discussed included building confidence in

their practice, especially in communication skills, reflective and systemic practice through practical application and developing theoretical understanding.

Adapting to Who We Were in a Shifting Learning Environment – The Reflecting Team Model as a Developmental and Contextual Tool

This theme explored how the reflecting team was used and adapted across a participant's doctoral training three-year course as part of different learning elements. Participants discussed the variable use of the model for each trainee. Opportunities included as part of a consultation learning module, group supervision spaces and work discussion groups (Jackson, 2008). Participants also experienced use of the model during placement in various Educational Psychology Services with other trainees or with families and other multi-disciplinary professionals. This highlighted the adaptability of the reflecting team model to be used across various learning scenarios to have a consistent model for reflective practice and group experiential learning.

Expanding Practice Through the Eyes of Others – The Reflexive Power of Shared Perspectives

The unique nature of reflecting teams to provide alternative perspectives helped participants to learn from different ideas and consider reflections beyond their own. This was discussed by participants in the role of the consultant, being in the reflecting team and also the impact on consultees. The dynamics between the different roles was considered as well as how reflections were taken up or rejected by the system when attempting to implement change.

What Am I Bringing? – Navigating Difference, Reflexivity and Ethical Engagement

This theme explored participants' development of practice and understanding of intersectionality. As part of training, participants reflected on the importance of developing their individual reflexivity. They also discussed the power dynamics present when working with the reflecting team model and how to reduce power imbalances. Additionally, the importance of working with groups and learning about group intersectionality was considered. This was especially relevant in the role of the EP in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity practices, and in advocating for families and CYP with intersecting identities. This is where participants identified and reflected on learning to recognise and carefully explore the role and impact of intersectionality for both themselves and the CYP they work with.

5.3 Findings in the Context of the Current Literature

5.3.1 What Have Been the Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Using the Reflecting Team Model as an Experiential Learning Tool for Trainees Completing the Educational Psychology Doctorate?

5.3.1.1 Trainee Confidence Development. A key finding from participants' accounts is the impact and support of the reflecting team model on trainee development in working towards qualifying as an Educational Psychologist. As previously discussed, the Educational Psychologist title is a protected and regulated title. Trainees are required to reach competencies and provide evidence of reaching standards in both the Health Care and Professionals Council (2023) and British Psychological Society (2023) ensuring a standard of practice for Educational Psychologists trained in the United Kingdom. The HCPC registration is a legal requirement to which practitioner psychologists must be registered and must continue to meet the standards of practice required during their career. Across the three

years of doctoral training participants reflected positively on their perception and experiences using Andersen's (1987) reflecting team model, particularly in skill development.

In educational psychology research, these findings aligned with those of recent studies. These studies reported that EPs felt they benefitted from being trained in the use of reflecting teams, both through in-person methodology (Amod & Miller, 2019) and online in a local authority context (Niven, 2023). Reflecting teams were perceived as supportive in enhancing practice, promoting collaborative complex problem solving, encouraging peer-support and improving wellbeing (Niven, 2023). This included confidence development for EPs and trainee EPs in enhancing their own skills and learning from the experiences of their colleagues. Participants in the current research, reflecting on their doctoral training, felt that their confidence in using the reflecting team model progressed over time, along with their perceived skill level.

McGovern and Harmsworth (2010) and Hale and Sindlinger (2017) supported this finding of progression over time. They discussed the development of courage, experience and confidence in their studies of trainees using of the reflecting team model in both clinical and counselling psychology. Lamprecht and Pitre (2018) also recognised the importance of implementing the reflecting team model in the early stages of practitioner psychologist training. This was similar to the current participants' experience of using the model during their first year of training, which provided time to develop certainty with the model, overcome initial challenges in a novel situation and observe modelled practice repeatedly. Hale and Sindlinger (2017), Lamprecht and Pitre (2018) and Davies (2012) highlighted the benefit of trainees observing modelled practice to support confidence and skill development. Participants in the current research expressed similar views and agreed with these findings.

Taylor et al. (2023) also highlighted the benefits of peer-on-peer modelling and feedback, alongside tutor input, which were seen as advantageous for trainees.

5.3.1.2 Supporting Trainees to Develop their Reflective Practice. Reflective and communication skills were identified as key competencies in the field of educational psychology. Participants found the reflecting team model particularly beneficial in supporting the development of these skills, which are required to meet professional standards of practice. The capacity for reflection is an essential component in the role of an Educational Psychologist, especially when practicing consultation. Reflecting on what has been said, along with one's response and beliefs, requires ongoing internal reflection. EP standards include being able to reflect critically on practice and consider alternative ways of working (HCPC, 2023). They also require EPs to demonstrate self-awareness and work as reflective practitioners (BPS, 2023). Models in the EP literature support critical reflection on new experiences for trainees. Examples include Gibb's (1988) and Kolb's (1984) multistage reflective cycles (Ohara, 2021; Rowley et al., 2023). In reflective practice, Schön (1983) identified reflection as the primary source of transformation that leads to learning and development. Kolb (2015) described reflection as a holistic learning process involving experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting.

The reflecting team model created a live experience of in the moment reflection for the participants in the current research. Schön (1983) described this as supporting the development of intuitive knowledge through "reflection-in-action," which allowed practitioners to respond to values, conflicts and complexity with awareness of the impact of their own actions (Hebert, 2015). Cologon et al. (2017) highlighted that practitioners rated as highly reflective tend to have better therapeutic outcomes, where the ability to reflect on

one's own experience and consider other's inner experience is a central skill (Goodman et al., 2016; Sidis et al., 2025). This is especially important in educational psychology, where practitioners work across multi-systemic levels with children, families and the wider community (Ohara, 2021).

Andersen (1995) highlighted the importance of becoming aware of feelings of discomfort through body sensations, suggesting that emotions can be used as a form of information (Armstrong, 2005). Ellis (2021) suggested that in the role of the EP, the use of oneself is a key tool in developing awareness of unconscious defences used to cope with feelings and thoughts. This occurs through the psychoanalytic concepts of projection (Bion, 1985), transference (Klein, 1946) and countertransference (Heimann, 1950) in interactions with consultees. The unique perspective of Educational Psychologists' doctoral level training given in the current research identified the importance of reflective practice development during evolving consultations with families, school communities and peers. Participants discussed how the reflecting team model supported their ability to identify emotional responses to evolving situations and to better understand the dynamics between themselves and consultees.

5.3.1.3 Assisting Trainees to Hone their Communication Skills. In addition to reflective skill development and theoretical understanding, participants also discussed communication skill development from working with the reflecting team model. This included the recognition of non-verbal communication such as head nods, eye contact, and the style of communication i.e. direct, indirect, leader-centred or group-centred (Taylor et al. 2023). These were considered essential skills for EPs during consultation and interaction with consultees, as outlined in the HCPC standards, which emphasise the use of effective and appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication with service users (HCPC, 2023).

Additionally, communication between cohort members within models such as the reflecting team may offer increased opportunities for skill development. This structure may be particularly effective for graduate students in helping professions (Austin, 2002; Echterling et al., 2002).

In Sindlinger's (2011) study on Counselling Psychologist doctoral students it was found that face-to-face interaction and communication were more meaningful for trainees than in an online setting. Online, non-video communication was seen as a disadvantage when cues such as gestures and facial expressions were not visible (McIsaac & Gunawardena, 1996). The current participants discussed using both online and in person reflecting teams but noted that video access supported communication throughout. The reflecting team model created an environment for interaction, communication and collaboration. From a constructivist perspective, these types of opportunities were considered central to learning.

Taylor et al. (2023) highlighted that trainee Counselling Psychologists required support in learning how to reframe statements positively, rather than approaching clients and group members with judgemental or negative comments. This led to more constructive, strength-based comments and greater awareness of how their feedback affected the receiver. Cox et al. (2003) found students expressed appreciation for reflections which were positive and non-judgmental. This allowed them the freedom to choose whether or not to incorporate the ideas raised. Participants from the current research discussed positive reframing and communication as supportive in creating a safe space for consultees. This was achieved by offering non-judgemental reflections that acknowledged challenge, difficulty and the exploration of problem situations.

EP participants reflected on the importance of shifting the problem-based narrative away from the child or young person. This allowed them to explore the impact of the wider system in situations such as classroom settings, identifying factors that could be changed to better support the CYP. In such situations, using natural, everyday language and speaking in a friendly manner with consultees, rather than relying on formal "professional" speak, helped reduce hierarchical dynamics. Families felt more able to contribute equally to the consultation and reflections, which supported meaningful change. Andersen (1991) described the importance in recognising 'outer talk' as speech we use when talking with others. This contrasts with 'inner talk', which referred to the internal dialogue we use when listening to others and forming our response in the moment, particularly to CYP, families and communities.

5.3.1.4 Experience of Anxiety and Uncertainty. Consistently discussed across the literature was the level of anxiety that can be produced in novel users of the reflecting team model. This included research in fields beyond psychology, such as in family therapy, where similar experiences of anxiety were reported. Harris and Crossley's (2021) meta-synthesis of eleven papers found the reflecting team was described as an 'unusual experience' and for some led to feelings of anxiousness and vulnerability. The unfamiliar nature of the experience could hinder the therapeutic process. Similarly, in social worker literature reflective practice use in group supervision was reported to initially create feelings of reservation and tension when transitioning from a one-to-one model. It took time for individuals to adjust to a newer, potentially more exposing group-based system of reflection (Bostock et al., 2022; Smith, 2022). Within the doctoral psychology literature several studies identified student anxiousness in using the model. Harrawood et al. (2011), in particular, explored the emotional experiences of counselling psychology students and found that the roles trainees adopted affected their emotional experience. The reflecting team role was

described as the most anxiety-provoking, while the Counselling Psychologist role brought a heightened awareness of responsibility.

In the educational psychology field Amod and Miller (2019) found anxiety was experienced by EPs being observed by the reflecting team. This was supported by Niven's (2023) study on local authority qualified EPs, who reported feeling pressure during observation, which may negatively impact a practitioner's ability to fully engage in the reflecting team process. The majority of studies from the literature noted that although trainees and practitioners initially felt nervous and tentative in using the approach, they eventually found the model useful and developed greater confidence in managing uncertainty and new experiences (Taylor et al. 2023). Munge et al. (2018) highlighted the value of learning from direct experiences, being active in the process and taking risks in novel challenges. They noted that, much like inevitable risk and uncertainty found in the real-world, these experiences were supportive for trainees. This was mirrored in the current research's participants who found the reflecting team model to be anxiety-provoking when initially using the model, leading to feelings of vulnerability. Developing a sense of safety in this was discussed as a crucial element to support the use of the reflecting teams for trainee Educational Psychologists, as part of the course programme. In addition, developing the ability to recognise and work with uncertainty was seen as essential. EPs have an ethical responsibility to remain aware of this and to advocate for consultees who may be experiencing uncertainty during consultation.

5.3.2 How Does the Implementation of the Reflecting Team Model Affect Trainees Learning Experiences Across the Doctorate?

5.3.2.1 Implementing the Reflecting Team Model to Support Adult Learning.

Participants discussed how the reflecting team model was used and implemented across the

doctoral training course as an experiential learning element. Experiential learning theory is core in studying adult education, adult learning, and andragogy, especially when experiential tools, such as the reflecting team model are used (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). As part of doctoral psychology training, it is important therefore to consider the use of the reflecting team model as an experiential learning tool for adult learners engaging in new concepts and experiences. It is also important to reflect on how best to support trainees with their engagement.

As part of Kolb's experiential learning theory, a four-stage cycle of learning was identified for effective learning. This included four different kinds of learning regions, consisting of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). The reflecting team model is considered to address all four learning modes in its implementation. To begin, trainees engage in a concrete experience by participating in the reflecting team process. Next learners participate in reflective observation of their experience and begin to make sense of the skills they are developing. Moving forward from reflecting, trainees start to form abstract conceptualisations, allowing them to modify their in-the-moment practice during the reflecting team experience. Finally, trainees test the new ideas and concepts they have gained through an active experimentation stage (Kolb, 1984). Trainees differ in their learning styles, which should be considered when engaging with the reflecting team model. This positions trainees in the different learning regions, depending on how they engage with the reflecting team model (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

Despite its widespread application in higher education, experiential learning theory has faced several critiques. These included concerns about the graphical model used (Bergsteiner et al., 2010), the 'epistemological contradictions' (Schenck & Cruickshank, 2015) and broader conceptual limitations, such as its lack of attention to ambiguous

experiences, environmental factors and sociopolitical context (Dillard et al. 2024). Dillard et al. (2024) argued that experiential learning theory presents an oversimplified and linear view of the learning process. Real-world experiences, such as those in reflecting teams, are often more complex than the four stages outlined. Despite these concerns, the theory is still regarded as the "clearest expression" of experiential learning (Seaman et al., 2017) and continues to inform tools like the reflecting team model.

Implementation of models such as the reflecting team as part of adult learning creates opportunity to support learners and space to engage in deep learning (Border, 2007). By allowing full engagement with the different regions of the learning cycle, where individuals can move freely between learning modes, adult learning can support increased effectiveness, cognitive understanding, and personal and professional growth (Kolb, 2015). Dillard et al. (2024) outlined the versatility of Kolb's model to be adapted in contemporary adult education to address emerging trends and challenges effectively.

The participants of the current research discussed how the use of the reflecting team model throughout their educational psychology training provided opportunities to revisit the approach. This supported the embedding of skills and development of their learning. They discussed the incorporation of reflecting teams across the three years of training during different course elements such as during consultation, group supervision, work discussion groups (Jackson, 2008) and varying experiences on their placements. Participants acknowledged the benefit of using the reflecting team model flexibly across different reflective spaces to build on their knowledge and understanding. They also valued the opportunity to explore and practice different roles when using the model. Kolb (2015) discussed that shifting the role that learners play, depending on which stage of the learning cycle they are, helps support transition from one learning style to another.

McGovern and Harmsworth (2010) also suggested that as experience with the reflecting team model increased participants developed a greater appreciation for its value. In Niven's (2023) study on Educational Psychologists they found an appeal for increased training and support in the use of the reflecting team model to ensure implementation fidelity. This was consistent with Amod & Miller's (2019) study on trainee EPs' concerns about having enough time to engage in reflecting teams. However, these concerns were mitigated when time was protected for participation.

In the literature, difference in how the reflecting team model was incorporated into doctoral psychology learning was discussed. Several studies offered suggestions on how best to support adult learners when engaging in new reflecting team learning. Shurts et al. (2006) and Taylor et al.'s (2023) studies on doctoral Counselling Psychologist trainees offered suggestions on how to support trainees who experienced challenging feelings. This included providing trainees with supervision (Shurts et al., 2006) and offering guidelines with a rationale for the use of reflecting teams (Taylor et al., 2023) to support understanding and processing their experiences.

In other studies, the reflecting team was discussed alongside other learning methods. For example, Maggio's (2014) study explored five teaching practicums, and Griffith and Frieden (2000) examined four to compare the unique learning gained from the reflecting team model. The incorporation of the reflecting team model into doctoral level training requires careful consideration of how the model will be used to best support trainees working towards the required standards. It is also important to consider how the model can contribute to creating a safe and supportive learning space.

5.3.2.2 Psychological Safety in the Reflecting Team Learning Space. Kolb (2015) outlined that a learning space includes physical, cultural, institutional, social, and psychological aspects and is conceived as a transaction between the person and the environment. This concept was built from Vygotsky's (1978) activity theory of social cognition, which saw a learning space as a construct of a person's experience in their social environment. It is embedded in communities of practice that have norms, tools and traditions of practice, where experience in these activities becomes the learning space. In the reflecting team learning space, it is important to consider that learning requires facing and embracing differences, from held ideas to new ones, and learning the values of others. These differences can be challenging and even threatening for trainees. They require a model, such as the reflecting team, that supports the expression of difference and fosters psychological safety (Sanford, 1966). Wyss-Flamm (2002) highlighted the importance of creating a culture of support in which the learner can trust that they are 'held' over time. This promoted effective learning when psychologically safe conditions were present. This is especially important in the context of Schein's (1999) view of power imbalances in adult learning institutes, where course providers hold a relative position of power compared to trainees in a one-down learning position. It is therefore essential to ensure ethical practice and create a safe learning environment when facilitating experiential learning contexts such as reflecting teams.

Literature on doctoral psychology students highlighted the importance of ethical considerations in the use of the reflecting team model. Duch's (2017) study discussed the importance of a supervisor in challenging inequality and gender discrimination as part of setting up a reflecting team in clinical psychology training. Griffith and Frieden (2000) also took positive steps to ensure informed consent was gained. They discussed both the benefits and risks of taking part in reflecting teams, as well as the importance of maintaining confidentiality. They also noted the level of self-disclosure trainees choose to discuss about

themselves should not impact academic evaluation. Several studies expressed the reflecting team model provided a safe and non-threatening space for trainees to develop and receive feedback (Harrawood et al., 2011; Landis & Young, 1994; Shurts et al., 2006). Cox et al. (2003) also found providing structure and clarifying expectations important for students new to using the reflecting team model.

In the current research participants discussed the elements of the reflecting team model that supported creating a safe learning space. This included the boundaried containment of the reflecting team structure, where the incorporation of set timings, the structure of the model and initial contracting supported boundary creation. Bartle (2021) described holding structures, such as set timings and roles, as boundaries which serve as a containing function for groups. These structures provided a predictable and structured format that felt safe and meaningful to group members (Rustin, 2008). Participants in the current research valued having space and time to reflect. This structure created opportunities for involvement from multiple professionals, allowing each member a more equal chance to contribute in their role. Participants also felt that the structure helped prevent the space from becoming dominated by a single voice and the snowballing of a topic. Instead, it created space to hear and explore alternative perspectives, allowing for a broader scope of learning.

5.3.3 How has the Experience of Group Learning in Reflecting Teams Impacted Trainee EPs' Understanding of Systemic Practice and Their Engagement in Becoming a Culturally Sensitive Practitioner?

5.3.3.1 Learning with Multiple Perspectives. Throughout the literature one of the key features of the reflecting team model that was seen as a beneficial learning experience for trainees on doctoral psychology courses was being able to work with multiple perspectives. The ability to learn from and work with multiple professionals in one space was seen as

supportive across a range of skills. This was especially valuable for the development and understanding of systemic practice. In the reviewed doctoral literature Taylor et al. (2023) and Meekums et al. (2016) found trainees learnt to recognise group dynamics as well as benefiting from hearing multiple perspectives, revealing personal blind spots. Landis and Young (1994) argued that the generation and co-creation of ideas was supported in reflecting team practice as students created multiple realities rather than a linear view of a situation. Davies (2012) also found students' use of "double vision" helped them appreciate not only the issues of their client but also issues that may have been evoked in their own lives. This appreciation for working with alternative and multiple perspectives extended beyond psychology disciplines with Bostock et al.'s (2022) social work group supervision reflecting team. This use supported bringing the voice of the child and family to the reflective space, where different perspectives, voices and ideas were shared about complex family systems. It also allowed for deeper understanding of the relational nature of the problem, supported critical thinking and encouraged a stance of curiosity. Cox et al. (2003) discussed the use of reflecting teams with trainee group workers to shift students' thinking, encourage the generation of new ideas and support the exploration of group dynamics. Chang's (2010) research on family therapy counsellors found reflecting teams supported in teaching systemic concepts, where multiple observers created more idea generation for intervention (James et al., 1996; Wright et al., 1996).

The participants from the current research discussed how they progressed in their understanding of psychological theory. They noted that different theories underpinned their individual reflections and supported a deeper understanding of the practical application of theory. This was particularly true for systemic theory. Participants felt that using the reflecting team model helped them recognise how their role influenced the wider family or

school system, viewing themselves as a ‘cog in the system’. They also described a better understanding systemic concepts such as circular causality and punctuation points. In line with Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological systems model, participants recognised their role in working across the different levels of the system to support CYP. Music (2019) argued that a key part of the EP role is to disrupt defensive cycles within systems, promoting understanding and containment of complex emotions. This, in turn, may help adults manage their responses to individuals and organisations so that CYP remain at the centre of thinking. Andersen (1991) viewed the reflections from the reflecting team as a direct intervention, offering the system new ideas to explore openly and support change.

Participants described working with ‘multiple minds’ and the shift from a traditional single-consultant role to one supported by a reflecting team. This approach encouraged broader thinking and helped them navigate the consultation process. Participants generally perceived this positively and found the contributions beneficial to their practice, particularly in generating new ideas. Some acknowledged frustration when receiving additional input from the reflecting team, especially when they wanted to guide the consultation in a specific direction. However, recognising differences of opinion and ideas within the reflecting team was ultimately seen as supportive of practice and trainee development. Participants found this particularly powerful when they perceived that the consultant was struggling to broach a topic with a family or school system. In these cases, the reflecting team helped reopen space for the topic to be explored from a position of curiosity, gently introducing challenge into the consultation.

Advocating for the voice of the child is an essential part of the EP role, especially during consultations. It is also a key skill to ensure space and time are given to reflect on the

CYP's perspective. Participants also highlighted the role of power dynamics in the space and consideration for consultees to have the opportunity to disagree with the reflections. Participants reported that it was important for trainees to be equipped to support consultees voicing disagreement, in order to reduce power imbalances. This helped create an open space where consultees could hear the teams' reflections, accept what they perceived as beneficial, and reject any reflections that did not feel supportive or relevant to them (Chang, 2010).

5.3.2.2 Working with Aspects of Intersectionality and Applying Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Principles to Practice.

In learning with multiple minds, participants had the opportunity to develop skills in their equality, diversity and inclusivity practice. Working with children, families and communities requires Educational Psychologists to practice in an equitable manner, understand intersectionality and promote inclusion, in line with HCPC (2023) and BPS (2023) standards of professional practice. In the EP role, EPs work with CYP, their families and wider systems where different aspects of intersectionality must be considered. A key point of development in EP training is learning to recognise and carefully explore the role and impact of intersectionality for both themselves, CYP and wider systems they work with (Dunsmuir et al., 2024; Sakata, 2024). Critique has been given to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, in regards to neglecting the role of power dynamics, social inequalities and sociopolitical context during learning (Dillard et al., 2024; Seaman, 2007). However, the reflecting team model is considered to support learners with engaging in and working with diverse environments. Smith et al. (1995) found the multiple views and case reflections from the reflecting team supported depolarising sociopolitical differences within the team. Laal and Ghodsi (2012) also highlighted that collaborative learning environments, such as the reflecting team encouraged meaningful dialogue and knowledge co-creation among learners.

As part of working in a larger group of professionals in a reflecting team, the impact of individual differences was an element of using the model that was identified and discussed by the current research's participants. It is important therefore to equip trainees with development opportunities to learn more about personal reflexivity and the challenges this may bring. Participants in the current research felt the reflecting team model was beneficial in providing a space to learn self-reflective skills as part of their reflective practice. Davies (2012) described reflecting teams as a self-reflexive immersive experience. New knowledge is constructed from what an individual knows and believes based on their previous experiences (Bransford et al., 2000). Hill (2003) described reflecting teams as a microcosm of a training program that can supplement broader efforts in diversity and inclusion training within a course programme. Experiential learning provides an educational context for shared associations across inter-personal, social and cultural differences. This supports students in engaging with, rather than avoiding, difference (Chang, 2010).

Participants from the current research were also able to learn about group difference from the reflecting team members and how aspects of intersectionality interact within their professional roles. Burnham (2018) highlighted the contrast between self-reflexivity of the 'internal state' and relational reflexivity between members of groups. The creation of a safe learning space supported practitioners to accept the learning nature of the process. This was also supported by the positive re-framing as discussed above.

Much of the doctoral psychology literature reviewed overlooked aspects of identity and the impact of this when using reflecting teams as part of practitioner psychology training, especially in the context of the UK. An exception was Yim's (2022) case study of their own reflecting team experience on their clinical psychology doctoral training, which discussed the importance of supporting trainees to develop anti-oppressive practice. They outlined

reflecting team practice as being a useful tool in supporting intersectionality reflection and discussion amongst trainees. Amod and Miller (2019) also reflected on the use of reflecting teams to support trainees working in the South African context, where poverty and race were discussed. It is hoped the current research is able to shed light in the field of educational psychology in the use of the reflecting team model for supporting trainees to develop these essential and ever-evolving skills to best support the children, families and communities they advocate for.

5.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Research

5.4.1 Research Strengths

The research obtained insights of Educational Psychologists' use of the reflecting team model as part of their three-year doctoral training. The goal was to understand the experiences of psychologists during their training and how the use of the reflecting team model affected learning. The research has therefore broadened the understanding of the use of the reflecting team model as part of EP doctoral training and has made a distinctive contribution within the field. The strengths of the research include the experiential element of the reflecting team model's use across different learning opportunities on the doctorate and the implications for EP practice. The model's contribution to enhancing trainee skill development, along with the methodology used, are also identified as strengths. These strengths are discussed in the following sections.

The research explored the experiences of qualified EPs during their doctoral training using the reflecting team model, offering a detailed insight into its use in EP training practice. It highlights the supportive structure of the reflecting team model in creating a boundaried learning space for trainees to engage in reflective and systemic practice. The research also

demonstrates the model's adaptability for flexible use across taught components and practical learning, helping trainees build confidence in its application over time. These findings shed light on opportunities for novel learning experiences within doctoral training and underscore the importance of creating supportive, experiential learning environment for trainees.

The research findings also offer an understanding of the direct skills EPs develop as part of their training when using the reflecting team model. This includes reflective and systemic practice, communication skills and developing greater awareness and engagement in equality, diversity and inclusivity practice. It is argued these findings offer an insight into effective use of reflecting teams in educational psychology training. This is particularly important given the limited research in the area, despite the model's current use as an experiential learning tool, as highlighted in the literature review.

An additional strength of the research is the flexibility of the methodology, RTA, used to analyse the qualitative data. Braun and Clarke's (2022) method is described as easy to apply due to their transparent and practical guide and flexibility in approach. To explore EPs' experiences with the use of the reflecting team model in depth, I employed reflexivity throughout the study. This enhanced the transparency and rigour of the research by acknowledging my own influence, as discussed in the Findings chapter.

5.4.2 Limitations of the Research

In working to establish the quality of the research, as guided by Yardley's (2024) evaluation criteria, several limitations were acknowledged. Specifically, the participant sample influences how contextually meaningful the findings may be to others. The inclusion criteria constrained the diversity of perspectives and experiences included in the study, which

may limit how far the findings resonate or are applicable to broader populations of EPs and trainee EPs.

Firstly, the exploratory nature of the research, aimed at understanding the lived experiences of a specific population with a small sample size, means it was not intended to generate generalisable findings or explain phenomena. While the research does not claim to encompass the full range of experiences with reflecting teams in EP doctoral training, efforts were made to support the sensitivity to context by clearly outlining the inclusion criteria and providing rich contextual information about the participants and their training. This allows the reader to judge the relevance and potential resonance of the findings in relation to their own practice through their professional and experiential knowledge (Smith et al., 2022). The findings may reflect an unintended emphasis on positive aspects of the reflecting team model. They may have been skewed toward a more favourable view due to the voluntary nature of participation. Participants who had more positive experiences using the reflecting team model were likely more inclined to participate. This may have led to an overlooking of EPs who had more challenging experiences or felt less impacted by the use of the model. Consequently, insights from those who did not participate have not had views represented and therefore the research does not reflect the diversity of perspectives on the topic.

Due to the paramount importance of confidentiality and anonymity, it was not possible to include gender and ethnicity of the participants. As a result, the analysis of the role of gender and ethnicity was limited within the focus of the research. I asked questions related to equality, diversity and inclusivity as part of practice with reflecting teams, which was discussed in the Findings section, but there were aspects that could not be explored due to the risk of breaching confidentiality. The representation of the sample was also affected by factors including recruitment methods and the geographical location of the chosen training

institution. The inclusion of six participants through purposive sampling supported in-depth exploration of experiences but inevitably narrows the range of perspectives captured. In line with Yardley's (2000) principle of sensitivity to context, these limitations are acknowledged as shaping how the findings may resonate with others. While the research offers valuable insights into the specific training context studied, it does not aim to produce generalisable conclusions. Instead, readers are invited to consider the relevance and applicability of the findings in relation to their own settings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2024). Future research could build on this study by recruiting a larger and more diverse sample from multiple training institutes and regions. This would help broaden the scope of understanding and deepen insight into how the reflecting team model is experienced across a wider variety of contexts, supporting the development of robust and meaningful qualitative knowledge in educational psychology.

All participants trained at the same designated training institution. This may have contributed to the development of shared theoretical orientations and experiential understandings in relation to the reflecting team model and cohort narratives. I acknowledged the limitation of transferring findings to other contexts, as the study aimed to explore EPs' experience of using the reflecting team model within a specific doctoral training institute.

Nevertheless, the findings offer meaningful insights within the boundaries of the researched context and may contribute insight to similar practices elsewhere, aligning with Yardley's (2017) principle of sensitivity to context. As a trainee Educational Psychologist at the same training institute, I recognised the potential influence of my positionality on the process of gathering participants' views. I prioritised confidentially and took care to establish rapport, which may have helped participants feel comfortable during the interviews. However, I also acknowledged the possibility that participants may have felt the need to

respond in a way that aligned with what they thought I wanted to hear. To address this, I used follow-up questions to encourage deeper reflection and to explore both positive and challenging aspects of the reflecting team model. This approach supported the generation of rich, nuanced data.

My familiarity with the reflecting team model as part of my own training also raised the possibility of unconscious influence on the research process. To address this, I kept a reflexive diary and engaged in regular reflective discussion with my research supervisor. Finally, participants were asked to recall experiences from their past, rather than reflecting on current practice. As Scaife (2014) stated, 'reflection-on-action' can occur over time, and participants were recruited shortly after their training to support accurate recall. Future research could explore how EPs engage with the reflecting team model in their current professional practice.

5.5 Future Research

In consideration of the findings several potential areas for further research exploration are proposed:

- There is a need to examine the application of reflecting teams in a wider context. The research privileged the voice of participants selected from a particular training institute, grounded in theoretical foundations of experiential learning reflective practice. In light of this, it is suggested that future research explore the application of the reflecting team model with EPs and trainee EPs who have completed training programs across various educational learning institutes and professional contexts such as local authority work. This could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the model's effectiveness across settings. Furthermore, to deepen understanding of reflecting team use in doctoral EP training, subsequent research could explore course

tutors' experiences of delivering reflecting team-based teaching. A multiple perspective design (Larkin et al., 2019) may support this by exploring the phenomena from various viewpoints, including those of trainees, course tutors and placement supervisors, to capture the range of experiences within educational psychology doctoral training.

- Exploring the use of the reflecting team model with practicing, qualified EPs who have extensive experience with the model would extend beyond the current research, which focused on its use during doctoral training. Niven (2023) examined EPs' perceptions of the model following initial training. However, future studies should explore how reflecting teams are used in ongoing professional practice to move beyond early or novel application.

- Further research is also needed to explore the use of the reflecting team model across diverse populations and demographic groups. This would allow for a deeper exploration of intersectionality and enhance understanding of the model's impact and relevance across varied settings. Such work would offer valuable insight into how reflecting teams may support the development of equitable and inclusive learning environments and practices within educational psychology.

- This research involved the construction of rich interpretive themes through the application of RTA. Future studies could be strengthened by the use of alternative or complementary methodologies, such as a mixed-methods approach. This has the potential to offer insight and broaden knowledge of how reflecting teams are employed in varied contexts in educational psychology practice.

5.6 EP Practice Implications

Broader implications derived from participants' experiences can be considered for other trainee Educational Psychologist and training institutions in the EP field. The themes identified in the findings of this research form the foundation for structuring implications of the study and are merged to support the following implication discussion. Themes have been combined to facilitate exploration of the following implications. Insights have been taken from the existing literature, the research question and the data analysis.

5.6.1 The Impact of the Reflecting Team Model on Trainee Competency Development

Educational Psychologists' accounts of their experiences of using the reflecting team model as part of their doctoral training highlighted how the model supported the development of skills and competencies aligned with the required standards of practice by the HCPC (2023). Trainees need to provide evidence of meeting each standard of practice before applying for registration to begin practicing as a qualified EP. Participants specifically discussed skill development in communication, reflective and systemic practice, equality, diversity and inclusivity practice and increased self-reflexivity and awareness of group intersectionality. Their accounts illustrated the direct impact of reflecting team practice on their learning and engagement in novel, experiential environments. These findings suggest that the reflecting team model, as an experiential learning tool, offered meaningful opportunities for trainees to apply developing skills to real-world practice. Participants reflected that this was particularly beneficial in preparing them to work with children, families and communities to support positive change.

In this context the research supports that the reflecting team model was perceived as beneficial to trainees' learning and development. It was particularly supportive in helping trainees develop competencies and meet the required standard of practice, especially through

the model's repeated use over time. There is additional scope for Local Authority Educational Psychology Services to consider how newly qualified EPs, already experienced with reflecting teams, can continue their development within team-based reflective spaces.

5.6.2 Use of the Reflecting Team Model as a Group Experiential Learning Tool

Group learning was outlined by participants to be particularly important during their studies, especially in developing their understanding of systemic and reflective practice. The input of additional perspectives whether in consultation with a family, within school systems or among trainee and EP peers, created opportunities for trainees to think beyond their own perspectives, engage with new concepts and apply theory to practice. This style of group learning, within the boundaried structure of the reflecting team, supported trainees' awareness of group dynamics and contributed to group cohesion. Participants described how multiple perspectives could be shared and held simultaneously, which supported the development of hypotheses around CYP and deepened their understanding of complex family and educational systems.

In addition to the findings of this study, the value of engaging with alternative perspectives through group learning have been recognised across disciplines (Bostock et al., 2022; Chang, 2019; Taylor et al. 2023). This was described as especially important when developing skills related to EDI and recognising intersectionality. This aspect of experiential learning gave trainees opportunities to practice, reflect and adapt their approach over time, supporting their development as more culturally sensitive practitioners. This in turn enhanced their capacity to work collaboratively with consultees and professionals, and to advocate more effectively for CYP and families.

5.6.3 Incorporating the Reflecting Team Model into EP Doctoral Training

When engaging in novel experiences as a learner, challenges can arise. In the context of the reflecting team model, participants discussed trainee anxiety in detail. This was particularly related to the sensitive nature of performing in front of a team, rather than practicing as a solo consultant. It is therefore important to carefully consider the implementation of the reflecting team model practice into student learning especially during the beginning stages, whilst trainees are gaining familiarity with the approach. Literature suggested the value of clearly outlining the reflecting team process and providing a strong theoretical foundation to support trainees' understanding and engagement with the model.

Participants also discussed how learning extended beyond the reflecting team space, highlighting the importance of supervision as a place to process new and challenging experiences, especially those related to intersectionality, both within the self and the wider group. This should be considered throughout the training experience, where the reflecting team model can be integrated into various learning modules and placement settings. Participants described its use in class-based modules, role-play scenarios, group supervision spaces and work discussion groups (Jackson, 2008). This highlights the model's versatility and compatibility with established learning structures. In cases where the reflecting team model is not formally introduced within university training, but is encountered during placement, appropriate instruction and follow-up discussion should be offered. This would help support trainees' wellbeing and their understanding of placement experiences. In particular, any variation in how the reflecting team model is applied during placement should be made explicit for trainees. Other factors should also be addressed from the outset, such as obtaining informed consent and clarifying that trainee assessment is not influenced by their level of personal disclosure during reflecting team sessions. Participants specifically noted the value of repeated interaction with the reflecting team model across different learning spaces and modules. This aligns with findings from Niven (2023) and Amod & Miller (2019)

who highlighted the benefits of repeated exposure to the model in supporting more effective and confident use by EPs.

5.7 Dissemination Strategy

To present implications to educational psychology practice was an aim of the research, as outlined in section 5.6, where part of EP core competency is dissemination of research (BPS, 2023; HCPC, 2023). Due to participants' beneficial experiences of the reflecting team model during their training, it is important to consider how the findings will be disseminated. This is especially relevant for advancing the model's use in practice, particularly in the development of trainee EPs. To begin, I will share a summary of the findings with the participants individually who expressed interest in receiving the findings. I hope they will continue to use the reflecting team model in their current EP practice and engage in reflective discussions about the research findings.

I will share a summary of the findings and implications for EPs to the course lead at the designated training institution, who has contributed to the development of using the reflecting team model as part of educational psychology doctoral training at the designated training institution. I intend to disseminate the findings wider within the educational psychology field with the hope other training institutions and local authorities will take up the use of the reflecting team model to support and develop trainee and EP practice. I also hope to publish the research in a relevant EP journal in the future and present the findings at an educational psychology conference.

5.8 Reflections on the Research Process

From my personal perspective, the research process required patience and ongoing reflection, particularly during times of uncertainty. At the outset, I had some concerns about the feasibility of the project, given the small and specific participant group from the

designated training institute, and the potential impact of my own position as a trainee. However, with support and guidance from my research supervisor, and through continuous reflexivity and transparency, I maintained that exploring Educational Psychologists' experiences of using the reflecting team model during training was a worthwhile and important focus. I found it encouraging that participants valued their experiences with the model and expressed a desire to share them. This sense of value was further emphasised during the interviews, when participants spoke about their hopes to implement the reflecting team model more actively in their current practice since qualifying.

Throughout the research process, I reflected on my own experiences as a trainee completing doctoral psychology training in educational psychology as an adult learner. I considered the elements that supported my skill development, as well as the challenges I encountered. I also reflected on my previous experience as a teacher and the learning models I had used to support students in developing skills and to create a safe and encouraging learning environment. Using a reflexive journal throughout the project helped me to recognise where participants' accounts aligned with or diverged from my own experiences. This supported a deeper awareness of how my own position may have shaped the interpretation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2024). The importance of reflective practice was central to the research process, particularly when using RTA, which encouraged ongoing consideration of my dual role as both researcher and trainee EP. Engaging with this identity, of being an EP-researcher, was essential in acknowledging how my perspective informed the analysis. It also served as a reminder of the skills I developed during training and how the doctoral experience would continue to influence my future practice.

6. Conclusion

The current research explored the experiences of Educational Psychologists' use of the reflecting team model as part of their three-year doctoral training. The research sheds light on how the model is implemented across the three-year doctoral training to support learning and practice development for trainee Educational Psychologists. The theoretical models in the introduction to the research highlight considerations for adult learning environments. They also explore how the reflecting team model is used and adapted in educational psychology practice context. The literature review highlighted an under-researched area in educational psychology training in the UK in the use of the reflecting team model and trainees' experiences. This is in comparison to similar fields such as clinical and counselling psychology, where there was more in-depth research on the use of the reflecting team model as part of doctoral psychology training.

The designated training institute's consistent implementation of the reflecting team model across the three-years of doctoral training for Educational Psychologists provided a valuable context for this research. It offered a pertinent opportunity to explore the experiences of EPs using the reflecting team model during their training. This was explored particularly through the experiences of recently qualified Educational Psychologists from the institute, who had been trained in the use of the reflecting team model across the three-year doctoral study period.

Overall, the participants expressed support for the reflecting team model being a beneficial experiential learning element of their training in supporting practice and skill development. Participants offered details into the areas of practice they felt were developed through the use of the model alongside other trainees and through placement experiences. This included skills in communication, reflective and systemic practice and the development

of equality, diversity and inclusivity practice. As part of the findings, participants reflected on the emotional impact of engaging in the reflecting team model, highlighting both positive and challenging experiences. Many described how the model felt supportive, particularly to novel users.

Participants also spoke about learning the principles of systemic practice and the value of reflection in their work with children, families and wider communities. This involved introspective learning through self-reflexivity, recognising group dynamics and understanding the influence of these dynamics on the systems surrounding a child or young person. When engaging in culturally sensitive practice development, participants viewed the reflecting team model as a boundaried and containing space. It created opportunities to hear alternative perspectives, broaden understanding and contribution more effectively to wider systems. In doing so, it supported their development of systemic thinking and emphasised the importance of cultural awareness in their emerging professional identities.

Several challenges of using reflecting teams with trainees were outlined. These included the emotional intensity experienced by novel users and the complex journey of self-reflexivity, particularly in relation to intersectionality within group learning contexts. Despite these challenges, participants expressed an overall appreciation for the model during their doctoral training. They were open in sharing how the reflecting team provided a sense of supportive containment in group work and offered thoughtful suggestions for adapting the model to better support trainees. These included the importance of additional supervision and reminders about the structure and theoretical foundations of the model when used across different learning spaces.

I outlined several implications for educational psychology practice and for future research into the use of reflecting teams. These included the importance of considering how

the model supports the development of trainee skills and competencies that are required for EP qualification. I also reflected on the model's potential as a flexible and adaptable group experiential learning tool that can be integrated across various elements of a three-year training programme. Key considerations include how to create a safe and effective learning environment to support this integration.

The hope for this research is to contribute to the wider recognition of the reflecting team model and its implementation within the practice of Educational Psychologists. In particular, in the preparation of trainee EPs to reach the standards of competency required to qualify and practice as an Educational Psychologist to support and serve children, young people, families, schools and wider communities.

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Yim, S.H. (2022). A Critique of Coordinated Management of Meaning and Circularity in Relation to Countering Oppressive Practice: Reflections from a Trainee Therapist. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 43(3),* 346-355. https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1506

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Appendix A

Full Text Articles Assessed for Inclusion Eligibility

Number	Article	Rationale
1	Bernard, J. M. (2010). Special Issue on Clinical Supervision: A Reflection. *Canadian Journal of Counselling / Revue Canadienne de Counseling, 44*(3), 238-245.	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
2	Chang, J., Mudry, T. E., & Hiseler, L. (2020). Clinical Practice and Clinical Supervision: Building a Firm Foundation. *Canadian Journal of Counselling & Psychotherapy / Revue Canadienne de Counseling et de Psychothérapie, 54*(4), 595-616. https://doi.org/10.47634/cjcp.v54i4.70677	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
3	Davis, J. (2012). The Golden Pig, Reflections As Ancestral Blessings: The Reflecting Process in Teaching Family Therapy. *Family Process, 51*(3), 405-419. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2012.01405.x	Meets the inclusion criteria.
4	Duch, M. F. (2017). A girl in the "boys" club: supervision, narrative ideas, ethics and intersectionality. *Journal of Family Therapy, 39*(3), 478-491. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12179	Meets the inclusion criteria.
5	Estrada, D., Frame, M. W., & Williams, C. B. (2004). Cross-Cultural Supervision: Guiding the Conversation Toward Race and Ethnicity. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development, 32*, 307-319.	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
6	Garrison, R. (2022). Individual Psychology Multiple Psychotherapy. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 78*(3), 346-355. https://doi.org/10.1353/jip.2022.0031	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.

7	Gazzola, N., De Stefano, J., Theriault, A., & Audet, C. (2014). Positive experiences of doctoral-level supervisors-in-training conducting group-format supervision: a qualitative investigation. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 42*(1), 26-42. https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2013.799263	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
8	Griffith, B. A., & Frieden, G. (2000). Facilitating Reflective Thinking in Counselor Education. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 40*(2), 82. https://doi.org/10/1002/j.1556-6978.2000.tb01240.x	Meets the inclusion criteria.
9	Hale, J. V., & Sindlinger, J. (2017). Re-Envisioning Reflective Supervision: A Choice Theory/Reality Therapy Application Using Reflecting Teams. *International Journal of Choice Theory & Reality Therapy, 37*(1), 56-65.	Meets the inclusion criteria.
10	Hawley, L. D. (2006). Reflecting Teams and Microcounseling in Beginning Counselor Training: Practice in Collaboration. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development, 45*(2), 198-207. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1939.2006.tb00018.x	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
11	Hoshmand, L. T. (2004). The Transformative Potential of Counseling Education. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development, 43*(1), 82-90. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2164-490X.2004.tb00045.x	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
12	Jenkins, D. (1996). A reflecting team approach to family therapy: a Delphi study. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy, 22,* 219-238. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.1996.tb00200.x	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
13	Laitila, A., & Oranen, M. (2013). Focused Dialogues in Training Contexts: A Model for Enhancing Reflection in Therapist's Professional Practice. *Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal, 35*(3), 599-612. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-013-9235-9	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.

14	Lamprecht, L. M., & Pitre, S. (2018). Developing a Pre-practicum Environment for Beginning Counselors; Growing My Counselor Educator Self. *Journal of Counselor Preparation & Supervision, 1*(2), 1-31.	Meets the inclusion criteria.
15	Landis, L. L., & Young, M. E. (1994). The reflecting team in counsellor education. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 33*(3), 210-218. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.1994.tb00287.x	Meets the inclusion criteria.
16	Lebensohn-Chialvo, P., Crago, M., & Shisslak, C. M. (2000). The Reflecting Team: An Innovative Approach for Teaching Clinical Skills to Family Practice Residents. *Family Medicine, 32*(8), 556-560.	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
17	Maggio, L. M. (2014). Privileging the client's voice in a counselling psychology doctoral program. *Journal of Systemic Therapies, 33*(4), 35-46. https://doi.org/10.1521/jsyt.2014.33.4.35	Meets the inclusion criteria.
18	Meekums, B., Macaskie, J., & Kaapur, T. (2016). Developing skills in counselling and psychotherapy: a scoping review of Interpersonal Process Recall and Reflecting Team methods in initial therapist training. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 44*(5), 504-515. https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2016.1143550	Meets the inclusion criteria.
19	Moody, S., Kostohryz, K., & Vereen, L. (2014). Authentically Engaged Learning Through Live Supervision: A Phenomenological Study. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 53*(1), 19-33. https://doi.org/10/1002/j.1556-6978.2014.00046.x	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
20	Muddle, S., Rettie, H., Harris, O., Lawes, A., Robinson, R. (2022). Trainee life under COVID-19: A Systemic Case Report. *Journal of Family Therapy. 44*(2): 239-249. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12354	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
21	O'Reilly, M., Kiyimba, N., Lester, J. N., & O'Reilly, M. (2018). Discursive psychology as a method of analysis for the study fo couple and	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students'

	family therapy. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy, 44*(3), 409-425. https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12288	experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
22	Paladino, D. A., Barrio Minton, C. A., & Kern, C. W. (2011). Interactive Training Model: Enhancing Beginning Counseling Student Development. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 50*(3), 189-206. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2011.tb00119.x	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
23	Pare, D. (2016). Creating a Space for Acknowledgment and Generativity in Reflective Group Supervision. *Family Process, 55*(2), 270-286. https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12214	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
24	Randall, J. J., & Head, A. (2018). Taking conversations forward: a systemic exercise for teams threatened by service restructures. *Journal of Family Therapy, 40*(3), 447-458. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12184	Meets the inclusion criteria.
25	Rausch, M. A., & Gallo, L. L. (2017). Counselor in Training 360 Degree Case Conceptualization Process for Group Supervision. *Journal of Counselor Preparation & Supervision, 10*(1), 1-27.	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
26	Schwarz, K., & Munro, L. (2022). My Journey From Black and White to Grey: A Student Counsellor's Perspective on Training in Post-modernism Following a Career Working within a Modernist Model1. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 43*(1), 80-91. https:doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1478	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
27	Sells, S. P., Smith, T. E., & Moon, S. (1996). An ethnographic study of client and therapist perceptions of therapy effectiveness in a university-based training clinic. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy, 22,* 321-342. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.1996.tb00209.x	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
28	Shurts, W. M., Cashwell, C. S., Spurgein, S. L., Degges-White, S., Barrio, C. A., & Kardatzke, K. N. (2006). Preparing Counselors-in-Training to	Meets the inclusion criteria.

	Work With Couples: Using Role-Plays and Reflecting Teams. *Family Journal, 12*(2), 151-157. https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480705285731	
29	Stinchfield, T. A., Hill, N. R., & Bowers, R. (2019). Integrative Reflective Model of Group Supervision: Practicum Students' Experiences. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 58*(2), 141-157. https://doi.org/10.1002/ceas.12137	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
30	Stratton, P., & Lask, J. (2013). The Development of Systemic Family Therapy for Changing Times in the United Kingdom. *Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal, 35*(2), 257-274. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-013-9252-8	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
31	Taylor, E. R., Campbell, M., & Ottone, K. (2023). Using Reflecting Teams in Solution-Focused Group Counseling Experiential Training for Master's Students. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 48*(4), 317-334. https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2023.2253467	Meets the inclusion criteria.
32	Willott, S., Hatton, T., & Ovebode, J. (2012). Reflecting team processes in family therapy: a search for research. *Journal of Family Therapy, 34*(2), 180-203. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6427.2010.00511.x	Focus of the study if not the subject of interest. The researcher aims to explore reflecting team practice within training institutions and doctoral students' experiences of these, therefore other focus points would not be relevant.
33	Yim, S.H. (2022). A Critique of Coordinated Management of Meaning and Circularity in Relation to Countering Oppressive Practice: Reflections from a Trainee Therapist. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 43*(3), 346-355.	Meets the inclusion criteria.

Appendix B

List of Articles Included in the Literature Review

1. Amod, Z., & Miller, J. (2019). Systemic Reflecting Team Training: Perceptions and Experiences of South African Educational Psychologists. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, *47*(2), 102-119.
2. Davis, J. (2012). The Golden Pig, Reflections As Ancestral Blessings: The Reflecting Process in Teaching Family Therapy. *Family Process, 51*(3), 405-419. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2012.01405.x
3. Duch, M. F. (2017). A girl in the "boys" club: supervision, narrative ideas, ethics and intersectionality. *Journal of Family Therapy, 39*(3), 478-491. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12179
4. Griffith, B. A., & Frieden, G. (2000). Facilitating Reflective Thinking in Counselor Education. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 40*(2), 82. https://doi.org/10/1002/j.1556-6978.2000.tb01240.x
5. Hale, J. V., & Sindlinger, J. (2017). Re-Envisioning Reflective Supervision: A Choice Theory/Reality Therapy Application Using Reflecting Teams. *International Journal of Choice Theory & Reality Therapy, 37*(1), 56-65.
6. Harrawood, L. K., Parmanand, S., & Wilde, B. J. (2011). Experiencing emotion across a semester-long family role-play and reflecting team: Implications for counselor development. *The Family Journal*, *19*(2), 198-203.
7. Lamprecht, L. M., & Pitre, S. (2018). Developing a Pre-practicum Environment for Beginning Counselors; Growing My Counselor Educator Self. *Journal of Counselor Preparation & Supervision, 1*(2), 1-31.
8. Landis, L. L., & Young, M. E. (1994). The reflecting team in counsellor education. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 33*(3), 210-218. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.1994.tb00287.x
9. Maggio, L. M. (2014). Privileging the client's voice in a counselling psychology doctoral program. *Journal of Systemic Therapies, 33*(4), 35-46. https://doi.org/10.1521/jsyt.2014.33.4.35
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11. Meekums, B., Macaskie, J., & Kaapur, T. (2016). Developing skills in counselling and psychotherapy: a scoping review of Interpersonal Process Recall and Reflecting Team methods in initial therapist training. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 44*(5), 504-515. https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2016.1143550
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Appendix C

Data Extraction Table

Article	Population	Method (design, data collection, data analysis)	Focus	Findings	Critique
Amod & Miller (2019)	12 Educational Psychologist trainees and one Family Therapy trainer. Students from a social services organisation in Gauteng, South Africa who had worked in a reflecting team during their internship year as well as their primary trainer who is a social worker and the Head of Counselling Services. Fifteen Educational Psychologists, trained over five years, were invited in writing to participate in the research. The 12 participants who agreed to participate in the study were trained at four of the six educational psychology Universities in South Africa.	The study used individual semi-structured interviews, utilizing open-ended questions to collect the data. Data was transcribed verbatim and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to thematic content analysis. A purposive sampling procedure was used.	A focus on the application of reflecting teams' systemic methodology to South African context for trainee Educational Psychologists practice development.	The study found trainees desired more in-depth theoretical training in family therapy and in Andersen's (1987) reflecting team method. Trainees valued the practical nature of the reflecting team training and benefitted from watching other more experienced therapists. It was found being observed was an anxiety provoking element of this type of training for trainees. Trainees benefitted from training in systemic family therapy with regards to their own current practice.	**Strengths.** This study explored students' equality, diversity and inclusivity factors and the impact this had on the reflecting team process and experience. Ethical processes were discussed and transparent. The South African context was described in detail. Data was triangulated from different participants. **Limitations.** Transferability of the results is limited as a purposive sampling procedure was utilised. Views expressed by the participants may not be representative of Educational Psychologists who were trained at alternative educational sites. There was a time delay of varying degrees

	Ten participants were aged between 28-35-year age group and two participants were between 55 and 62 years of age.				between the participants' internship training year and their account of their reflecting team experiences and their ability to recall their experiences could have affected the accuracy of the results. Participants may have been cautious about what they said during the interviews due to the nature of their relationship with the internship training site and the universities at which they were trained.
Davis (2012)	A course facilitator of pre-and post-doctoral interns at the University of Massachusetts' Counselling Centre involving counselling psychology graduate students who took part in a weekly 2-hour "Family Therapy Consultation Seminar."	A case study of the authors experiences of teaching using reflecting teams process on a postgraduate counselling programme. A contextual overview with a case example using a dialogic transcript.	A focus on the approach of teaching family therapy on postgraduate counselling course to demonstrate the way in which the reflecting team process connects the participant members and supports self-	The study found a reduced level of anxiety for the presenting therapists. Students developed a capacity for "double vision," an ability to be aware not only of the client's issues, but of the resonance these issues might evoke in their own lives. The author states students experienced first-hand the transformative	**Strengths.** This study explored students' equality, diversity and inclusivity factors and the impact this had on the reflecting team process and experience. **Limitations.** This case study was written from the author's perspective, which limits the transferability of the findings. There was no critical evaluation of author's subjective opinion and no

			reflexive learning through cognitive and emotional connection. Author states learning is revealed though the case example dialogue transcript.	potential of building "dialogic space" together.	alternative perspectives were presented. It was unclear how the participants were selected and ethical considerations were not discussed, including confidentiality. There was potential for researcher bias in this study and there was no analysis of the case example transcript.
Duch (2017)	A University of Leeds, United Kingdom trainee supervisor in a family therapy clinic using a reflecting team approach with experienced team of two Family Therapists and one Clinical Psychology doctoral trainee on placement.	A personal narrative of the authors experiences as a trainee female supervisor exploring a feminist position in a male dominated reflecting team within a family therapy context supervising two male family therapists and one male clinical doctoral trainee.	The author argues the importance of using a working framework and structure to unbalance power pressures and bring forth trust in the team. It is illustrated with narrative ideas, practices in super- vision and a brief description of intersectionality	The study concludes with reflections of the feminist supervisors' experiences of working in a male dominated reflecting team space with trainees of changes to their own practice in developing a unique feminist stance and changes of the reflecting team who acknowledged their need to remain open and supportive to female colleagues.	**Strengths.** The narrative approach provides a detailed account of the authors experiences in chronological order, with key points of change and revelation highlighted. Equality, diversity and inclusivity issues were discussed reflexively throughout. The author critically evaluated their subjective opinion. **Limitations.** This narrative was written from authors perspective which limits the

			applied to this context.		transferability of the findings. Ethical issues were not discussed in depth.
Griffith & Frieden (2000)	University course facilitators of doctoral students at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee in the United States involving counselling psychology graduate students using four training methods with student case examples.	A case study of the authors experiences of facilitating trainees using reflecting teams in doctoral counsellor education with student case examples.	A focus on the practice of reflection and four educational strategies Socratic teaching, journal writing, Inter-personal Process Recall and reflection teams that may facilitate trainee development. Examples of how these methods can be integrated into a counsellor education curriculum are provided.	The study found reflecting teams help students develop the skills necessary for becoming a reflective practitioner. Students become familiar with systems theory and collaborative inquiry and learn from others' observations.	**Strengths.** The authors provide an overview of their experiences facilitating doctoral students in using reflecting teams and three other methods. Equality, diversity and inclusivity issues were discussed in detail. **Limitations.** This case study was written from authors perspective, which limits the transferability of the findings. There was no critical evaluation of authors subjective opinion. It was unclear how the student case examples were selected or reflexivity around why particular cases were used.
Hale & Sindlinger (2017)	Course faculty and supervisors at Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania on a	A case study of the authors' experiences of supervising trainees using reflecting teams in	A focus on the approach how the integration of the reflecting	The study found the reflecting team model approach can be used to aid counsellor	**Strengths.** The authors provide an overview of their experiences as doctoral students in using reflecting

	counsellor postgraduate counselling course and student quotes.	postgraduate counsellor education with student quotes.	team model and William Glasser's Choice Theory/Reality Therapy (CT/RT) principles with WDEP questioning techniques deliver a unique approach to the supervision of counsellors in training.	supervisees in the reduction of defensiveness when receiving feedback without external evaluation or criticism. They found Choice Theory/Reality Therapy (CT/RT) can be used to illuminate the supervisee's developmental needs, with WDEP questioning techniques strengthening this model of reflective supervision, through supervisees feeling valued and enjoying being part of a collaborative process.	teams and how this impacted their desire to use the method within their current teaching practice. **Limitations.** This case study was written from the authors' perspective which limits the transferability of the findings. Equality, diversity and inclusivity issues were not discussed. There was no critical evaluation of authors subjective opinion. It was unclear how the student quotes were selected and whether there were students who disagreed with the authors support for the reflecting team model. It was not discussed how the quotes were collected or the potential for researcher bias due to the power differentials between course facilitators and students.
Harrawood et al. (2011)	Course facilitator and two doctoral student authors at Idaho State University, United States	A case study of the authors experiences of teaching using reflecting teams experiential learning	A focus on identifying the emotions experienced by	The study found the emotion students felt the most when in the co-counsellor role was	**Strengths.** The authors provide an overview of their experiences facilitating students in using reflecting

	on a counsellor postgraduate counselling course and student quotes.	model on a postgraduate counselling programme. A contextual overview with student views gained from video recordings transcribed.	students during the use of a 10-week-long role-play in graduate counsellor training, whereby the students played various roles including that of co-counsellor, family member, reflecting team member, and observation team member. Implications for the training of counsellors and the importance of future research are explored.	fear from the level of responsibility, other students discussed having a co-counsellor as comfortable to support the therapeutic process. Being in the reflecting team role students discussed learning the most in this role but found it the most anxiety producing role. They highlight the benefit of conducting a safe and inclusive peer learning environment through development of clinical effectiveness and self-efficacy.	teams and roleplay approaches. Both strengths and challenges were explored offering a balanced perspective. Equality, diversity and inclusivity issues were discussed and ethical issues raised. **Limitations** This case study was written from the authors' perspective which limits the transferability of the findings. It was unclear how the student case examples were selected or reflexivity around why particular cases were used.
Lamprecht & Pitre (2018)	A course facilitator in a counsellor education program at Idaho state University, United States. A personal narrative of the authors chronological journey from Masters to doctoral student to course	A personal narrative of the authors experiences as a Masters to doctoral student to course facilitator and their experiences of developing a practicum laboratory	A focus on the experiences as a faculty member in an attempt to transform the existing educational model for how	The study discussed students experience the reflecting team format of supervision provided them with an alternative way to conceptualize client concerns and aided both the	**Strengths.** The narrative approach provides a detailed account of the authors experiences in chronological order, with key points of change and revelation highlighted.

	facilitator and their experiences of developing a practicum laboratory using reflecting teams for counsellor students.	using reflecting teams for counsellor students.	school and clinical mental health counsellors are trained using live supervision with use of technology, reflective journaling, reflective teams, and process group experiences as pedagogical adjuncts to enhance the training and developmental needs of beginning counselling students.	practicing and observing counselling students in skill development. The reflecting team approach in supervision can also aid with students that are resistant to corrective feedback by providing space in the feedback loop between sender(s) and recipient.	**Limitations.** This narrative was written from the authors' perspective which limits the transferability of the findings. Equality, diversity and inclusivity issues were not discussed. There was no critical evaluation of the authors' subjective opinion.
Landis & Young (1994)	A course facilitator of students enrolled in an introductory marriage and family counselling class of approximately 20 students, one instructor and one doctoral student at Stetson University,	A mixed methodology design of a case study with quantitative data of the authors and students' experiences of teaching using reflecting teams process on a counselling programme. A contextual	A focus on the step-by-step account of introducing the reflecting team model into a counsellor education	The study found that students who observe a skill by a peer are more likely to exhibit skill improvement and increased self-efficacy than are those who do	**Strengths.** The use of quantitative data within a case study approach provides an additional source of information and provide student experience within the data.

	Florida in the United States.	overview with a case example using quantitative questionnaire scale (The Family Therapist Trainee Rating Scale (FTTRS) (Amatea, 1986)) with 14 students as a pre- and post-measure to assess the impact of this approach on the acquisition skills. This 34-item instrument was adapted from Piercy et al.'s (1983) Family Therapy Rating Scale and from competencies identified by Tomm and Wright (1979). Trainees rate themselves on a 0 to 6 Likert scale. Basic descriptive statistics used.	programme and exploring students perceived skill development pre and post using the new training model.	not view a peer but instead view an expert. They also found the reflecting team model encourages student rehearsal by providing an opportunity for alternative possibilities by each student with immediate peer feedback. The reflecting team shows promise as a method for training counsellors in marriage and family therapy skills.	**Limitations.** The small sample size limits the transferability of the findings and the closed questions limit the level of detail in students' responses to their learning to only descriptive statistics. The scale was also used to measure students perceived progress, which may lead to bias within the responses, due to students not wanting to score a negative result.
Maggio (2014)	A course facilitator of doctoral students at Springfield College, Massachusetts in the United States involving counselling psychology graduate students using five training methods with student examples, quotes and transcripts.	A case study of the authors experiences of supervising trainees using reflecting teams in doctoral counsellor education with student quotes, transcripts or examples.	A focus on five training methods used in a counselling psychology doctoral program to bring forth the client's voice in the psychotherapy process and to enhance	The study found incorporating client perspectives in therapy increases the likelihood of a positive therapeutic outcome. Students have reported that these techniques have given them new insights into their clients and have impacted positively on their therapeutic work	**Strengths.** The authors provide an overview of their experiences facilitating doctoral students in using reflecting teams and other methods in practice. **Limitations.** This case study was written from the author's perspective which limits the transferability of the findings.

			students' awareness of their clients' perspectives. These methods have been used in counselling practicum classes, practicum seminars, and didactic courses, and include reflecting teams, post-therapy trialogues, "as if" listening, internalized other interviews, and client-informed outcome measures.	with them. Utilising these methods has also increased their appreciation of ongoing evaluation of their effectiveness with an emphasis on client-informed outcomes.	Equality, diversity and inclusivity issues were not discussed. There was no critical evaluation of authors subjective opinion. It was unclear how the student quotes were selected and whether there were students who disagreed with the authors support for the reflecting team model. It was not discussed how the quotes/transcripts were collected or the potential for researcher bias due to the power differentials between course facilitators and students.
McGovern & Harmsworth (2010)	Two course facilitators of clinical doctoral students at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom involving 18 trainee Clinical Psychologists using reflecting team practice during an	A case study of the authors experiences of facilitating 18 trainees using reflecting teams in doctoral clinical psychology education through an 'in the moment' practice during	This article describes a training exercise in which students who are new to systemic practice but have some	The study found students valued of the experiential nature of the reflecting team exercise and the extent to which the theoretical ideas were illuminated. Students felt unsettled	**Strengths.** The authors provide an overview of their experiences facilitating doctoral students in using reflecting teams in practice. **Limitations.** This case study was written from the authors'

	introductory day on systemic practice.	an introductory day on systemic practice.	experience in therapeutic work in other modalities were invited to experience reflecting practice.	by the strangeness of having a conversation that is about the family, while intentionally withholding themselves from eye contact or other forms of immediate feedback from them.	perspective which limits the transferability of the findings. Equality, diversity and inclusivity issues were not discussed. There was no critical evaluation of authors subjective opinion. There was limited context for the study for both theoretical overview or description of the trainee course which is needed to enhance the study's qualitative rigour and credibility.
Meekums et al. (2016)	Scoping literature review where six papers were identified (four IPR, two RT), all from the USA. Inclusion criteria were empirical research, reviews of empirical research, and responses to these.	The authors conducted a scoping review of the peer-reviewed literature associated with Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) and Reflecting Team (RT) methods in order to find evidence for their use within skills development in therapist trainings. RT or IPR for skills development in counsellors/psychotherapists undertaking initial training.	This article reviews six papers (four IPR, two RT), all from the USA on Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) and Reflecting Team (RT) methods in order to find evidence for their use within skills development in	The authors critique methodological flaws in Crews et al.'s (2005) IPR paper and the IPR review papers suggesting it is difficult to draw confident conclusions. They found reflecting teams are generally welcomed by students but needs a clear set of guidelines and rationale for use within training. They highlighted a benefit of mutual learning for	**Strengths.** The authors address the limitations of their scoping review in the discussion section providing a level of reflexivity. **Limitations.** The scoping review only assessed six papers across two methodologies leading to a lack of data. Three papers were reviews - this led to a lack of confident conclusions drawn from the papers.

			therapist trainings. RT or IPR for skills development in counsellors/psychotherapists undertaking initial training.	novices in challenging practice whilst being part of a reflecting team. The authors discuss the lack of research in the United Kingdom on trainee development of practice across different methods.	Equality, diversity and inclusivity issues were not discussed. Lack of depth for paper data analysis provided.
Randall-James & Head (2017)	Two clinical psychology trainees at the University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom on placement on a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), team away day. A multidisciplinary team of 15 clinicians took part in a systemic exercise and reflecting team including community psychiatric nursing, clinical psychology, systemic family therapy, art therapy, psychiatry and administrative disciplines.	A case study of the trainee clinical psychology authors experiences of facilitating a multi-disciplinary team in a systemic exercise and reflecting team on a staff team away day to support new team cohesion. As well as reflection of how acting as a facilitator impacts on trainee practice development.	This paper describes a systemic exercise for clinical staff facing multiple changes to team structure and threats to their sense of belonging. A systemic exercise was used alongside a reflecting team facilitated by trainee Clinical Psychologists, which would introduce multiple perspectives,	The study found the use of reflecting team approach enabled people to contribute and engage with the developing layers of dialogue around overcoming team challenges and co-create new narratives. The trainee authors also reflected on their own competency development through facilitating the team exercise.	**Strengths.** The authors provide an overview of their experiences facilitating a multi-disciplinary team in a systemic exercise using a reflecting team. Equity, diversity and inclusivity was discussed as being positively acknowledged in the reflecting team practice. **Limitations.** This case study was written from the authors' perspective which limits the transferability of the findings.

			question unquestioned stories and allow for different dialogues to emerge.		
Shurts et al. (2006)	Authors of this article all had different roles in the course over several semesters, including class instructor, graduate assistant/actor, and student. The perspectives of all the authors in this article as well as from informal and anecdotal feedback received from Master's and doctoral counsellors in training at Montclair State University, Montclair, New Jersey in the United States.	A narrative of the authors experiences as class instructor, graduate assistant and students' evolution during the counsellor course of several semesters of experimentation and modification using role play and reflecting teams.	A focus on detail the authors experiences with creating a novel and effective couples-counselling experiential learning opportunity that involved semester-long role-plays and student reflecting teams.	The study found students benefited from these experiences and were able to provide validation, offer encouragement, and act as catalysts for change both with their classmates and in mock couples' sessions. The reflecting team format promoted a safe, interactive learning environment allowing students to practice offering tentative impressions, hypotheses, and suggestions in a nonthreatening manner. Suggestions are made for adapting the approaches to fit other programs.	**Strengths.** The authors provide an overview of their experiences facilitating students in using reflecting teams and roleplay approaches. Both strengths and challenges were explored offering a balanced perspective. Equality, diversity and inclusivity issues were discussed and ethical issues raised. **Limitations.** This case study was written from authors perspective which limits the transferability of the findings. It was unclear how the student case examples were selected or reflexivity around why particular cases were used.
Taylor et al. (2023)	A course facilitator of postgraduate counselling	A case study of the authors experiences of teaching	A focus on the use of a	The study found the main advantages that	**Strengths.** This study takes a considered and in-depth

	students at the Texas Christian University involving counselling psychology graduate students who took part in four-hour weekly experiential learning reflecting team sessions for three weeks. Including eight Masters students (seven White and one Hispanic females), and four doctoral students (two White females, one Hispanic female, and one Black male).	using reflecting teams experiential learning model on a postgraduate counselling programme. A contextual overview with student feedback gained from 35-45 minute interviews via telephone or Zoom.	reflecting team to teach the experiential component of a postgraduate course in small group counselling using solution-focused (SF) therapy. Doctoral students act as the reflecting team and provide feedback to the group members who can then respond to the feedback. The authors provide an overview of the process, alternative approaches for using reflecting teams, feedback from small groups and the reflecting team	using reflecting teams was experienced positively by students and advantaged them by offering multiple perspectives to the team members, revealed personal blind spots and support knowledge of group functioning gained by the students.	approach to exploring the use of reflecting teams in counsellor education. Ethical issues are explored as well as researcher reflexivity in discussing power imbalances. Detailed context is provided as well as methodological approach. **Limitations.** The study would have benefited from further exploration of student experiences with greater depth of analysis e.g. thematic analysis.

			members.		
Yim (2022)	A ‘double’ trainee Clinical Psychologist/ joint intermediate systemic trainee at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom. Who identifies as an early-career psychologist who holds multiple marginalised identities.	A narrative of the author’s clinical and personal experience as an early-career clinician in the current environment, which can feel at times oppressive.	A focus on critique as an early-career psychologist who holds multiple marginalised identities. Using systemic ideas, particularly coordinated management of meaning, circularity, and reflecting teams, providing examples and analysis on how they can help counter oppressive practice.	The study used case examples to illustrate how practitioners can deconstruct power and resist dominant narratives, countering oppressive practice in action. Critique of the existing systemic literature in relation to anti-oppressive work is offered and suggestions for future research and practice such as holding an anti-oppressive lens and understanding power and difference within the reflecting team.	**Strengths.** The authors provide an overview of their clinical and personal experience as an early-career clinician. Both strengths and challenges were explored offering a balanced perspective. Critique of reflecting team practice is provided and equality, diversity and inclusivity issues were discussed and ethical issues in detail. The author provides a reflexive stance on their positioning. **Limitations.** This case study was written from authors perspective which limit the transferability of the findings.

Appendix D

Critical Appraisal of Studies used in the Literature Review

Table D1

CASP Qualitative Research Critical Appraisal 1

Critical Appraisal Question	Amod & Miller (2019)	Davis 2012	Duch (2017)	Griffith & Frieden (2000)	Hale & Sindlinger (2017)
Was there a clear statement of **aims** of the research?	Yes, to explore trainee Educational Psychologists' perceptions and experiences of Tom Andersen's (1987) reflecting team method of training and supervision.	Yes, to share a case study using a dialogical approach of the reflecting team process with students from the perspective of a supervisor on counselling course.	Yes, to highlight the journey of a female trainee family therapist's supervisor in the context of a male team. The author argues the importance of using a working framework and structure to unbalance power pressures and bring forth trust in the team. Illustrated with narrative ideas, practices in super-vision and a brief description of intersectionality applied to this context. describe my journey of supervising three	Yes, to describe the practice of reflection and suggest four educational strategies Socratic teaching, journal writing, Inter-personal Process Recall and reflection teams that may facilitate its development. Examples of how these methods can be integrated into a counsellor education curriculum are provided.	Yes, to explain how the integration of the reflecting team method and William Glasser's Choice Theory/Reality Therapy (CT/RT) principles deliver a unique approach to the supervision of counsellors in training. This article is intended to offer an innovative model to integrate reflective supervision for counsellor educators and therapists who use or are interested in using CT/RT approaches.

			British white male supervisees.		
Is a **qualitative** methodology appropriate?	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author and participants.	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author and participants.	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author.	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author and participants.	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author and participants.
Was the **research design** appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes qualitative, descriptive, exploratory research design was applied to facilitate the collection, analysis and understanding of rich interpretivist data relating to practitioners' perceptions and experiences of their systemic reflecting team training.	Yes, a case study was used to explore the research in depth, provided details and open discussion of the case.	Yes, a personal narrative was used to explore the research in depth, provided details and open discussion and reflexivity of the authors experience.	Yes, a case study providing overview of four techniques to use in counsellor training with short case examples in practice.	Yes, a case study was used to provide an overview of reflecting team techniques to use in counsellor training supervision. Direct quotes from trainees are provided and discussed.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Purposive sampling procedure was used 12 Educational Psychologists who had worked in a reflecting team during their internship year as well as their primary trainer who is a social worker	The author invited Lynn Hoffman (a friend as well as a former teacher) to participate. It is unclear how the students in the reflecting team were recruited to take part	Permission was sought to write up the personal narrative from the reflecting team members.	The recruitment of the students was not discussed.	The recruitment of the students was not discussed.

	and the Head of Counselling Services at the internship training organisation.	in the research or what steps were taken to anonymise the participants information. Possibility of selective bias within recruitment.			
Was the **data collected** in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes - Individual semi-structured interviews, utilising open-ended questions, were used to collect the data. Offered opportunities through questioning to focus their responses on both positive and negative experiences and perceptions.	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of approach in case study. Use of a transcript of the reflecting team session as a case example.	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of personal narrative of feminist positioning in a male dominated reflecting team from the perspective of a trainee supervisor.	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of approach in case study. Use of case examples and questions of the reflecting team session.	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of approach in case study, of the reflecting team with written up quotes from trainees.
Has the **relationship** between researcher and participant been adequately considered?	The relationship between the supervisor and reflecting team was discussed.	It was discussed that a friend was invited to join the study and students. It was not discussed about the potential for bias in the data.	The relationship between the supervisor and reflecting team was discussed in depth from a feminist perspective in a male dominated team and the impact personally and practically.	Case study with reflections of examples from training and using reflecting team experiential practice groups. Course facilitator and student relationship was not discussed.	Discussion of the relationship between the researcher and students who provided quotes was not provided.
Have **ethical** issues been	Yes - ethical considerations include; Permission obtained	No – confidentiality of participants not discussed.	No – ethical issues were not discussed in relation to consent,	Yes - ethical considerations include; emotional support for	No – ethical issues were not discussed in relation to consent,

taken into consideration?	from the participants to audio-record the interviews. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University's Human Research Ethics Committee Anonymity is maintained in reporting the data.	Ethical standards not discussed. Effects of study on participants not discussed. Unknown if ethical approval sought.	confidentiality, participant selection. Authors discussed seeking permission from the reflecting team members to write up the narrative.	new learners, counsellor educators sensitivity to the learner's experiences. Informed consent from self-disclosive nature of reflective practice and academic evaluation should not be based on the student's level of self-disclosure. Supervisors must maintain confidentiality of personal student information.	confidentiality, participant selection. Authors discussed the sensitive approach taken when using reflecting teams.
Was the **data analysis** sufficiently rigorous?	Yes, data was transcribed verbatim and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to thematic content analysis.	Case study analysis. No critical analysis of own role in case study.	Yes, personal narrative analysis provided with chronological description of experience and in-depth context with a high level of reflexivity.	Yes, case study analysis and review of student examples.	Yes, case study analysis and review of student quotes.
Is there a clear statement of the **findings**?	Yes - The study found trainees desired more in-depth theoretical training in family therapy and in Andersen's (1987) reflecting team method. Trainees valued the practical	Yes - authors discuss findings but no alternative perspectives given.	Yes – the author concludes with reflection of changes to their own practice in developing a unique feminist stance and changes of the reflecting team who acknowledged their	Yes- The study emphasised the need for students to be reflective practitioners. Self-understanding and awareness are characteristics often associated with counsellor competence.	Yes- The study found the reflecting team model approach can be used to aid counsellor supervisees in the reduction of defensiveness when receiving feedback without external

	nature of the reflecting team training and benefitted from watching other more experienced therapists.		need to remain open and supportive to female colleagues.	Four reflective practices were identified, where reflecting teams allow students to view problems as systemic and meanings as co-constructed.	evaluation or criticism. Students were able to validate their feelings in relation to one another.
How **valuable** is the research?	The study highlights the impact of reflecting teams practice on development on trainee Educational Psychologists in the South African context. The reflecting team is a suitable place to resolve and accommodate differences as this approach accentuates the values of respect, fairness, equality, and justice. Implications for the training of Educational Psychologists.	The study highlights the impact of reflecting teams practice on development from the perspective of the author on a specific counselling course.	The study highlights the impact of reflecting teams practice on development from the unique feminist perspective of the author on a specific clinical course.	The study highlights the practice of reflection can facilitate self-understanding and enhance counsellor performance by creating new opportunities for learning in the classroom, through journal writing, and in supervision.	The study highlights the importance of using a supervision model that supports reflective practice and develops a reflective stance in supervisees. It supports the use of the reflecting team method as suitable to be used in supervision.

Table D2

CASP Qualitative Research Critical Appraisal 2

Critical Appraisal Question	Harrawood et al. (2011)	Lamprecht & Pitre (2018)	Maggio (2014)	McGovern & Harmsworth (2010)
Was there a clear statement of **aims** of the research?	Yes, to identify the emotions experienced by students during the use of a 10-week-long role-play in a graduate counsellor training, whereby the students played various roles including that of co-counsellor, family member, reflecting team member, and observation team member. Implications for the training of counsellors and the importance of future research are explored.	Yes, to provide a personal narrative of the challenges experienced as a faculty member transforming the existing educational model for counsellors to use laboratory training using live supervision, reflective journaling, reflective teams, and process group experiences to enhance the training and developmental needs of beginning counselling students.	Yes, to present five training methods used in a counselling psychology doctoral program to bring forth the client's voice in the psychotherapy process and to enhance students' awareness of their clients' perspectives. The methods include reflecting teams, post-therapy trialogues, "as if" listening, internalized other interviews, and client-informed outcome measures.	Yes, to describe a training exercise in which students who are new to systemic practice but have some experience in therapeutic work in other modalities were invited to experience reflecting practice.
Is a **qualitative** methodology appropriate?	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author.	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author.	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author with examples, quotes and transcripts of student's experiences.	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author.

Was the **research design** appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes, case study analysis providing overview of role play and reflecting teams used in counsellor training with quotes and student examples.	Yes, a personal narrative was used to explore the research in depth, provided details and open discussion of the authors experience.	Yes, case study analysis providing overview of five techniques used in counsellor training with transcript, quotes and student examples.	Yes, case study analysis providing overview of using role play reflecting teams with doctoral Clinical Psychology students.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes – Student participants were recruited from one class on a counsellors graduate training course. Students given packets that contained a written informed consent and a signature sheet. The informed consent document stated that students' participation in the following discussion regarding their experience was part of the class; however, students were informed that granting permission to use their statements in an article for publication was completely voluntary and choosing not to grant permission to reproduce their statements would in no way impact their grade for the course. The informed consent	Not applicable as a personal narrative. However, monies were allocated to doctoral students who completed the course with the author previously to utilize their services in the course while working under the authors supervision.	The recruitment of the students was not discussed.	The recruitment of the students was not discussed.

	document also outlined that video recording would be utilised to capture their statements and confidentiality would be maintained. At the time of data collection, the researchers had no knowledge of which participants had granted permission to use their statements. After data were collected, it was established that all students present during the processing gave permission to utilise their statements.			
Was the **data collected** in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of two techniques used in counsellor training with quotes and student examples.	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of personal narrative of approach to developing counsellor education.	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of five techniques used in counsellor training with transcript, quotes and student examples.	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of reflecting team role play approach used on clinical psychology doctoral training. Author also provided their own experience.
Has the **relationship** between researcher and participant been adequately considered?	Yes – See above (recruitment strategy).	As part of the personal narrative piece the chronological history of the author was discussed and key moments that led them to make a change for their course.	Discussion of the relationship between the researcher and students who provided quotes was not provided.	Discussion of the relationship between the researcher and students was not provided.

Have **ethical** issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – ethical permissions discussed as granted permission by the university human subject's approval. Confidentiality, informed consent and student participation considerations around pressure to take part in study addressed. Students informed their grades would not be affected if they participated or did not.	No – ethical issues were not discussed.	No – ethical issues were not discussed.	No – ethical issues were not discussed.
Was the **data analysis** sufficiently rigorous?	Yes - case study analysis. Video recording was transcribed and analysed. No critical analysis of own role in case study.	Yes - personal narrative analysis provided with chronological description of experience and in-depth context. Further reflexivity would have been beneficial.	Yes - case study analysis. No critical analysis of own role in case study.	Case study analysis with a lack of context for the study for both theoretical perspectives and how the programme fit into overall trainee development. No critical analysis of own role in case study.

Is there a clear statement of the **findings**?	Yes - the role-play experience for the counsellors-in-training in this simulation identified powerful emotions (i.e., fear, excitement, comfort, defensiveness, sadness, anxiety, and frustration) that impacted their learning of family systems theory, which motivate and encourage valuable learning experiences and encourage student openness to additional learning experiences. For use in the counsellor education classroom, the role-play and reflecting team approach as outlined in this article can be utilised as a class- room intervention necessary to promote knowledge, skill, and practice that will positively impact counsellor trainees' future work with client systems.	Yes - experiential learning can help support this developmental area through continued exposure to the practice environment, through course facilitator modelling and encouraging supervisory feedback.	Yes – the study found by incorporating client perspectives in therapy the client's expertise in his or her own life enhances the therapeutic alliance, which in- creases the likelihood of a positive therapeutic outcome. Students reported techniques have given them new insights into their clients and have impacted positively on their therapeutic work with them.	Yes – the study found students valued the experiential nature of the reflecting team exercise and the extent to which the theoretical ideas were illuminated. They found the training exercise offers students a more immediate connection to the therapeutic potential of the approach and may aid their appreciation of the theory.

How **valuable** is the research?	The study highlights the impact of reflecting teams practice on counsellor trainee emotional development from the unique perspective of the authors on a specific counselling course.	The study highlights the impact of reflecting teams practice on development from the unique perspective of the author on a specific counselling course.	The study gives insight into different training techniques in counsellor development training. The perspective is from the author with discussions and examples of student experiences. This study provides the opportunity for further studies to explore these techniques in counsellor training.	The study highlights the impact of reflecting teams practice on development from the unique perspective of the author on a specific doctoral clinical psychology course. Further contextual detail and theoretical overview is needed to enhance the study's qualitative rigour and credibility.

Table D3

CASP Qualitative Research Critical Appraisal 3

Critical Appraisal Question	Randall-James & Head (2017)	Shurts et al. (2006)	Taylor et al. (2023)	Yim (2022)
Was there a clear statement of **aims** of the research?	Yes - This paper describes a systemic exercise for clinical staff facing multiple changes to team structure and threats to their sense of belonging. The authors aimed to facilitate a reflecting team exercise which would introduce multiple perspectives, question unquestioned stories and allow for different dialogues.	Yes - This paper describes experiential learning of a semester-long role-play enacted by doctoral student graduate assistants and student reflecting teams. The paper provides a narrative of the authors experiences with creating a novel and effective couples-counselling learning opportunity that involved semester-long role-plays and student reflecting teams.	Yes - To share a case study of the use of reflecting teams with the experiential components of a solution-focused (SF) small groups class. Both strengths and limitations of the process are explored.	Yes - This paper provides a focus on critique as an early-career psychologist who holds multiple marginalised identities. Using systemic ideas, particularly coordinated management of meaning, circularity, and reflecting teams, providing examples and analysis on how they can help counter oppressive practice.
Is a **qualitative** methodology appropriate?	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author and participants.	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author and participants.	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author and participants.	Yes – aims to illuminate the subjective experiences of author.
Was the **research design** appropriate to address the	Yes – a case study was used to provide an overview of reflecting team exercise delivered by two trainee Clinical	Yes - a narrative approach explores how the authors experience of using role play and reflecting teams evolved during the course of several	Yes - a case study was used to provide an overview of reflecting team technique as an experiential learning tool to use in counsellor postgraduate	Yes - a narrative approach of the author's clinical and personal experience as an early-career clinician in the current

aims of the research?	Psychologists during a CAMHS away day for a multidisciplinary team.	semesters of experimentation and modification on graduate counsellors course.	training. Interviews were conducted for student feedback.	environment, which can feel at times oppressive.
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	The recruitment of the CAMHS multidisciplinary team was not discussed.	Not applicable as authors personal narrative. Unclear if student quotes were authors or other students on the course.	Yes - The authors gained written and oral consent from group members and doctoral students to participate in the small group experience and reflecting team. The authors used doctoral students and Masters students from the counselling programme they teach. Both groups signed permission forms to participate and promise to uphold confidentiality.	Not applicable as authors personal narrative.
Was the **data collected** in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of approach in case study, of the reflecting team exercise and trainee reflections on practice development.	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of authors narrative of approach to developing counsellor education.	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of approach in case study, of the reflecting team with interview feedback from doctoral and master level students.	Yes – provided a first-hand discussion of authors narrative of critique practice using systemic ideas, particularly coordinated management of meaning, circularity, and reflecting teams, providing examples and analysis on how they can help counter oppressive practice.
Has the **relationship** between researcher and participant	Yes – The authors have considered both the student researcher relationship and the multidisciplinary team	Yes - As part of the personal narrative piece the chronological history of the authors was discussed and key moments that led them to	Yes – The authors have considered both the student researcher relationship and the roles of the different level students through power	Yes - As part of the personal narrative piece the chronological history of the authors training was discussed and key moments of anti-oppressive practice development.

been adequately considered?	through power imbalances. Differing power dynamics could introduce concepts of what was 'right' or 'wrong' to discuss as part of the reflecting team.	make a change for their course.	imbalances. They discuss aiming to minimise problems from power imbalance.	
Have **ethical** issues been taken into consideration?	Yes – a consideration of ethics taken. Authors discuss being advised to brief perceived confident staff prior to the session, in order to encourage them to volunteer to be the conversational team. The authors felt this advice was given to 'protect' trainees from potentially challenging circumstances avoiding preconceived power relations within the team.	No – ethical issues were not discussed in relation to consent, confidentiality, participant selection. Authors discussed the sensitive approach taken when using reflecting teams.	Yes – appropriate consideration of ethics taken. Written consent gained from participants and confidentiality discussed, emphasised that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed when working in small groups and risks identified to make informed consent choice. Power imbalance discussed between students and researchers and consideration of contact beyond the study.	Yes – ethical issues in relation to oppression were considered in depth.
Was the **data analysis** sufficiently rigorous?	Yes - case study analysis with context for the study of the CAMHS team but the study lacked theoretical overview of the	Yes - personal narrative analysis provided with chronological description of experience and in-depth context. Further reflexivity would have been beneficial.	Yes - case study analysis and review of student quotes.	Yes - personal narrative analysis provided with chronological description of experience and in-depth context. Author reflexivity was discussed in depth and a

	reflecting team. The trainee authors provided critical analysis of their own role in the case study.	Critical analysis of approaches were discussed.		critical analysis of approaches was discussed.
Is there a clear statement of the **findings**?	Yes – the study found that the unique context of trainee Clinical Psychologists facilitating a reflecting team practice alongside a systemic exercise enabled a multidisciplinary team to contribute and engage with the developing layers of dialogue around overcoming team challenges, co-creating new narratives.	Yes – the study found that students benefited from these experiences and were able to provide validation, offer encouragement, and act as catalysts for change both with their classmates and in mock couples' sessions. The reflecting team format was especially helpful in promoting a safe, interactive learning environment. Suggestions are made for adapting the approaches to fit other programs.	Yes – the study found that using reflecting teams was experienced positively by students and advantaged them by offering multiple perspectives to the team members, revealed personal blind spots and support knowledge of group functioning gained by the students.	The study used case examples to illustrate how practitioners can deconstruct power and resist dominant narratives, countering oppressive practice in action. Critique of the existing systemic literature in relation to anti-oppressive work is offered and suggestions for future research and practice such as holding an anti-oppressive lens and understanding power and difference within the reflecting team.
How **valuable** is the research?	The study provides discussion of use of reflecting team approach in team development away day from a clinical trainee perspective with a multidisciplinary team.	The study highlights the impact of reflecting teams practice on development from the perspective of the author on a specific counselling course and student feedback. As well as the strengths and limitations of the process.	The study highlights the impact of reflecting teams practice on development from the perspective of the author on a specific counselling course and student feedback. As well as the strengths and limitations of the process.	The study highlights a personal narrative around using systemic methods including reflecting teams to focus on EDI issues and oppressive practice.

Table D4

Critical Appraisal of Systematic Review

Critical Appraisal Question	Meekums et al. (2016)
Did the review address a clearly focused question?	Yes - The authors conducted a scoping review of the peer-reviewed literature associated with Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) and Reflecting Team (RT) methods in order to find evidence for their use within skills development in therapist trainings.
Did the authors look for the right types of papers?	Yes - The authors inclusion criteria were: empirical research, reviews of empirical research, and responses to these; reflecting team or IPR for skills development in counsellors/psychotherapists undertaking initial training. Six papers were identified (four IPR, two RT), all from the USA. The authors critique that three out of four IPR papers were review papers indicating it was difficult to draw conclusions from the papers and the fourth empirical paper being of poor methodological quality.
Do you think all important/relevant studies were included in the review?	Yes but further expansion of the search criteria could have led to a potential increase in the studies available for review e.g. by expanding to include other disciplinary titles e.g. psychologists. The small number of RT studies, of varying methodological quality, made it difficult to draw any conclusions about the appropriateness of this method for initial skills training.
Did the review's authors do enough to assess the quality of the included studies?	Yes - critiques and strengths are discussed for each paper but no further analysis was completed to assess study quality.
If the results of the review have been combined, was it reasonable to do so?	The results from IPR papers and reflecting teams have been kept separate leading to small study numbers for each method.
What are the overall results of the review?	RT papers suggested that this method was generally welcomed by students, with a strength of RT methods in their inclusive and collaborative nature. Overall, there is a lack of UK research on IPR or RT for skills development within initial counsellor/psychotherapist training.

	The review highlights the difficulties of comparing these studies since the precise use of IPR and RT varies. Moreover, methodological flaws make it impossible to draw firm conclusions. These flaws include stated weaknesses in the empirical studies included by Baker et al. (1990), the possible bias indicated above in the findings of Crews et al. (2005), the uncertainty of the analytic method used by Harrawood et al. (2011) and the impossibility of establishing how representative participant quotations are in both this paper and Hawley (2006).
How precise are the results?	The authors conclude that the papers found made it difficult to draw any conclusions about the appropriateness of either method for initial skills training.
Can the results be applied to the local population?	The review highlights the need for more research into skills development methods in counsellor training. Benefits of IPR and reflecting teams model are discussed.
Were all important outcomes considered?	The authors reviewed each paper but highlighted no definitive conclusions can be drawn and methods can not be compared.
Are the benefits worth the harms and costs?	N/A

Table D5

The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) Version 2018 applied to Landis & Young (1994)

The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) Version 2018 applied to Landis & Young (1994)		
Category of study design	Methodological quality criteria	Responses
Screening questions	Are there clear research questions?	Yes - What is the experience of implementing a reflecting team model into a marriage and family counselling course on student skill development?
	Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	Yes – A case study approach and collecting quantitative questionnaire Likert scale data as pre and post measures of student development.
Qualitative	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	Yes- It allows for an in-depth context of how the reflecting team was implemented into a marriage and family counselling course and the experiences of this.
	Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	Yes- It allows for an in-depth context of how the reflecting team was implemented into a marriage and family counselling course and the experiences of this.
	Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	Yes – a case study context provides detail of how the approach was used and delivered to students.
	Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	Yes – a case study context provides detail of how the approach was used and delivered to students.
	Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	Yes – a case study context provides detail of how the approach was used and delivered to students alongside theory discussion and critique.
Quantitative descriptive	Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Purposive sampling of students on the course was used. It is unclear however, which students were selected to take part or why others did not.

	Is the sample representative of the target population?	Yes - counsellor students enrolled in the marriage and family class are representative. However, the sample size is only 14 and is very small for quantitative data collection.
	Are the measurements appropriate?	A self-reporting Likert scale was used, which can lead to bias within the results due to students marking their own developmental progress and not wanting to have a negative score.
	Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Purposive sampling of students on the course was used. It is unclear however, which students were selected to take part or why others did not.
	Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Only basic statistical description of the Likert scores pre and post measures are compared.
Mixed methods	Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	Yes - to gain the experiences of both the course provider/facilitator and the experiences of the students and their perceived skill development.
	Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	The main focus if the study is the descriptive case study context. However, there is discussion of the quantitative results to supplement the case study.
	Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	As above.
	Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Yes – The authors address that students did not perceive their skill in structural processes as high as the authors thought they would and gave an explanation as to why they would perceive their skill as lower.
	Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	To some extent.

Appendix E

Anonymised Trust Research Ethics Committee Approval

[redacted]

Quality Assurance & Enhancement
Directorate of Education & Training
[redacted]
Tel: [redacted]
https://[redacted].uk/

Jessica Malcolm-McKay

By Email

07 June 2024

Dear Jessica,

Re: Trust Research Ethics Application

Title: *'An exploration into the experience of Educational Psychologists using reflecting teams as part of doctoral training.'*

Thank you for submitting your updated Research Ethics documentation. I am pleased to inform you that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your application has been approved. This means you can proceed with your research.

Please be advised that any changes to the project design including changes to methodology/data collection etc, must be referred to TREC as failure to do so, may result in a report of academic and/or research misconduct.

If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

I am copying this communication to your supervisor.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Franklyn

Academic Governance and Quality Officer
T: 020 938 2699
E: academicquality@[redacted].uk

cc. Course Lead, Supervisor, Research Lead

Appendix F

Anonymised Introductory Recruitment Email

Cc: Jessica Malcolm-McKay JMalcolmMcKay@[redacted].uk

Hello,

My name is Jessica Malcolm-McKay, I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist from the [redacted] in my second year of training. As part of my studies, I am completing a research project which aims to explore the experiences of Educational Psychologist use of reflecting teams as part of their doctoral training and development of professional practice.

This study aims to contribute to a limited evidence base by exploring EPs experiences of using reflecting teams during training toward developing competencies and proficiencies in reflective and systemic practice. It is hoped that this study will provide an insight into reflecting team use as an experiential learning method for continued professional development in the Educational Psychology field.

The research will involve a semi-structured interview which should take around 45 minutes to one hour to complete. The interviews are open to Educational Psychologists who are in their first two years of qualifying from the doctoral programme and who are practising in England.

I would appreciate your help in recruiting EPs who may be interested in taking part in the study. Please could you circulate this email, along with the attached participant information sheet.

If you are currently a third year trainee please email to be part of the project and interviews will take place in September, post-qualifying.

Thank you for your time, if you have any queries or would like to know more about the research project or be a participant, please contact me or my supervisor using the details below:

Jessica Malcolm-McKay (Trainee Educational Psychologist) - jmalcolmmckay@[redacted]uk

Dr Maria Wedlock (Research Supervisor) – mwedlock@[redacted].uk

Kind Regards,

Jessica Malcolm-McKay

Email distributed by:

Appendix G

Anonymised Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INVITATION AND INFORMATION LETTER

[redacted] **Research Ethics Committee**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:
[redacted], Trust Quality Assurance Officer. Email: [redacted].uk

Who am I?

I am a postgraduate psychology student at the [redacted] where I am completing my Doctorate in Child, Community and Educational Psychology. As part of my studies, I am conducting the research you are being invited to participate in.

The Researcher
Jessica Malcolm-McKay
Email: jmalcolmmckay@[redacted]uk

Research Supervisor
Dr Maria Wedlock
Email: MWedlock@[redacted]nhs.uk

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Project Title

An exploration into the experience of using reflecting teams as part of educational psychologist training.

Project Description

What is the research?

I am conducting research into Trainee Educational Psychologist experiences of using reflecting teams as part of their training in developing professional practice in relation to competency and proficiency. The research title is; An exploration into the experience of using reflecting teams as part of educational psychologist training. The purpose of the study is to explore the

experiences of Trainee Educational psychologists use of reflecting teams as part of their doctoral training programme in developing competency and proficiency in professional practice.

My research has been approved by the [redacted]Research Ethics Committee. This means that the Committee's evaluation of this ethics application has been guided by the standards of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been invited to participate in my research as someone who fits the kind of people I am looking for to help me explore my research topic. I am looking to involve Trainee Educational Psychologists who have experience in using reflecting teams as part of their doctoral training.

I emphasise that I am not looking for 'experts' on the topic I am studying. You will not be judged or personally analysed in any way and you will be treated with respect.

You are free to decide whether or not to participate and should not feel coerced.

What will your participation involve?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to take part and share your experiences of using reflecting teams as part of your doctoral educational psychology training through a semi-structured interview with a set of 7 research questions. The interview is expected to take between 45 minutes to one hour. The location of the interviews will be i[redacted] online using the Zoom platform. The interview will be audio-recorded but the process will be conducted as if having an informal chat around the subject as a way to explore the topic. I will not be able to pay you for participating in my research, but your participation would be very valuable in helping to develop knowledge and understanding of my research topic. The risks to taking part are the potential for psychological harm if a difficult topic is approached – at which point the question can be moved past. The advantages of taking part could include developing knowledge around trainee educational psychologists learning experiences and the development of using reflecting teams in the Educational Psychology field.

Confidentiality of the Data

Your taking part will be safe and confidential

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times. The identity and location of the training institution or participants will not be identified during data collection or in any follow up

transcription or final dissertation write up. Participants do not have to answer all questions and can stop their participation in the study at any time.

What will happen to the information that you provide?

The data will be stored on the researcher's personal password protected computer which is not accessible by anyone else and all documents will be password protected. If names or any other identifying details are collected during the interview these will be replaced with pseudonyms. The anonymised data will be seen by the course supervisor, course examiners and potential academic journals. All data after the study has been completed will be destroyed including audio-recordings and transcripts. Participants are able to request to withdraw the data they have provided up to 3 weeks after data collection after which data analysis will have begun and this will no longer be possible. Confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations and disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others. Data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the Trusts 's Data Protection and handling Policies.: https:/ [redacted] uk/about- us/governance/policies-and-procedures/.

What if you want to withdraw?

You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. Separately, you may also request to withdraw your data even after you have participated data, provided that this request is made within 3 weeks of the data being collected (after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible).

What if you have been adversely affected by taking part?

It is not anticipated that you will have been adversely affected by taking part in the research, and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise potential harm. Nevertheless, it is still possible that your participation – or its after-effects – may have been challenging, distressing or uncomfortable in some way. If you have been affected in any of those ways you may find the following resources/services helpful in relation to obtaining information and support:

Student Mental Health and Wellbein Services

- The T [redacted] student advice and consultation service. STUACS@ [redacted] uk.
- [redacted] personal tutors or supervisors for trainees.
- [redacted] support services (accessible to [redacted] course trainees) include;
  - Wellbeing drop in service. Email wellbeing@e [redacted] ac.uk telephone and Zoom appointments can be arranged.
  - 24-hour Student Wellbeing Support Line: on 0 [redacted]) –open every day, including weekends and bank holidays

Mental Health and Wellbeing Services

- SilverCloud - an online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) resource offering a range of programmes on mental health, wellbeing, and long-term conditions

[redacted]

- Togtherall is a safe, online peer-to-peer mental health community that empowers individuals to anonymously seek and provide support 24/7. To sign up, go to togetherall.com and use your student email address to register as a member of a university or college
- Samaritans
- Student Minds
- Mind
- SANE
- Health in Mind
- Rethink Mental Illness
- NHS therapy and counselling services

You are also very welcome to contact me or my supervisor if you have specific questions or concerns.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Jessica Malcolm-McKay. Email: jmalcolmmckay@[redacted]uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Maria Wedlock, [redacted]

Email: MWedlock@[redacted]uk

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study and are free to withdraw at any time during the interview. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:

[redacted], Trust Quality Assurance Officer. Email: [redacted].uk

Or Head of Academic Registry. Email: academicquality@[redacted]uk

[redacted]

Appendix H

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. When have you used reflecting teams as part of your educational psychology doctorate training?
2. What were your positive experiences of using reflecting teams in your training?
3. What were your negative experiences of using reflecting teams in your training?
4. What BPS competencies or HCPC proficiencies do you feel you developed during reflecting team sessions, if any during your training?
5. How has using reflecting teams developed your reflective practice, if at all during training?
6. How has using reflective teams developed your systemic practice, if at all during training?
7. Would you change your training experiences on your course using reflecting teams during training?

Appendix I

Anonymised Consent Form

[redacted] [redacted]

Consent to Participate

An exploration into the experience of Educational Psychologists using reflecting teams as part of doctoral training.

Researchers

Jessica Malcolm-McKay (Researcher) and Dr Maria Wedlock (Research Supervisor).

Consent

- I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. [x]
- The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, as being a research project which is part of a degree and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. [x]
- I understand what it being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me. [x]
- I confirm that I have taken part in Reflecting Teams as part of my Year 1 core module, [redacted] [redacted] over at least a 3-month period. [x]
- I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential and de-identified. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the project has been completed. [x]
- I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the programme at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. [x]

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS): [redacted]

Participant's Signature: [redacted]

Participant's Email: [redacted]

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):

JESSICA MALCOLM-MCKAY

Investigator's Signature: [redacted]

Appendix J

Anonymised Debrief Sheet

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF LETTER

Thank you for participating in my research study - An exploration into the experience of using reflecting teams as part of educational psychologist training. This letter offers information that may be relevant in light of you having now taken part.

What will happen to the information that you have provided?

The following steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the data you have provided. The data will be stored on the researcher's personal password protected computer which is not accessible by anyone else. If names or any other identifying details are collected during the interview these will be replaced with pseudonyms. The anonymised data will be seen by the course supervisor, course examiners and potential academic journals. All data after the study has been completed will be destroyed including audio-recordings and transcripts. Participants are able to request to withdraw the data they have provided up to 3 weeks after data collection after which data analysis will have begun and this will no longer be possible.

What if you have been adversely affected by taking part?

It is not anticipated that you will have been adversely affected by taking part in the research, and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise potential harm. Nevertheless, it is still possible that your participation – or its after-effects – may have been challenging, distressing or uncomfortable in some way. If you have been affected in any of those ways you may find the following resources/services helpful in relation to obtaining information and support:

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Services

- The [redacted] student advice and consultation service. STUACS@[redacted].uk.
- [redacted] personal tutors or supervisors for trainees.
- [redacted] support services (accessible to [redacted] course trainees) include;
  - Wellbeing drop in service. Email wellbeing@[redacted].ac.uk telephone and Zoom appointments can be arranged.
  - 24-hour Student Wellbeing Support Line: [redacted]) –open every day, including weekends and bank holidays

Mental Health and Wellbeing Services

- SilverCloud - an online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) resource offering a range of programmes on mental health, wellbeing, and long-term conditions
- Togtherall is a safe, online peer-to-peer mental health community that empowers individuals to anonymously seek and provide support 24/7. To sign up, go to togetherall.com and use your student email address to register as a member of a university or college
- Samaritans
- Student Minds

- Mind
- SANE
- Health in Mind
- Rethink Mental Illness
- NHS therapy and counselling services

You are also very welcome to contact me or my supervisor if you have specific questions or concerns.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Jessica Malcolm-McKay. Email: jmalcolmmckay@[redacted].uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Maria Wedlock, T[redacted]
Email: MWedlock@[redacted].uk

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study and are free to withdraw at any time during the interview. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate, please contact:
[redacted], Trust Quality Assurance Officer. Email: [redacted].uk
Or Head of Academic Registry. Email: academicquality@[redacted].uk

Appendix K

RTA Codes and Definitions

Initial codes and definitions

Code	Definition
Adaptability	The reflecting team model can be used across different elements of the doctoral training including at the designated training institute and on placement experiences.
Alternative Perspectives	Reflecting teams provide learning from alternative perspectives during practice.
Changes Wanted	Changes reflected on after using reflecting team model.
Being at the designated training institute	Reflecting teams were used at the designated training institute and offered learning opportunities as a trainee.
Confidence development	Reflecting teams develop trainees' confidence.
Contracting	The reflecting team model uses contracting to support understanding.
Curiosity	Reflecting teams creates opportunities to explore curiosities.
Difference between course module and placement use	Reflecting teams are used on trainee course modules and on placements.
Group supervision	Reflecting teams are used as part of group supervision.
Hopes for use in the future	Reflecting teams use post-qualification as an EP.
Impact of difference	Reflecting teams are impacted by aspects of intersectionality.
Impact on consultant	Reflecting team input impacts on the consultant.
Impact on consultee	Reflecting team input impacts on the consultee.
Impact on reflecting team	Reflecting team member experiences in the role.
Impressions and feelings using the reflecting team model	The reflecting team model has an emotional impact on trainees.
Learning outside of the reflecting team	Learning from the reflecting team continues beyond the in-person practice.
Limitations to reflecting team feedback	The reflecting team feedback can feel limiting.
Multidisciplinary experiences	The reflecting team model offers opportunity to work in a multi-disciplinary team.
Observation of others practice	The reflecting team creates opportunity to observe other practitioners in practice.
Online reflecting teams	Reflecting teams can be used online.
Placement use	Reflecting teams are used on trainees' placements.
Power balance or imbalance	Reflecting teams highlight aspects of power imbalance.
Pre-course influence	Reflecting teams are influenced by trainees' experiences before beginning the doctoral training.
Rota	Reflecting teams were organised using a rota during year 1 class modules.
Self-consciousness working with other trainees	Reflecting teams can cause self-consciousness working alongside other trainees.
Skill development	Reflecting teams created opportunity for trainee skill development.

Intersectionality	The reflecting team model enabled trainees to discuss aspects of intersectionality.
Staff or tutor input	The reflecting team model creates opportunity for staff input.
Supervisory support	Reflecting teams are reflected on in supervisory sessions.
Supportive model	Reflecting teams were seen as a supportive model in trainee development.
Systemic practice in action	Reflecting teams create practice opportunity for systemic practice.
Theory	Reflecting teams supported the understanding of psychological theory and application.
Trainee rule following	The reflecting team model requires trainees to understand and apply rules to practice.
Trainees supporting one another	The reflecting team model supports trainees to work collaboratively and provide support for one another.
Use in consultation	Reflecting teams are used in consultation.
Work discussion groups	Reflecting teams are used in work discussion groups.
Year 1	Reflecting teams are first used for trainees in their Year 1 consultation model.

Merged and amended codes and extract examples

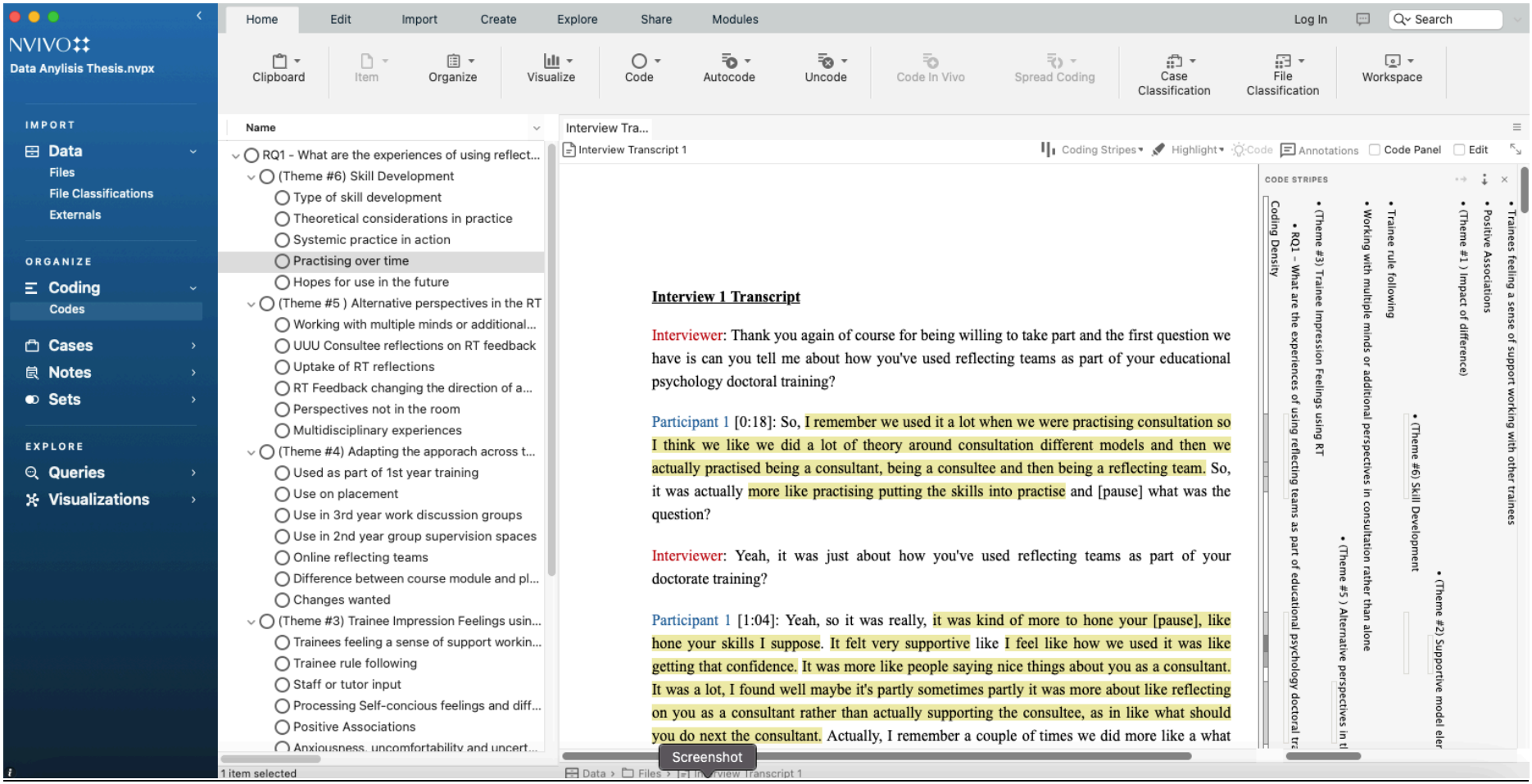
Merges/Amended Code	**Comprised of**	**Definition**	**Example of coded extract from interview transcript**
Type of skill development	• Skill development	Reflecting teams created opportunity for trainee skill development in reflective and communication.	"Just being able to take the time to really, I mean for skill development really hone in your ability to observe and really listen and kind of promote those active listening skills." (Participant 2)
Theoretical considerations in practice	• Theory	Reflecting teams supported the understanding of psychological theory and application.	"I think also different psychological theories underpin the reflections which I think made the discussion richer and so for me it was always been a curiosity to listen to what they listen to what they were saying." (Participant 5)
Practicing over time	• Confidence development	Reflecting teams develop trainees' confidence over time.	"I think you get better reflecting teams with experience". (Participant 6)
Working with multiple minds or additional	• Alternative Perspectives	Reflecting teams provide learning from alternative perspectives during	"You're not on your own, you're not alone, you are like you're using someone else's brain,

perspectives in consultation rather than alone	• Impact on consultant • Limitations to reflecting team feedback	practice which impact on the consultant role.	you're using someone else's mind, you're able to like step out of the situation and like that's really powerful." (Participant 1)
Consultee reflections on reflecting team feedback	• Impact on consultee	Reflecting team input impacts on the consultant.	"As a client or consultee like how can you say actually I was really hurt by something that the reflecting team said." (Participant 4)
Reflecting team feedback changing the direction of a consultation	• Impact on reflecting team • Learning outside of the reflecting team	Reflecting team member experiences in the role.	"Having a reflecting team kind of like centres your own thoughts sometimes and kind of they can kind of steer what avenue you should be going down a little bit. I think that was kind of a really positive part of having that." (Participant 4)
Used as part of 1st Year training	• Year 1	Reflecting teams are first used for trainees in their Year 1 consultation model.	"One was it being used as part of the module in year one where we learnt about consultation." (Participant 2)
Used in 2nd Year group supervision spaces	• Group supervision	Reflecting teams are used as part of group supervision.	"Was used as part of a module for groups supervision and then it was also used in year two of the training in peer supervision." (Participant 2)
Used in 3rd Year work discussion group	• Work discussion groups	Reflecting teams are used in work discussion groups.	"In a work group discussion like a similar feeling of like reassurance that when the team would reflect back they would help me to see a lot of the positive things that I was doing well." (Participant 6)
Trainees feeling a sense of support working with other trainees	• Trainees supporting one another	Reflecting teams can support trainees to feel supported by other trainees.	"It enhances your relationship with your cohort." (Participant 2)
Processing self-conscious feelings and difficulties whilst working with other trainees	• Self-consciousness working with other trainees • Trainee rule following	Reflecting teams can cause self-consciousness working alongside other trainees and requires trainees to understand and apply rules to practice.	"What position you're taking and the reflecting team influences it. Your relationships with everyone obviously will impact that." (Participant 2)

Positive associations	• Impressions and feelings using the reflecting team model	The reflecting team model has a positive emotional impact on trainees.	“It was a very positive and like accepting environment.” (Participant 2)
Anxiousness, discomfort and uncertainty	• Impressions and feelings using the reflecting team model	The reflecting team model has an emotional impact on trainees in creating anxiousness and uncertainty.	“Name that, this is going to feel really weird, this is going to feel really uncomfortable, this is going to be something different to what you've done before and really put it out there.” (Participant 1)
Unique opportunity to reflect in a reflecting team	• Supportive model	Reflecting teams were seen as a unique opportunity to have time and space to reflect.	“Moves your thinking on, it was the process of stopping and going away.” (Participant 1)
Reflecting team structure	• Supportive model	The reflecting team model structure was seen as a supportive model in trainee development.	“I think it's yeah it brings a it's like an anchor, it's a hook it's yeah it's something to boundary the conversation.” (Participant 6)
Positive re-framing element of reflecting team	• Supportive model	Reflecting teams used positive re-framing.	“Curious positive reframe that I think really helps.” (Participant 4)
Importance of contracting	• Contracting	The reflecting team model uses contracting to support understanding.	“The contracting phase and like making sure that's clear and making sure the aims are clear at the start so that you can like productively work together but it's also about sticking to that.” (Participant 3)
Power dynamic	• Power balance or imbalance	Reflecting teams highlight aspects of power imbalance.	“Address or reflect or highlight power in the room in terms of who is speaking, when they are speaking.” (Participant 2)
Group intersectionality identification and discussion	• Intersectionality	The reflecting team model enabled trainees to discuss aspects of intersectionality.	“a reflecting team can help EPs to be more reflective on equality and equity and cultural differences.” (Participant 5)

Appendix L

Example of Transcript with Coding using NVivo



Appendix M

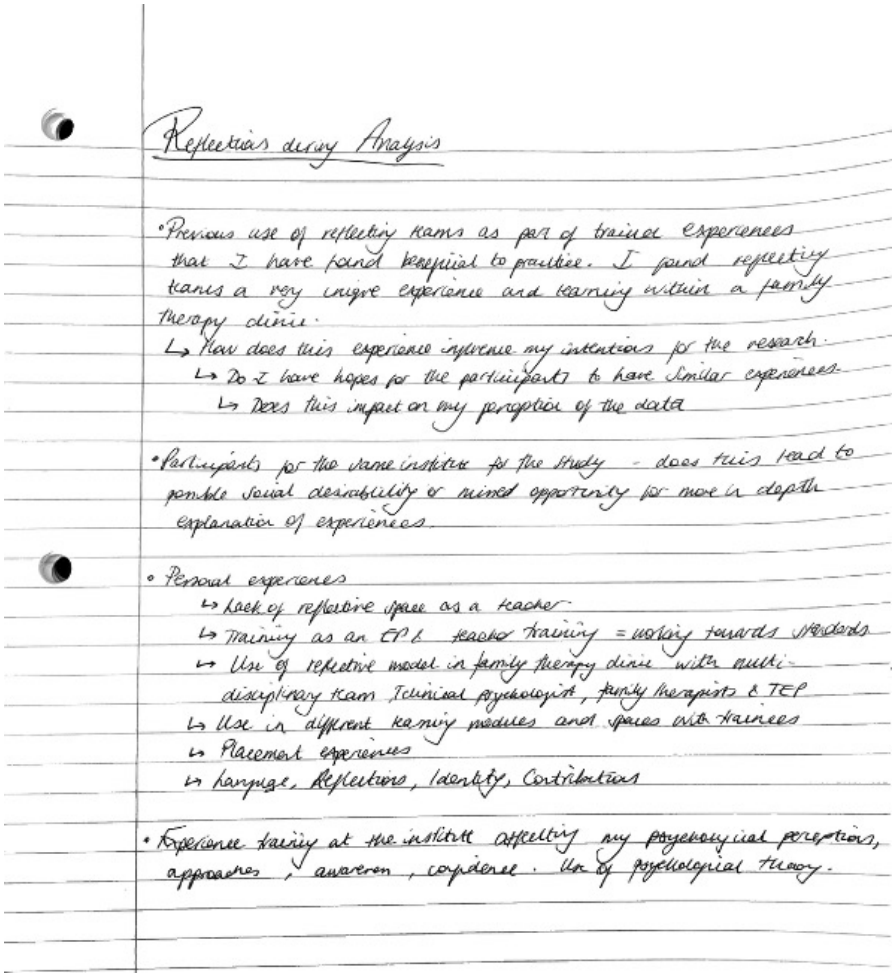
Themes, Sub-themes and Codes Relationship

Theme	Sub-theme	Refined Code
Holding Discomfort – Navigating Emotional Risk and Relational Learning	"The Safest Space We Had" – Affirming Connection and Collective Meaning Making	• Trainees feeling a sense of support working with other trainees • Positive associations
	Working With Discomfort – Growth Through Uncertainty	• Anxiousness, discomfort and uncertainty • Processing self-conscious feelings and difficulties whilst working with other trainees • Trainee rule following
	Blurring Roles – Tutor Presence and the Dynamics of Power and Support	• Staff or tutor input
Safety, Structure and Voice – Foundations for Reflective Learning	Pausing With Purpose – Making Space for Thoughtful Reflection	• Unique opportunity to reflect in a reflecting team
	Curious Voices That Invite, Not Judge	• Positive re-framing element of reflecting team
	Boundaries That Hold – Structure as Safety and Empowerment	• Reflecting team structure • Importance of contracting • Supportive model
Becoming the Psychologist I Want to Be – Developing Professional Identity in Reflective Spaces	"Confidence Came With Doing It" – Trusting the Process Over Time	• Practicing over time
	Reflecting While Speaking, Listening While Thinking	• Type of skill development
	I'm a Cog Too – Seeing the System From Within	• Systemic practice in action
	Bringing Theory Into the Room – Thinking Together in Practice	• Theoretical considerations in practice
Adapting to Who We Were in a Shifting Learning Environment – The	"It Fit the Focus of Each Year" – Layered Learning Through the Reflecting Team Model	• Used as part of 1st Year training • Used in 2nd Year group supervision spaces

Reflecting Team Model as a Developmental and Contextual Tool		• Used in 3rd Year work discussion group • Online reflecting teams
	"More Authentic" – Expanding Reflective Practice Beyond the Classroom	• Placement use • Difference between course module and placement use
Expanding Practice Through the Eyes of Others – The Reflexive Power of Shared Perspectives	Learning With "Multiple Minds"	• Working with multiple minds or additional perspectives in consultation rather than alone • Multidisciplinary experiences • Alternative Perspectives
	"Take It or Leave It" – The Uncertainty and Power of Offering Reflection	• Reflecting team feedback changing the direction of a consultation
	Intention Versus Impact – Holding Space for the Client's Voice	• Consultee reflections on reflecting team feedback
What Am I Bringing? – Navigating Difference, Reflexivity and Ethical Engagement	Whose Reflections Are Heard? – Power, Presence and Silence in the Team	• Power dynamic
	Permission to Explore – Reflecting Teams as a Catalyst for Cultural and Identity Dialogue	• Group intersectionality identification and discussion
	The Reflective Mirror – Self-Awareness, Identity and Practitioner Growth	• Group intersectionality identification and discussion • Working with multiple minds or additional perspectives in consultation rather than alone • Curiosity

Appendix N

Excerpt from Reflective Diary



Reflective diary Analysis

- Previous use of reflecting teams as part of trained experiences that I have found beneficial to practice. I found reflecting teams a very unique experience and learning within a family therapy clinic.
  - ↳ How does this experience influence my intentions for the research.
    - ↳ Do I have hopes for the participants to have similar experiences.
      - ↳ Does this impact on my perception of the data

- Participants for the same institute for the study - does this lead to possible social desirability or missed opportunity for more in depth explanation of experiences.

- Personal experiences
  - ↳ Lack of reflexive space as a teacher
  - ↳ Training as an EP & teacher training = working towards standards
  - ↳ Use of reflective model in family therapy clinic with multi-disciplinary team (clinical psychologist, family therapists & TEP
  - ↳ Use in different training modules and spaces with trainees
  - ↳ Placement experiences
  - ↳ Language, Reflections, Identity, Contributions

- Experience training at the institute affecting my psychological perception, approaches, awareness, confidence. Use of psychological theory.