

Major Research Project

**Exploring Dynamic Processes:
A Qualitative Study of
Problem-Based Learning Experiences
within Clinical Psychology Training**

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Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

Leonard Cohen, Anthem (1992)

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1.0 ABSTRACT

Aim: The existing literature on the experiences of individuals who have undertaken Problem-Based Learning (PBL) as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training in the UK is scarce, particularly from the perspective of *qualitative peer research*. The aim of the present study was to construct and articulate a deeper account of such experiences, and in particular, to explore how individuals make sense of these experiences. It is hoped that the findings of the present study will increase awareness within Clinical Psychology training programmes of the experiences, perspectives and needs of trainees who undertake PBL.

Method: A qualitative approach was adopted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight Trainee Clinical Psychologists who have undertaken PBL at a Clinical Psychology training programme in South-East England. Their accounts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which endeavours to illuminate the lived experiences of small samples of individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon.

Results: The analytic procedure highlighted four main themes emerging within participants' accounts: *Intensity of the experience; Striving towards connection versus fear of disconnection; Responses to manage the experience(s) can be unhelpful and helpful; and Trying to make sense of PBL.*

Implications: Participants characterised PBL as a challenging yet invaluable process through which they made significant gains, both professionally and personally. Facilitators were noted to play a key role in helping to create safe spaces in which trainees are supported to engage with issues that may arise for them in relation to their professional and personal development. Implications and recommendations are outlined for the benefit of Clinical Psychology training programmes that may wish to incorporate or alter PBL within their syllabuses.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present study is to explore the experiences of Trainee Clinical Psychologists who undertake Problem-Based Learning (PBL) as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training. I will begin this section by illustrating how I came to do this study followed by a contextual examination of the drivers behind collaborative practice within the National Health Service (NHS). I will then review the literature on PBL and evaluate the current literature on the experiences of Trainee Clinical Psychologists who have undertaken PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training in the UK. I then outline my rationale for conducting peer research and the present study.

2.1 How I came to this study

I came to this study with my own values, beliefs and interactions with the world. In keeping with the epistemology of qualitative research and in the interests of reflexivity, I wish to acknowledge - and even embrace - the impact that these dynamic social processes may have played in my relationship with the data (Webb, 1992). I have therefore chosen to write in the first person, rather than from the viewpoint of 'the researcher'. Writing from this position inevitably requires employing a more personal, 'informal' language, rather than a more impersonal, 'formal' language.

My interest in this area is primarily informed by my experience of undertaking PBL as part of my Clinical Psychology training. During a personal tutorial at University I expressed my struggle to commit to a specific research area. Sensing my ambivalence my supervisor prompted me to share my ideas, '...however crazy they might seem', to which I immediately replied, '...something on PBL'. We discussed the deeply emotive, frustrating but ultimately meaningful nature of my experiences within PBL; an exploration made poignantly salient due to her also having been my PBL group facilitator and thus actually being witness to my journey through PBL. Her enthusiasm and unwavering support from this point on gave me the courage to 'stick with' this research idea until its conclusion, just as she had helped my PBL group to 'stick with' the difficulties when they arose.

My literature search showed that research on the experiences of individuals who undertake PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training was indeed scarce. However, when I

talked with other trainees about my emerging research ideas, their enthusiasm and curiosity for my research area made me wonder if other trainees were having similar, or indeed different, experiences to my own; in turn, this heightened my curiosity and bolstered my motivation to undertake this piece of research. These discussions with my peers and supervisor confirmed to me that this could be a valuable focus for my major research project - to create a platform to help other trainees reflect on unheard experiences or, through the findings, gain a sense that their experiences could be understood. Further personal reflections on my process with this research are explored within section **4.9**.

2.2 Literature search strategy

Electronic literature searches were conducted using key psychology, social science and medical databases. Further search strategies included: searching the reference lists of pertinent journal articles and books; using the Google Scholar search engine; consulting the authors of relevant publications to identify additional relevant literature; and consulting with supervisors and peers about their own journeys with PBL. Several search terms were used in combination, for example: Clinical Psychology, training, trainee, counselling, therapist, PBL, problem-based learning / problem based learning, experiential learning, practice-based learning / practice based learning. Conceptual literature was considered alongside empirical studies.

2.3 Review strategy

The literature on PBL around the world spans multiple models and mechanisms of implementation across and within disciplines, resulting in research not being directly comparable (Hung, 2011). Furthermore, Eraut (2000) states that much research on PBL focuses on 'transmission models', emphasising the retention of academic knowledge and showing little evidence of transfer into practice. Curle, Wood, Haslam and Stedmon (2006, p.180) inform us that such studies are of "...dubious utility for assessing competence in health service settings characterised by uncertainty, complexity and an ever-expanding knowledge base".

Therefore, with regards to the remit of the present study, the primary focus of the literature review will reside within the implementation of PBL within Clinical Psychology. Additionally,

as PBL is not currently utilised within Clinical Psychology training in other countries, the literature review will focus on papers published within the UK. More in-depth meta-analyses and systematic reviews of PBL studies have been conducted but they will not be explored in depth here due to their differing transmission models (for further information, see: Albanese & Mitchell, 1993; Berkson, 1993; Colliver, 2000; Neville, 2009; Norman & Schmidt, 1992; Vernon & Blake, 1993).

Given that the literature on the experiences of individuals who have undertaken PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training in the UK is sparse, literature on interprofessional education within the NHS was also included. I was mindful of the associated generalisability issues. Conceptual literature and empirical studies were reviewed and appraised for potential significance with regards to the experiences of individuals who have undertaken PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training in the UK.

2.4 Background

2.4.1 Drivers behind collaborative practice within the NHS

Given that the main employer of Clinical Psychologists is the NHS, this section aims to explore the literature around team-working and multi-disciplinary teams within the NHS. A review all of the literature on group working and group processes is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, key authors include Adair (1986); Belbin, 1981; Tuckman (1975); and West (1994). The focus of section 2.4.3 there will also be a consideration of group processes that may occur when groups work together in multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) and within clinical training.

Over the course of the last decade or so, a spotlight has been shone on the ways in which NHS staff are trained, employed, developed, and work together (Baxter & Brumfitt, 2008). Leathard (2003) pronounces that the accompanying explosion of policy documents (for example, Department of Health [DH], 2000a,b,c; DH, 2002; DH, 2004a,b,c; DH, 2005) as part of a ten-year plan to reform the NHS has led to an “avalanche of change” (p.30) in clinical working practice.

These policies and strategies exist within an economic climate, where there is a push towards cuts and proving value for money (DH, 2000a). For example, recent economic considerations within the mental health arena include the introduction of Payment by Results, which began to be rolled-out in 2003-04 (DH, 2002) as well as the Layard Report (Layard et al., 2006) which outlines an economic conceptualisation to reducing the personal and economic distress of mental illness via the ‘Improving Access to Psychological Therapies’ (IAPT) programme (DH, 2007). Within the context of these external pressures, MDT working has become the dominant approach within mental health services in an endeavour for professionals to pool their resources to meet the broad remits which they find themselves facing. With this in mind, developing successful team-working skills seems to be useful. Clinical Psychologists need to adapt to the changing demands of the NHS and develop the necessary leadership skills that may be useful in securing their roles within generic teams. For example, alongside the shift towards MDT working, there has been an increasing focus upon generic working and skills within MDTs, particularly through the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF: DH, 2004a). Within this context, different professionals are assumed to have the same skill-sets. The KSF is a competence-based framework designed to support the

personal development and career progression of all NHS staff, with the exception of doctors and dentists. It is one of the three strands emerging from the Agenda for Change pay negotiations (DH, 2004b) and thus the current professional and personal development of NHS professionals is inextricably linked with pay progression policies. In addition, The Ten Essential Shared Capabilities for Mental Health Practice (DH, 2004c) also support the identification and use of transferrable skills and ideals between different professional groups. This move towards generic working and skills within MDTs could possibly result in a less certain future for Clinical Psychology as a profession.

A further compounding element has been the emergence of the Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) role (Mental Health Act, 2007), which can be occupied by professionals who possess different training backgrounds including Social Workers, Community Psychiatric Nurses, Occupational Therapists and Psychologists. In addition, there has been a shift towards generic rather than profession-specific roles and training within NHS mental health services (for example, DH, 2005). As such, it is becoming common conjecture that vacant positions within the NHS are increasingly being advertised as generic roles rather than profession-specific. For example, recent adverts for Mental Health Practitioners posted on www.jobs.nhs.uk state that Clinical Psychologists, Counselling Psychologists, Family Therapists, Nurse Specialists and Social Workers are all welcome to apply. This growing movement towards generic training, working and roles within the NHS increases the risk of 'groupthink' (Janus, 1982; Yalom, 2005), in which individual differences within the group are not embraced and may thus increase a false sense of connection and belonging. This can lead to the rejection of uncertainty, reflection and exploration, thus inhibiting the growth of group members and ultimately, the NHS as a whole. With this in mind, the training of Clinical Psychologists in group working and leadership skills could be advantageous in this evolving time.

Firth-Cozens (2001) notes that one of the key distinctions in joint working practice between the NHS and other settings such as business and industry is that NHS workers have professional groupings and different allegiances. In the context of multi-disciplinary and generic working within the NHS, this could have the potential to result in, or perhaps draw attention to, interpersonal difficulties between professionals. For example, Brown, Crawford and Darongkamas (2000) assert that multi-disciplinary modes of working actively encourage

role-blurring as well as tensions between professional groups who are anxious to uphold separate professional identities. More recently, Baxter and Brumfitt (2008) conducted qualitative research exploring the impact of such changes to traditional working practices upon NHS staff. They observed complexities in the forming of team identities in the context of professional groups' eagerness to preserve their own professional identities; as well as some evidence of role-blurring and tensions in non-hierarchical MDTs stemming from power and status assumptions accompanying those in medical roles.

Indeed, the need for collaborative team-working and interprofessional communication has been identified as priority areas for improvement in clinical settings (see the 'National Health Service [NHS] Plan' - Department of Health [DH], 2000a; Brandon et al., 2009). In particular, the NHS Plan (DH, 2000a) explicitly states the need to break down barriers between staff and move towards "...more flexible team working between different clinical professionals" (p.82). Whereas such skills might be expected to develop 'on the job', there is increasing recognition that this can no longer be assumed. Many cases investigated by the Health Service Ombudsman in England expose issues with coordination and communication between different NHS bodies and services (see, for example, Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry, 2001; the Clyde Report, 1992; the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, 2003; Serious Case Review: Baby Peter, 2009). Furthermore, a direct link has been identified between service user satisfaction and effective communication *within and between* teams (Spencer, 2003; Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman for England, 2006). In addition, research suggests that professionals working within teams provide higher quality care to service users than when working in isolation (Carter & West, 1999; Finch, 2000; Firth-Cozens, 2000; Zwarenstein & Bryant, 2000). One explanation for this may be that increased collaboration reinforces clinical competencies (Barr, Freeth, Hammick, Kopel & Reeves, 2000). It could be argued that it is open communication that facilitates this increased collaboration, which in turn reinforces clinical competencies. Taken together, these factors highlight that the move towards multi-disciplinary and generic working needs to be supported through the enhancement of interprofessional communication, understanding and support. The training of Clinical Psychologists, which involves leadership and team-working skills, could help facilitate this process.

These needs have not yet been fully addressed within NHS policy or the research literature. A key example of this is the NHS Plan (DH, 2000), which makes a commitment to providing support for NHS professionals through education, training and personal development (see also DH, 2004). However, all references to ‘personal development’ within the NHS Plan state that this will be achieved through formalised education and skills-based teaching. It has been argued that academic knowledge and teaching cannot facilitate and further personal development and clinical practice within the NHS, with some professional training courses transcending the artificial barriers between practice and theory through the implementation of problem-solving and practice-based work (Brigley, Young, Littlejohns & McEwen, 1997). Furthermore, despite literature on the high prevalence of stress and psychopathology in NHS staff (Boorman, 2009; Tillett, 2003) which can lead to burnout and a loss of ideals (Maben, Latter & Macleod Clark, 2007) and can inhibit the expression of compassion and empathy towards colleagues and service users (Firth-Cozens & Cornwell, 2009), corresponding literature on the support of NHS staff is largely anecdotal or theoretical (for example, Cox & Leiter, 1992; Wilkes et al., 1998).

2.4.2 Enhancing interprofessional communication, understanding and support

Enhancing communication, understanding and support between professionals has recently been attempted through the formal training and education of mental health professionals. A key aspect of this attempt is ‘interprofessional education’ (IPE) wherein individuals from different professions learn common material side-by-side using a number of different learning approaches. IPE occurs when, “...two or more professions learn with, from, and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care” (Freeth, Hammick, Reeves, Koppel & Barr, 2005). Priest et al. (2008) posit that IPE is the way forward in ensuring effective multi-disciplinary working within the field of healthcare delivery. IPE is suggested to have a strong focus upon engaging individuals in shared activities and collaborative tasks, with resultant benefits including: the development of awareness and empathy; changed attitudes and perceptions; a reduction of negative stereotypes; understanding different theoretical perspectives; increased understanding of the roles, responsibilities, strengths and limitations of other professions; enhanced motivation to work collaboratively; the cultivation of interpersonal, group and organisational relationships; and the establishment of common values and knowledge (Barr et al., 2000; CAIPE, 1996; Finch, 2000; Parsell & Bligh, 1999).

A key element of IPE is PBL (Priest et al., 2008). PBL was developed over 30 years ago in the context of medical education, and now forms part of the curricula in 70% of North American medical schools (Kelson & Distlehorst, 2000). PBL's popularity has gradually increased and is now employed by a variety of disciplines and professional training programmes (Boud & Feletti, 1997). PBL promotes the acquisition of knowledge via the presentation of a succession of problems presented in context, with learning materials and support from teaching staff made available (Boud & Feletti, 1997; Cross & Steadman, 1996; West & Moore-West, 1988). Students are supported to take responsibility for their own learning, with their trainer becoming "...a facilitator and guide, rather than an instructor and expert" (Nel et al., 2008, p.198). In this way, it could be argued that PBL represents the 'active ingredient' of IPE, providing a framework which not only encourages, but necessitates, self-directed learning and personal growth via the enhancement of inter-personal and interprofessional communication, understanding and support.

2.4.3 Problem-Based Learning within Clinical Psychology

In the UK the training of Clinical Psychologists is the joint responsibility of the NHS and universities which run Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy) programmes. Selection for entry onto such courses is generally characterised by fierce competition (see Roth, 1998), ensuring that successful applicants are all of a high calibre and in the possession of relevant work experience. It is expected that DClinPsy programmes will produce Clinical Psychologists who are 'fit to practice' in the context of a challenging and evolving NHS. Students are therefore recruited into NHS apprenticeship roles and split their working week between clinical placements and university, developing their clinical, academic and research skills across these contexts.

A fundamental issue that arises is how to reconcile the gaps between theory and practice within Clinical Psychology training: between the acquisition of clinical skills on placement and their relationship with theoretical learning at university (Stedmon, Wood, Curle & Haslam, 2005). It has been asserted that, "The demands of integrating theory and practice, collaboration, taking multiple perspectives and developing clinical reasoning require learning to be dynamic and constructivist" (Bolhuis, 2003; Savery & Duffy, 1995; as cited in Curle, Wood, Haslam and Stedmon, 2006, p.185). PBL is suggested to offer such a dynamic and constructivist approach, in which a bridge between 'know-that' within academic contexts

and 'know-how' within clinical practice is created through an experiential learning framework (Curle et al., 2006; Eraut, 2000). For example, PBL exercises are designed to mirror the complexity and uncertainty inherent in NHS working with trainees adopting an adult learner role. It is argued that such an approach helps improve skills of clinical reasoning and fosters effective lifelong learning skills (Curle et al., 2006; Huey, 2001). PBL's value in relation to self-directed, motivated and deep learning is seen as a highly relevant approach for trainee practitioners (Albanese & Mitchell, 1993; Huey, 2001) and thus can be a powerful training mechanism in the development of future Clinical Psychologists.

Until recently, PBL was used by only a few Clinical Psychology doctoral training programmes in the UK (Stedmon et al., 2005). Curle et al. (2006) provide a comprehensive overview of the application of PBL within a Clinical Psychology training course, wherein PBL comprises three domains: practice; group presentation; and individual written summary. 'Practice' refers to an initial focus upon a clinical problem, whereby small groups of trainees are encouraged to draw upon a range of resources (e.g. prior learning / experience, placement supervisors, articles etc.) to conceptualise and work through complex clinical vignettes that are representative of NHS working. During this process, trainees are also asked to attend to group dynamics and reflect upon their experiences of working as part of a group, with the aim of developing skills in MDT working and reflective practice. The second domain – 'group presentation', involves the group of trainees providing a presentation of up to 30 minutes to represent what they have learnt over the course of the exercise in line with guidance identifying key aspects of the assessment. The final domain – 'individual written summary', provides trainees with a space to reflect upon their experiences and learning in a context which is separate from the group. Curle et al. (2006) argue that the primary focus of the individual reflective account should be upon describing and critiquing a single aspect of the group's work, along with reflections upon the workings and dynamics of their PBL group. The authors suggest that together these three domains help address the need to work collaboratively - a core skill within the practice of Clinical Psychology.

At the university where the present study took place, PBL follows a similar path and has formed a significant part of the DClinPsy programme for a number of years. Within the first week of the course, trainees are randomly allocated to PBL groups comprising five or six members. Each group is allocated a facilitator from the Course Team who aims to remain

with their group until the conclusion of the entire PBL experience. Across the first two years of training each PBL group undertakes five PBL exercises spanning five to six weeks in duration. Within each PBL exercise information is drip-fed to trainees, mirroring the real-life context of clinical working in which information about the client is garnered over time rather than being fully available at the point of referral. Trainees are evaluated at the end of this period via a twenty-minute group presentation in the presence of their peers, members from the Course Team and external clinical supervisors from the region. Evaluation of the group presentation focuses upon the content covered within the presentations; attention to group processes; and individual and group reflections. Individual group members are then required to submit a reflective essay of 1500 words approximately two weeks after the group presentation. Reflective practice may be a novel endeavour for trainees and thus the first exercise and reflective essay is formative with no consequences for failing. The remaining four exercises and reflective essays must be passed in order for individuals to progress through their clinical training.

The dimensions of PBL are of particular relevance to Clinical Psychology training and current practice within the NHS. The 'standards of proficiency' for practitioner psychologists, as set out by the Health Professions Council (HPC, 2009) note that gaining knowledge of working *with* and *within* multiple systems (including MDTs) are an essential aspect of a Clinical Psychologist's role. The formation of small groups, in which students must pool their personal resources in order to solve the problems with which they are presented, is characteristic of the NHS working context (for example, as within MDTs). In engaging with a 'problem' in this way, trainees increase their content knowledge and acquire process skills such as learning to work in a team; learning to listen to other points of view; negotiation and leadership skills; and personal reflexivity (Nel et al., 2008). The presumption is that the new knowledge and process skills which are gained from engaging with PBL will be transferred to the individual's clinical practice, for example, in their interactions with clients, colleagues, and MDTs (Nel et al., 2008; Stedmon et al., 2005). Facilitating the development of effective communication is one means of achieving this; for example, by increasing the ability to respectfully voice the unsaid (Keville et al., 2013; Keville et al., 2010). Alongside this, the lack of certainty within the PBL experience (i.e., no right way to do PBL, no experts, etc.) promotes trainees to become exposed to and learn how to develop a "...tolerance for

ambiguity” which is an inherent part of the wider Clinical Psychology training experience (Pica, 1998, p.361).

Trainees’ experiences and perspectives of PBL have been tentatively explored within the research literature. Trainee feedback within Curle et al. (2006) suggested that the PBL process is experienced as an anxiety-provoking yet valuable learning experience, with particular appreciation for its ‘authenticity’ in relation to clinical practice. The authors also noted that trainees worked longer and harder within their PBL exercises than training staff had anticipated. They attribute this to a keen desire to learn, as instilled by the adult-learner model which underpins PBL. However, such feedback was not subject to any rigorous analysis and so could be seen as anecdotal evidence. The authors also provide bar charts highlighting the pass rates across the different PBL exercises in an attempt to show the ‘success’ of PBL. It could be argued such figures refer to the trainees’ habituation to PBL rather than achieving the underlying learning objectives of the exercises.

A ‘thicker narrative’ of the experiential aspects of PBL within Clinical Psychology training comes from Nel et al. (2008). In their paper, trainees within a single PBL group presented reflective accounts of their experiences at the outset of PBL, with additional reflections from members of the course team, including the group’s facilitator. In the context of introducing the PBL approach to their training programme, ‘sitting with uncertainty’ emerged as a key theme for both trainees and course team staff. They wrote, “Change was the topic; change was the outcome; and within this uncertainty, avoidance and ultimately some kind of resolution seemed to be the process” (Nel et al. 2008, p.204). It seems therefore, that experiential avoidance was noted as a response to uncertainty, in which the avoidance of conflict, difficulties and internal experiences within the PBL group process provided stability and a sense of control. The authors go on to suggest it is the role of training courses to help trainees to learn from their responses to uncertainty by providing safe places for trainees to connect with and experience such difficulties. This parallels the processes involved in group therapeutic work (Yalom, 2005). As with Curle et al. (2006), no formal analysis of the trainee and facilitator accounts took place. However, the accounts were presented in their entirety and so provide a degree of credulity.

Keville et al. (2009; 2010) provided additional reflective accounts but with a clearer analysis framework, for a group of trainees and their facilitator towards both the middle and end stages of their PBL curriculum. Again, a proclivity towards experiential avoidance was noted as a theme within most trainees' accounts, in which the nature of clinical materials and / or group dynamics gave rise to emotional discomfort. The authors suggest that such discomfort reflects the realities of both clinical practice and MDT working. Thus it was of paramount importance that PBL could provide the trainees with an opportunity to acknowledge and work through such difficulties in a safe environment, rather like the processes that occur within group therapy (Yalom, 2005).

Another theme emerging from the work of Keville et al. (2009; 2010) revolved around the dilemma between speaking out or feeling silenced within the PBL group context, which was believed to be a key driver behind many group dynamics. The authors argue that trainees and group facilitators should respect and acknowledge the differences in ability and willingness to disclose emotions and experiences within the PBL group context, whilst it also being important to explore and challenge misconceptions which may have led to particular group dynamics. In this regard, the authors note the dilemma yet ultimate importance of navigating 'the in-between' to promote interpersonal learning. This reflects the reality and complexities of clinical practice, in which clinicians are required to respond to and manage different levels of personal disclosure either within therapy, between professionals, or within teams. In addition, therapy involves clinicians and clients connecting with difficult feelings and experiences from the client's past. The authors note the temptation to attend to the information garnered at the beginning and end of therapy rather than during the 'in-between', paralleling the central role of assessment and evaluating outcomes which often preside in lectures and clinical practice. This in-between space, as in PBL, can often involve struggle, messiness and difficulty. The authors argue that trainees should be encouraged to connect and stay with 'the in-between' as this can help them in not only connecting with others' experiences, but also to connect with their own experiences and support others to do the same (Keville et al., 2010). Keville et al. (2013; 2012b) suggest that a similar process occurs in relation to connecting with others' vulnerabilities – in doing so, this may allow us also to connect with and acknowledge our own vulnerabilities and support others to do this. The authors argue that these processes are invaluable in enabling trainees to feel more

confident and able to explore difficult emotions within their clinical work (Butler, Fennel & Hackmann, 2008; as cited in Keville et al., 2012b).

Further exploration of trainees' accounts (Keville et al., 2013; 2012b) reveal PBL to be a journey of emotional and intellectual development within trainees' personal and professional identities, in which the outcomes and the experience to achieving those outcomes are embraced. Facilitator accounts suggest that trust, compassion, validation, acceptance, containment, contextualisation and reflective spaces allow this journey of development to occur (Keville et al., 2013; 2012b; Nel et al., 2008). In addition, a flexible approach to facilitation is promoted, in which the individual needs and dynamics of each PBL group determine the style of facilitation required in order to support and maintain this experiential learning (Keville et al., 2013).

Keville et al. (2013) note that one group expressed both a desire, and indeed a *need*, to emotionally connect to the clinical material and convey this via the assessed presentation. Emotional connectedness to clinical vignette material and to each other as group members was highly valued, as without such connection the group found themselves becoming repeatedly 'stuck'. Developing these abilities in forming emotional relationships within PBL groups and to the clinical vignette material is said to help trainees to utilise congruency and authenticity within their clinical work (Keville et al., 2012b). For other groups (Keville et al., 2012a), the emotional journey involved acknowledging and learning from their group's dynamics and how they navigated through them, in order to use these experiences and reflections to develop their team-working skills. Avoidance of conflict, a desire for cohesiveness, striving for authenticity and connecting with vulnerability all arose from trainee accounts and acted as key learning points for multi-disciplinary working. Overall, the authors believe that PBL has the potential to be the interface between the personal and professional selves "in a vibrant process" (Keville et al., 2013, p.9).

Despite the number of themes and ideas arising from the tentative exploration of trainees' experiences of PBL, no rigorous examinations or formal research of trainees' experiences of PBL has taken place. The aforementioned studies focused upon written trainee accounts provided to course staff with very limited methodological analysis. Such an approach does not allow for a dialogue to be created between the researcher and participant, which in turn

limits the researcher's ability to ascertain how trainees 'make sense' of PBL and gain a deeper understanding of the PBL process. In addition, there has been no peer research within a field in which adult learning is promoted. Therefore an exploration of trainees' experiences within PBL from a peer perspective using a rigorous research methodology may provide a unique contribution to the research literature and general understanding of PBL. Additional research using more formal methodological procedures is merited to further articulate and elucidate the experiences of individuals who undertake PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training.

2.5 Conclusions and rationale

Within the current economic climate, there is a drive within the NHS towards multi-disciplinary and generic working within clinical practice. This drive is also reflected within the provision of education and skills-based teaching as a means of enhancing personal and professional development (DH, 2004a; 2004c; 2005). Jordan (2000) states that, "...to survive in the world of evidence-based care, educators must demonstrate their contribution to clinical effectiveness" (p.461). For Clinical Psychologist this would involve the development of group-working and leadership skills. PBL has been seen as a useful approach to develop interprofessional and group-working skills. Increasingly, Clinical Psychology has adopted this approach within their training programmes. Emerging research from the Course Teams at two DCLinPsy training programmes focused upon an evaluation of the use of PBL within their clinical training programmes. They found a staggering increase in the quality of trainee competence and performance, with trainees reporting a preference for PBL in assisting the development of their clinical thinking and practice (Curle et al., 2006). However, there is a lack of research from a trainee perspective through peer research, wherein relaxed and supportive peer-led interview situations may lead to high quality data and much more detailed, honest and open exploration of participants' experiences (Sheffield Hallam University, 2012).

A gap in our current PBL knowledge is in the knowing and understanding of individuals' experiences of PBL, and of the meaning that they attach to their experiences. This research aims to explore the personal experiences, the meaning of these experiences, and the potential impact upon professional development, of a group of Trainee Clinical Psychologists who have undertaken the PBL journey as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training in

the UK. Currently, there is little literature on PBL in Clinical Psychology as a method of developing team-working skills and expertise in facilitating effective group functioning. These qualities may be useful in the leadership roles which Clinical Psychologists could occupy.

By conducting novel qualitative peer research in this area, it is hoped that a deeper understanding could emerge with regards to the Trainee Clinical Psychologists' lived experiences of PBL. This research specifically looks at elements trainees found helpful and unhelpful, the potential challenges of PBL, ways in which PBL may prepare the Clinical Psychologists of the future to work within the NHS, and explores the personal and professional development opportunities that PBL may bring. As I will be conducting research with my peers, I wish to acknowledge the potential impact of this upon the interviewing process and the content that ensues. As such, I intend to explore the experience of being interviewed by one's peers (Platt, 1981).

3.0 RESEARCH QUESTION

The main aims of this study were to explore individuals' accounts of their PBL experiences using a more rigorous methodological approach than the anecdotal evidence portrayed within the current literature. Given this, the main research question was framed as:

- What is the experience of individuals who undertake PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training?

This main research question was explored via a further subsidiary question:

- What sense do individuals make of the impact their PBL experiences have had upon their professional and personal development?

4.0 METHODOLOGY

This section describes the rationale for choosing IPA (Smith, 1996; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2008) including its possible limitations; development of the interview schedule and interviewing skills; participant recruitment, data collection and analysis; and the steps taken to meet research quality criteria as delineated by several researchers. Issues of self-reflexivity are also explored.

4.1 A qualitative approach

The present study utilised a qualitative research design. As stated earlier, peer research exploring and articulating the experiences of individuals undertaking PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training in the UK is scarce. The papers that have been published in this area consist of reflective papers written from the perspective of one PBL group (for example, Keville et al., 2010; 2009; Nel et al., 2008). Further papers based on the reflections of PBL groups across a number of cohorts have also recently been submitted to peer-reviewed journals (for example, Keville et al., 2013; 2012b).

The aim of the present study is to construct and articulate a deeper account of the experiences of individuals who undertake PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training in the UK.

The focus of this research was to investigate the lived experience of participating in PBL. As a result, a qualitative methodology was adopted as it can enhance existing findings through facilitating an in-depth and exploratory study of personal experiences (Barker, Pistrang & Elliott, 2002). In addition, interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule (see **Appendix 1**) as this balance between structure and flexibility affords the opportunity to explore interesting or significant material that may arise during the course of the interview whilst yielding rich data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

4.2 My Social Constructionist Stance

Clinical Psychologists are privy to more than a century of theory, research and practice underpinned by constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed epistemologies, theories and paradigms (Lock & Strong, 2010). Over the past three decades there has been a shift away

from such empiricism, positivism and the belief that knowledge is constructed through an observable and external reality. A new range of rubrics have evolved under the umbrella term of 'Social Constructionism', including, 'discursive psychology', 'critical psychology', 'deconstruction' and 'poststructuralism'. Such a shift represents a distinctive move towards more qualitative approaches in the advancement of our knowledge about the world (Burr, 2003).

Social Constructionism promotes a critical stance towards empiricism so that we may come to appreciate that all knowledge is both culturally and historically specific; that meaning is constructed *between* people; and that language is the mechanism through which we make sense of life (Burr, 2003; Locke & Strong, 2010). This philosophy fits very comfortably with my own personal values and ideals; thus, the present study has been undertaken within a Social Constructionist stance.

4.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Within the context of the present study, IPA (Smith, 1996; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003; 2008) was identified as the qualitative methodology of choice. The rationale for choosing IPA will be outlined with particular reference to the three theoretical and philosophical tenets which are central to IPA: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009).

Firstly, IPA's phenomenological aim of conducting an in-depth exploration to capture and articulate the personal meaning and sense-making in a particular context, for individuals who share a particular experience (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003) corresponds with the research question of the present study: *What is the experience of individuals who undertake PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training?* Smith et al. (2009) assert that IPA subscribes to social constructionism, though to a lesser degree than Discourse Analysis (Edwards & Potter, 1992) and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Parker, 1992) in that it recognises that human experiences are necessarily and essentially informed and shaped by social processes. Thus, the qualitative framework which guides the present study is both phenomenological and social constructionist in nature, given that it conducts an in-depth exploration of individuals' personal experiences and perceptions of PBL, whilst adopting a

'critical psychology' perspective (Smith & Osborn, 2003) from which to consider these experiences within the dynamic social context in which they occur.

Secondly, hermeneutics is concerned with "...the theory of interpretation" (Smith et al., 2009, p.21). IPA concedes that it is not possible for an individual's inner world to be accessed directly and thus interpretative activity is a necessity. The process by which the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant, who is trying to make sense of their world, is known as a double hermeneutic (Smith et al., 2009). It is acknowledged that this process of co-construction will inevitably be influenced by my own values, beliefs, and opinions (Giddens, 1987; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). Consequently, reflexivity is considered to be fundamental in facilitating transparency and in turn, increasing the validity of the research (Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1999).

Thirdly, IPA is committed to understanding how individuals within a particular context understand particular experiential phenomena with which they find themselves faced. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that this focus on the particular moves us closer to the universal because it gives us insight into the very 'essence' of human experience. Whilst IPA can be used for single case studies to achieve this aim, it can also be used to capture and articulate in detail the perceptions and meaning-making of a small group of people, rather than making general claims about the wider population (Smith, 1996; Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, as analysis includes an examination of the convergences and divergences in themes emerging from the transcripts of individuals with a shared experience, when IPA's idiographic emphasis is upheld it can be used to generate a thematic analysis of relatively homogenous small groups. This aim corresponds with the intention of the present study; that is, to utilise a Social Constructionist framework (see 4.2), to conduct a detailed exploration of individuals' personal experiences and the meaning that they make.

The detailed guidance outlining the process of conducting IPA studies (for example, Smith et al., 2009) is both appealing and helpful to a relatively novice qualitative researcher like myself. Further distinct advantages of IPA include its inductive nature; the way in which it lends itself to exploring the complexity of individuals' experiences; and the freedom to not simply fit the individual's experience into a framework of existing knowledge, as analysis allows unanticipated themes to emerge (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

For the purposes of the present study IPA was deemed to be the most suitable approach. For example, Smith et al. (2009) note that language is viewed as a key resource in the process of meaning-making by both Discourse Analysis and IPA approaches. However, these approaches diverge with regards to the significance bestowed upon the chain of connection between cognition and the experience of body and self (Crossley, 2000a; Smith et al., 2009). In discursive approaches the chain of connection between language and the experiencing self is 'bracketed out', thus directing emphasis away from how individuals think, feel or give meaning to the phenomenon being explored (Abraham & Hampson, 1996; Denzin, 1995; Eatough & Smith, 2006). Eatough and Smith (2006) declare that, "...lived life with its vicissitudes is much more than historically situated linguistic interactions between people" (p.485). As it was imperative to me to explore how the individuals in my study *make sense of* and indeed *feel* about their experiences, Discourse Analysis was considered to be less fitting than IPA due to its emphasis upon the role of language in *construing* social reality, as opposed to focusing on understanding personal experience (Willig, 2003).

A further option that was considered was a Narrative analytical approach (Crossley, 2000a) for its emphasis upon the lived experience of individuals, especially in the context of identity re-negotiation (Collie, Bottorff & Long, 2006). Although sharing many epistemological features with IPA, narrative analysis is more interested in the content and structure of the stories that individuals tell rather than what these stories may reveal about the meaning-making attached to subjective experience. Furthermore, as opposed to IPA's very purpose of capturing the personal meaning and sense-making attributed to lived experiences, the core task of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is to construct theoretical explanations of psychological phenomena. As one of the reasons for implementing a qualitative rather than quantitative approach was to conduct novel research into the experiences of individuals who undertake PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training in the UK, I chose to bypass the need to fit human experiences into existing categories or theoretical literature (Dey, 1999) and thus Grounded Theory was discarded. However, Smith et al. (2009) note that it is feasible and indeed desirable, for an IPA researcher to conduct sufficient analysis for the development of group-level themes to emerge, thus moving beyond a simple description of the data obtained.

Finally, Harper (2008) states that, “...for clinical psychologists, their preferences for epistemological frameworks will probably be related to their preferred theoretical orientation” (p.433). He speculates that those who identify themselves as cognitive-behavioural will probably find a good fit in the epistemology of evidence-based practice derived from more quantitative methods. As I write this, I am currently undertaking final-year Clinical Psychology training specialist placements using systemic (children and families) and psychodynamic (adult) models. My preference for looking at wider systems and facilitating clients’ meaning-making processes therefore highlights a good fit with qualitative methodologies.

4.4 Participants

4.4.1 Recruitment

Purposive sampling utilises closely defined groups for whom the research question will be significant (Robson, 1993; Smith & Osborn, 2008), thus the sample in the present study comprised individuals who had experienced PBL as part of their Clinical Psychology training. Given that PBL is implemented in different forms across different disciplines and Clinical Psychology training programmes, I decided to recruit participants from one DCLinPsy training programme in the UK to ensure comparative homogeneity of their experiences (in line with IPA methodology; Smith et al., 2009).

In order to identify potential participants, I requested permission from the identified DCLinPsy course to contact current and previous Trainee Clinical Psychologists who had undertaken PBL as part of their training. I provided the course with copies of documentation that participants would receive to inform their written consent (see **Appendices 2, 3, 4 & 5**). My request was approved.

My initial e-mail to potential participants was then forwarded to the course administrators for dissemination (see **Appendix 2**). This e-mail briefly described the aims of the study and highlighted what input would involve. An in-depth information pack (see **Appendix 3**) was attached to the e-mail along with my contact details. Once a potential participant contacted me to express their interest, an interview was arranged in a location of their choice.

4.4.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Both my research supervisors and I felt that individuals who had completed the majority of their PBL exercises would have gained enough experience and understanding of the PBL process to the degree that their contributions would be valuable to this study and consistent with those who had fully completed their PBL exercises. As such, it was agreed that individuals who had completed either the entirety or the majority of the PBL portion of their training were to be approached. Due to my geographical location, a Clinical Psychology training programme in South-East England was identified for participant recruitment.

Four cohorts were approached to take part in the research, three had completed their PBL exercises and one had completed the majority. A further cohort was identified as eligible but were not approached as they had extensive doctoral commitments at that time.

Issues of social difference including gender, race, religion, class, culture, ethnicity, sexuality and spirituality did not play any role in the selection of participants for this study. Due to the minimum requirements to gain entry to Clinical Psychology training in the UK, all participants had attained at least an undergraduate degree and as a result were academically proficient and over 21 years of age.

4.4.3 The sample

Eight participants took part in the study fulfilling recommendations for doctoral-level IPA studies (Smith et al., 2009).

Participants' names were replaced with aliases in the write-up of this study and other participant characteristics were presented at the aggregate level (see **Table 1**) in order to preserve confidentiality

TABLE 1. PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS	
Number of participants	8
Age	Mid-twenties to mid-thirties
Gender	7 female; 1 male
Nationality	All UK Nationals

Training status	6: 2 nd year of training; 2: completed their training within the past two years
Participant aliases	Participant 1 – ‘EMILY’ Participant 2 – ‘MICHELLE’ Participant 3 – ‘PETER’ Participant 4 – ‘ANGELA’ Participant 5 – ‘OLIVIA’* Participant 6 – ‘ANN’ Participant 7 – ‘JEAN’ Participant 8 – ‘KATHLEEN’*

Table 1. Participant characteristics.

* **N.B:** *Participants who had completed their Clinical Psychology training.*

4.5 Ethical issues

4.5.1 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the present study was granted by the University of Hertfordshire Ethics Committee (School of Psychology), registration protocol number: PSY/01/12/L-MC (see **Appendix 4**). This research is also compliant with the BPS Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines (2009).

4.5.2 Informed consent

At the first point of contact an information pack (see **Appendix 3**) was provided detailing key information including the aims of the study, the benefits and risks of taking part, what their participation would involve and how their confidentiality would be preserved. At the time of the interview the information pack was then revisited and the individual was offered the opportunity to seek clarification and ask any questions. Individuals were also informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without giving a reason. They were then asked to provide their informed written consent (see **Appendix 5**) if they still wished to participate.

4.5.3 Confidentiality

Participants were provided with information about confidentiality and its limits both verbally and in writing (see **Appendix 3**).

Participants' identifying information was kept separately from the audio recordings as well as from the subsequent transcripts and analysis. All of these items were stored securely according to the University of Hertfordshire's 'Guide to Good Practice in Research' (2004). Participants were made aware that audio recordings would be kept for up to five years after my research is submitted for examination (until approximately June 2017), after which time they would be destroyed. The participants' training programme did not have access to any raw research data or identifying information. Participants were informed that the anonymised transcripts of their interview would be viewed by my research supervisors and members of a specific research methodology peer support group, as well as by academic and professional assessment bodies.

A transcriber was used to transcribe all of the interviews. The information pack and consent forms (see **Appendices 3 and 5**) informed participants that in the event of a transcription service being used, I would gain a signed non-disclosure / confidentiality agreement prior to giving the transcription service my recordings (see **Appendix 7**). Furthermore, all names and identifiable information were removed from the transcripts prior to transcription and replaced by alphabetic letters. The same transcriber was used for all interviews to ensure consistency of transcript preparation.

4.5.4 Potential distress

Some research participants have described the process of reflecting on their experiences as therapeutic (Birch & Miller, 2000; Colbourne & Sque, 2005; Murray, 2003; Nel, 2006). Within the present study, it was possible that participants would describe potentially upsetting group experiences such as instances of conflict, marginalisation or difference, which they could find distressing.

In order to minimise potential distress a number of safeguards were put in place. Participants were aware (see **4.5.2**) that the interview could be terminated at any time; they were also verbally informed that we could stop for a break at any point during the interview. My own work as a Trainee Clinical Psychologist means I have experience of managing emotional distress in a containing and empathetic manner. At the end of the interview participants were provided with time to debrief; they were also informed that they could

seek further emotional support from a qualified Clinical Psychologist (who was also the principle research supervisor).

4.6 Data collection

4.6.1 Pilot interviews

A semi-structured interview schedule (**Appendix 1**) was developed collaboratively with my supervisors using relevant literature and specialist IPA guidance (Smith et al., 2009). The questions within the interview schedule were devised to explore expectations and experiences of PBL and group working; the impact – if any, upon professional and personal development; and the experience of being interviewed by a peer. A pilot interview was conducted in order to test the interview schedule and obtain feedback regarding the interview process. The only modification identified by the pilot interviewee was the need to reword an awkwardly phrased question. In addition, I introduced Question 16 into the formalised interview schedule.

Furthermore, I was able to reflect that I did not feel wholly at ease with my research interview skills. McNair, Taft and Hegarty (2008) have noted that for the inexperienced qualitative researcher, inflexible question sequences can be present in early interviews. They emphasise the need for reflexivity in conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews. As such, my principle research supervisor supported this process of reflexivity by re-piloting my interview schedule with me as the interviewee rather than the interviewer, allowing me to gain an understanding of what it is like to be interviewed and how to develop prompts. I found this experience invaluable in developing and consolidating my research interview skills. These pilot interviews are not included in the main study.

4.6.2 Interviews within the main study

In line with the guidance given by Smith and Osborn (2008), the interview schedule was used flexibly in order to encourage detailed descriptive accounts and facilitate further probing of any areas of interest that may arise.

Participants were asked to choose an interview location in which they felt comfortable. Three chose to be interviewed in their homes; two on University premises; and three at

independent locations. Interviews lasted between 76 and 111 minutes and were audio-recorded and then transcribed, with all identifying information removed or concealed.

4.7 Data analysis

Data was analysed using established IPA procedures (Smith and Osborn, 2003; 2008; Smith et al., 2009) and were informed by guidelines for ensuring quality in qualitative research (Elliott et al., 1999; Yardley, 2000; 2008), alongside ongoing consultation with both of my research supervisors (both of which have extensive experience of IPA)

4.7.1 Variations of analysis with larger samples

The total duration of the audio-recorded interviews is 11 hours and 40 minutes. Although Smith et al. (2009) note that, "...successful analysis requires time, reflection and dialogue, and larger datasets tend to inhibit all of these things, especially amongst less experienced qualitative researchers" (p.52), they recognise that when a researcher is working with larger samples the intensity of analysis may not be as detailed. They state, "...in this case, the emphasis may shift more to assessing what were the key emergent themes for the whole group" (Smith et al., 2009, p.106).

Smith & Osborn (2008) have suggested that one can either perform case-by-case analyses or use themes from one case to orient the subsequent analyses. This is known as the idiographic approach to analysis, wherein a researcher begins with a single case design and compares the findings to other cases to work towards "...general categorisation or claims" (Smith & Osborne, 2003, p.66)

Consequently, in order to ensure the quality of my analyses whilst making the task of analysis more manageable, I combined these approaches by conducting in-depth case-by-case analyses for two transcripts with the themes emerging from these being used to guide the analyses for the other six transcripts. Thus, the data from participants 1 and 2 were included in the individual case-by-case analysis, resulting in a total of 3 hours 9 minutes worth of data. Analysis of data for participants 3-8 were guided by the themes emerging from the other two interviews, whilst being mindful of new themes that may emerge (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

4.7.2 Individual case analysis

Case-by-case analyses were carried out for participants 1 and 2 (Emily and Michelle) using the approach recommended by Smith et al. (2009). I listened to the audio-recordings and read the transcripts of the interviews several times, recording my initial notes and reactions in the middle column (See **Appendix 7** for sample analysis and audit trail). Anything that seemed interesting or significant were recorded in these notes, including descriptions, metaphors, language used, initial associations that came to my mind, similarities, contradictions and repetitions.

After this stage was complete the transcripts and initial notes and reactions were then re-read and analysed at a deeper, more conceptual level. Herein, I endeavoured to interpret what the participants were trying to communicate. The right-hand column was used to record emerging themes. This required moving to a higher level of abstraction, with interpretations being general enough to allow room for theoretical connections across cases to be made, whilst remaining grounded in the text (Smith & Osborn, 2008). In accordance with the phenomenological nature of IPA (Larkin et al., 2006), as far as possible, the words and phrases used by the participants themselves were adopted as labels for the emerging themes throughout each stage of the process.

The next stage involved searching for connections across emerging themes. Super-ordinate themes were created by merging and clustering emerging themes according to their underlying shared meanings. Next a table of the emergent themes was produced, comprising the super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes with corresponding text extracts. An example of the entire analytic process for one interview can be seen within **Appendix 7**. This process was used to analyse the transcripts for Emily and Michelle were and the resultant super-ordinate themes and related sub-theme clusters were examined and clustered together to produce a list of super-ordinate themes and their sub-ordinate themes across both participants (see **Table 2**).

4.7.3 Group level analysis

The themes elicited from the case-by-case analyses for Emily and Michelle were used to orient the analyses for participants 3- 8. This involved observing replication of themes within the data both in terms of convergences and divergences, whilst remaining open to the

emergence of new themes. After all analysis was complete, the themes were re-examined and refined to create a master list of themes with the development of corresponding subordinate themes for the group as a whole (see **Table 2**). Smith et al. (2009) suggest that an important method which can be used to enhance the validity of a study's findings is to take account of the frequency with which a theme recurs across cases (see **Appendix 8**).

4.8 Writing up

4.8.1 Quality and validity in qualitative research

Barker et al. (2002) suggest that conventional criteria for appraising the reliability and validity of quantitative research do not easily transfer onto qualitative approaches. Instead, specific criteria for evaluating qualitative studies (for example, Stiles, 1993; Yardley, 2000, 2008) is more helpful. Bespoke guidelines such as those produced by Elliott et al. (1999) have greater resonance for the task-at-hand as they have been generated for evaluating qualitative research within the field of Clinical Psychology. The eight principles described by Elliott et al. (1999) (owning one's perspective; situating the sample; grounding in examples; providing credibility checks; coherence; accomplishing general versus specific research tasks; and resonating with readers) were applied in the present study to ensure standards of quality and validity were being met.

To establish credibility and transferability in IPA studies, it is necessary to triangulate the analyses to generate findings which are meaningful to its readers (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Often triangulation refers to the convergences of data across sources or methods; however, it can also be used to describe convergences across perspectives (Yardley, 2008). Such convergences are considered to be an indication of the validity of research findings.

In the present study, triangulation occurred in two main ways: convergences of themes across the sample; and through the use of supervision and peer review. Throughout the analytic process, emerging themes as well as the coherence and comprehensibility of the analysis were discussed within supervision. My first interview as well as the related audit documentation were audited by one of my research supervisors (as outlined by Yin, 1989; cited in Smith et al., 2009), following my IPA process through to the generation of master themes. Additionally, my principle research supervisor examined the analysis from the first and second interviews as well as sections from the remaining interviews to ascertain the

validity of themes elicited. Both supervisors also checked my Results section and concurred that the elicited themes could be justified and were grounded within the transcripts, thus signifying credibility and sound trustworthiness of interpretations (Elliott et al., 1999; Stiles, 1993).

An IPA peer support group was established by a group of nine colleagues (including myself) who were all conducting IPA studies, with input from a Consultant Clinical Psychologist who is an experienced IPA researcher. A section of Participant 1's transcript was checked by two members of the IPA group to identify themes which were then compared with my own analysis, in order to ascertain whether corresponding themes had been observed. Since the themes that my peers had drawn out from the transcript were in accordance with my own, my analyses therefore appear to be a suitable reflection of the content and process contained within the interviews.

The philosophical connotations of triangulation have often been criticised as relying on a positivist assumption that there exists a singular, fixed truth to which results can be compared (Angen, 2000; Bloor, 1997; Seale, 1999). Alternatively, adopting a Social Constructionist perspective (Burr, 1995) towards triangulation wherein multiple realities exist and understanding is co-created, may lead to a richer understanding of the data obtained through the multiple perspectives that might emerge (Smith, 1996).

Finally, I chose to keep a reflexive journal throughout the research process in which I wrote about my thoughts, impressions, biases, emotions and personal reflections, as recommended by Smith (1999). Smith argues that the use of a reflexive journal mirrors the in-depth thinking and reflections expected of participants and by the researcher engaging in the same process, richer data will be uncovered. Supervision was also helpful in creating space for me to reflect on my journal entries, which in turn supported the development of reflexivity and interpretations.

4.9 Self-reflexivity in relation to the present study

It is imperative for qualitative researchers to engage in reflexivity and reflexive bracketing in considering how their own values, perspectives and experiences may influence the research process (Ahern, 1999; Elliot et al., 1999; Smith et al., 2009). This is particularly important

when conducting IPA research where the aim is to consider individuals' experiences and meaning-making within their individual contexts, prior to developing more general concepts (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, I present a précis of my reflections upon my experiences, values and meaning-making and how these influence my relationship with this research.

My personal experience of PBL was deeply meaningful. It provided me with the opportunity to play with my curiosities, work through difficulties, confront conflict, explore diversity and difference, but perhaps most importantly and poignantly it was a space where connection and creativity were both *valued* and *encouraged*. This framework enabled me to give myself permission to bring my vulnerabilities and fears to the PBL process, which felt immensely liberating. The concomitant experience of being valued, appreciated and respected by my PBL peers within this group process was profoundly validating. Validation not just on a cognitive or intellectual level (*'I think I'm good enough'*) but on an experiential and emotional level (*'I feel good enough'* and *'I feel that I belong'*). PBL thus came to feel quasi- and relationally- reparative for me. It is this sense of *self-acceptance*, which has resonated powerfully and stayed with me, that I believe led me to pursue this research.

As I have engaged in this research I have come to wonder at my repeated experience of 'stuckness' throughout the process of analysing and writing. A 'stuckness' characterised by excessive and exhaustive deliberation on transcripts or particular extracts, being pernickety over thematic titles, feeling confused and generally questioning my own ability to do justice to the participants' experiences. Of note, this feels incongruent with my approach outside of this research. Thus I came to wonder, what is my relationship with PBL and this research?

To understand this 'stuckness' I am drawn to my own beliefs about PBL, namely that the experiences are so exasperating, meaningful and complex, almost intangible, that they are extremely difficult for myself, and others, to articulate. I reflected intensely that if I could not even find the right words to represent my own experiences of PBL, how could I do it for the participants? This sense of 'stuckness' may also have been compounded by a personal desire for coherence, for things to be linear, for things to be approached and delivered chronologically. I have noticed myself craving for a connected, cohesive story of 'me' to be formed, whilst hiding the mess of incoherence and the journey of discovering this story from others. Thus, when I experienced a sense of disparity or incongruence in the participants'

stories, it paralysed me, preventing me from moving on until I had resolved or brought them back within a perceived logical narrative. It felt de-skilling to not be able to make sense of such perceived mess which left me feeling responsible and guilty for not doing their stories justice; emotions that further exacerbated my feelings of 'stuckness'.

I have come to recognise my desire to confront, expose and address things that are hidden in my own and, perhaps more unconsciously, others' stories; to make the unknown known, even though that can be scary, in order to acknowledge, manage and grow *through* the difficulties. Notably, this confrontation and exposure occurred in my PBL experiences. This process uncovered hidden aspects of me through the process of relating to other people. However, it led to an internal dilemma: wanting that knowledge of myself, but being intensely fearful of the potential for feeling exposed, de-skilled and ultimately vulnerable. Through the help of my peers and mentors, both within PBL and the wider training programme, I have been able to connect with my own history and my own vulnerabilities and moved towards developing a sense of acceptance: both of myself, and of others.

Thus, for me, the process of PBL was about being aware of this dilemma and the need to balance it. I have learnt to seek out others both within the PBL group and beyond, in order to make sense of me, within the process of relating with others. PBL has been a powerful catalyst which is why I sincerely hope to honour the personal meaning and gains I have made within the PBL process. Furthermore, being able to make sense of something which is seemingly intangible, incoherent and uncontained is something to which I am continually drawn. However, I am aware that whilst language *may* embody experience, there is also something in the nature of experience itself that is beyond articulation, conception and comprehension. As such my search for coherence and understanding has to be tempered or balanced with this realisation.

In reflecting upon and eventually writing down these personal reflections, I became stuck again. I found it challenging to find those same words to represent the PBL experience that I was no longer in. I came to realise that I struggled to find coherence within isolation. I needed peers to sit down with me and explore my experiences with me; I needed a co-creator, a narrator, a witness to my reflections. The 'other' helps me to make sense of myself - and this is precisely what happened within PBL. We made sense of ourselves,

through our interactions with each other. Reflecting now, I wonder if this is isomorphic of the participants' choice to be involved in this research; namely that they were also looking for a witness or co-constructor. Deconstructing this further, my pursuit of this thesis can also be understood as within isomorphism, namely that the research itself has symbolically become the witness. This is consistent with my experience in that PBL and particularly this research process has increasingly helped me to find a sense of self-acceptance.

Finally, as this research progressed I came to wonder, more specifically, at my reasons for pursuing this thesis area. I believe that language and meaning are co-created through interaction, thus, it was my 'secret' wish that by working together, my participants and I would be able to articulate, express and represent the personal meaning and significance of PBL; for them, for myself, and to the wider world. Furthermore, through the experience of the participants stumbling across the perfect words, might this vicariously facilitate the articulation of my own experience? I refer to a 'secret' wish because this realisation emerged surreptitiously but ardently throughout the research process, within the context of having the time and space to reflect upon my experiences. It is with this lens that I approached and undertook this research.

5.0 RESULTS

This section will present the findings of my Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the experiences of individuals who undertake PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training in the UK.

Four super-ordinate themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews:

- Intensity of the experience
- Striving towards connection versus fear of disconnection
- Responses to manage the experience(s) can be unhelpful and helpful
- Trying to make sense of PBL

The account presented here is the result of a thorough analysis of the data, but nevertheless represents one possible construction of the phenomenon of being an individual who has undertaken PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training. The double hermeneutic is acknowledged, wherein I am trying to make sense of my participants who are in turn trying to make sense of their experiences (Elliott et al., 1999; Giddens, 1987; Larkin et al., 2006; see section 4.9). This could conceivably mean that for another researcher, somewhat different themes may have emerged. However, I would hope that my efforts to present a methodical and rigorous account of the analyses will allow the reader to make their own credibility checks (Elliott et al., 1999). Furthermore, in line with Yardley's (2000; 2008) principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research, *sensitivity to context* will be demonstrated by using numerous verbatim extracts from the participants' transcripts to support the findings of my analysis. This will ensure that the participants' voices are placed at the centre of this study whilst also allowing the reader to check the interpretations that have been made (Elliott et al., 1999).

Due to word restrictions, it will not be possible to include every aspect from each of the eight participants' rich accounts of their experiences. In the writing of this Results section I have attempted to represent and negotiate the convergence, divergence, commonality and individuality that are portrayed within and across themes. As described above, within this

section I have used verbatim⁹ quotes from the participants with which to illustrate my themes. **Appendix 8** provides an overview of the representation of themes across the eight participants. The four super-ordinate themes and their related sub-ordinate themes (see **Table 2: Super-Ordinate Themes**) will be described and explored throughout this section.

TABLE 2. SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES
<p>Theme 1: INTENSITY OF THE EXPERIENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It's not a concrete thing; you can't pin it down ● The group context as a catalyst for exposing and developing from difficulties ● You can't escape Pandora's Box
<p>Theme 2: STRIVING TOWARDS CONNECTION VERSUS FEAR OF DISCONNECTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It becomes very tribal ● People bring to the group their previous experiences of relating ● The desire to impress and be validated
<p>Theme 3: RESPONSES TO MANAGE THE EXPERIENCE(S) CAN BE UNHELPFUL AND HELPFUL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can't talk about these things ● The facilitator can be invaluable ● Learning to connect to the struggle in order to grow
<p>Theme 4: TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF PBL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The value of reflective spaces ● Parallels with group therapy ● Applications of PBL to MDT working

Table 2. Super-ordinate themes

⁹ The verbatim quotes included in the following Results section have been revised to facilitate readability. Specifically:

- Parts of extracts which have been deleted for readability have been denoted by brackets (...).
- Repeated words, minor hesitations and words such as 'umm' have been deleted.
- Pauses have been indicated by

Furthermore, the confidentiality of participants has been preserved by removing all identifying information and replacing names with aliases.

Additionally, my personal reflections will be interspersed throughout this section in order to elucidate the contribution of my personal reflexivity to the research process.

5.1 Theme 1: Intensity of the experience

Overview

The first super-ordinate theme captures the intensity and seeming inescapability of the PBL experience and its reverberations within both the group and participants' personal emotional lives. There appears to be a struggle to put this intensity into words. For example, participants use metaphors including Pandora's Box, roller coasters and roundabouts to describe the unpredictable yet alluring nature of PBL. This struggle to articulate the meaning of PBL eases over the course of the interview; the more they talk and attempt to articulate their experiences, the more able they are to select meaningful language to express their underlying experiences. They also describe competing desires to engage with, yet also escape from the emotional intensity within the process. This intensity seems to arise both internally and within group contexts.

5.1.1 It's not a concrete thing; you can't pin it down

This theme speaks to a struggle towards sense-making and how emotional experiences cannot be fully communicated via language, which I personally reflected upon within my self-reflexivity account in section 4.9. We are invited into sharing the participants' difficulty in describing and making-sense of PBL, in which a sense of uncertainty or insecurity within the process prevails. This uncertainty appeared to result in intense emotions for some of the participants. However, this struggle appeared to reduce over the course of each interview, with participants increasingly using metaphor and imagery in order to provide a bridge to a common understanding around the PBL experience.

"PBL - it's not a concrete thing; you can't pin it down. It's an emotional thing...sometimes it's an academic thing but I think the emotional aspect makes it difficult to define or put a label on it." (Michelle)

Here, Michelle describes the intangible and ever-changing nature of PBL whilst speculating that it is the emotional aspect of PBL that results in it defying ease of expression. She also uses visual images to convey this intangibility, perhaps because she has not yet acquired the language necessary in order for to articulate her experiences.

Conversely, Peter is explicit about his use of metaphor to illuminate something that is so difficult to describe.

“I think again I’ll probably use a metaphor ‘cos it’s really hard to explain. I’d say it’s like training to run the marathon in that you know it’s gonna happen, you’re training as part of it and it’s that getting up on Sundays when you really don’t wanna go for that run today, I really can’t be arsed with this right now, but you still have to do it...” (Peter)

Peter’s use of a ‘marathon’ metaphor conjures up images of effort, emotional exhaustion and anticipatory anxiety. This speaks to a perceived on-going intensity of the experience

This emotional intensity, alongside a struggle with language, is further exemplified through Emily. She engages in an emotional dialogue with me, in her attempts to describe her experiences of PBL.

“For all of the talking I like to do on an intellectual level, it means more to feel something on a real level, like...It’s not about theory, it’s not about big words; it’s basic, simple, so simple it’s hard to define, yeah. Maybe there’s not a word for it yet (laughs).”

Interviewer – “If you could make up a word then, what would it be?”

“Oh God! (laughs) for what bit, the awakening? Erm...Oh God, like make up my own word or use an existing word?”

Interviewer – “It’s up to you...”

“Oh God, now I’ve just got random words coming into my head that make no sense...”

Interviewer – “Like what?”

“Jamboree! I dunno where the hell that word came from! (both laugh). Yeah maybe sum it up as like a facial expression in like (laughing), how do you describe that? It’s like a gasp, it’s like a gasp and an intake at the same time (laughs), it’s a...”

Interviewer – “And if you were to put that into words...?”

“A gasp-take.”

Interviewer – “A gasp-take?! And what’s the gasp-take about? What are you gasping about and what are you in-taking?”

“Oh God, erm you’re gasping for air ‘cos you can’t breathe but you’re taking something in but you don’t know what you’re taking in and it’s coming out at the same time so you’re kind of, you’re doing it kind of before you know you’re doing it. You’re embodying it, you’re part of it before you fully inhaled it ‘cos it’s inside you but you don’t know it is. (...) It’s there, it’s in-

between, it's not in you or outside of you, it's between you. It's both at the same time, yes."
(Emily)

The way Emily engages in this conversation seems to highlight the difficulty articulating the experience (with her repetitive use of 'Oh God' and her pauses for thought). We can also see within the very process of speaking out about this, how she creatively and eloquently names her experience as a 'gasp-take'.

Below, Olivia expresses mock ridicule at my invitation for her to define PBL, perhaps signifying her difficulty in describing PBL. She then moves our understanding of the un-concrete nature of PBL in a different direction, ascribing a 'sneaky' nature to PBL through the use of a reference to a Ronseal paint advertisement tagline ('it does exactly what it says on the tin'), contrasting that PBL is not like this. This hints at a perceived hidden, devious aspect of PBL and furthers the idea of PBL being an uncertain, unpredictable and somewhat feared experience even though at other times it seems valued.

Interviewer – "Could you describe what happens in PBL, in your own words?"

"It's a ridiculous question, Louise! (both laugh). It was...sneaky - you know? It was...not what it said on the tin! Erm, so we were given a vignette but it never felt like that was the purpose of PBL, not for me, and I think not for a lot of people. (Olivia)

The idea of PBL not being about 'the task' is supported by a number of participants, as the following extract highlights. In contrast to Olivia, here Kathleen identifies the usefulness of it being set up in a way to generate uncertainty.

"Well we learnt pretty quickly that it wasn't just about the task and I think although it felt at the time very uncertain and anxiety-provoking not knowing what it was about, I think it was important for it to be like that and for it not to be imposed upon you, what it's about, for you then to discover your own route through it." (Kathleen)

Angela highlights the wider impact this inability to express the experience of PBL within language may have upon trainees. She pronounces her exasperation with and isolation from people outside of clinical training (and PBL) as not being able to fully grasp what PBL *is* and the emotional impact that this has on those undertaking it.

“I think just, it’s so hard to explain, I think people (laughs) within PBL know what you mean but sometimes it’s really hard to put into words the experience of what happens. I come home and my partner says, ‘what’s wrong?’, and I reply ‘ah...PBL’, and he was like, ‘well, what happened?’ and I was like, ‘nothing really bad’. It’s just - I don’t really like answering questions because it’s hard to put into words.” (Angela)

Here one wonders what impact a difficult PBL experience might have if there is no outlet to discuss and articulate the experience outside of the group, particularly if the group is not supportive or cohesive or is unwilling to have difficult conversations, as highlighted later by Ann (see **5.3.1**).

5.1.2 The group context as a catalyst for exposing and developing from difficulties

“I think it’s kind of a like a love-hate relationship but I guess the term ‘PB-Hell’ kind of brings out the more hate aspect because nobody ever calls it ‘PB-Love’. ‘PB-Love’...ha!” (Angela)

This excerpt captures the pervasive ‘love-hate’ reputation of PBL amongst participants through a play on words, i.e. ‘PBL’ becoming known, perhaps affectionately, as ‘PB-Hell’. One might consider why it is that whilst this excerpt infers that PBL is also valued or revered in some way, the focus of stories and shared experiences is upon difficult aspects of PBL. These more difficult aspects almost become folklore amongst other peers who undertake PBL, as the term ‘PB-Hell’ attests to.

Strong emotions often go hand-in-hand with opposing experiences. Both Angela and Emily speak of the love-hate dynamic around PBL, with the ‘hellish’ experience that Angela describes above being contrasted within Emily’s account below.

“With the last PBL there were highs and there were lows; so there was literally one session when (...) I was just like, ‘this is amazing, I love this group!’. We were all saying to each other that this is the best session we’ve ever had and ‘oh look at us all bonding’ and we made decisions, and it was fun, and it was painless and we were able to deal with real issues and be real people and I was on a proper high (...). I was like ‘awww (...) I’ve got the best PBL group ever’, not in a competitive way but, ‘I love my PBL group!’ and my boyfriend was making fun

of that and (laughs) and then he tortured me with it by going, the next week, 'oh do you still love your PBL group?' and I was like 'uurrrhhh, not quite'. You don't fall in and out of love with them but when the pressure gets...you know, you have to make decisions and you can get a bit snappy with people (...)" (Emily)

The symbolic parallel between relationships and PBL is stark, perhaps indicating that PBL is a relational endeavour. Some of the difficulties that are experienced by group members within PBL, and which Angela makes reference to above, are reflected in the following extracts.

On a group level:

"It just felt so compressed. It felt so intense that you just needed to breathe afterwards and the deadline...you could've worked on this presentation for the whole three years in all honesty...it was never gonna be finished...So you would work *so* hard, right up 'til the last few minutes...pulling things together and then...that bit was done and you didn't have to be in a room with those people for hours at a time anymore, you didn't have to struggle making decisions, you didn't have to take other people's feelings into account in the same way or watch other people trying to take your feelings into account. And it was just, 'okay let's put it away until next time'." (Olivia)

"Er, emotionally, angry erm, excited, happy - yeah I think angry when things are like trudging through thick mud and then excited at the beginning when you get the cases and excited when it comes to doing the actual presentation. It's a cliché, but it's a real roller coaster of emotions; like one day to the next could be completely different. So one session can be really good and stimulating and exciting and funny, good humour and then another one can be just - yeah - you come away just going, 'I hate you lot', (both laugh). 'I really hate you lot', which is obviously not true." (Peter)

"What happens in PBL? My mind is thinking about storms and I think it's a little bit chaotic and everything gets turned a little bit upside down and people do lots of shifting and adapting and resisting." (Michelle)

The language within these excerpts evokes strong images of group experiences as being unpredictable, suffocating, and characterised by intense interpersonal struggles. Olivia, Peter and Michelle all describe a desire to escape these pressures as well as the emotional

intensity of the experience, whilst feeling unable to do so until each PBL exercise has concluded. Perhaps this intensity is inevitable given that there is no escape from the PBL process. All trainees must contribute and be in attendance at the presentation, and students must pass the presentation and reflective essay to progress through the course. Participants must also attend, and be engaged with the PBL process on group and individual levels to attain their doctoral qualification. One wonders what impact this might have on those who dislike distress. We can see this theme develop further below:

On an individual level:

“The group exposes vulnerabilities (sighs) like, the vestige of embarrassment...that lingering sense that...I was so not in control of myself and my emotional stuff and a bit embarrassed that I couldn't work it out either.” (Olivia)

“(...) it's been a bit of a catalyst but I don't necessarily see that as a negative thing. It's just my relationship to emotions. There's been times when it's just like 'aaaw, I can't escape from this, why have I always gotta think about myself? Why is everything related to me?' (Emily)

Within these descriptions, Emily and Olivia speak almost as though they are uncovering their relationship with their own vulnerabilities through relating with the material, or others, in a group context. Whilst in the midst of such a process, it may feel as though one has a lack of control over one's self which may lead to an outward focus of upset or anger in order to mask or manage the deep personal pain underneath.

5.1.3 You can't escape Pandora's Box

“Hopes and fears at the beginning. Erm (sighs). It's quite difficult to put yourself back there. It's almost like Pandora's Box: once you've opened it (...) you can't go back (...) you can't un-know what you know now.” (Emily)

In the hesitation and sigh when Emily first describes this, one can almost experience a sense of foreboding in what might be uncovered. Yet the temptation is strong. Here, Emily describes the dilemma of Pandora's Box in which she experiences the temptation to explore what is hidden from her, the consequence of which is acceptance of having to deal with

what one might find. Emily feels irrevocably changed by the insights and understanding that PBL brings, and that she can never return to a position of *not knowing*. We will see Emily's journey with this as the Results section unfolds.

The allure of taking such a journey of discovery is further elucidated by Michelle.

“I think we did think about PBL as being like a children's roundabout - you know, the ones where you'd get on and someone would run and spin it as fast as they could... there would be a lot of excitement and a lot of emotional things and that would feel like you were kind of going faster and faster and it's really exciting and then (laughs), the feeling of sickness and...and...feeling like yeah, you don't wanna be there anymore, you've had enough you wanna get off the roundabout but the roundabout is really attractive and it's kind of exciting and fun, so you're drawn back in often, but it's hard to maintain that level of excitement and enjoyment and often the more excitement and enjoyment you have, the more sick there is. That was kind of our roundabout.” (Michelle)

As with Pandora's Box Michelle describes a desire to engage with the PBL process despite the “...feeling of sickness...” that may ensue. In addition, she speaks to the circular process of PBL in which initial excitement is challenged by emotional intensity which, although difficult at the time, encourages Michelle to re-engage in the process due to the new learning and understandings that she gains. It seems that PBL is described here with almost an addictive quality. In spite of the inability to escape the process, it seems that the allure of excitement and enjoyment of joining in with others is strong.

Let us now revisit this desire to escape the emotional intensity. This is paralleled in Jean's account, where she describes that in the midst of PBL, she feels stuck in a place which she cannot escape from.

“If you ask me in the middle of doing PBL how I felt about it, it might be different.”

Interviewer – “What kind of things do you think you'd say then?”

“I'd say it's horrible, get me out of here! (laughs)” (Jean)

It appears that Jean feels as though she is powerless within the emotional intensity, with the call to get her out of here suggesting a need for other people to help her to escape from this

place. It is no wonder given there is no choice, as trainees have to participate in PBL. Perhaps this is where a certain kind of dependence upon working with the group, or with the facilitator, is required in order to work through the difficulties and thus move on.

For Jean and Olivia, there was a sense of fear and trepidation at the thought of opening Pandora's Box:

"I am a person who 'does'. But I don't know that I would've made the leap in all honesty when it came to it. It's just too unpredictable. (...) it's like starting a fire. If you're not sure you can contain it, you better be able to run away and there's no running away from clinical training, unless you drop out and I don't think any of us were up for that idea. Erm so, I think I found it really frustrating and also very sensible in some ways, to not start the fire." (Olivia)

"There is explicit talk about how it is important to be vulnerable or ... [to] demonstrate emotion that is considered, real."

Interviewer – "And what kind of emotions are considered real?"

"I'd say probably sadness and tearfulness are acceptable, they come first, and then other emotions probably closely follow. But I'm not so sure about anger." (Jean)

Both Olivia and Jean describe the perceived acceptability of what is allowed to be expressed within PBL and consequently, a choice to not engage with the emotional intensity or challenges of PBL (this is expanded further within **5.3.1**). Olivia describes the inescapability and unpredictability of PBL and clinical training, which perhaps does not give her the safety to 'play with matches'. This suggests an avoidance of anything which might upset the balance, for example, speaking out within the group about internal or relational experiences. In addition, there is a fear of emotions running out of control and of becoming overwhelmed. Jean focuses upon a fear of her vulnerabilities not being validated or accepted within the group context, especially if they are expressed in ways which aren't deemed to be socially acceptable (i.e. frustration or anger).

As with Pandora's Box, even if you do not open the box, it will continue to have an impact due to the knowledge of its existence.

5.2 Theme 2: Striving towards connection versus fear of disconnection

Overview

This theme describes the desire for connection within groups and the impact of the processes used to achieve this cohesion. Despite the non-hierarchical structure of PBL groups, somehow power structures and struggles can evolve within and between groups. The participants describe the 'tribal' nature of PBL groups, which foster intra-group and inter-group connectedness and competitiveness. Individuals' previous ways of relating were also discussed, along with individual and group desires to impress and be validated. Finally, the desire for a cohesive group identity via minimising the appearance of group conflict is also explored.

5.2.1 It becomes very tribal

"(...) it almost becomes a bit tribal (...); I don't know whether (...) in order to be like a cohesive group you almost need an out-group in order to create that. So it's like an 'us and them' and it becomes very tribal and almost like competitive and it's like 'sshhh sshhh sshhh don't say anything in front of them'. And it's not like you're going to steal anyone's ideas but you're very careful at being kept in close quarters and you don't want anyone to find out what you're doing." (Emily)

This quote speaks about looking outwards in order to form a cohesive group identity; defining the self by defining the other. It seems that this 'us and them' dynamic resulted in feelings of competition and threat whenever an outsider was perceived to be encroaching upon the group's identity and boundaries. This idea of PBL groups as 'tribes' is furthered by Angela, wherein the label placed with her PBL group is embraced.

"I'm a bit competitive and we've got a bit of a label for being the kind of 'different group', so I like to kind of, I find myself wanting to keep to that for some reason or another." (Angela)

Olivia and Kathleen describe the forming of group bonds and connectedness through shared social activities. Olivia speaks of the meaning attached to sharing food, whereas Kathleen describes social drinking, shared spaces and activities as bonding experiences which in turn, helped her PBL group to work well together.

"I think [food] was a way for us to try and bond to try and be a group, I think it's a real cultural thing isn't it - it's like the sharing of food, the eating together and I think especially in the beginning when we're trying to get to know each other - you know?...there were some really nice moments (...)" (Olivia)

"There were some hangovers, I think!"

Interviewer – "Is that part of the PBL process?"

"Well it was part of our process. There was quite a bit of wine consumed throughout. And food. Food was a big part of the process!"

Interviewer – "What does having wine or food together do for your group?"

"It was a shared experience and it brings a more sociable side to PBL, than kind of just meeting in the library or something. We would meet at each other's houses and it would be part doing some work and part of it would be just relaxing and connecting with each other and I dunno, just friendship. We were working on our relationships with each other, which I suppose then helped with the task." (Kathleen)

Peter talks about the function of in- and out- groups within the confines of individual PBL groups. He speaks to the value (rather than the hindrance) of the format of PBL, in which the group remains constant and individuals cannot avoid each other, eventually having to confront their interpersonal difficulties if they want to move forwards.

"People definitely avoid others when it's harder - I think some people put others in a side group as a means of just keeping it together. But actually, if they talk about stuff then they can have some common ground, but then again, if you start talking about other stuff, that's when people then feel that they're not quite as close to the other people as they don't share the same view. So I think being stuck in the group is important - I think...it allows people to just stay with it rather than just go, 'I've had enough of this'." (Peter)

Below Kathleen speaks to the wider experiences of groups. The group dynamics that occur within PBL mirror real life group experiences; although, within doctoral Clinical Psychology training there are *regular, timetabled* reflective spaces to think about these interpersonal dynamics that play out within the group. Kathleen links her learning from PBL to the 'real world' and her current work (she is now a qualified Clinical Psychologist).

“I think it was really helpful in putting you in the thick of an experiential sense of group processes and working through those and I guess also the exploration of the clinical material. And so I think it was a really helpful part of training, I think perhaps what may have been unhelpful was that it did seem to be divisive in my cohort anyway (...). But I suppose the experience of that divisiveness is an experience...which I guess parallels stuff in the real world outside of Uni.”

Interviewer – “Have you noticed that in other groups outside of University, now that you’re qualified and working out there?”

“(silence and exhales), Erm...definitely. I think there is something about having an identity as a group or a team which then I suppose becomes competitiveness or whatever between different teams and I suppose...yeah, similar processes [to PBL].” (Kathleen)

We move next onto a consideration of the relational aspect of PBL.

5.2.2 People bring to the group their previous experiences of relating

In the first extract below, Michelle speculates that people bring to the group their previous experiences of relating. For her, these previous ways of relating could often be met with confusion, frustration and avoidance, due to other group members seeing these ways of relating in isolation, and not within their context of origin.

“...I think often for our group, disagreements happen when people bring their previous experiences of relating and their personal situations that are causing kind of extra stress, into the room. And often, almost their way of relating to the person that they’re having stress with outside of PBL, comes into the room with us and it’s quite difficult to deal with as a group. I think people don’t really know what to do or say so they sort of back away a bit really.” (Michelle)

Peter also talks of bringing his previous ways of relating to the PBL context, in which he typically adopts a task-orientated role when confronted with anxiety. He views anxiety as a contagion, and so feels he is adopting a role for others as well as himself, perhaps in an attempt to solve it. However, his experience of PBL is challenging the automaticity of adopting this position, with Peter reconsidering the value of such a role.

"I think all of the emotions affect how I am in the group, I think the anxiety may affect me, yeah, I think when I'm more anxious [and other people are anxious or appear anxious as well] I've always moved to a more task-focused position and a bit more of a prominent role...Not necessarily that others liked it, but that position happens and so I've always had it, so it's hard to think about whether or not I wanna be in it or did I not and I think it's a match that people you know, it worked for me and it worked for them but I dunno...after that I'm not sure." (Peter)

Interestingly, Ann also brings with her preconceived ideas about others' relatedness, in which she believes that women within her PBL group attempted to 'protect' a male member of her group from "woman stuff" such as "emotion". They also define the male group member's position, one wonders if it was his position or theirs.

"There were...huge gender dynamics in our group. I think us women wanted to protect the male member of our group from all of this 'woman stuff' (laughs). We wanted to protect him from...emotion (long silence)...yeah."

Interviewer – "What do you think would have happened if you didn't?"

"I think he would have found it incredibly frustrating." (Ann)

As with Peter's description above, Olivia's quote below speaks of a sense of automaticity in ways of relating. She gives us an indication that the reason why people might occupy the roles that they're used to occupying is to avoid discomfort and explosions, perhaps caused by the uncertainty inherent in attempting to adopt an alternative role.

"I just think I'm a leaper. It's one of those things that you keep wanting to draw back it just doesn't always make very much sense and I'm not quite in control of it (laughs) you know there, there comes a point where I'm just too, it is literally just too uncomfortable to keep something in."

Interviewer – "What would happen if you did try to keep it in?"

"Oh I might explode! There'd be a shocking mess (both laugh)! Like, just the discomfort, erm." (Olivia)

Here one can sense that it is no wonder that there is such an intense emotional experience. The experiences can be overwhelming and too much to bear and are thus expressed as a

means of relieving them, of reducing the pressure within the pressure cooker that might otherwise explode.

5.2.3 The desire to impress and be validated

This theme speaks to a sense of a group desire to impress and be validated both by peers and those seen as being in positions of power. Angela describes a dynamic around receiving praise, in which she very much appreciated and valued the praise but also felt this resulted in high expectations being placed upon her group. In addition, she speaks of this expectation being internalised within and between group members. Conversely, Emily speaks of being proud of her group and wanting this feeling to be validated through others, both in terms of praise and positive comparisons.

“We’ve been praised in feedback for having a balance between (...) content and process - and who doesn’t like a bit of praise?! I think that generally we’ve had good feedback and people have said quite exciting things - that they’ve really enjoyed watching our [presentation] and it’s really adventurous...when someone says that you wanna do the same again or you wanna be better (...). I think personally I end up expecting of myself what others expect of me.”
(Angela)

“It does become quite rivalrous and there’s a lot of comparing and thinking ‘are we doing it the right way?’, ‘is our group better?’. So that puts a lot of pressure on the presentation and also when you feel like you’re doing really good stuff in the sessions, you want people to see that, so when you feel proud of what you’ve done, you wanna be able to get that across to people.” (Emily)

Michelle also speaks of the desire to impress, in which she views the pressure of PBL as a cause of problems and then avoiding subsequent problems in order to portray a ‘perfect group’ to pass her group’s presentation; it is almost as if this is viewed as the point of PBL.

“We’ve got time [within our] families for things to stew and get dealt with whereas in PBL everyone feels under so much pressure to get everything done that if you create a problem - people seem to think it’s about coming back to be evaluated and people think being cohesive and all getting along will help us to pass the final presentation so I guess it’s that that makes it very different.” (Michelle)

There is a sense in Michelle's account that avoiding issues may not be helpful, in that the way of relating in PBL differs to that within a family where you might have time to deal with issues that arise. However, for Ann, we hear a different experience.

"I think we all felt really kind of pleased with ourselves as a group because the other two groups were kind of told they'd missed the point a bit [in their presentations] and we kind of ticked all the boxes and we were really praised for having got it right ...I think we are quite a creative group of people and that's the best thing about our group, it's the creativity and it's the humour. But it's funny - we can't create anything between ourselves (laughs) ... we need something 'out there'." (Ann)

Emily and Olivia take this need for validation and praise to an individual level, within the PBL group itself. Emily describes a fear of not being valued within her group if an idea she offered was rejected, whilst Olivia speaks of being 'good enough' in multiple contexts.

"... it might make you feel a bit left out or you know if you're making decisions and someone doesn't take up your idea that might make you feel not that valued." (Emily)

"Even when things weren't what we hoped for, it was important that [the presentation] could be good enough."

"...that we as a group could get along well enough, that we could be good enough individually in the group, that we would be good enough at... the reflecting stuff... I think it always comes back to being good enough..." (Olivia)

It is almost as if this desire to be 'good enough' drives the need to impress, as if it is a means of acquiring and connecting with a sense of validation.

5.3 Theme 3: Responses to manage the experience(s) can be unhelpful and helpful

Overview

This theme describes the different responses and strategies individuals adopted to manage the intensity and emotional impact associated with their PBL experiences (as described in the previous super-ordinate themes), particularly the arduous and complex emotional work on both group and individual levels and the prerequisites for effective PBL group facilitation.

5.3.1 I can't talk about these things

Participants identified a key strategy of avoidance in terms of not wanting to talk about personal things, as well as not being able to talk about things outside of the group due to issues of trust and loyalty. These aspects link with 5.2.1 ('It becomes very tribal') and the latter parts of 5.2.2 ('People bring to the group their previous experiences of relating'): whilst the avoidance may help foster a cohesive but false group identity, the difficulty of talking to those outside of the group may endanger this cohesiveness.

Angela and Olivia both speak of the fear of discussing unspoken emotions and experiences within the group; a dynamic seems to exist where feelings have an impact whether they're spoken about or not (paralleling issues within 5.1.3 – 'You can't escape Pandora's Box').

"I can just feel if something's not right or if somebody is there but kind of not really there or they've got something to say and they can't say it." (Angela)

"It was alright to talk about the task; it was not okay to talk about how we felt about each other. It was not okay to talk about the roles we took in the group and how other people felt about those positions." (Olivia)

Here one can sense the tension build with this inability to speak out. Ann and Emily disclose the feelings of mistrust that develop when discussions occur outside of the group and the impact this has on group cohesiveness.

"...other groups have had very different styles of facilitation and perhaps emotions have felt more encouraged...We don't tend to or I don't tend to talk about PBL that much outside of

PBL, and I think that's partly because I feel so awful about the fact that I believe at least a couple in my group are talking about it outside in a negative way so I wouldn't really want to do that knowing how that feels." (Ann)

"... you feel like you can't really talk about it because of these loyalties and if you talk to someone who's in a different group, are you betraying the trust of the people in your group?" (Emily)

Here one can see differing reasons underlying a similar difficulty of speaking out. To develop this further, both Emily and Olivia speak of the role of safety and self-protection when disclosing within PBL. Emily refers to an external pull towards disclosing versus an internal desire to stay safe, wherein she previously saw herself as a risk-taker and able to speak out and be 'out there'. However, upon experiencing a personal crisis, she felt great anxiety and vulnerability at 'baring her soul' in the group context.

"When I was going through, I wouldn't say a personal crisis, but it felt like it was all a bit sensitive and everything was going off in every area of my life, everything was relating to my background and stuff like that, I felt like 'Oh my God, I don't wanna talk about these things, I don't wanna present on these things' and I could relate a bit more to some people's positions of not wanting to go there and not wanting to bare your soul. But until I had that experience I couldn't fully see it. I was just like, you know, 'you're supposed to be 'out there', that means you're learning and being open and being honest' - but you need to protect yourself as well." (Emily)

Here one can see that connecting with personal issues can hinder the likelihood of speaking out, even when it is valued. For Olivia, there was an internal desire to take risks and speak out but this is hampered by others' fear of doing so. Olivia then goes on to state the need to take personal risks in order to address difficulties, whilst accepting the discomfort that this may bring.

"Hmmm, I think just the difficulty in knowing what was okay to talk about and what wasn't and that was not a difficult incident it was the theme I think that was around for us a lot of the time and manifested in various ways but there was this ongoing theme of what people felt safe to say and what they didn't and I'm a person that doesn't really worry about whether things are safe or not I just say it because actually it's too uncomfortable not to say

it. So it was a real frustration for me this, this notion, and I was like ‘what do you think is going to happen and at what point do you just take a leap?’ And you know there comes a point where it doesn’t really matter whether it’s safe or not, if something is getting in the way then it needs to be addressed and you have to take a bit of responsibility for your own safety.” (Olivia)

The belief in speaking out seems to be in stark contrast to those held by others within the group. Indeed, Olivia’s aspiration is met with disappointment and possibly frustration when she realises that for this group, the prevailing resolution is to simply accept that issues cannot be resolved, as we can see in the quote below.

“I think partly ‘cos of the group I had, it was very difficult to talk about some things. We would talk about talking and then not really talk about things so it felt like things were never truly resolved and often the resolution was the acceptance that things could not be resolved and actually that was quite an uncomfortable feeling for me for a lot of the time. And then that required the different level of acceptance, that I was just going to feel uncomfortable, you know?” (Olivia)

5.3.2 The facilitator can be invaluable

Participants described the value of facilitated reflection in being able to name difficulties in order to work through them as well as in bringing words to meaning.

A number of participants described the positive experiences of their group facilitator. Emily reported that her facilitator was invaluable in scaffolding (Schaffer, 2003; White, 2007) and modelling difficult conversations around group process issues, as well as respecting and valuing others’ experiences within the group.

“...our group were really able to talk about process issues and (...) I think the facilitator was really helpful in (...) scaffolding us to be able to do that, to be able to have those conversations...and focus on what we individually brought to the whole process and to remember that we need to value what everyone brings and not fight against it.” (Emily)

Kathleen takes this further, viewing her facilitator as a containing force who was emotionally in tune with the group’s experience, to the extent that she was still a containing influence

even when she wasn't physically with her group. Kathleen goes on to state that it was the facilitator's emotional investment in the group that stayed with and contained her emotional experience.

"...there may be something about the containing force of our facilitator...I think there was something containing about our facilitator even though they wouldn't necessarily meet with us that often." (Kathleen)

"There was something about her having an investment in the group and that, hmm, caring and having faith in us that we could do it and work through whatever. I think it's difficult to language it, she wouldn't necessarily come and make interpretations as to what was going on and things like that, it would be more helping us to do it, just asking questions and helping us to stand back, (silence) but just, it just felt like she had a confidence in us." (Kathleen)

It seems that the facilitator enabled the group members to develop autonomy and confidence in their own abilities by asking strategic questions and allowing them to generate their own ideas, believing that they have the ability to do this rather than giving them the answers.

Olivia identifies availability, naming difficulties and normalising experiences as highly valued aspects of the facilitation of her group.

Interviewer – "And were there any unhelpful aspects about doing PBL as part of your clinical training?"

"Oh it hurt! (interviewer laughs) It really hurt!"

Interviewer – "Where did it hurt?"

"Everywhere!! (both really laughing). I didn't enjoy it, like my head hurt and like I was always so thirsty I could never have uurrhhh, just you know, managing breaks and trying to find enough time, trying to organise you know, a group of people and I think looking at the whole cohort I think there were some facilitators that were much accessible than others and I felt lucky with ours 'cos we could say, 'can you come in and help us?' and she would and we could say, 'can you go away now?' and she would. But I don't think other groups had that you know?"(Olivia)

"[Our facilitator] would think *with* us and sometimes *for* us, and she helped to name things and she helped make it less all about us in some ways, you know? A sense that other groups struggled, that this is part of the process, this is a normal experience, maybe you lot are worse than everyone else, but you know; this is normal! And I think that was really helpful to feel like, okay, well if other groups have got through it then we can too and we'll just find a way to bumble along. It helped us to keep going, certainly." (Olivia)

Conversely, some participants described more negative experiences of their PBL group facilitator. Peter speaks of the uncertainty inherent within PBL, and that the lack of availability of his facilitator deepened the feelings of not being contained and held in mind.

"The facilitator was not so available earlier on and we probably needed them to be for various reasons ... so it meant it was more difficult for them to get to know us and for us to get to know them and to know what their role was, to provide a bit of security or safety in a new situation, and around the same time we had a lot of challenges and uncertainty within the group and I think that's been really difficult. So every group talks about uncertainty in PBL and the process but actually our group had a lot of uncertainty on top of that, and our group set-up just didn't seem to be like other groups' just on the very basic level of having a facilitator there at set times, having meetings set up and people attending, having a solid group membership that stayed [with this] group throughout so I think that's been the main challenge." (Peter)

Within this quote one gets the sense that the early stages of PBL are crucial in forming relationships and developing an understanding of each other. Without commitment early on, the group may struggle more; likewise, with too many changes within the group, the group may struggle more to form an identity.

Ann discusses feelings of invalidation and vulnerability caused by her experience of the facilitator's response when disclosing and taking risks within her group; she goes on to say how these feelings have left her unwilling to take further risks.

Interviewer – "You felt that you had irritated the facilitator?"

"Yeah"

Interviewer – "How?"... "What do you think [their] facial expression was saying?"

“It was irritated, it was very irritated and I think [they were] feeling irritated by me kind of not spitting it out - what was bothering me, but then equally when I did spit it out and I was told that it was an unfair suggestion, that felt wrong too so it felt like you’re damned if you do and you’re damned if you don’t. It wasn’t a good experience of taking that risk so I wouldn’t choose to repeat it. (...). I find pretending about how you actually feel really distressing and there’s a strong feeling in that group that you have to pretend.” (Ann)

Within this quote one can see just how important the participants’ subjective experience of the facilitator can be. Whilst these may be inadvertent, perhaps unreliability and an invalidating nature of some facilitation may lead to reduced self-sufficiency, a lack of group cohesiveness, and unwillingness to take risks – ultimately resulting in a reduced functioning of the group and perhaps reduced development of some members within it.

5.3.3 Learning to connect to the struggle in order to grow

This theme revolves around learning through experience that personal growth comes from embracing struggles.

Emily speaks of embracing struggle, in being able to explore the group conflicts and difficulties in order to grow and develop as individuals and as a group. She also refers to a dynamic where exposing and exploring difficulties supports growth, but also leaves scars and reminders of those difficulties. She goes on to describe a need to embrace the internal struggles between the personal and professional, that is, her history and her present, and her personal values and clinical practice.

“You feel a bit euphoric when it’s all come together and it’s all been for a purpose (...) you have to trust in the process. You have to trust that you’ll get there and you’ll be able to pull it off, although you doubt it at times and sometimes majorly doubt it...So it’s nice to be proven wrong or proven right depending on what your outlook was. (...) We thought we had it sussed in the first one and we were like, ‘oh look how reflective we are’ and ‘we’re all about the process’ and then obviously we missed a great big thing where someone felt marginalised so we needed to go through all that in order to be stronger. I don’t know if it’s true but you hear about, like, if you break a bone and it grows back stronger...it’s almost like that. But the cracks will still show...you will be stronger but you’ll also have scars and sensitivities so you won’t be perfect.” (Emily)

“You can’t really separate (...) the professional and the personal...You bring your own values, you bring your context and that’s gonna influence your clinical work for the good and the bad so you need to be aware of...you know, what you bring with you (...) better to recognise it and embrace it than deny that it’s there.” (Emily)

Here one can see the benefits, described earlier; that growth, awareness and development can come from this connection with the struggle and with the intensity of the experience. It would seem that the willingness to embrace this is crucial.

Michelle describes a need to emotionally connect to all aspects of the PBL process, as it becomes the most valuable aspect of clinical practice. Angela speaks of this emotional connectedness, in terms of developing both her personal and professional identities.

“I think it’s wonderful; I think being able to connect with the struggle is so important and I think the emotional experience of PBL is the thing that drives me mad about it (laughs) but it’s always the thing that I get a lot of value out of and it’s the things, even when I go away and research a particular thing relating to a case that we’re working with and connect with the kind of true stories about the things that are going on, the fact that I can emotionally connect with those things, it brings a different level to that. Things have a different meaning when you can appreciate what it might feel like to go through that or connect with what that person might have experienced and I think it’s those things that are the better aspects that come out of PBL and they’re the things that as a clinician - I’d be really, losing those things in the future you know, when people become tired and burnt out and stuff - that would be the thing that worries me most. ‘Cos I just think, you can’t really learn that in a book (laughs) or you know, be taught it in a lecture. I think you have to kind of experience it really to know the value of it.” (Michelle)

“...I’m sure PBL has a large part to play in shaping your personal and professional identity...because we’ve looked back at our tapes and we can see how different they are from our more recent presentations. We can see that we’re evolving. I think when you do something so intense, if you’re not affected by it or somewhat changed by it, then how do you know what’s going on? Once you start to let it, there’s something about it that you don’t get in other parts of the course training.” (Angela)

Both Peter and Olivia describe a need to take a risk in embracing the struggle, with Peter also disclosing a desire for others to join him in just jumping in. For Olivia, it was more a case of being pushed into the process and trusting it would work out in the end.

“I’m an ‘all-in’ kinda guy. If you wanna get something out of it you put yourself in and by putting yourself in...that’s what creates the safety... people can see the trust that it can be safe. Many times I’ve felt like you can put yourself in and then other people wanna put themselves more or less differently and it can then be difficult and I really struggle with that, it’s been quite hard. So I found that quite difficult and wanting other people to be in or out...in order to get the most out you’ve almost gotta throw yourself in and then you’ll have a bit of the rough time but then that’s when you actually, as a group, you may have more of a strength...” (Peter)

“I remember somebody in our group said, ‘I hated it at the time but I can really see the point, so thank you for making us do it’. And I agree, wholeheartedly. I think even in the moment, when you really hated it and you were like, ‘I know there’s a reason we’re doing this and I’m sure that it will make me better psychologist and possibly be a better person but really, it’s just rude and mean!’ and ‘I don’t wanna cry anymore’.” (Olivia)

It seems that others have to be willing to embrace the struggle too: when they are not this can be frustrating, as it can be difficult to work with people with different needs and outlooks and values. Sometimes people can join in the embracing of the struggle and are able see the benefits of this in reflection; however for some, unwillingness remains – and thus for those who embrace the struggle, their frustration remains.

5.4 Theme 4: The value of reflective spaces

Overview

This theme encompasses participants' reflexivity on the value of the overarching reflective space within the PBL experience. Over the course of the interviews there was a real sense that the participants viewed reflection as a process which enabled personal and professional growth as well as the application of skills and learning across a number of contexts. In particular, group and individual reflective spaces were greatly valued and seen as a strong foundation for effective MDT working.

5.4.1 The value of reflective spaces

This theme speaks of the value participants placed upon reflective spaces in order to develop self-awareness and acceptance (as described throughout 5.3) which seems to help bring words to meaning. Perhaps the research interviews may also have been a valuable reflective space for the participants, thus reinforcing the value of reflective spaces already provided such as examining experiences within the PBL group as well as writing the reflective essays once each PBL experience has concluded.

Both Angela and Peter describe how reflective spaces have helped them in moving from anxiety towards a more comfortable position in relation to uncertainty and being able to explore their roles in relation to others.

“It’s been invaluable, playing around with the ideas that would be quite anxiety-provoking to play around with if hadn’t done so before, in a real life clinical environment. But in PBL, you can give it a go. It’s a safe environment.” (Angela)

One can also see the importance of safety in facilitating this process. Moving on to Peter:

“I’m more reflective! In my personal development, I would say that it’s made me think about how I communicate with other people, recognise in other situations what role I might play and how I may inter-relate and impact on the system itself and therefore trying to be mindful of that as well. So if you had it in the football team or in a relationship or a friendship...I think it’s...the...inter-relating and the communication and why do I do certain things or why do they

do certain things? So I think it makes you a bit more reflective and a bit more aware of yourself which is good because I think more awareness is good...it means you can orchestrate change if you want to." (Peter)

Here one can also see the value of communication in facilitating the development of these attributes, skills and knowledge. Again the ability to communicate enhances, not just within the PBL group, but also within the course of the individual interviews.

For Olivia, PBL helped her to become more reflective within her clinical practice, in which she is increasingly able to focus on the therapeutic process between herself and her clients.

"I need to be the person in the room who can hear and see and think about what is happening...therapy is a shared endeavour but I'm responsible for the space. And I take that really seriously actually so I guess that in learning to think about the process, in learning to manage difficulties in the process, it has been really important in helping me to think about process in a therapy room, in team settings...for me, it was the device that gave us the opportunity to think about the process." (Olivia)

For Kathleen, the reflective essay provided an opportunity to stand back and reflect on the overall experience, which she found helpful. Furthermore, she found the process of being able to put words to her experiences as helpful.

"The opportunity to reflect on anything in the reflective essay was helpful, 'cos I suppose that was also a process of standing back at the end and revealing the process and maybe some things might not have been obvious at the time when you're in them and then you look back on them and then maybe see what was going on. And so the process of thinking about them after and then putting some of that into words, was helpful." (Kathleen)

Emily describes PBL as safe place to think about and put into practice ideas relating to her clinical work before she takes these skills to the outside world. She also describes learning about herself as well as herself in relation to others, so that she can then take that learning into the NHS context.

“I think it’s invaluable. It’s funny because I haven’t really painted a rosy picture, it’s this traumatic thing but what doesn’t kill you makes you (laughs) stronger. (...) I think you just learn so much about yourself and about other people and about groups and those kind of systemic contexts and (...) it makes sense if you’re gonna be in a setting where you’re in MDT meetings, you’re gonna get all of these issues so, better to have it in PBL where you can work through it then think about it thoughtfully so you can then kind of deal with it in the professional context and (...) I think it’s invaluable where you’re not gonna get clear-cut cases so you need to be able to problem-solve and think outside the box and kind of be creative with things and I think it allows you to do that. It kind of enables you to do that. (...) it kind of takes away all the rules, it’s like it’s up to you. You know - trust yourself, use your own initiative so, yeah it’s encouraging.” (Emily)

It is almost as if we have come full circle, considering again the intensity of the experience and that love-hate relationship, here she initially reflects upon having told stories of difficulties around PBL throughout the research interview and then goes on to describe the amount of learning and personal meaning she has taken from her PBL experience.

Michelle, Peter and Ann also reported the value of engaging in the present peer research interviews, providing an additional reflective context for them to process their stories. Ann in particular notes the therapeutic value of the interview, perhaps indicating some participants’ motivation for engaging in this research.

“It was hard ‘cos I wanted to say, ‘what was that like for you?’...I think it makes it easier [being interviewed by a peer] to talk about the experience because even if the person hasn’t had exactly the same experience of PBL, they’ve got some idea of what you’re talking about and they’ve probably been through quite a few of the things that we’ve talked about. I think it’s quite nice to have the opportunity to think with...specific questions [about] what PBL brings, ‘cos although I reflect on stuff and the value of it, I’ve never done it all in one go (laughs), reflecting on every element altogether so I think it kind of makes me question what it is that I really like about doing PBL (laughs) and why do I value it so much erm and yeah I think it’s good!” (Michelle)

“...I’ve said things to you that I haven’t said to other people so I suppose yeah I’m, you’re, uncovering I, I’ve tried to go with that feet first in that I’m just going with the fact that I trust the fact it will be [helpful].” (Peter)

“...I imagine that you might understand what I’m talking about. Yeah - that you understand. It feels - it feels - it feels... good (laughs). It feels cathartic; being able to speak about this with someone who understands it but is a bit removed from it, a detached observer who can relate to it...that’s definitely why I came along today it was for a bit of free therapy. I’m just joking, but it is an opportunity to reflect on it, to maybe feel upset about it and for that to feel okay, so in those respects it’s a bit like therapy but obviously at the same time I’m fully aware that it’s not, it’s research... (laughs).” (Ann)

As within Angela’s earlier quote wherein she describes the difficulty of explaining the experiences or emotions elicited by PBL to her partner, here Ann notes how it is much easier to relate to a peer with PBL experience, whilst this also speaks to a dynamic between wanting to understand similarity and difference. Perhaps my PBL experiences made me similar enough to participants to feel that I truly understand their experiences, but not being in the same context meant that I was different enough for them to disclose information without fear of ‘tribal’ tensions. This difference is perhaps where the therapeutic aspect comes in for Peter and Ann, whereby I can occupy the same external space as a therapist would within clinical practice.

5.4.2 Parallels with group therapy

Many of the participants described gaining a sense of deep personal awareness, which then helped them to find self-acceptance and acceptance of others as well as being able to adopt more flexibility in their roles, positions and ways of being within PBL and other areas of life. Emily describes this as almost a therapeutic experience, describing the PBL group experience as providing her with a complete 360° degree view of herself, seeing both the positive and negatives, and greatly valuing the insights this affords.

“So for me, it works on so many levels. So, it’s a group experience, it’s almost like...a therapeutic experience. Erm, it’s a learning experience, it’s like personally and professionally...it’s a chance to get to know yourself, as a person, a person in a group, professionally.” (Emily)

“It’s like a mirror (...). It kind of reflects back who you are in the group...so you kind of see yourself, warts and all. It depends whether you decide to concentrate on the warts or not.

You see your whole self almost like in a 360° degree kind of view. So you see more of yourself - the bits that would have been hidden, that you wouldn't have seen, that you might not have been that aware of..." (Emily)

For both Emily and Olivia PBL was a transformative process in which, through developing self-awareness, they moved from a position of either disallowing or disowning their personal histories and vulnerabilities to a place where these aspects were accepted, valued, integrated and embraced, particularly in regards to developing as therapists and in some ways as a person.

"It helps you grow. It helped me integrate that aspect of myself and kind of think 'your personal experiences don't hinder you from being a good therapist'. If you embrace them then they can help you, I don't know - the wounded healer analogy - you can kind of empathise with people through your own pain but you've just gotta know what belongs to you and what belongs to other people, so I think you need to process that." (Emily)

"Sometimes in order to be a better professional you have to figure some things out in your personal life. And I think PBL really helped me with that aspect of it. It made me, well training here generally made me feel like I was...alright. You know? That I wasn't great but I wasn't terrible and I really didn't need to worry so much, and that was a really helpful lesson because it means I can go into a room and not be stressing about being the perfect therapist. It means I can walk into a room with professionals and (...) have some respect for myself." (Olivia)

In the exchange below with Michelle, the emotions revealed convey how meaningful this process of self-awareness and acceptance was for her, in which her previously disowned vulnerabilities and difficult personal experiences and her means of expressing this are now acknowledged (by herself and others) as a powerful ally in her journey through life and in developing as a Clinical Psychologist.

"PBL's really (...) helped to kind of think about the value of some of the past experiences that I've had and how they can be a helpful thing in PBL...I think it's me being able to value that part of myself and where that comes from and, I think to be able to kind of accept or be able to appreciate the difficult experiences...aren't only a bad thing that they erm, there's things that really come out about that that are really important and that will probably make me,

you know, better at the things. It's kind of learning to do the emotional connectedness...it's all those kind of things that are really highly valued in my PBL group and that ... previously it's not always been something that I've been pleased with or proud of because it meant I was more emotional than other people sometimes or got more moved by things and was more emotionally tired (laughs) erm but now that's a valued thing so that's, it means it kind of validates a part of me, which is nice." (Michelle)

5.4.3 Applications of PBL to MDT working

Participants spoke of the multiple applications of their PBL experiences to their clinical practice, particularly around learning how to *be* in a group, for example, gaining an increased ability to move between different roles and positionings, a greater awareness of self and others, increasing understanding of group processes and developing confidence to speak out in other group settings.

Peter described the multiple challenges of PBL and the skills 'you' develop as a result.

"I think it's excellent because it puts you in really difficult positions, really challenging situations with other people. It's actually not really about the case, the case is useful to think clinically about and bring in theories but it's helpful that you can bring in stuff that you're doing in a group, and which other people talk about in the group, which you can then take into clinical practice. But what's much more useful is just your inter-relations with other people and the group dynamics, working under pressure, so it's the skills you've learnt. It's not the knowledge; it's the skills you've learnt and the self-reflection that you can then take into a professional situation which is very helpful." (Peter)

His use of phrases like 'really difficult' and 'really challenging' might suggest that PBL is an experience to be avoided, however again, we are drawn to the value seen in facing this experience both personally and professionally. For Angela, she speaks of having developed new ways of *being* within groups and with others as well as the value of sharing ideas.

"I think I've learnt that it's okay to speak out, to be a bit more challenging and assertive in groups, in MDT's, in meetings - even if you feel...down at the bottom of the pecking order...in a room full of psychiatrists or something (laughs) or if you're a new trainee (...). I've learnt that even if it doesn't go well it can be overcome. It doesn't have to mean the end of the

relationship. And I've learnt that from having gone through a difficult experience and still being able to challenge each other. I've learnt the value of getting everyone's ideas. I value different ideas in my group and I think that I can do that more in meetings." (Angela)

Here one can see the value of developing communication skills particularly in developing the ability to have difficult conversations with professionals with greater perceived experience or status. To build on this, Olivia reflects on the value that those within her working place (and thus outside of her PBL experience) place on her ability to take up a position of *not knowing* and curiosity. She also talks about the value of acknowledging multiple truths and having developed a sense of self-acceptance.

"Somebody said to me..., 'I really like that when we work together, you can say that you just don't know', and I said, 'but I don't know'. And actually, [PBL] allows us to be curious, it allows us to learn together because I...don't worry about that anymore and I think PBL is a massive part of [this] course and [this] course has given me that. I don't think I would have got that from another course...I like [the course where I trained] a lot more now I've left it than I did when I was on it, because actually I feel like it really encourages you to be the person that you...to be the psychologist that you need to be...There's lots of ways to be a psychologist and I really like that [the course where I trained] respects that." (Olivia)

"I think PBL has also really increased my resilience. So, having had that experience of self-monitoring to the point of insanity, I don't have to do that anymore (laughs)...I've now got resilience against my own inner nightmare erm, so my own self-critic I guess, and my own worries about what other people think of me. I suppose it's given me an experience of working with people in a group and it being alright. And even when I wasn't sure of what they thought of me, it was still alright and I think that's a really helpful lesson...So actually the people who watched me learning, who watched me cry, who watched me not knowing what I was doing, could work with me. These people [at work] who know me a lot less...are gonna be able to work with me too." (Olivia)

Here one can see the ongoing benefits, post-qualification, to professional practice that Olivia attributes to her experiences in PBL. Returning to Peter, he describes how PBL has helped him to think interpersonally and systemically in terms of groups as well as how he views his personal and professional selves as integrated.

“It’s helped my formulation skills and my work with process issues in a therapeutic environment and the team situation at work, definitely, and systemic working in general I think, systemic processes that go on, and as a professional, yeah, where do I sit as a psychologist, what my views are. I think there’s a bridge - I don’t think it’s so distinct as professional and personal, I don’t believe there’s a personal professional, I think it’s together. I think it’s me. I don’t separate them really. I can’t.” (Peter)

Within Peter’s account, there is a strong sense of an intrinsic connection between the personal and professional that cannot be separated. We conclude this theme with Emily, who further elucidates this personal and professional connection. Here she speaks of learning the value of thinking relationally and developing the ability to sit within multiple positions, despite the uncertainty this may bring.

“It’s between you, relationally. I think that’s one of the most important things I’ve learnt generally, it’s that in-between position is so difficult to be in ‘cos sometimes you just wanna belong, to be one or the other, but if you can hold both at the same time then you’ve got it sussed, you can kind of straddle both worlds. So whether that’s the personal and the professional, be in the group and be a person, to hold it all at the same time. It’s difficult: you’ll wobble, if you can manage that way to stay on it (laughs), erm it’s kind of where you need to be to fully appreciate everything. Yeah it’s like to appreciate the view... on a cliff edge, to see both sides, you kind of need to be walking in the middle but you can fall off and it feels like you’re falling sometimes and you’re gonna die. I like my dramatic metaphors (laughs) but if you can hold the course and keep going and trust (laughing) that you’re not gonna die, you’ve just gotta carry on and just put one foot in front of the other and you’ll be fine, then you’ll be alright.” (Emily)

Here one can see the courage needed to continue on this uncertain journey, and through maintaining this courage and momentum, great rewards such as an ability to see a wider perspective, can be reaped within the context of a supportive and facilitative group.

6.0 DISCUSSION

The findings will now be considered in the context of my research questions, followed by a critique of the methodology, suggestions for further research and ending with implications and recommendations arising from the research.

Revisiting the primary research question:

- What is the experience of individuals who undertake PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training?

This main research question was explored via a further subsidiary question:

- What sense do individuals make of the impact their PBL experiences have had upon their professional and personal development?

6.1 Making sense of PBL and of the experiences within it

Making sense of PBL and of the experiences within it was a major aim of this study. My own struggle to find words to describe and articulate my felt experience of PBL (see 4.9) was mirrored in the participants' accounts (see 5.1.3; 5.1.1). Yet the participants reported finding the research interview therapeutic and cathartic despite this struggle (see 5.4.1), and this is reflected in the creation of its own distinct sub-ordinate theme, 'Parallels with group therapy' (see 5.4.2). It was almost as if talking about their experience within this research enabled them to form their own narratives of their unique experiences. I began to wonder whether this mirrored the PBL experience – something that is difficult to put into words, something that speaks more towards a felt experience. In this section I will explore the underlying process of communication (both spoken and unspoken, and also within 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' forms) inherent within the PBL process; how participants use this to try to make sense of their PBL experience (for example, in relation to intra- and inter-personal group dynamics); and further extend upon the analogy between PBL and therapy to frame the difficult yet valued journey of which the participants speak. I will also reflect on the role group facilitation might have on this journey, considering factors that might help or hinder learning from the PBL experience, in addition to how participants negotiate professional and personal development within PBL.

6.1.1 The struggle to explain

IPA's phenomenological nature in which in-depth exploration aims to capture and articulate individuals' personal meaning and sense-making of a particular experience (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003) enabled me to gain an understanding of the participants' rich, dynamic, complex, emotional experiences within PBL, which many participants revealed, was at times, "...not about theory...not about big words; it's basic, simple, so simple it's hard to define" (Emily; see 5.1.1). Here we can see that this process of sense-making was not a simple one, either for participants or for me (see 4.9). In fact, the theme of communication as characterised by an intense struggle to represent the complexity and intensity of experiences and emotions catalysed via PBL persisted throughout the present study, thus forming the theme, 'It's not a concrete thing; you can't pin it down' (see 5.1.1). Furthermore, participants' repeated use of metaphor and visual imagery to facilitate communication was florid. For example, references to 'PB-Hell' and roller coasters were employed to describe the seeming unavoidability of encountering difficulties within PBL (see 5.1.2) whilst

descriptions of Pandora's Box, roundabouts and roller coasters were again used to illustrate the unpredictable yet alluring nature of PBL (see 5.1.3). The interviewees were facing difficult experiences and had to find ways of managing or expressing these struggles, in what they considered to be socially appropriate ways. Many other instances of metaphor and visual imagery predominate throughout the Results section.

Michelle speculates that it is the emotional aspect of PBL that results in it defying ease of expression (see 5.1.1). Frosh (1997; 2004) provides support for Michelle's speculations, declaring that emotional experiences cannot be fully communicated via language. This is supported by research into Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), where highly emotional and distressing events are associated with a difficulty in communicating the felt experience associated with these events, irrespective of avoidance strategies employed to manage the intense emotions (e.g., Amir, Stafford, Freshman & Foa, 2000; Halligan, Michael, Clark & Ehlers, 2003). Although I am not suggesting that PBL experiences are traumatic, participants' accounts suggest intense emotions are experienced within the process. Therefore it could be argued that the intensity of the emotion inhibits an individual's ability to communicate that same emotion.

If individuals do not have opportunities to express difficult experiences, then there is less opportunity to develop the language required to express and reflect upon these experiences. One wonders what processes may underlie this difficulty to voice struggle. In reviewing the literature, Mather and Rutherford (1996) state that socially acceptable behaviour enables individuals to gain social reinforcement and acceptance. Perhaps there is a natural fear of expressing 'unacceptable' experiences such as anger if there is a sense that this could potentially jeopardise one's membership of a social group. This is also reflected in the literature on 'groupthink' (Janus, 1982; Yalom, 2005) wherein one must conform to intra-group norms in order to maintain group membership.

Extending this further, it could be considered that there is an undercurrent of disapproval in relation to expressions of anger. For example, there is a wealth of treatment available for 'anger management' for children (Sukhhodolsky, Kassinove & Gorman, 2004), adults (Novaco, 1975) and people with Learning Disabilities (Lindsay, Allan, MacLeod, Smart, Smith & Helmstetter, 2003), in which its patrons receive the message that anger should be

suppressed. Whilst it may not be stipulated that anger is unacceptable per se, the unspoken implicit message may convey this.

Further to this, Geddes and Callister (2007) state that the research literature predominately focuses upon the negative consequences of expressing anger. They propose a dual threshold model of anger when expressed within organisations, wherein expression and deviancy of anger are the thresholds. Anger which is expressed but not deviant is suggested to lead to positive consequences such as identifying problems and increasing knowledge of the organisation. Conversely, non-expressed and deviant anger are said to result in negative outcomes for the individual and the organisation. However, these thresholds, and thus the opportunity to express non-deviant anger, differ between contexts dependent upon the characteristics of the individuals and the organisation. Therefore the context defines the acceptability of, and ability to express, anger. From this model, it appears that changing the social construction of anger is a key step towards developing its acceptability and expression, but it may be that expressing and discussing anger is the only route towards making it more acceptable.

One can see this dilemma of what is acceptable to express between those within PBL and their perceived responses of others outside of the PBL process. As can be seen through Angela (see 5.1.1), her struggle to convey the intensity and personal impact of PBL to her partner resulted in frustration and developing a dislike for discussing PBL with 'outsiders'; she felt that only those who had experienced PBL could understand, and empathise with her experiences; illustrating the dilemma of whom to speak out with and whom to remain silent with. This is interesting as there is a sense of isolation from those not involved in PBL, who would normally be close to the participants in other ways. This is exemplified by Keville et al. (2013), in a reflective account by Michael. After having missed a PBL session that had appeared to shape the group dynamics, Michael felt as though he was stuck playing 'catch-up' with the rest of the group. He affirms that two factors helped him to become more connected with the group: expressing his feelings about his PBL experience to the group, which allowed him to feel understood and validated by the group - a feeling that he had not felt until that point; and putting on a 'stressful but successful' conference workshop at a PBL conference in Dublin, which helped to create a new identity to the group of which he now felt part. Michael's reflective account highlights the importance of considering the impact of

training on relationships and the personal value attributed to feelings of belonging, understanding, and validation from other members within the same experience (Bennett, 2011; Keville et al. 2013; Shah, 2010). PBL facilitators and group members alike must therefore remain mindful of facilitating the creation of safe environments within which to allow people to find their voice.

Thus, we must also wonder where one would access support if an individual's PBL group or wider cohort was not functioning very well, or if there was a personal impact which transcended the confines of the group experience. Further, not feeling safe enough to speak out about intense and private internal experiences may impact upon trainees' opportunities to learn about themselves and develop fuller and more coherent narratives of their experiences. This parallels the processes seen within therapy, whereby the therapeutic process gives individuals the opportunity to enhance their personal narrative. Dallos (2010) writes of the paramount importance of this task, "...the ability to develop a coherent story about our lives is at the core of positive change [...] profoundly difficult [...] experiences [...] can be transcended if we are able to develop a coherent account of these experiences." (Dallos, 2010, pp.88).

Metaphor and visual imagery were creative strategies employed by participants in order to communicate and provide a bridge to a common understanding around the PBL experience, to those within and outside of their process. This seemed to increase their ability to form a coherent narrative for themselves and with others. Ylvisaker & Feeney (2000) recognise the social advantages of employing metaphor due to its effectiveness in assisting the exploration or communication of abstract or challenging concepts. They go on to state that, "...social construction of identity through metaphor is a natural developmental process..." (p.17). Therefore, the challenges in negotiating an individual and group identity within PBL may be activating this developmental process. The struggle for words may thus be linked to both the struggles of articulating in the face of complexity and emotional intensity, as well as identity formation within the dual contexts of self, and in seeing oneself contextually and relationally (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

To take this theme of communication further, transforming experiences into coherent narratives or stories helps to shape individuals' sense of identity, as well as maintain a well-

adjusted sense of connection to their experiences (Crossley, 2000b). Metaphors are potentially one way of achieving this. It could be argued that reflective spaces also offer individuals an opportunity to create coherent stories around their experiences. A number of studies have suggested that the process of reflecting upon and communicating experiences within research interviews was therapeutic for participants (Birch & Miller, 2000; Colbourne & Sque, 2005; Murray, 2003; Nel, 2006). This was also true of the current study (see **5.4.1**). For example, Peter commented, "...I've said things to you that I haven't said to other people (...) I'm just going with the fact that I trust the fact it will be [helpful]" whilst Ann remarked, "...It feels cathartic; being able to speak about this (...) that's definitely why I came along today (...) it's a bit like therapy but obviously at the same time I'm fully aware that it's not...". These excerpts speak to a desire for experiences and emotions to be *processed relationally* – a key feature of the therapeutic experience for Peter and Ann, and perhaps similarly, for those within the therapeutic process. This is evidenced by the wealth of literature available on the importance of the therapeutic alliance (for example, see: Horvath & Symonds, 1991; Kahn, 1997; Roth & Fonagy, 2006).

With this in mind, it is important to consider in more depth what it is about the PBL experience, or the communication and reflection upon such experiences, which is therapeutic. Participants were exposed to regular reflective spaces within their PBL groups, where the struggle to put words to their experiences and convey to others what was occurring internally, frequently arose. As outlined by Keville et al. (2013), the facilitator's goal is to reduce this struggle and support the group to engage with this deeper level of articulation about felt experience. This parallels what can happen within psychological therapy, wherein the therapist supports clients to engage with and articulate at that same deeper level. Further parallels that may exist between PBL and therapeutic environments include the fundamental human need for relationships which provide nurturance, security, comfort, and interest (Golding, 2008); containment (Bion, 1967; Ringer, 2002); acceptance and validation (Kohut, 1984); and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1961). It is these basic needs which emerge through the process of relating with others and perhaps drive the urge to connect with others. As with many relational experiences there can be a bi-directional quality (as in Relational Frame Theory, Hayes, Barnes-Holmes & Roche, 2003), in that experiencing these needs being met can facilitate the ability to meet these needs in others, which may then be reciprocated, thus facilitating these needs being met again – and

so the cycle maintains itself. Therefore, by connecting to our own vulnerability, communicating this and experiencing acceptance from others, we may gain the ability to meet these needs in others. Perhaps this is the underlying therapeutic benefit of PBL as a group endeavour; by reflecting and connecting internally (with ourselves) and externally (with others) we experience acceptance and validation. This reflects a similar process which is evident in the group therapy literature (for example, Yalom, 2005). Therefore, one might speculate that there is another dimension when trainees learn together within PBL groups: there is a personal element to these groups. Trainees are not just training together, they are forming friendships and allegiances. They are working together to find ways to manage the demands of training, in the same way that social support is viewed as a buffer to psychological distress in clinical settings (Trickey, Siddaway, Mesier-Steadman, Serpell & Field, 2012).

A further aspect that may have contributed towards the research interviews being experienced as quasi-therapeutic arose from participants' reports of having valued my peer status. My sameness enabled them to feel as though I could connect and understand their experiences; whilst my difference provided a degree of therapeutic space to allow deeper meanings and understandings to emerge - whilst being different enough for them to disclose information without fear of 'tribal' tensions. For example, Ann states that it is helpful "...being able to speak about this with someone who understands it but is a bit removed from it, a detached observer who can relate to it..." (see 5.4.1). In this way, perhaps I was able to occupy the same external space as a therapist would within clinical practice, pointing to the value of facilitation within the PBL process to create meaning and make sense of the experience.

6.1.2 Inter-group and intra-group dynamics

Taking forth the analogy between PBL and therapy to frame the difficult yet valued journey of which the participants speak (see 6.1.1), what follows is an exploration of Yalom's (2005) principles of the three unconscious stages of therapeutic groups, as applied to PBL groups.

The initial stage is characterised by orientation, hesitant participation, the search for meaning and dependency. We can see the desperate search for meaning as to the purpose of the group when Olivia speaks of the devious nature of PBL, "It was...sneaky - you know? It

was...not what it said on the tin!" (see **5.1.1**). Yalom (2005) informs us that in the context of such uncertainty the development of dependency ensues and thus group members attend to social relationships within the group in order to reinforce bonds to provide containment and certainty. Olivia and Kathleen describe the forming of such bonds and connectedness through the sharing of food, social drinking and other shared activities which in turn, helped their PBL groups to work well together (see **5.2.1**).

The second stage is regarded as a period of conflict, dominance and rebellion (see **5.1.2; 5.2.1; 5.3.1**) in which initial inter-dependency gives way to questions of who is 'in' or 'out' (see **5.3.1**), followed by a struggle between individuals in order to establish 'a pecking order'. The participants within this study labelled these processes as 'it becomes very tribal', in which group members look outwards in order to form a cohesive group identity; defining the self by defining the other.

During this stage, due to its intimate structure, individual and group anxieties become projected into the group as a mechanism underlying the process of identity formation and renegotiation (of the group and of individuals within the group). These competing anxieties lead to the expression of conflict (see **5.1.2; 5.2.2**). This was apparent within the tribal nature of PBL, whereby an 'us and them' dynamic between groups was created, resulting in feelings of competition and threat whenever an outsider was perceived to be encroaching upon the group's identity and boundaries. This led to tension building alongside this inability to speak out. Ann and Emily disclose the feelings of mistrust that develop when discussions occur outside of the group and the impact this has on group cohesiveness (see **5.3.1**).

We can see within Olivia, Peter and Michelle's accounts the desire to escape the pressures and emotional intensity that arises within PBL (see **5.1.2**) as well as the desire to avoid 'discomfort' and 'explosions' (see **5.2.2**) through experiential avoidance (Hayes et al., 2003). Lemma (2006) informs us that in learning to work through conflict, our relationships can be strengthened by the ruptures that can be repaired. Participants reported that through effective group facilitation, conflict could indeed be managed effectively, resulting in the growth of the group. However, due to the intensity of the experience, participants commented that often they could only see the benefits of working through the conflict, in

hindsight (see **5.3.3**). This process is supported by Keville et al. (2012a) and is commented on further towards the end of this section.

This leads us on to the third stage: the development of group cohesion. Conflict can lead to a foundation of intimacy and trust, facilitating the growth of safety, morale and the emergence of personal self-disclosures. These attributes contribute to continued growth within the group and will be explored further in **6.1.3**. One can see here how the expression of 'unacceptable' experiences (for example, anger) can facilitate development within therapeutic groups. This parallels the processes seen within this thesis wherein trainees' experiences of PBL facilitate professional and personal development, particularly in those instances where trainees voiced their internal struggles and found acceptance in doing so.

Emily spoke of the PBL context as being, "(...) a bit of a catalyst but I don't necessarily see that as a negative thing. (...) There's been times when it's just like 'aaaw, I can't escape from this (...) Why is everything related to me?'" It seems, therefore, that PBL may activate an individual's personal vulnerabilities, which feel magnified within the group context from which there is no escape. From a psychodynamic perspective, this may be viewed as a challenging opportunity to work through the transference (Greenson, 1967) in order to move towards personal growth. Andolfi, Angelo, Menghi & Nicolò-Corigliano (1983) offer an alternative perspective, outlining the complex, dynamic and inter-dependent nature within family groups, in order for individuals and group members to work through difficulties and move towards psychological growth:

"...an active system in constant transformation, that is, a complex organism that changes over time to ensure continuity and psychological growth in its component members. This dual process of continuity and growth allows the development of the family as a unit and at the same time assures the differentiation of its members. The need for differentiation, understood as the necessity of self-expression for each individual, is meshed with the need for cohesiveness and maintenance of unity in the group over time..." (Andolfi et al., 1983, p.4)

The importance of continuity, as featured in the description above, is highlighted in Peter's description (see **5.2.1**), "I think being stuck in the group is important - I think...it allows

people to just stay with [difficult emotions / conflict] rather than just go, 'I've had enough of this'." This suggests that the process of 'staying with' difficult emotions and conflict in order to work through them is both difficult yet important for the development of the group, as well as individual group members (Keville et al., 2012a). Again, this highlights the value of naming difficult experiences such as anger.

The exploration of Yalom's (2005) three stages of group development highlights the shared aspects of group therapy and PBL. However, individualised therapy also provides further parallels. In therapy, we come to know our clients' histories through completing detailed assessments which allow us to then see our developing work with our clients within context; within *their* contexts (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Balousis & Joseph, 2008). Holding such contextual information can be useful within PBL, facilitating the expression of compassion (Keville et al., 2012b). Within the PBL context, it can be difficult for individuals to feel compassionate towards others when the personal contexts of others in the group are unknown. For example, Jean spoke of her group's fear of expressions of 'unacceptable' emotions, "There is explicit talk about how it is important to be vulnerable or...[to] demonstrate emotion that is considered, real...I'd say probably sadness and tearfulness are acceptable (...) and then other emotions probably closely follow. But I'm not so sure about anger." (see 5.1.3). It is possible that this unwillingness to allow expressions of anger could be invalidating for the person who feels angry. Within groups, people may protect their identities by becoming angry when they perceive others to criticise or reject them. In turn, others' anger may be a threat to our own identities (Canary, Spitzberg & Semic, 1998). Perhaps the duration of PBL combined with open communication offers participants the opportunity to learn about and know each other's contexts, with the potential for labels such as 'unacceptable' to be discarded (Keville et al., 2012a; 2012b). It is almost as if by voicing the 'unacceptable', this then becomes 'acceptable'. This brings us back to Mathur and Rutherford's (1996) statement, that socially acceptable behaviour enables individuals to gain social reinforcement and acceptance.

In summary, a range of inter-group and intra-group dynamics have been explored within the context of participants' accounts. Their experiences corresponded to the wider literature around group dynamics, in particular group psychotherapy (Yalom, 2005). Specific experiences represented within participants' accounts included the activation of personal

vulnerabilities and the need to acknowledge them for personal growth; and the importance of a safe space to explore these issues within a space which offers continuity, containment and validation, for individual and group development.

6.1.3 The value of PBL group facilitation

Many of the participants' accounts spoke of the invaluable nature of their PBL group facilitators. Such value was placed within the facilitators' continued demonstrations of confidence in their group's abilities to find their own answers and thrive, with Kathleen stating that she valued her facilitator for, "(...) having faith in us that we could do it and work through whatever", (see **5.3.2**). This seemed to enable the group members to develop autonomy and confidence in their own abilities, perhaps as a function of this apparent validation from the facilitator. Furthermore, Kathleen also spoke of the, "...containing force of our facilitator...I think there was something containing about our facilitator even though they wouldn't necessarily meet with us that often". Cecchin, Lane and Ray (1992) declare that through providing such safe spaces, it allows group members to be more curious and playful. In the context of PBL, input from facilitators can provide safe spaces in which group members can demonstrate courage, allowing risks to be taken. Underpinning this may be the exploration and reflection on internal processes – such as personal vulnerability; and connection with the vulnerability of others (Keville et al., 2012b).

The value participants take from their experiences of PBL facilitation parallels the processes employed by group therapists. Yalom (2005; p.141-142) describes the importance of focusing upon the here-and-how in creating meaningful change within group psychotherapy. He conceptualises this focus as having two tiers – *experiencing* and *illuminating the process*. Experiencing refers to emotions needing to be the major discourse within groups, from which catharsis and meaningful self-disclosure can occur. Illuminating the process involves the examination of the group by itself, leading to exploration of transactions between group members and the integration of reflections upon experience into experience itself. Group therapists are framed as directors of these processes, with responsibility for supporting the group to engage at both tiers. PBL facilitators may occupy a similar role within their groups, albeit for some facilitators, a non-therapeutic role. Participants described in sections **5.3.2** and **5.4.1** how they experienced facilitators as supporting difficult conversations around

emotions and interactions within the group, which clearly links with the two tiers proposed by Yalom (2005).

To reiterate: throughout their accounts participants spoke of the facilitator providing a safe place for them to explore their own vulnerabilities and new ways of *being*. Some described how they experienced the unavailable and inconsistent nature of some facilitators as increasing uncertainty within the process. This idea of a safe place, and possibly the threat its absence may cause, brings to mind attachment theory, wherein the main goal of the attachment relationship is to provide the child with a secure base in order to allow them to explore their social world (Holmes, 1993). Within such a relationship, closeness provides safety, whilst any distance may elicit feelings of anxiety and frustration. This tension between safety and exploration is at the core of attachment theory and speaks to the felt experiences of the participants within this study. For example, Emily and Olivia spoke of the need for safety when considering making disclosures within PBL (see 5.3.1). An important implication arising from this is enabling people to speak out and identifying what might be hindering the process of speaking out, in order for underlying issues to be addressed and the group to further develop (Keville et al., 2013; 2012b).

Scaffolding (Schaffer, 2003; White, 2007) may also be another useful way to construe the facilitator role within PBL. Participants reported that the primary processes which supported their development occurred through the facilitator scaffolding difficult conversations, asking strategic questions and allowing group members to generate their own ideas (as described throughout 5.3.2). Emily and Olivia speak about uncovering their relationship with their own vulnerabilities through relating with the material, or others, in a group context (see 5.1.2). Whilst in the midst of such a process, a sense of a lack of control over one's self may lead to an outward focus of upset or anger in order to mask or manage the deep personal pain underneath. This links with Safran and Muran's (2000) view of anger masking the experience of vulnerability and people's unwillingness to connect with this. Safran and Muran (2000) go on to suggest that there is a need to understand that beneath anger is vulnerability. This raises questions within the group context as to how emotions are responded to and what the responses are, at both an implicit and explicit level. Perhaps the facilitator takes a role in modelling the courage to speak out and name the unsaid, revealing the perceived implicit responses; facilitated by their step-removed position and thus making it less threatening

(Keville et al., 2013). This again highlights the process that has been noted earlier and linked with Mathur and Rutherford's (1996) work, wherein the expression of socially 'unacceptable' behaviours (for example, anger) can become 'acceptable' when expressed in safe contexts. Olivia speaks about the facilitator's role in naming difficulties, both explicitly and implicitly, in section **5.3.2**.

In summary, it appears that the facilitator takes up multiple identities and roles within the PBL process. Participants described a range of values they attributed to the facilitator, which have been conceptualised within this section via the realms of group therapy, attachment theory, scaffolding and modelling. This diversity of roles perhaps speaks to the struggle participants' face in their endeavours to articulate the personal meaning or definition of PBL. It could also be argued that the facilitator embodies all of these roles in an attempt to assist trainees' to assimilate their academic knowledge with clinical practice; knowledge of the client within their personal and social contexts; and the integration of the professional and personal.

6.2 Bridging the professional and personal selves

“I think there’s a bridge - I don’t think it’s so distinct as professional and personal, I don’t believe there’s a personal professional, I think it’s together. I think it’s me. I don’t separate them really. I can’t.” (Peter)

Many participants spoke of an intrinsic and inseparable connection between the professional and personal. Peter describes his professional and personal selves as being inextricably intertwined and so for him, development in one area equates to development in another. Emily also conceptualises this as a relational dynamic in which she sees the professional and personal selves as complimentary and connected, which carries across into her relationships with others:

“It’s between you, relationally. I think that’s one of the most important things I’ve learnt generally, it’s that in-between position is so difficult to be in ‘cos sometimes you just wanna belong, to be one or the other, but if you can hold both at the same time then you’ve got it sussed, you can kind of straddle both worlds. So whether that’s the personal and the professional, be in the group and be a person, to hold it all at the same time. It’s difficult: you’ll wobble (...) [but] it’s kind of where you need to be to fully appreciate everything.” (Emily)

“[PBL is] a chance to get to know yourself, as a person, a person in a group, professionally.” (Emily)

Acknowledging, negotiating and accommodating this dual existence of the professional and the personal is at the heart of Clinical Psychology, wherein its practitioners are expected to develop and integrate the skills necessary to be scientist-practitioners (Belar & Perry, 1992) and reflective- and reflexive- practitioners (Schön, 1987). Although I recognise that participants see their professional and personal selves as indivisible, to facilitate clarity for the reader and this research, what follows is an exploration of each of these facets in turn. Whilst these will be discussed separately they will still incorporate this concept of a ‘bridge’ between professional and personal selves.

6.2.1 The impact of PBL upon professional development

There is a presumption that the new knowledge and process skills which are gained from engaging with PBL will be transferred to the individual's clinical practice (Nel et al., 2008; Stedmon et al., 2005). As we can see in the accounts from Olivia and Kathleen (the qualified Clinical Psychologists in this sample), they speak of PBL continuing to influence their interactions with clients, with colleagues, and with multi-disciplinary teams. In particular, they argue that the group dynamics that occur within PBL mirror real life group experiences; although, within doctoral Clinical Psychology training there are *regular, timetabled* reflective spaces to think about these interpersonal dynamics that play out within the group. Olivia notes "...it has been really important in helping me to think about process in a therapy room in team settings...for me, it was the device that gave us the opportunity to think about the process" (see 5.4.1).

This sense of PBL experiences being transferable to NHS working also emerged from the accounts of participants who are yet to complete their Clinical Psychology training. Michelle speaks of her PBL group's desire to avoid conflict in order to portray a 'perfect group' to pass her group's presentation (see 5.2.2), almost as if this was viewed as the point of PBL. This directs us to the literature on 'groupthink' (Janus, 1982; Yalom, 2005), in which individual differences within the group are not embraced and may thus increase a false sense of connection and belonging. As described earlier (see 2.4.1), the growing movement towards generic training, working and roles within the NHS increases the risk of 'groupthink'. Within both the PBL and MDT contexts, adopting such a stance can lead to the rejection of uncertainty, reflection and exploration, thus inhibiting the growth of group members and ultimately, the NHS as a whole. However, within this thesis the value of PBL in learning group-working skills seems evident and it could be argued that such skills are essential within MDTs. Furthermore, these group-working and leadership skills have come to be expected of the roles that Clinical Psychologists often occupy. Thus, through PBL we are faced with a unique opportunity to enhance these skills within the training of Clinical Psychologists which could then be advantageously applied in the facilitation of effective group- and team-working.

An opposing experience to groupthink was that of conflict and intensity within a group context, which was noted as a key aspect of participants experience and perhaps mirrors the

current culture of the NHS. This is exemplified within the third biennial analysis of serious case reviews in England by Brandon et al. (2009). One of the key findings being that “...the chaotic behaviour in families was often mirrored in professionals’ thinking and actions...professionals were overwhelmed by having too many problems to face and too much to achieve” (Brandon et al., 2009, p.1). They also reported that professionals’ understanding of their clients’ circumstances was hindered by their tendency towards ‘fixed thinking’ when under pressure; and that professionals with low self-confidence in the face of power or authority struggle to challenge decisions and behaviour of their multi-agency colleagues. From the participants’ accounts one can see the value of developing communication skills particularly in developing the ability to have difficult conversations with professionals with greater perceived experience or status. Specifically, the value that those within the NHS place on the ability to take up a position of *not knowing* and curiosity, alongside new ways of *being* within groups and with others as well as the value of sharing ideas, is noted. The development of such skills through the mechanism of PBL seems evident within this thesis. PBL may therefore be primed to assist Clinical Psychologists to adapt within the evolving nature of the NHS, and address the need for staff at all levels to facilitate effective group working,

6.2.2 The impact of PBL upon personal development

Participants’ accounts flourished with examples of how they had personally developed through PBL. It was almost as if the PBL process as well as the experience of being interviewed for this research facilitated the development of more coherent personal narratives for the interviewees. Expanding on other reflections about the personal development in PBL (for example, Keville et al., 2012a; 2012b), the development described by these participants was characterised by growth in self-awareness, self-acceptance, and an ability to be more authentic and congruent across contexts.

For example, Peter comments that PBL, “...makes you a bit more reflective and a bit more aware of yourself (...) I think more awareness is good...it means you can orchestrate change if you want to.” This belief is an empowering position to hold. In the context of interpersonal relationships, and indeed, working in a challenging and evolving NHS where team work is often a central component of jobs, it could be argued that such feelings of empowerment could bolster an individual’s resilience whilst simultaneously enhancing a sense of belonging

(Zautra, 2009). This could be particularly relevant in teams who adopt open communication and who value and support reflection.

Emily reveals that PBL helped her to integrate her personal context into her professional practice: "It helped me (...) think, 'your personal experiences don't hinder you from being a good therapist'. If you embrace them (...), you can... empathise with people through your own pain...". It seems that developing a greater narrative of self-acceptance or perhaps identity integration increased Emily's abilities to connect with her clients on a deeper level. Emily continued, "...you've just gotta know what belongs to you and what belongs to other people, so I think you need to process that". This ability to reflect on what one brings to therapeutic encounters can be useful due to the potential for parallel processes and isomorphism to occur (White & Russell, 1997). In this regard, since interactional patterns are replicated across subsystem boundaries, one must endeavour to consider what patterns of relating may emerge between the therapist and the client; and between the individual and the wider PBL group (Kaslow, Celano & Stanton, 2005). It could be argued that in the context of PBL, although it is a difficult task to connect with and accept one's emotions for what they are (see Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, & Lillis, 2006), if we wish for our clients to be accepting of their emotions too then we must demonstrate a willingness to do so for ourselves.

Continuing this point, Olivia speaks from a different position, in terms of how developing self-acceptance enabled her to nurture a sense of self-respect in professional contexts, "[PBL] made me (...) feel like I was...alright. You know? (...) It means I can walk into a room with professionals and (...) have some respect for myself". Keville et al. (2012a) suggest that although it takes courage to accept ourselves as we are and be authentic across contexts, this ability may lead to an increased focus upon working with the personal within professional contexts, as is evident in PBL. This may then facilitate individuals to move away from using experiential avoidance strategies (Hayes et al., 2003) and towards taking personal risks within professional settings. It seems that there can be huge benefits in finding the courage to work through interpersonal difficulties that have arisen and which have are impacting upon MDT working (Keville et al, 2012b).

As outlined within **2.4.1**, all references to 'personal development' within the NHS Plan (DH, 2000a) state that this will be achieved through formalised education and skills-based teaching. One must wonder if the breadth and depth of personal development revealed within this research is achievable through these means. Indeed, Yalom (2002), states, "...we learn best about ourselves and our behaviour through personal participation in interaction combined with observation and analysis of that interaction." (Yalom, 2002, pp.65). Certainly; Brigley, Young, Littlejohns and McEwen (1997) assert that PBL can help individuals to transcend the artificial barriers between practice and theory through the implementation of problem-solving and practice-based work, thus enhancing the personal development of clinicians within the NHS.

6.3 Methodological considerations

In this section I will critique methodological issues within the present study. IPA was implemented as the qualitative methodology of choice (Smith, 1996; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The crux of an IPA researcher's task is to demonstrate commitment to examining how individuals make sense of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). As such, the eight principles described by Elliott et al. (1999) were applied to ensure standards of quality and validity within qualitative research were being met. I will use the structure of these guidelines to critique the methodology and results, below.

6.3.1 Owing one's perspective

I have explicitly owned my personal perspective (Elliot et al., 1999) by describing my predilection towards the theoretical framework guiding the research and particular theoretical models (see 4.2) as well as my affiliations with constructionist and constructivist ideas (see 4.2, 4.8.1, 4.9). Within the aim of understanding and representing participants' experiences (Elliott et al., 1999) I engaged in self-reflexivity throughout the research process in an attempt to 'bracket' my own beliefs, values and assumptions. Consequently, self-reflexivity was explored within my reflective journal; in discussions with my research supervisors; within section 4.9; as well as being integrated within the process of analysis and write up

Whilst reflecting on the research interviews with my principal research supervisor, I became aware of my heightened interest when participants' accounts connected with my own experiences or which I found to be emotionally resonant in some way. Whilst the nature of PBL groups requires reflection about personal and group experiences, as does the completion of a reflective essay at the end of each PBL 'module', many participants commented that prior to the research interview they had not had the opportunity to explore their experiences in-depth. Within the experience of the research interviews it was evident that participants were constructing new connections and meanings, accompanied by emotions ranging from relief to frustration, and joy to sadness. I felt privileged and moved to witness these accounts and of having the opportunity to make powerful connections with my PBL group facilitator, who is also my primary research supervisor. I experienced a strong and pervasive sense of personal duty towards ensuring that the participants' voices were

heard and therefore I was mindful of the risk of privileging the accounts that resonated with me. Endeavouring to practice as a 'reflective-practitioner' (Schön, 1983) in my clinical work, I was hopefully able to readily make the move towards reflection-on-action (i.e., 'thinking on one's feet') and reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983) within my role as a researcher. In this way, I am hopeful that during my research interviews, my professional experience as a reflective-practitioner enabled me to remain open to, and hence curious about, multiple perspectives.

Conducting the interviews as a Trainee Clinical Psychologist who had also undertaken PBL came with strengths and limitations. A particular strength is that through conducting peer research, power differences are less prevalent. As Platt states, "...one's peers...are...one's equals in role-specific senses, they share the same background knowledge and sub-cultural understandings, and they are members of the same groups or communities", (Platt, 1981, p.76). Furthermore, shared experiences can help to foster stronger rapport with participants, as well as a deeper, readily accessible shared frame of reference (Mercer, 2007). I found that my status and experiences enabled me to develop good rapport with participants. Moreover, I factored into the interview schedule a question wherein I explicitly asked participants what it had been like to be interviewed by a peer who had also been through the PBL experience (see **Appendix 1**). Many participants commented on how *peer research* was important in enabling them to feel free to talk about their challenging personal and group experiences (see **5.4.1**). I also believe that these shared experiences, facilitated recruitment. This was noticeable as I had a full sample within a week of the initial contact e-mail having been sent out, and many other individuals contacted me throughout the research process to emphasise their support and belief in the importance of the present study.

Even though I believe that rich data was generated through the interviews, I wonder whether I would have asked different questions if I had been in the 'outsider' position. Even so, before commencing the interviews I made use of opportunities with both my supervisors and my peers within an IPA peer support group to reflect on potential questions and areas for exploration. These opportunities ignited my curiosity and awareness about areas that I might not have otherwise considered exploring.

6.3.2 Situating the sample

IPA's requirement for a homogenous sample was met by recruiting participants from one Doctorate in Clinical Psychology training programme in the UK (Smith et al., 2009). The number of participants ($n = 8$) as well as the representation of individuals still in Clinical Psychology training was a relative strength: not only are their experiences fresh in their minds, their participation in the present study also addresses the paucity of systematic and detailed studies focusing on the experiences of individuals who undertake PBL as part of their Clinical Psychology training.

As part of situating the sample, it would be expected that the diversity of participants would be acknowledged. However, research indicates that more homogenous groups are found within populations of Clinical Psychologists and Trainee Clinical Psychologists and that in turn, these groups do not represent the populations which they serve (Griffiths, 2007; Turpin & Coleman, 2010). Therefore, due to the small population from which I could recruit participants, exploring issues of diversity may inadvertently reveal the identity of participants. For this reason, issues of similarity or difference were not explored in depth within this study in order to safeguard participants' anonymity.

Furthermore, Smith & Osborn (2008) point out that pragmatics dictate that one's sample is in part defined by who is prepared to be included in it. From the four cohorts that were approached ($n = 64$), eight individuals agreed to be interviewed. Potentially, participants within the sample may have been more affected or had a greater need to make sense of their PBL experiences; it is also possible that they were more comfortable talking about their experiences in comparison to those who chose not to participate in the present study; or perhaps they could have been more willing to connect with the experience.

6.3.3 Grounding in examples

Using IPA was conducive in obtaining insightful descriptions and enshrining the analysis in participants' experiences. However, my analysis and conclusions represent one possible construction of the phenomenon of being an individual who has undertaken PBL as part of their doctoral Clinical Psychology training, for a specific group of participants. This was ameliorated by using verbatim quotes, providing justification and illustrating themes, but word restrictions limited the full representation of each of the participants' experiences.

6.3.4 Providing credibility checks

The analyses followed a rigorous and transparent IPA procedure with the purpose of enhancing the validity of the findings (see **4.0**; Elliott et al., 1999; Smith et al., 2009; **Appendix 7**). To ensure the validity of my findings, the analyses followed recommended IPA procedures and sections of analysis were examined by experts in IPA as well as members of an IPA peer support group, both of whom concurred with the themes I had elicited.

Elliott et al. (1999) assert that a particularly useful form of triangulation can be achieved through checking the credibility of the emerging themes with individuals who have had similar experiences to the phenomenon under study. It is therefore of note that not only do both of my research supervisors have experience of facilitating PBL groups, but also every member of the IPA peer support group had undertaken PBL as part of their Clinical Psychology training. Accordingly, I feel that clarity and richness were added into the analytic process via this input from my supervisors and members of the IPA peer support group. However, each of us remained mindful of the double hermeneutic inherent within IPA results, in that findings were reflective of my interpretation of each participant's interpretation of this phenomenon. Input from both my supervisors and peers led to minor adjustments in the analyses but these did not warrant significant adjustments to the overall findings.

Finally, as Smith (2004) disputes the validity of seeking respondent validation of the themes elicited due to the double hermeneutic element of IPA, feedback on my analyses was not sought from participants.

6.3.5 Coherence

Coherence can be achieved by ensuring that the research adheres to the underlying theoretical and epistemological assumptions of the implemented qualitative approach (Yardley, 2000). Elliott et al. (1999) state that coherence is also achieved through representing understanding and integration in a way that preserves nuances within the data, as well as fitting this understanding together in such a way that it forms a data-based narrative of the phenomenon being explored. In working towards achieving these aims I have checked whether themes hang together to form a coherent narrative, whilst preserving

the richness and integrity of the data by ensuring that I represent individuals' divergent positions. My supervisors facilitated this process by checking the themes, to ensure that the analysis remained grounded within the data.

6.3.6 Accomplishing general versus specific research tasks

Claims of theoretical transferability must be made with caution due to the nature and size of the sample. However, having conducted detailed interviews with eight participants, this represents a large dataset for a qualitative study. This enables more connections to be made within and across participants' accounts, which in turn, broadens the claims that can be made from the findings (Smith et al., 2009). The transferability of the findings may also increase transferability via the diversity of the sample in terms of age, gender and stage of training (see **Table 1** for a breakdown of participant characteristics) as well as the fact that common themes emerged (see **Table 2; Appendix 8**).

Working with data from eight interviews has been both a privilege and a challenge. I have followed recommendations for methodically managing larger samples (Smith et al., 2009) in order to address dilemmas such as which themes to privilege over others, as well as engaging in ongoing dialogue with my supervisors to manage these pressures. In the future it may be interesting to conduct further analyses either with one participant's interview or a particular super-ordinate theme, in order to provide a 'thick description' (Elliott et al., 1999) of the experience of being an individual who has undertaken PBL as part of their Clinical Psychology training.

6.3.7 Resonating with readers

Smith et al. (2009) suggest that the focus on the particular moves us closer to the universal because it gives us insight into the very 'essence' of human experience. Thus, in the writing up of this research I have endeavoured to provide a rich, transparent and contextualised account of the participants' dynamic and complex experiences in the hope that readers will find a resonance with the very 'essence' of human experience that I have striven to portray.

6.4 Areas for further research

A number of areas for future research arose out of this study. A key aspect emerging from the results was the dynamic between the professional and personal selves for trainees engaging with the PBL process. For most of the participants, an idea of growth within and across both selves was noted. Therefore it might be worth considering how, if at all, participants' personal and professional development might change through the course of their PBL journey in order to further illuminate the professional and personal developmental processes at play whilst undertaking PBL within clinical training.

The role of gender within the PBL process was noted by some of the participants within the interviews. For example, within section 5.2.2 Ann discusses preconceived ideas about others' relatedness, in which she believes that women within her PBL group attempted to 'protect' a male member of her group from "woman stuff" such as "emotion". We do not know whether this was in fact his position or hers, however, this indicates that issues of gender may warrant closer inspection and in particular whether males and females experience PBL differently. No published studies have been identified in this area in relation to the application of PBL to Clinical Psychology training.

Furthermore, trainees' experiences could be explored from alternative methodological perspectives, such as through the narratives they produce or the discourses they use to articulate their experiences. Such approaches may provide alternative constructions of trainees' experiences and thus provide a richer description of the PBL process.

Facilitators' experiences of facilitating PBL groups have been touched upon but not thoroughly examined within previous PBL studies (e.g. Keville et al. 2009, 2010; Nel et al. 2008), and so would be a valuable avenue of exploration. Whilst the present study may provide an insight into individual experiences of facilitation and of the useful facets of PBL, Yalom and Elkin (1992) assert that often the therapist and client have very different ideas about what exactly is helpful. Such research may elucidate the factors that underpin professional and personal development opportunities within the PBL group context. It may also be useful to consider whether the course philosophy has any impact upon the delivery and effectiveness of PBL.

Finally, it would be useful to replicate this research, both with the training course hosting this research and other Clinical Psychology training programmes, to enhance the validity of the findings.

6.5 Implications and recommendations for the implementation of PBL within Clinical Psychology training

A number of implications for the implementation of PBL within doctoral-level Clinical Psychology training programmes in the UK have been noted in the Discussion above. I herewith present a synopsis of these, including some further implications and recommendations for training programmes.

A significant implication arising from this study is recognition of the value of PBL in supporting Clinical Psychology trainees to develop team working and leadership skills, as well as more generally facilitating growth within and across the professional and personal selves. Given the current focus upon team working and leadership skills within the NHS, Clinical Psychology, training courses should be encouraged to consider implementing PBL, or aspects thereof, within their curriculum. In addition, training courses should be encouraged to recognise the value of PBL in facilitating a personal journey for trainees and in turn, the value of personal journeys in developing professional roles.

Participants' also noted the importance of facilitator availability, flexibility, impartiality and commitment to processing difficulties through to their conclusion. It may be useful for training courses implementing PBL, and more importantly facilitators of PBL groups, to remain mindful that consistency across these domains provides a sense of containment within the PBL group, which has been reported to assist trainees' in working through difficulties that may arise within their PBL groups. In addition, courses should consider what support is made available to those trainees who do not experience a safe PBL context. In these instances individualised support systems may be of benefit, for example, Personal Tutors, buddies and Personal Advisors.

The impact of group dynamics upon individuals and PBL groups, and connections between groups within the wider cohort, emerged as a key theme within the present study. Thus, course staff should remain mindful of the impact of such group dynamics. Participants also made reference to the value of reflective spaces for exploring and containing the potentially difficult emotions arising from these dynamics, and so training courses may wish to provide opportunities for facilitated group reflection for each PBL group and the wider cohort within course timetables. In particular, a final follow-up of the PBL group towards the end of the

course could provide a facilitated space in which to address any unresolved issues around group dynamics within and between PBL groups.

Finally, the value participants placed upon reflective spaces also suggests that the facilitation of PBL groups needs to be carefully considered and supported. Regular workshops could be offered for facilitators, focusing upon the development and maintenance of group facilitation skills. In addition, it may be helpful for facilitated space to be provided for the facilitators themselves, in order to provide them with access to peer support and to provide a space to consider issues of isomorphism that may impact upon cohorts or the facilitation team. This is highly relevant given the participants in this study having noted that peer support was of paramount importance when engaging with the struggles of PBL.

6.6 Conclusions

This research presents the findings of a qualitative study using IPA methodology to facilitate the exploration of experiences of Trainee Clinical Psychologists who have undertaken PBL as part of their doctoral-level training in the UK. While it is important to recognise that participants in this study do not necessarily speak for all Trainee Clinical Psychologists who have undertaken PBL as part of their training, this research endeavours to provide a rich and meaningful insight into participants' dynamic, complex and emotional experiences.

There was a pervasive sense of intangibility, intensity and a reverberating emotional impact which necessitated arduous and complex emotional work on individual and group levels.

The difficulty in articulating PBL and its impact appeared to relate to an intense desire to put meaning into words; a process which was eased through effective group facilitation, writing reflective essays, and additional reflective contexts such as talking with peers and even, engaging in these research interviews. These seemed to scaffold individuals' abilities to process intense emotional experiences often stemming from the complex dynamics occurring within the PBL experience, for example, between group members.

'Intensity' appeared to emanate from issues such as perceived time pressures, interpersonal dynamics *within* and *between* groups, clinical vignettes which resonate with individuals' personal histories or difficulties and changes in group membership or facilitation. Different responses and strategies individuals adopted to manage these issues included experiential avoidance (for example, disconnection and efforts to generally create distance between themselves and these intense emotions), and conflict. However, through effective facilitation, the support of fellow group members, and personal risk-taking individuals were able to acknowledge and connect with this emotional intensity from a place of safety. These aspects seem to be the underlying 'therapeutic factors' within PBL groups and have invariably led individuals' to experience a reverberating emotional impact – within the group, the wider cohort, in professional contexts, individuals' personal lives, and beyond.

This application of the learned lessons and experiences of PBL to the outside world is of high importance given the multiple contexts and pressures trainees relate to. These differences make it difficult for trainees to be congruent within themselves across contexts, and with

others. Within these circumstances, it is easy to only connect with what is 'acceptable' within that context. In addition, intellectual development seems to be favoured over emotional development, which reinforces experiential avoidance of emotion on a societal level. Within the specific context of Clinical Psychology training, competition and uncertainty are rife and may represent a threat to the exploration of emotions and vulnerability. PBL embraces these differences, bridging the intellectual and the emotional, alongside the professional and the personal.

Participants within the study valued my peer status as my sameness enabled them to feel like I could connect and understand their experiences whilst my difference provided a degree of therapeutic space to allow deeper meanings and understandings to emerge. They also spoke of the therapeutic benefit of the interviews and of being able to reflect upon their experiences with another; the same, but different. I also valued occupying the same reflective space as my participants – I was truly privileged to be able to share in my participants stories and support them in making sense of their experiences. In doing so, I feel that my reflections on my own experiences of PBL, in hindsight, have become richer. However, this left me struggling to balance my roles within the research interviews: when emotive material arose, was I a researcher, a peer or a clinician?

It was through engaging in a self-reflexive process, both individually as well as with my research supervisors that I was able to negotiate the challenges that lay within balancing such competing roles. Supervision allowed me to acknowledge what I was bringing to the interviews and the analyses and allowed my participants' voices to be heard within the write-up of my research, and so self-reflexivity thus became a key aspect of my thesis.

In concluding my research and in coming to the end of my own doctoral studies and thus my direct involvement with PBL, I found that an extract from Yalom (2005) struck a particular chord;

“Groups hate to die, and members generally try to avoid the ending. They may, for example, pretend that the group will continue in some other setting – for example, reunions or regularly scheduled social meetings. But the therapist is well advised to confront the group with reality: the end of a group is a real loss. It never really can

be reconvened, and even if relationships are continued in pairs or small fragments of the group as the members then know it – in this room, in its present form, with the group leaders – will be gone forever.” (Yalom, 2005, p.389)

Therefore, perhaps my undertaking of this thesis can be construed as a sign of my unwillingness to let go of PBL; of my experiences within it; of my connections with other members within my PBL group and with other PBL groups within my cohort; of the relationship with my PBL group facilitator; of the meaning and significance of all of these.

The participants within this research reveal to us that the journey is far more important than the destination. Like travellers and pioneers of a bygone age, it is the very act of navigating one’s way through uncharted territory and finding ways to overcome roadblocks that has the potential to be so transformative. Regardless of what Yalom says, I intend to ensure that I carry my travelling companions with me on my future professional and personal journeys throughout life, no matter where the road ahead takes me.

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8.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

EXPLORING DYNAMIC PROCESSES: A QUALITATIVE DECONSTRUCTION OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Interview schedule - Version 1 - Date: 06 / 12 / 2011

A. PBL

- 1) What does the term 'PBL' mean to you? How would you define it?
Prompt: What images / words come to mind? Do you have a nickname for it?
- 2) What were your expectations of PBL?
Prompt: hopes, fears.
- 3) Could you describe what happens in PBL, in your own words?
- 4) How do you feel when you are doing PBL?
Prompt: emotionally, mentally, physically.
- 5) How do you feel about doing PBL as part of your clinical training?
Prompt: helpful aspects, unhelpful aspects?
- 6) How would you sum up your experience of PBL to someone who has never done it?

B. Group working

- 7) How would you describe working in a PBL small group? What is (was) it like?
- 8) Were there any particularly difficult experiences your group faced whilst doing PBL? If so, can you describe them?
- 9) How did your small group manage these difficult experiences? What helped and hindered your small group to cope with these difficult experiences?
- 10) Were there any difficult experiences for you personally about working in your PBL small group? If so, can you describe them?
Prompt: things to do with the vignettes, group process, deciding to share / not share, being evaluated.
- 11) How did you manage these difficult experiences? What helped and hindered you to cope with these difficult experiences?
- 12) Were there any particularly good experiences of working as a PBL group? If so, can you describe them?
Prompt: feeling connected, a sense of belonging, achieving a task together.
- 13) How do your experiences in your PBL small group compare to your experiences in other groups?
Prompt: outside of training, family, similar / different?

C. Professional and personal development

- 14) In what ways have your PBL experiences impacted on your professional development?
Prompt: clinical, MDT working, professional identity.
- 15) In what ways have your PBL experiences impacted on your personal development?
- 16) Earlier I asked you about the expectations hopes and fears that you held at the start of PBL. Now that you're nearing the end / have completed your PBL journey, do you think that your expectations, hopes and fears were realised?

D. Experience of this interview

- 17) What was it like being interviewed by a peer who has also been through the PBL experience?

APPENDIX 2: INITIAL PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

Hello past and present UH DClInPsy trainees!

My name is Louise Conlan and I'm a current 3rd year student on the UH DClInPsy programme. I am writing to you because we all have something in common - we have all undertaken Problem-Based Learning (PBL) at UH!

I would like to invite you to take part in a novel piece of research for my thesis, exploring your experiences of PBL...

What will the study involve?

If you could spare a bit of your time to be involved in this novel piece of peer research, you will be asked to take part in an audio recorded interview followed by completion of a brief questionnaire. This should take approximately 1 ½ hours. What I am interested in includes your experiences of PBL; your experiences of group working; and how PBL has impacted upon your professional and personal development. I will ask every person similar questions, however, the aim is to hear about *your* individual thoughts, feelings and experiences. All information provided by you will be anonymised and confidentiality will be preserved. Please see the attached Participant Information Sheet for further details.

Benefits of participating in this research

Your participation will help to voice the lived experiences of trainees undertaking PBL, identify factors that help and hinder individuals and groups to work through difficult experiences, further develop PBL programmes and improve the overall experience of clinical training. And on a personal level, you'll have an opportunity to reminisce about the 'marmite' that is PBL - whether you loved it or hated it, I am interested in hearing about all PBL experiences!

If you would like to be involved, please contact me at your earliest convenience on [REDACTED] or l.conlan@herts.ac.uk

I am very excited about talking with you about your PBL experiences...and so I look forward to hearing from you soon!

With best wishes,

Louise



EXPLORING DYNAMIC PROCESSES:

A QUALITATIVE DECONSTRUCTION OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Participant Information Sheet - Version 1 - Date: 06 / 12 / 2011

AIMS OF THE STUDY

My name is Louise-Margaret Conlan and I am a third year Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Hertfordshire. I am contacting you because I am interested in your experiences of undertaking problem-based learning (PBL) as part of your Doctoral Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy) training at the University of Hertfordshire. Currently there is very limited *peer research* focusing on how individuals understand and make sense of PBL experiences undertaken as part of DClinPsy training; neither is there much exploration of how these experiences may impact upon individuals' professional and personal development. I hope that you might be willing to take part in my research which aims to address this knowledge gap.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

It is hoped that this study can be used to:

- (1) voice the lived experiences of those who have undertaken PBL as part of their clinical psychology training;
- (2) articulate the factors that help and hinder individuals and groups to work through any difficult experiences;
- (3) aid curriculum organisers' understanding of ways in which they might wish to adapt their PBL programmes;
- (4) aid curriculum organisers' understanding of ways which PBL enhances professional and personal development.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF TAKING PART?

To the best of my knowledge there are no risks involved in this study.

WHAT IS INVOLVED?

If you consent to being involved in this research you will be asked to take part in an audio recorded interview that will take place either at the University or your home. Immediately following the interview you will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire. The interview and questionnaire should take approximately 1 ½ hours and will involve me asking you about your experiences of problem-based learning. I will ask every person similar questions, however, the aim is to hear about your individual thoughts, feelings and experiences. What I am interested in includes your experiences of PBL; your experiences of group working; and how PBL has impacted upon your professional and personal development.

CONFIDENTIALITY

If you choose to be interviewed for this study all information you provide will be kept confidential from the course team, trainees and other participants who take part in this study, in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. An audio recording of your interview will be given a code (e.g. Interview A) and stored on a password protected and encrypted

USB drive and backed up on a password protected and secure computer. I will pay a transcription service to transcribe my interviews, which involves typing up the interview verbatim. I will gain a signed non-disclosure / confidentiality agreement from the service prior to giving them my recordings. Further to this, all names and identifiable information will be removed from the transcripts by the researcher and kept securely and separately from the transcripts. The researcher's supervisors will therefore be kept blind as to the identity of participants when reviewing transcripts.

I will look for themes within the transcripts of yours and others' interviews. The results will be reported in a thesis for the purpose of gaining a qualification in Clinical Psychology. The thesis will be held at the University of Hertfordshire Learning Resource Centre and will be accessible to interested parties. A summary of the main research findings may be published in written work or articles that the researcher and / or her project supervisors write, as well as for the purpose of teaching / conference presentations. Information emanating from the study will only be made public in an unattributable format or at the aggregate level in order to ensure that no participant is identifiable.

HOW LONG WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE KEPT?

Your personal information and recordings will be kept for up to five years after the research is submitted for examination (until approximately June 2017). The information will be stored securely according to the University of Hertfordshire's 'Good Practice in Research' guidelines.

WHO HAS REVIEWED THIS STUDY?

This study has been approved by the University of Hertfordshire's School of Psychology Ethics Committee (protocol number: PSY/01/12/L-MC). The research design has also been formally peer-reviewed by the study's supervisors - Dr Saskia Keville and Dr Pieter W Nel, as well as research staff from the University of Hertfordshire's Doctoral Clinical Psychology training programme.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. If you are interested in taking part in this research please contact me. Alternatively, if you have any questions please contact me or the primary project supervisor via the contact details provided below:

Louise-Margaret Conlan

✉ e-mail: l.conlan@herts.ac.uk

✉ telephone: [REDACTED]

✉ post: c/o Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, F262 Wright Building, College Lane Campus, Hatfield, AL10 9AB

Dr Saskia Keville

s.keville@herts.ac.uk

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APPENDIX 4: ETHICAL APPROVAL

Revised (September 2006)

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Student Investigator: Louise-Margaret Conlan

**Title of project: Exploring Dynamic Processes:
A Qualitative Deconstruction Of Problem-Based Learning
Experiences**

Supervisor: Saskia Keville and Pieter W Nel

Registration Protocol Number: PSY/01/12/L-MC

The approval for the above research project was granted on 18 January 2012 by the Psychology Ethics Committee under delegated authority from the Ethics Committee of the University of Hertfordshire.

The end date of your study is 28 September 2012.

Signed:



Date: 18 January 2012

Professor Lia Kvavilashvili
Chair
Psychology Ethics Committee

STATEMENT OF THE SUPERVISOR:

From my discussions with the above student, as far as I can ascertain, s/he has followed the ethics protocol approved for this project.

Signed (supervisor):

Date:

APPENDIX 6: TRANSCRIPTION AGREEMENT

University of
Hertfordshire

TRANSCRIPTION AGREEMENT

Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

University of Hertfordshire

Transcription confidentiality / non-disclosure agreement

This non-disclosure agreement is in reference to the following parties:

LOUISE-MARGARET CONLAN ('the discloser')

And

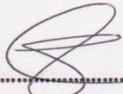
THERESA-JEAN ('the recipient')

The recipient agrees to not divulge any information to a third party with regards to the transcription of audio recordings, as recorded by the discloser.

The information shared will therefore remain confidential.

The recipient also agrees to destroy the transcripts as soon as they have been provided to the discloser.

The recipient agrees to return and or destroy any copies of the recordings they were able to access provided by the discloser.

Signed:.....

Date: 1st February 2012



APPENDIX 7: AUDIT TRAIL for Emily

Appendix 7a: Anonymised interview transcript with my initial reactions and analysis of emerging themes for Emily

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH PARTICIPANT ~*~ 'EMILY' ~*~

Possible quotes Metaphors Emerging themes Relevant theory / literature

A. PBL	INITIAL REACTIONS	EMERGING THEMES
<p>1) OK, so I just wanted to find out about your experiences with PBL and what I'd like to start off by asking you is, what 'PBL' means to you? So I already know that PBL stands for problem-based learning, but how would you define PBL for you?</p> <p>Prompt: What images / words come to mind? Do you have a nickname for it?</p> <p>Oh wow! Define. Erm... [it's a] roller coaster of intense emotions. A definition in terms of what it actually means personally or kind of if I were describing it to someone else?</p> <p>Lou - Both</p> <p>Okay, so...erm, problem-based learning is a kind of working in a group with other people to work on a case but exploring the process as well as the content, to gain a better understanding of the case and how you'd work with it. It's really difficult to define because - I don't know - one thing might be the objective that the course sets, but what it actually means personally is probably very different. So for me it's like, I don't know, it works on so many levels. So, it's a group experience, it's almost like - almost - I wouldn't say it replaces - but almost like a therapeutic experience. Erm, it's a learning experience, it's like personally and professionally...it's a chance to get to know yourself, as a person, a person in a group, professionally. Erm I don't know [giggles lightly], I don't know what were you thinking?</p> <p>Lou - Oh no, that's interesting, I think what I'm quite curious about is you said it feels almost like a therapeutic experience and you had a smile on your face when you said that. You also said that it's a chance to get to know yourself, (participant said uh hmm, like agreeing to statement) so those two things together, I was just wondering if you could tell me a bit more about that?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Participant overwhelmed when thinking about having to define PBL. Looking to me to provide more structure to frame her thinking. Needing external help to solve an internal struggle. ◆ Metaphor: 'roller coaster of intense emotions'. (see: Ylvisaker & Feeny, 2000: metaphorical compaction / decreased memory load) ◆ Participant wanted to know whether she was defining her experience of PBL or describing PBL to others. ◆ Group working to address issues of process and content. ◆ Difficult to define: objective and subjective purposes and meanings; multiple levels. Why does she think that the course's objectives could be so very different to what PBL would actually mean to her? ◆ PBL potentially analogous to a therapeutic experience. ◆ Opportunity to develop both personally and professionally. ◆ She asserts that PBL should be 'a minimum requirement' for trainees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ "Pandora's box". ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ Tension between process and content. ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am"

<p>Yeah, so, I think personally PBL is <i>very important as something in itself</i> I think (<i>Lou - for trainees?</i>) for trainees, yeah, so I think personally as well, I think a lot of people could benefit from therapy but obviously it's very expensive but <i>I think as a minimum, I think PBL and probably reflective groups as well, as a trainee, should be a minimum requirement for personal insight into growth.</i> It's <i>hard to disentangle</i> kind of where you get the benefits and insights from so it's kind of <i>hard to say</i> I learnt about myself not necessarily from, you know, placements or therapy. But I don't know, if you try and <i>disentangle</i> some of it I guess <i>there's some bits I've learnt from PBL that I haven't got from personal therapy but because it's the group experience I guess you learn what you're like in a group.</i> And I think because it's quite <i>intense it almost has parallels with family issues</i> so it kind of recreates a family environment which can, I guess, bring up a lot of erm, kinds of <i>difficulties</i> or... and things, so <i>it really kind of helps you think about yourself in a group, how you work with other people, what your sensitivities are, how you deal with conflict, how you deal with difficult emotions, how you manage difficult emotions.</i> Erm...yeah (giggles quietly, sounds unsure).</p> <p><i>Lou - that's quite a lot, giggles</i></p> <p>Yeah</p> <p><i>Lou - We'll touch on some of those themes later. I was also wondering when you think of PBL, what words or images come to mind? Do you have a nickname for it? So you personally, or within your PBL group, or within your cohort?</i></p> <p>Erm, <i>I haven't got a nickname but for some reason, the thing that's coming into my head at the moment is PB-Hell, which is ironic because it's meant to be beneficial</i> (laughs). Yeah sometimes when it's in the dark recesses of it, in <i>the middle of it, like towards the presentation, it feels like a pressure cooker, kind of PB-Hell. So you're kind of in PB-Hell.</i> Erm...</p> <p><i>Lou - where did that word or term come from?</i></p>	<p>whilst stating that it is a therapeutic experience which develops '<i>personal insight into growth</i>'. Also below – she states that there are some things she has gotten from PBL that she hasn't gotten from personal therapy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Also thinks reflective groups are important for trainees – what is so important about learning in groups? ◆ Difficult to disentangle (x3) / say where benefits / insights / developments come from. This theme continues throughout. ◆ Struggle to articulate this experience, perhaps because it's based more on a 'felt sense'. This is on an experiential level... often words from the heart can be less articulated (deriving from an emotional experience). Perhaps this is what experiential learning (like PBL) is tapping into. ◆ Intensity. This theme continues throughout. ◆ Parallels with family dynamics: family as our first group context, PBL as the next most similar thing? Sense of big emotional experience in families (often established pre-verbally). ◆ Mentioned difficult emotions x2 – in the context of personal sensitivities, group working and group conflict. This theme continues throughout. ◆ Giggling / uncertainty when discussing emotions. What is this about? ◆ First mention of PB-Hell. ◆ Irony: PBL has a bad name yet '<i>it's meant to be beneficial</i>'. More laughing when talking about what is emotionally difficult. ◆ Dark recesses': buried, enclosed, surrounded, unable to look out. ◆ Metaphor of '<i>pressure cooker</i>'. What is difficult about the middle / presentation aspect of PBL? Is this related to 'working together'? What is being compressed? Emotions? Why the difficulty releasing? How does she cope in such a dark/exaggerated place? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ Parallels with family dynamics. ◆ Using humour to talk about difficult experiences. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ Tribal.
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<p>I don't know, I just made it up today. I don't know if anyone else calls it that but it's kind of like (sighs).</p> <p>Lou - <i>And what about it is the pressure cooker?</i></p> <p>Erm...</p> <p>Lou - <i>Or is the pressure cooker PB-Hell?</i></p> <p>It's interesting because I don't think it's something we've held in our group. In one of the other groups, I know a lot of them mention like, 'if only we didn't have to do a presentation at the end then it would be so much better' because it puts on a lot of pressure when you have to work towards these deadlines and you have to make these decisions and there's these pressures which are ruthless and you kind of have to define where you're gonna go. I think they're important skills to have but it does put a lot of pressure on and in our group there's a lot of opinionated people so it's...it's...you know, you have to learn to compromise and make decisions, erm, you can't always get by by trying to please everyone. Erm, which we've tried. Erm, so it's...yeah, it's that kind of decision-making process where it gets really tough and kind of how you'd kind of spend the time as well like in the sessions like, what's important to focus on, what can be done in the session, what needs to be done outside the session, so time management becomes a big issue and it almost takes over everything</p> <p>Lou - <i>agreed sympathetically</i></p> <p>So it becomes all-encompassing, like especially the build up to it. You're thinking, working on it, you're trying to meet like erm, you're trying to arrange meetings outside of the PBL allocated time to try and just get it done so it becomes really pressured, and I don't know why we place so much emphasis on the final product and presentation but it but it feels like you wanna just give it everything so you just make it this big thing, you're crazy, you create a monster (laughs).</p> <p>Lou - <i>what makes you want to create this big presentation, to make it</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Thinks she has invented the term 'PB-Hell' despite it being in common usage since at least Cohort 6! Is there something subliminal / trans-generational going on here??! ◆ If she did just make up the term 'PB-Hell', then why is she denying that this is something that she / her PBL group have 'held'? Difficulty of self / others owning difficult emotions / experiences? ◆ Decisions / choosing directions = 'ruthless' pressures. Parallel-processing/isomorphism (systemic)/re-enactment (psychodynamic) of narrative within groups. ◆ Is 'ruthless' the product of the pressure cooker analogy? ◆ Difficulty of opinionated people / learning to compromise / not being able to please everyone. It seems then that 'pleasing everyone' therefore does not necessarily lead to having an easier life, as if this is the case then decisions don't get made, which increases the internal group pressure. ◆ Spending time on PBL outside of timetabled sessions. Why don't / can't they get everything done within the timetabled sessions? Is it necessary or is this driven by pressures from within / outside / between PBL groups, to create a good 'final product' and presentation? ◆ 'it almost takes over everything', / 'becomes all-encompassing' – language here expresses enormity of what PBL is / does / takes over / impacts upon... ◆ She is trying to make sense of why so much emphasis is placed by herself / her group / the cohort (?) on 'the final product' / presentation. ◆ Metaphor: 'you create a monster'. Almost as though things become outside of her / the group's control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ "Pandora's box". ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ Desire to impress and be validated.
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<p><i>really good?</i></p> <p>Erm...</p> <p><i>Where does that pressure come from?</i></p> <p>It comes from us. I think it's funny; different groups have different theories about it. You know, some people think it's the course expects certain things, and it's like you're playing to their expectations but it almost becomes a bit tribal, and I don't know, I don't know whether it's like you use some kind of group psychology theory in order to be like a cohesive group. You almost need an out-group in order to create that. So it's like an 'us and them' and it becomes very tribal and almost like competitive and it's like 'sshhh sshhh sshhh don't say anything in front of them'. And it's not like you're going to steal anyone's ideas but you're very careful at being kept in close quarters and you don't want anyone to find out what you're doing and yeah, it does become quite rivalrous and there's a lot of comparing and thinking 'are we doing it the right way?'; 'is our group better?'. So that puts a lot of pressure on the presentation and also when you feel like you're doing really good stuff in the sessions, you want people of see that, so you kind of, when you feel proud of what you've done you wanna be able to get that across to people.</p> <p><i>Lou - made hmm noise as if in agreement</i></p> <p>And for our group as well like we really value the end product, like being able to be open about things and share what we've learnt with everyone else cos that's kind of some of our group values about being open and sharing and being transparent as also the process to get to know yourself.</p> <p><i>Lou - made hmm noise as if in agreement</i></p> <p>So that's kind of how it works for our group from my point of view, I don't know if everyone would say that, yeah (laughing).</p> <p><i>Lou - laughing also</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ She can immediately pinpoint that the pressure comes from within the group / cohort. ◆ (Conspiracy) theories (x2)! This resonates with me / my PBL experience! ◆ Projected expectations of course team, based on previous experiences within academic / clinical environments? ◆ Metaphor: 'it almost becomes a bit tribal' → 'very tribal' – it's grown! Discussion of group cohesion / identity. ◆ Importance of out-groups to create in-group identity/cohesion → efforts to compare externally generally a product of insecurities / confusion / fear internally (psychoanalytic theory), seeking reassurance from outside when inside is unsettled. ◆ Competition, secrecy, rivalry and comparisons between groups. ◆ Querying 'are we doing it the right way?'; 'is our group better?' as well as wanting others to see the 'good stuff' that is happening in their sessions – are they seeking to be witnessed or validated and if so, why; and from whom / where? Does this link back to PBL groups being like family – are the group members the children who need others to feel proud of them before they allow themselves to feel proud? ◆ Group values of sharing externally what has been learnt within their PBL group context: (openness; sharing; transparency) – where do these values come from? ◆ How it works from her point of view – is she conscious that others may define the same experiences differently? Why does this make her laugh? In the context of talking about external witnessing / validation, does she perhaps think of me as something akin to a facilitator / marker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Conspiracy theories. ◆ Conspiracy theories. ◆ Desire to impress and be validated. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Desire to impress and be validated. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ Desire to impress and be validated. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Importance of shared group values.
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	- does she think that I am evaluating her or her answers?	
<p>2) So before you did PBL what were your expectations of what PBL would be, or what it would be like?</p> <p>Prompt: hopes, fears.</p>		
<p>Erm, I remember when I was first told about it before I started, before I even got on the course, and I was excited by it but I also thought 'this sounds a bit crazy - there's no way that I'm gonna be singing and dancing'. We haven't gone that far - we haven't been singing and dancing, but we are quite a theatrical group, erm, so I don't know.</p> <p>Lou - so was it another trainee you'd spoken to?</p> <p>Yeah, yeah, so I'd heard about it but obviously every group has their own identity about their group about you know, the way it is and then when we started we saw a video of some people talking about their PBL experience so this was before we went into our PBL groups and they talked a lot about how the group was split and it was very tribal like 'we couldn't come back as a cohort' and they were seen as like the boring group because they were quite theoretical. Erm, that was kind of their perception, I don't know if it was an identity they gave themselves or that's how other people viewed them. Er and I think that created a lot of stuff between everyone because our group didn't want to be that because we didn't want to be the boring group and also we didn't want all of these divides. So our group's really, we're really close in our group but we also become part of the cohort so even though we're close we like to open that out to other people so we're kind of a bit more permeable, I think, than some of the other groups.</p> <p>Lou - hmm, agreed. You say you're a close group. In what ways do you open that out, to the rest of your cohort? How does that happen?</p> <p>Erm, mainly in terms of the, when we do the presentation erm, we kind of bare it all. And it's kind of like all the feedback we tend to get, you know in the discussion bit after our presentation, that you know we're kind of really</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Excited about PBL before it even began but also thought it sounded 'a bit crazy'. What was this excitement about? Does this link to her comments later about having hoped to try out different roles and learn about herself? ◆ '...every group has their own identity...' – how is this created? Is this just an internal group process, or does some of the group identity come from external views of the group? ◆ Another mention of 'very tribal', as above. ◆ Groups with predilection for including theory in their presentations are considered 'boring'...by this group. Is emotional connection a cohort value? How does this person / her group define themselves? In comparison with...? ◆ Wanting to avoid 'divides' Valom's seeking conformity (safety seeking) but with this comes a reduced acknowledgement of within-group individuality. ◆ Group identities – some are permeable, some are not. What impact does this have on individuals within groups / individual groups / wider cohort? ◆ First mention of 'baring it all'. This is repeated throughout the interview. Views this as key to wider cohort connecting with their group / experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Pandora's box". ◆ Tribal. ◆ Importance of connecting with others. ◆ Putting it 'out there'. ◆ Baring your soul. ◆ Importance of shared

<p><i>honest and open</i> about, you know, even the conflicts we've had and how we've tried to go through that. Erm I don't know, <i>we're not kind of afraid to show our flaws and the difficulties we've had</i> and the fact we're a work in progress, so I don't know, that I guess.</p> <p><i>Lou - what's 'a work in progress'?</i></p> <p>Erm? Sighs.</p> <p><i>Lou - you or the group?</i></p> <p>The group, oh yeah definitely me as well, but er the group. Yeah I mean, <i>there were times that were dark and you know people were fearful for our group</i> (laughs nervously as she says this sentence), they didn't quite know what they were gonna get and I think, I don't know some of the feedback we had was like, <i>watching us was very tense because we put it all out there, everything that was going on we just whoa, kind of hit people with it</i> (laughs here) which erm, yeah <i>we weren't afraid to hold back</i> which is a quality really like, <i>that kind of brave bruising kind of ness</i>, yeah, hmm. <11:52></p> <p><i>Lou - So I know you've talked a bit about what you thought PBL would be like, what your expectations of it would be. If you were kind of thinking about that in terms of your hopes and fears for PBL, how would you kind of sum that up?</i></p> <p>Oh, (large sighs), my hopes then or my hopes continuing through?</p> <p><i>Lou - Well, if we start with your hope then just before you started PBL, the journey.</i></p> <p>Erm...</p> <p><i>Lou - hopes and fears</i></p> <p><i>Hopes and fears at the beginning. Erm (sighs). It's quite difficult to put yourself back there. It's almost like Pandora's Box: once you've opened it, like it's you can't go back, you can't know, you can't un-know what you know now, if that makes any sense. Let me think, erm (long silence), I don't know. I kind of hoped to learn about myself, it's like something I guess I've</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Moving from individual group identity to wider cohort through honesty and openness – about the difficult stuff. ◆ Found courage to show flaws / be open about difficulties / to be 'a work in progress', as a group. How was this safety / courage found / adopted? (reciprocal roles: openness ↔ closed). ◆ What does this sigh indicate? Will the work of a group / group formation ever be done?! ◆ Dark times for the group – others were fearful for them. Why is it important how others viewed their group? What did it mean for the group / individuals in the group that outsiders were commenting upon their group identity / difficulties? Also laughing again – in the context of difficult emotions. Whose is the 'tenseness'? What is audience picking up on? ◆ Uncertainty that others can tolerate the honest expression of her group's difficulties? ◆ Could how people respond to a group's difficult emotions / experiences inhibit the expression of a group's identity / emotions / experiences? ◆ Sigh: resistance to engaging with early anxieties or perhaps overwhelmed by the enormity of trying to define it 'back then' alongside everything else that's occurred since? ◆ Metaphor: Pandora's Box! ◆ Saw PBL as an opportunity to hopefully learn about herself, to build 	<p>group values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ Desire to impress and be validated. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intensity of openness. ◆ Putting it 'out there'. ◆ Intensity of openness. ◆ Desire to impress and be validated. ◆ "Pandora's box".
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<p>always kind of striven, strove for, I don't know which one's the right word. Erm, yeah it's something that I wanted and I saw PBL as an opportunity to do that and I hope to be, I don't know, to build friendships in the group but also be a good working group so kind of get on with people but not be afraid to say what I think and to kind of put my opinions across. Also like when I've been in previous study groups at University, I've taken on quite a leadership bossy role, so I'm quite bossy, so I wanted a chance to be something different and try out something new and to be able to trust in the process but you don't have to be, you know, leading or 'hands on' to get what you want, you can trust that other people will fulfil their roles so a chance to kind of try out some different ways of groups and different roles. In terms of fears, erm not liking the group, not feeling like I belong or fit in, not being able to be myself, not having my hopes met (laughs nervously), a fear of not having it live up to what I wanted it to be. <14:40></p> <p>Lou - OK, we'll touch on that a bit later.</p>	<p>friendships, to work well in groups, to be able to speak up in groups, to try out new roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Wanted a chance to step out of comfortable roles, to challenge self, to try something different. ◆ It seems very brave to trust in something that you don't fully understand. Why does she have trust in the PBL process? ◆ Fearing not liking the group, not fitting in, not belonging, not having expectations met. Group identity = something to belong to? Like a family? ◆ High expectations / hopes of PBL: does this make it easier or more difficult to engage fully with PBL, when a lot of value is placed upon it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ . "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ "...you have to trust in the process." ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Value of learning to be flexible. ◆ Desire to impress and be validated. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Value of learning to be flexible. ◆ Longing to belong.
<p>3) Could you describe what happens in PBL, in your own words?</p> <p>I think you mentioned it before but can you describe in your own words what happens in PBL?</p> <p>What happens in it? Erm what in terms about what's supposed to happen or (laughs) what does happen? Erm, so what happens? Well, so much happens, so much happens at different levels at the same time so it depends what you're paying attention to or what you tune into. So there's multiple levels so at some levels you are a work group and you, you think about a case and you think how you would work with this therapeutically and professionally and you think about theory and stuff to help with that, then you've got the group contact so working with other people to make</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What's 'supposed' to happen in PBL vs. what actually happens in PBL! ◆ Multiple levels mentioned, again: being a work group, exploring group dynamics, dynamic processes between self / group learning and multiple contexts of the personal and the professional. ◆ What impacts upon what someone pays attention to / tunes in to? How does this link with the Pandora's Box metaphor? If you know something is going to change your view / beliefs / experience, do you choose not to attend to it? What unconscious processes or conscious decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Conspiracy theories. ◆ Tension between process and content. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Difficulty of making

<p>decisions to kind of erm you know generate hypotheses and ways of thinking about things and coming together in some ways to get some kind of agreement of where to go. Also sharing and expanding your view on it and their individual level, (laughs) erm being in a group and bringing, bringing yourself, your personal context and how that interacts with the professional, the professional role and you in a group-type role. It's really hard to unpick and in terms of what happens is, I don't know if that's what the type of question you meant or what happens in terms of what are the issues that come up?</p> <p>Lou - I'll ask about the issues that come up as we go through but I just meant generally your perception of how PBL works and you touched on that earlier as well anyway but thank you for that.</p> <p>Okay.</p>	<p>processes play into this? For example, is it too anxiety-provoking to sense something but not name it (for some individuals)? See pg 26.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Making decisions / coming to agreements / choosing directions. This is mentioned throughout. ◆ Interplay between personal context and professional development; as well as the private self and the group / professional persona? ◆ Difficult to disentangle / say where benefits / insights / developments come from, as on pg. 2. This theme continues throughout. 	<p>decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ "You can't... separate... the professional and the personal" ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am"
<p>4) How do you feel when you are doing PBL? Prompt: emotionally, mentally, physically.</p>		
<p>Oh, er oh, (sighs and laugh) oh, it's such a simply phrased question but don't think the answer's as simple! Erm how do I feel! Erm...God, I wish I had my diary with me (laughs). Erm, up and down. It depends like, just for example with the last PBL there were highs and there were lows so there was literally one session when we had it and I was just like, 'this is amazing, I love this group!'. We were all saying to each other like that this is the best session we've ever had and 'oh look at us all bonding' and we made decisions (word elongated), and it was fun (elongated), and it was painless (elongated) and we were able to deal with real (word elongated) issues and be real (word elongated) people and I was on a proper high and I started a video journal in my last one. I was like awww and I watched it back and I was happy and I was like, awww, I've got the best PBL group ever, not in a competitive way but, 'I love my PBL group!' and my boyfriend was making fun of that and (heh heh heh laughs) and then he tortured me with it by</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Participant overwhelmed (+ 'God') when thinking about how she feels (emotionally, mentally, physically) when doing PBL. Simple question (perhaps?!), but there are no simple answers, it seems. Why is this? ◆ Intense feelings: ups and downs; highs and lows. ◆ Group bonding = when the group made decisions; had fun; had a 'pain-free' experience; and dealt with real issues whilst being real people. ◆ Is there something about being authentic here? About just connecting and being with the process.... with the 'flow'? See Csikszentmihalyi and Seligman's work on 'positive psychology'. ◆ Looking back – nostalgia about the group whilst still in the midst of the group processes! Being able to reflect / feel / being with the process, when things are going well. ◆ Keen to say that loving her group didn't come from a position of competitiveness – why? Does competition = conflict? See Freud's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Importance of connecting with others. ◆ Connecting with the flow. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ "You'll come out the other end and you'll start to be nostalgic about it".

<p>going, the next week 'oh do you still love your PBL group?' and I was like 'uurrrhh, not quite'. You don't fall in and out of love with them but when the pressure gets... you know, you have to make decisions and you can get a bit snappy with people and you can you know. But I think depending on where you are in the process, I mean, 'cos when you're thinking about it later on, you kind of learn to deal with them and in the context that this is because we're stressed, not take it personally, but I think earlier on you know there were really big ups and downs like the first one went quite well, it was quite stressful because we tried to put a lot in it. The second one, there was like a big blow you know someone kind of said erm that they felt left out and like marginalised and there was a big silence and I was like whoa, a big spanner in the works, and it really brought morale down but it was a kind of opportunity to learn and think about what was going on and try and correct some of it so that took a while to come back up and trust in ourselves and in each other again, so up and down. It's a simple way of doing it but it doesn't quite capture it. Many emotions at the same time. There's been tears, there's been tantrums. There's been laughs, there's been...cake (both laugh). <19:35></p> <p>Lou - what does cake do for you and your group in PBL?</p> <p>Erm well funnily enough we didn't really, we did 'cake draw' in one thing but we each decided to be the leader and we each brought like food and stuff to the sessions that we were each leading, erm and we had a tea party one time to kind of bind as a group and we went to watch like a show thing as well, to get inspired but also to connect as a group because that's what we were working on, so I don't know it makes it a bit more informal like it makes it more like a friendship kind of thing which in terms of me and my aims of what I want to get out of PBL, is really important because I was saying about that sense of belonging and being part of it and it being more than a work thing. That's one of my (emphasised 'my') things that I want to</p>	<p>negation theory Why are people so conflict avoidant?!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Participant had discussions about her group outside of the cohort – boyfriend / others able to reflect back participant's feelings about the group process and maintain an overview of the journey / struggle. Just as a facilitator does? Useful to process group experiences both with those experiencing the experiences with you, as well as with someone slightly outside of the process? ◆ A. The need to make decisions can lead to people being 'snappy'. Why? ◆ A. Being able to reflect on stresses better when not in the midst of time pressures? Difficulty of reflecting when pressurised? As above and on pg 31. ◆ Intense feelings: 'really big ups and downs' (x2) / 'quite stressful' / 'tears and tantrums'. ◆ Learning from experience. ◆ A. Someone feeling marginalised from the group can be 'a big blow', 'a big spanner in the works' to the other group members. Discomfort of self / other blame? Do you internalise their pain? Link to above: group identity hinged on honesty, openness, cohesiveness – their group identity is conflicted when a member felt marginalised (see Yalom). ◆ Difficult to trust and self / others: is this where a facilitator comes in handy? To check things out with? To get safety / support / validation? ◆ A. 'Correct': see 'constructive and destructive processes' / conflict necessary for meaningful and honest group identity and formation. ◆ Importance of external social activities / sharing food to aid group bonding. Food symbolic of very concrete, bottom of Maslow's hierarchy, sense of ingesting sustenance, in-taking comfort, very universal... safety-seeking. ◆ Friendship – personal vs. professional relationship (avoidance – food as personal way of coping with professional / group identity disruptions). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Tribal. ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Connecting with the flow. ◆ Connecting with the flow. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ Value of formal reflection in bringing words to meaning. ◆ Importance of connecting with others. ◆ Importance of connecting with others. ◆ Longing to belong. ◆ Desire to impress and be validated.
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<p>get out of PBL so on that level, that's why it's important to me. <20:35></p> <p>Lou - So you've talked a lot, thank you, about how you feel when you're doing PBL and on an emotional level and a bit about the physical side, where sometimes there's tears and stress. Are there any other things that you feel mentally, physically, emotionally, just to touch on if you haven't so far?</p> <p>I yi-i, I get a lot of somatic complaints; you know (laughs) chest pains.</p> <p>Lou - Around PBL time?</p> <p>Oh, yeah yeah, in PBL in session like that yeah and quite tuned into my body. It's probably because I'm not expressing my emotions, well verbally I do but it's hard to process them. But yeah you do, you have like heart pounding and you know when I felt angry or you know, just stressed you know a really kind of anxious feeling, a lot of us used to talk about how we had that because we do a lot of check-ins and check-outs like every session, so (ha) that will get commented on like feeling really nervous and really on edge, erm...</p> <p>Lou - what do you think those physical feelings that you were saying that happens within the group, anxious, nervous, on-edge, heart pounding...what do you think that's about?</p> <p>Some of it was like dread, like that's another name, 'PBL dread', another nickname in terms of the lead up to it, like I'm quite close in particular to one person in my group so we talk a lot about the PBL dread and especially when we're going through the really rough patch that kind of you just dread what's gonna come up and the fact you knew you had to make decisions and stuff like that, it was just orrgh (annoyed, frustrated sound), you were just preparing yourself for the angst and it was just, I don't know it was so intense, so much is going on that sometimes you just feel overwhelmed and you get like headaches and yeah (exasperated 'yeah'), somatic complaints.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Important to her to achieve a 'sense of belonging' within her PBL group, and so perhaps this is why it is difficult to handle the feelings associated with someone else feeling marginalised from the group? ^ . Someone else living out her worst fear? ◆ Somatic symptoms associated with being in a group / being unable to verbally express her internal experience: chest pains, heart pounding, headaches (mentioned below) as well as an emotional / physical / cognitive experience of anxiety, being 'on edge'. ◆ Benefits of 'checking in' and 'checking out' to help other people monitor / manage similar feelings – so that no one feels alone with their internal experience? Sense of beginning / end = theme of boundaries / containment? ◆ 'PBL dread' – anxiety associated with 'rough patches' and group decision-making. ◆ Repeat of pressure-cooker analogy / feeling. Anticipation / 'preparing yourself for the angst' is difficult to tolerate. ◆ Intensity of feelings. ◆ Somatic complaints (e.g. headaches) stemming from angst, intensity, feeling overwhelmed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Somatic complaints. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Somatic complaints. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ PBL-dread. ◆ Using humour to talk about difficult experiences. ◆ PBL-dread. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ PBL-dread. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense pressure.
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<p>5) How do you feel about doing PBL as part of your clinical training? Prompt: helpful aspects, unhelpful aspects?</p>		<p>◆ Somatic complaints.</p>
<p>I think it's invaluable. Erm (laughs), it's funny because I haven't really painted a rosy picture. It's this traumatic thing but what doesn't kill you makes you (laughs) stronger. Erm, I don't know, I think you just learn so much about yourself and about other people and about groups and those kind of systemic contexts and I don't know, it makes sense if you're like you're gonna be in a setting where you're in MDT meetings, you're gonna get all of these issues so, better to have it in PBL where you can work through it then think about it thoughtfully so you can then kind of deal with it in the profession context and I don't know, think it's invaluable where you're not gonna get clear-cut cases so you need to be able to problem-solve and think outside the box and kind of be creative with things and think it allows you to do that. It kind of enables you to do that. I don't know it kind of takes away all the rules, it's like it's up to you. You know trust yourself, use your own initiative so, yeah it's encouraging.</p> <p><i>Lou - So you find PBL really invaluable as well as part of your clinical training for all those reasons? Are there any other helpful aspects of PBL?</i></p> <p>Erm, I mean from the professional point of view, I think it's been really important particularly of the...I don't know, more of a recent kind of insight about you know you can't really separate so much the professional and the personal like, it's just how much you choose to acknowledge that it's gonna come through, you know you are who you are. You bring your own values, you bring your context and that's gonna influence your clinical work for the good and the bad so you need to be aware of...you know, what you bring with you and I think it's a really good way to explore it, erm...yeah and really really think about it like how you interact with other people but also why you're drawn to particular aspects of a case and hmm, erm, why do, why do</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ She sees PBL as 'invaluable' as part of her clinical training (1st mention of 'invaluable' - mentioned three times in interview). ◆ She realises the discrepancy between the personal / group struggles she has described in PBL and how these descriptions might not convey the value which she places on PBL, in spite of / because of these difficult experiences; '...what doesn't kill you makes you stronger'! ◆ ^ Learning about self, others and groups from within the group context. ◆ Recognition of difficulties of MDT / group working and the importance of having safe spaces to work through / learn from such difficulties prior to encountering such difficulties within the professional context. ◆ 'Invaluable' 2nd mention (mentioned three times in interview). ◆ Complex cases: PBL teaches you to 'problem-solve', 'think outside the box' and 'be creative'. How does it do this? ◆ PBL as something which frees you from the constraints of 'rules' / constrained thinking / institutionalisation and allows you to trust in yourself and your instincts. ◆ Artificial boundary between the professional and personal selves? ◆ Value of allowing your 'personal self' to be joined up with your 'professional self'. ◆ Sense of inevitability that the self will come through, that defences will come down. Powerlessness, uncertainty, discomfort of sitting with this. ◆ Personal values and contexts influence your clinical work: PBL helps you to become aware of this (and then later, to value this?). ◆ PBL teaches you about how you interact with others. ◆ PBL teaches you about what draws you in and what your sensitivities are. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ PBL is invaluable. ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things. ◆ PBL is invaluable. ◆ Value of learning to be flexible. ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ "You can't... separate... the professional and the personal" ◆ "You can't... separate... the professional and the personal"

<p>certain things interest you or why you, why you're quite sensitive about talking about those kinds of things because that's gonna, that's gonna come into your clinical work so I don't know, better to recognise it and embrace it than deny, deny that it's there. <25:28></p> <p>Lou - And so you feel it's useful to work through it and think about that in PBL?</p> <p>Uh-hmm</p> <p>Lou - And why PBL in particular?</p> <p>Erm</p> <p>Lou - why not on placement?</p> <p>I don't think supervisors are as thoughtful about it to be honest, I don't think they would really create that space. I don't know 'cos I've not been, I've not been on a placement with like a < > supervisor, I don't know, perhaps they'd be different. I haven't gone through the experience but I don't know because you've got the group context as well and you bounce off other people and you have so much time to think about one case so you really get to think in-depth about what you're bringing erm and how that relates to the case and you've got time to unpick it whereas I don't think you'd necessarily be able to kind of make that sense straight away, if you were on placement. I don't know.</p> <p>Lou - So is that then learning that you do in a PBL group about one case in-depth, like you were saying, that then you're able to use in other areas?</p> <p>Yeah I mean the case, it sounds a bit mean, but the case becomes a bit irrelevant at the end of the day that's, you know, from my point of view I don't do it so I go, 'oh I've just read that you can do this type of therapy with this person, oh and I'll go and apply this technique to someone who's got this similar condition now', it's just, what's the point in that, you can get that out of lecture, you can get that in a book. It's about what you learn about yourself or you know, what you learn about the dynamic between people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Better to recognise and embrace your values / context than to deny it is there. Does being able to do this lead to more personal and group authenticity, and less cognitive dissonance? ◆ Supervisors on placement not open to discussing personal values / context and the interplay between that and cases. What about the group context makes it more acceptable / easier to do? ◆ Group comparison – Herts vs. not. This links to comparisons within a cohort, between PBL groups. Why do groups compare? ◆ Value of 'bouncing off of other people' as opposed to just 1:1 with a supervisor. ◆ Clinical vignette aspect of PBL is useful to think about in depth in order to explore how you personally relate to / with the material. ◆ Time / space = helps 'understanding' to evolve – but this 'understanding' seems more about self than case, actually. ◆ Mean towards what / whom? Perhaps sense of guilt in meanness towards Herts staff (identifies with) who set the task / taking time to think about self? Contradicting her statement above, the clinical vignette aspect becomes irrelevant, because the learning that is achieved is more implicit than explicit. The learning doesn't stay with one case, at one point in time. The 'understanding' or learning almost travels with her. ◆ PBL is about the dynamic between people; relational learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ "Better to embrace it than deny that it's there." ◆ Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ Connecting with the flow. ◆ Value of experiential learning. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Learning to navigate the
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<p>and relationally. That, <i>that thing that you can't learn in a book, that thing that's just there between people, you know, learning about that - that you can take to any context because you're learning about what it means to be a person</i> (laughs), if that makes any sense? <i>it does sound a bit weird, 'learning what it is to be person' but that's what you take with you which is why it's so hard to define</i> as well but yeah, yeah.</p> <p>Lou - <i>That's 'why it's so hard to define' what particular thing, were you talking about?</i></p> <p>Erm, you know you were saying about <i>what you get from PBL? What it means and stuff like that, because it's relational, because it's about this thing between people that you learn about and your power and that and it makes it hard to kind of go, 'this is what I've learned from PBL' because it's almost like a, an indefinable quality.</i></p> <p>Lou - <i>hmm</i></p> <p><i>yeah, it's not a piece of knowledge although you gain awareness of it. it's something you almost become aware at, at a different level first.</i></p> <p>Lou - <i>if you could describe that level - I know, (both laugh), you're doing a good job of this so far. If you could describe that different level, the piece of knowledge, it's something else, you were saying?</i></p> <p>Well it's kind of, <i>I think a lot of it is unconscious but then it's when you bring it into awareness so, what was helpful, I don't know - for me, was kind of you know, linking it to theories so then you've got some kind of ground to understand what's going on.</i> So it was, erm, I don't know, like there's different ways of thinking about it but you can think of therapeutic relationship or alliance or you know rejection or kind of urhh (exhales), <i>I don't know I can't think of the (long silence). I don't feel like I can do it justice</i> (laughs). <i>It's almost like words...</i></p> <p>Lou - <i>You can't do what justice?</i></p> <p>I can't, <i>I can't do the quality justice by, it's beyond language.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ PBL can't be taught or read about in a book. It has to be experienced. ◆ Personal learning in terms of self and self-other and other-other cannot be taught to you by someone else. ◆ Difficult to define because you're learning something abstract / implicit, about what it is to be a 'person'. ◆ Limitations of language to explain her PBL experiences. Again, because it is based upon a felt sense? ◆ PBL to her, means the dynamic that occurs between people, this unstable entity, your power in relation to that which is almost 'indefinable': it's at an implicit / emotional underlying level. ◆ Multiple levels / layers of 'knowing' or 'awareness'; not explicit, teachable, learnable knowledge. ◆ Bringing unconscious knowledge into conscious awareness. Making the implicit, explicit. ◆ One way of doing this: linking implicit → explicit → via psychological theories. ◆ Limitations of language, as below. ◆ Limitations of language (and frustration with this – perhaps because it is as though the external validation groups seek of their internal identity / values is not being witnessed?) to explain her PBL experiences. Again, because it is based upon a felt sense? How do you convey 'a felt sense' 	<p>in-between.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Value of experiential learning. ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ Value of experiential learning. ◆ "...it means more to feel something...on a real level". ◆ Value of experiential learning. ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ "It's beyond language."
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<p>Lou - What you mean from PBL is beyond language? <29:17> Yeah, yeah it's, words just can't describe it because it's, it's experiential. You have to feel it. Yeah (laughs).</p> <p>Lou - Thank you. So you talked a lot there about what the helpful aspects of PBL are as part of your clinical training, are there any unhelpful aspects of having PBL as part of your clinical training?</p> <p>Er, er you know it does create a lot of pressure and it depends what other, what other bits are going on as well at the time, it can be really stressful like I know for me it's brought up various things, I don't think it's brought up various things but it's been a bit of a catalyst but I don't necessarily see that as a negative thing. It's just my relationship to emotions. Erm but yeah there's been times when it's just like oaw (frustrated noise<30:20>). I can't escape from this, why have I always gotta think about myself? Why is everything related to me? Or you'll find these connections and sometimes you do just wanna kind of just disconnect and not think about these things and you don't get the opportunity to do that with PBL. Erm, you're fully switched on all the time or at least I am. Erm so, if you want an easy life then erm, it's a problem.</p> <p>Lou - So earlier on when I asked you what your expectations of PBL were before you did it, you know, when you were just coming into PBL, you said it was like opening a Pandora's Box, you can't un-know what you now know about PBL, and just now you said one of the unhelpful aspects of having PBL as part of your clinical training is that you can't disconnect - once you're switched on, you're fully switched on (participant A agreeing by 'hmm' sounds). So does it feel like what you gain from PBL is something that stays with you? That brings about permanent feelings or thoughts or changes or helpful and unhelpful aspects to how you navigate your life as a trainee?</p> <p>Hmm, to be fair though it is part of my style, I find it impossible to switch off,</p>	<p>to others?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Limitations of language, as above. ◆ Pressure. ◆ Stressful. ◆ PBL doesn't create issues: it is simply a catalyst for exposing underlying issues. ◆ Can't escape from feeling / analysing / having to revisit her past / untangling what it means about her? ◆ 'Why is everything always related to me?' → do we relate everything to ourselves to understand our own internal world? Is this why people in PBL groups at times take offence so easily, whilst others struggle to explain what has just happened?! Do stressful group experiences bring about a lack of mentalising? She mentioned elsewhere that the post-presentation debrief helps people to come back together as a cohort – but what effect does group size have? Is it more difficult to mentalise / be a group when there are more than a certain number of people, primarily because eye contact is somewhat less? See pg 28 of transcript. ◆ Fully 'switched on' all of the time in PBL. Switched on to..? Mentioned throughout the transcript. ◆ Difficult to avoid having struggles in PBL groups. ◆ Finds it difficult to 'switch off'. ^. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ "...it means more to feel something...on a real level". ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Group context as a catalyst for exposing individual difficulties. ◆ No escape from group dynamics. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ "...you're fully switched on all the time" ◆ No escape from group dynamics. ◆ "...you're fully switched
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<p>I'm always analysing it's just, I transfer it to that context as well and other people don't necessarily discourage it, of me. In that context they expect it from me so but it is, it's almost made me analyse in a new context (laughs) so, and I think some experiences that happened in PBL as well like the, I felt a bit taken aback when someone said they felt so silenced and marginalised so that made me then very wary to kind of look out for what was going on and to check-in and to really kind of dig beneath things and kind of not expect things or what they were at one level so it made me very wary and very tuned in even more so of what was going on so then I couldn't, I can't switch off. Also, (sighs) I find it hard to think of things as problems because they're not but it kind of, it can magnify your sensitivity so I don't know, I think I have sensitivities around belonging and stuff like that so it can sometimes feel like that's magnified like depending on how you're feeling at the time. it can kind of, I don't know, make you feel a bit funny like I don't know, I think group situations do that, kind of you know if you put yourself out there and people don't have the same opinion or whatever, it might make you feel a bit left out or you know if you're making decisions and someone doesn't take up your idea that might make you feel not that valued erm, although I don't fully feel that that's happened to me but I feel like I'm waiting for it to happen to me (laughs). 'cos it feels like it's kind of gone round the group a bit. It feels like in our group someone, someone has felt like they have been left with the anxiety or it feels like it's been placed with particular people. It's just a pattern that I've noticed. Erm, so I'm waiting for it to come round to me erm, maybe it has and I've (laughs)...</p> <p><i>Lou - is that waiting for it to come round to you part of what makes it PBL-Hell or PBL dread? <34:05></i></p> <p>Maybe but I think I would feel, I think I would feel better with it, it would probably confirm a lot of things for me because I feel like I hold it in the wider cohort so I don't think I'd be appreciative if I held it in PBL as well</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ PBL affords the opportunity to analyse previously unquestioned information (about self and others?) in a new context. ◆ Can't switch off...for fear that if she does, her action / inaction could impact upon someone else negatively? Links to the benefits of 'checking in' and 'checking out' (which may have been initiated by her) → to help other people monitor / manage feelings that she herself would not want to bear? ◆ Again, so PBL magnifies rather than creates sensitivities. Just as above, PBL can be a catalyst rather than an originator of difficulties. ◆ Sensitivities around belonging. ◆ 'Putting yourself out there' is a risk: you risk feeling left out, devalued or are left to 'hold the anxiety'. ◆ Waiting for the anxiety to be placed with you: it goes around the group; it's always someone's turn. Trepidation around this. ◆ Holding the anxiety doesn't necessarily have to be a bad thing – she is 	<p><i>on all the time"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. ◆ <i>"...you're fully switched on all the time"</i> ◆ Group context as a catalyst for exposing individual difficulties. ◆ <i>"...you're fully switched on all the time"</i> ◆ Longing to belong. ◆ Desire to impress and be validated. ◆ Putting it 'out there'. ◆ Longing to belong. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty.
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<p>but at least then (<i>Lou - hold the anxiety?</i>) yeah <u>at least then it would be knowable if you hold it instead of me kind of going 'oh my God, is what's going on, is everyone okay?'</u> like not like I'm like majorly want reassurance from people, I'm not one of these people who can't let, needs to know everyone's happy. I just need to know what's going on, which means I need to, I like to talk about the negative feelings, a bit so I can pull that out quite a lot which means I'm not, I'm not always kind of focussing on the positives (laughs, sounds like a nervous laugh). I can't remember what your question was.</p> <p><i>Lou - It was about unhelpful aspects of PBL as part of clinical training but I feel that you've answered, you've given me a lot of information unless there's anything else you wanted to say on it?</i></p> <p>Erm, unhelpful aspects, erm just the kind of the <u>group rivalry</u>, kind of aspect. But I feel like <u>the debrief you have at the end of the presentation bring us, brings us back together again so that kind of, that kind of gives us a bit of closure together again so that's not too bad but for the time being it does feel like there's divisions and it's very secretive.</u> And 'cos everyone's going through it as well <u>there's like no escape from it.</u> You know everyone's going through it so whooo, it gets a bit (laughs and made a physical gesture because participant A then says), your tape won't capture that! (both laugh)</p> <p><i>Lou - how can you describe the gesture you just did?! <35:53></i></p> <p>A bit urrgghh, you know a bit hmmm, not very nice a bit, erm (laughs), <u>words fail me!</u> Erm I don't know, I feel like I'm screwing my face up in disgust but it's not disgust it's er, I don't know it's horribleness like orghh everywhere you turn. <u>Everyone's going through it, there's no escape from it, but you feel like you can't really talk about it because of these loyalties and if you talk to someone who's in a different group, are you betraying the trust of the people in your group? So yeah that's all weird, that dynamic is all weird and I don't really like that aspect of it but, yeah.</u></p>	<p>much more comfortable with holding the anxiety so that it becomes knowable and that things can be checked out with people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'Oh my God'. ◆ Not knowing / being able to name what is going on can be difficult. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Group rivalry (divisions/ secretiveness) is an unhelpful part of clinical training. ◆ However, this is counteracted by the post-presentation whole-cohort debrief session. ◆ 'No escape from it' – mentioned throughout. However, this time it is mentioned in the context of the dynamics being inescapable because everyone else is going through it too. What is at play here? ◆ Limitations of language – mentioned throughout. ◆ Intensity of feelings: disgust (or not), horribleness. ◆ No escape from it. Again, ^, mentioned everyone going through it too. ◆ Loyalties / betraying trust - within groups, precluding people from talking about difficulties within the wider cohort / with friends who are in other PBL groups. Akin to family loyalty? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Tribal. ◆ Importance of connecting with others. ◆ Tribal. ◆ No escape from group dynamics. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ No escape from group dynamics. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Parallels with family dynamics. ◆ Unable to speak out due
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<p>Lou - Okay so perhaps we'll touch on that in the interview as well. And so you were telling me a bit before about that you'd spoken to a trainee on the course about PBL before you'd done it</p> <p>Yeah</p> <p>Lou - And I'm just wondering from your perspective,</p>		<p>to trust and loyalty.</p>
<p>6) How would you sum up your experience of PBL to someone who has never done it?</p>		
<p><37:07></p> <p>Erm...God...erm, (laughs) I think I inadvertently put some of the first years off. Perhaps. Did I? I think they were saying they were starting PB-Hell...I mean PBL! God, Freudian slip! And I'll say 'it gets worse' or 'yeah it gets intense'. I may not have said that but I don't know, I would say 'it's really valuable, throw yourself into it'...'it's a really good learning experience, get from it what you can'. Erm 'think about yourself in relation to it, think about how what you've learnt can be applied to placements and kind of thinking about yourself in other group contexts'. Erm...</p> <p>Lou - So the kind of things that you really value or that they might get from it, does that sum up your experience? To say that it's intense, valuable, throwing yourself into it, a good learning experience, think about yourself in a group, does that sum up your experience of PBL, to someone that's never done it?</p> <p>Erm no, I mean you would have to, you would have to temperate it with, it will feel like hell at times. It will feel like it's just not worth it, you will question the whole course as to why the hell we're doing this and why they want the trainees to have a breakdown and what is their purpose of this, what is like, have they got some evil plan to damage us all or (laughs) I don't know, like, you will question why you are doing this, what the value of this is. At times you will think there is no purpose to this, you know it's just madness but I don't know, you'll come out the other end and you'll start to be</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'God...' ◆ Freudian slip around 'PB-Hell'! But is this phrase said with affection, or 'knowingness' – does this language, which has become part of the dominant discourse around PBL, convey part of what is so difficult? That it is accepted that it will be hard, but through that, that it will also be useful? Is this language held dear because it conveys something of what is so difficult to express? ◆ Intensity of feeling: '...it gets worse' and '...it gets intense'. Forewarning / putting their experience thus far into perspective / using humour to help talk around difficult experiences. See Alessandra Lemma's work. Makes me think of, 'a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down!'. ◆ ^.. Conveying the personal value of PBL: 'it's really valuable, throw yourself into it'...'it's a really good learning experience, get from it what you can'. ◆ ^.. Conveying the professional value of PBL: 'think about how what you've learnt can be applied to placements and kind of thinking about yourself in other group contexts'. ◆ Limitations of language – mentioned throughout. The above summary she gave wasn't enough. She tried to convey the emotional journey in order to give a fuller understanding of what PBL would be like. ◆ Awareness of course / tutors role in PBL. Also, anger (at the confusion? related to previous page of transcript – sitting with the uncertainty is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ PBL-dread. ◆ Using humour to talk about difficult experiences. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Using humour to talk about difficult experiences. ◆ PBL is invaluable. ◆ PBL is invaluable. ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty. ◆ Conspiracy theories. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense pressures. ◆ "You'll come out the other end and you'll

<p>nostalgic about it". I mean, I've not finished PBL but I'm already feeling a bit nostalgic.</p> <p>Lou - What are the kind of things you feel nostalgic about PBL, because that was a long list of things in terms of experiencing difficult feelings, so what makes you nostalgic?</p> <p>I don't know it's funny like towards the end of our last PBL we started talking about our next PBL presentation and we like thinking about, erm, I mean this may or may not happen but like erm, you know like at the end of films when they have like out-takes or you know like the best bits or I don't know like the ideas that never happened that you know, just like playing around with everything and so I don't know, the nostalgic bits of just being in a group erm, the funny bits like (laughs) when (Molly) had a bit of a sugar high and was like laughing her head off and was just completely mad, (Christian) like pretending, sorry I shouldn't be giving away names.</p> <p>Lou - That's alright I'll cover that up.</p> <p>And like (laughing, reminiscing) being the director and being really arty, the whole crazy drama of creating our own lenses – oh! 'Lenses' was like a metaphor of how we see the world. We created big lenses and we had our own theme music that they came out to and like big pretentious artists, it was hilarious so erm, so like some of the actual presentation moments are like nostalgic funny like we had a bit of a game show where like (Molly) and (Margaret), (Margaret) were like doing these like Australian, I think they were American or Australian accents with these like big glitzy jackets on and it was yeah, really funny. But also some of the more really like tender moments like erm I don't know just being like able to cry in front of the group and people being like really supportive. I always remember like (Marie) sharing her, 'cos we did like a bit of a (tuts) kind of what would you call it? Like a bit of a 'show and tell' during our first one about erm, beginnings because that was our topic. What it meant to us. And she talked</p>	<p>difficult) about not knowing what their purpose is in making the trainees do PBL as part of their clinical training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Intensity of feeling and language...Breakdown. Evil plan. Damage. Madness. ◆ Searching for meaning and purpose and to know the value. Some sort of desire to be explicitly told this by the course / tutors, at least on some level? ◆ Nostalgia (before it's even over!), despite difficult emotions / experiences! Is this about not wanting to let go / wanting to hold on to their experiences? ◆ Nostalgia: thinking about the possible nostalgic / funny / hilarious / tender / supportive 'out-takes' from their experiences. When you're being nostalgic, you're actively remembering the good bits. Is nostalgia / reminiscing 'done' with other people? Connectedness and containment. Is this maintained via nostalgia? ◆ Metaphor of 'lenses'. How they see their worlds – their constructions of it. They wanted to communicate their internal experiences / views / beliefs to their audience. To connect with them within their context of their group's values being about openness, honesty, sharing, baring it all etc? ◆ See above, on this page of the transcript. ◆ Did they do a 'show and tell' in order to, as above, share their internal experiences – but this time not with their external audience, but with 	<p>start to be nostalgic about it".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "You'll come out the other end and you'll start to be nostalgic about it". ◆ "You'll come out the other end and you'll start to be nostalgic about it". ◆ The value of authenticity. ◆ Importance of connecting with others.
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<p>a lot about her personal life and kind of what it meant to her from a personal point of view and that's always stuck with me, that kind of realness so it's something I've always kind of...I don't know, I've had her as a bit of a role model in that respect like, kind of looked up to her in terms of how she was able to be herself and bring herself and I've tried to emulate. <i>Erm there's loads of nice stories, thank you for reminding me of them (both laugh).</i><42:02></p> <p><i>Lou - So just moving on a bit to think about group working...</i></p>	<p>each other, within the group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Admiration for people who share their personal lives / stories / personal meaning in a group context. ◆ Feeling nostalgic in her conversations with me. Reflective essay / debrief / this interview gives her the space / time to reflect afterwards? What is the value of this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The value of authenticity. ◆ "You'll come out the other end and you'll start to be nostalgic about it". ◆ Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.
B. GROUP WORKING	INITIAL REACTIONS	EMERGING THEMES
<p>7) How would you describe working in a PBL small group? What is (was) it like?</p>		
<p><i>Oh God, during like the first few, like I think we were so incapable of making a decision that we didn't. We just incorporated everything, so that's why we'd have a really elaborate and we still do, we find it really hard to cut it down, really elaborate, huge, production rooms or whatever and then we really started to try and sort out the decision making 'cos we had a lot of issues with that so we made a strategic move for our last PBL of having leaders. So we put our leaders in chairs for each PBL session so we were able to bring our own leadership group style, so we all kind of brought ourselves to that role and we were meant to be a leader erm, but yeah, decision making has been so difficult. There were moments when it was like having a gun to your head. I remember we had to make a decision on our last PBL and we had two ideas that were put out there and they both came from very similar routes around the things that we were discussing and what we were trying to get across so our messages were the same but the way we were proposed to do it was very different so one was more plain, being yourself and putting across your own views and the other was playing characters and putting across different perspectives through characters so</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'Oh God'. ◆ Difficulty making decisions: '...we were so incapable of making a decision that we didn't' → Incorporated everything. ◆ Usefulness, for this group, of appointing leaders to assist with the decision-making processes. What is the function of this? Do people take less offence when the context of the decision-making process seems less personal / more professional? ◆ Difficulty of decision-making process. ◆ Metaphor of difficulty of decision-making process: 'like having a gun to your head'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Putting it 'out there'.

the group was split and I said, I said 'before we start', I said 'I can see these two ideas and it's gonna be a 3-2 split. There was a 3-2 split' and you know (Christian) went, 'this is my idea' so he and (Margaret) decided to go on the same ideas and so it was left to me and (Marie) to make the decision and neither of us wanted to make the decision because then if I said one, say if I said (Christian's) then it would have been up to her to make the decision, which wasn't fair. And she kind of felt the same way and I was like, 'what is the need to make the decision right this moment?'. This was like, we always pile up the pressure like ten minutes before the end of the session when suddenly you have to make everything get serious and you have to make a decision. And even though we didn't actually do that much in between then and the next session, we had to make this decision and literally, it was like having a gun to your head and then kind of, (Marie) took the call and said (Christian's) idea. She knew I kind of agreed with that anyway 'cos I said it was the 3-2 split and it was clear where my allegiances were and the funny thing was even though I hated (emphasised 'hated') the way that decision making process was made and I brought it up at the next session to make sure people were happy about it, the one's whose it didn't go their way, they were happy just that a decision had been made. They didn't really care what got chosen in the end and it was the fact that we actually made a decision which was an improvement on where we'd come from, but...

Lou - What do think made making your decision so difficult?

Erm, I think even though you don't, I don't know, it's the kind of power. I don't know there's a lot of context in history to it like (Christian) was a bit of leader in the first one and then after the whole thing came off worse and someone felt marginalised and there was a bit of blame put towards him, he really went underground and distanced himself a lot from the group so he was coming back up so you wanna empower him and the fact that he's got this idea which it didn't, it wasn't like these ideas came from two distinct

- ◆ Why do they pile up the pressure ten minutes before the end? Does the decision-making process signify the shift from light-hearted → serious (or vice versa)?
- ◆ Again, what is the function of the decision-making process, when decisions don't lead to a sudden flush of productiveness? Why is there such pressure at the end of a session to revert to 'task' rather than to stick with 'process'? Where is this pressure coming from? Do they feel guilty about making space to reflect? This is interesting – because when I have presented about PBL on my own clinical placements, I have been made to feel that PBL is an almost recreational, indulgent, luxury! Is it containing for the group to feel as though the work of the group is only done when the group is together? Would they feel guilty if they all did things for the group, outside of the group? Just as with this participant's example, on page 25/6 of this transcript – wherein the group did not like that two members of the group discussed the group dynamics outside of the group? Was there any external pressure: other deadlines / comparison between groups?
- ◆ In the same way as someone can feel marginalised if they feel left out of the decision-making process, 'leaders' can (or can fear that they will) be marginalised / scapegoated (powerful societal process, throughout the ages) by the rest of the group / team → is this somorphism at play? It's also noteworthy that this male was a minority in this group, i.e. because of his gender he may already have been feeling marginalised and so took the role of leader in order to give himself a voice / position in the

- ◆ Difficulty of making decisions.
- ◆ Intense pressure.
- ◆ Difficulty of making decisions.
- ◆ Intense pressure.
- ◆ Difficulty of making decisions.
- ◆ Difficulty of making decisions.
- ◆ Difficulty of making decisions.
- ◆ Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation x2.

<p>people, these were talked about anyway but they somehow got assigned to particular people like if there were two camps and you don't wanna, I don't know like the whole, people not feeling valued or the difficulty was that these two ideas, were positioned in two different ways of doing it, so being yourself or being a character was a big decision because some people didn't wanna put up with putting it all out there just for the sake of putting it all out there and people were afraid if like you were playing yourself then you were expected to tell everyone about all the things we've discussed in PBL, or you know you're expected to bare your soul, just for an audience. So people understandably didn't wanna do that so there was a bit of fear around that. And obviously you don't wanna make anybody feel uncomfortable by saying, by giving that idea, by choosing that idea that you're endorsing the view that you need to put it all out there, even though it was kind of valued by our group. Erm, yeah so that's why it was difficult because it got to our underlying values and what we wanted to get out of PBL and what we didn't want to get out of PBL <47:30> and how comfortable people felt with personal disclosure and how far they wanted to dig so that's why it all kind of got played out as it does, yeah.</p> <p>Lou - So do you think some of that rivalry that you were talking about that happens between groups happens within groups as well? Would you describe it as rivalry or...?</p> <p>I don't know if it's rivalry, I think it's, I think certain group norms or a culture gets developed that might be an extreme version of what people might hold and I think that our group was seen as like 'the brave group', 'the out-there group', 'the very in-your-face, say it as it is, dig deep, push it out there group' and maybe erm maybe that's an exaggeration of who we are, individually. I don't know, you almost adopt an identity and live up to it but I don't, not everyone is at the same level and some people hold back more than others so even as I say it I'm placing a value judgement on it and you</p>	<p>group. Therefore, when things go wrong, he may want to do all that he can in order to avoid being marginalised, even if on some level this means that he would marginalise someone else.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ideas get assigned to people even if they didn't originate with those people – what is the function of this? How does it happen? ◆ Big decisions. ◆ Fear of feeling exposed to the wider cohort. ◆ Baring the soul – to / for others? Wanting to feel like this is only done purposefully. ◆ Group values and how these may inhibit individuals / decision-making processes. ◆ Baring their souls analogy again. ◆ What it's like being in a group where some people's personal disclosures may be scary yet liberating for them, and how this liberation may encourage others to personally disclose too. But what would it be like if you really didn't want to personally disclose and you are surrounded by others who value this? Is this a different kind of within-group secrecy or marginalisation? ◆ Personal norms / culture / values that become group norms / culture / values which somehow become magnified in the process. Is this simply a cumulative effect?! ◆ Their group were seen as: brave, out-there, in-your-face, dig-deep, push-it-out – how was this likely to be received by others witnessing this? ◆ '...you almost adopt an identity and live up to it'. Is comfort derived from belonging to a group identity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Putting it 'out there'. ◆ Putting it 'out there'. ◆ Baring your soul. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Putting it 'out there'. ◆ Baring your soul. ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ The value of authenticity. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ Putting it 'out there'. ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ "You can't... separate... the professional and the personal"
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<p>can see where I'm coming from when I say some people hold back as if it's a negative thing but erm I don't know, towards the end I was like, when I was going through, I wouldn't say a personal crisis, but it felt like it was all a bit sensitive and everything was going off in every area of my life, everything was relating to my background and stuff like that, I felt like 'Oh my God, I don't wanna talk about these things, I don't wanna present on these things' and I could relate a bit more to some people's positions of not wanting to go there and not wanting to bare your soul but until I had that experience I couldn't fully see it. I was just like you know, you're supposed to be 'out there', that means you're learning and being open and being honest but you need to protect yourself as well. So it's a balance isn't it? (Lou agrees by making 'hmmm' noise).</p> <p>Lou - I was going to come onto asking you if there were any particularly difficult experiences that your group faced whilst doing PBL but I think that sounds like it was a particularly difficult experience within your group (participant A 'hms'). Were there any other experiences that were difficult and if so could you describe them? Or does that kind of sum up the difficulties within your group?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Unable to escape from it all – mentioned throughout. ◆ 'Oh my God'. ◆ Is this about an the development of empathy through connecting with the pain of one's own personal experiences? She couldn't understand positions which had at one time been the polar opposite to her own, until she herself had experienced something similar. What is learnt within PBL comes from what has been experienced, not taught. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Tribal. ◆ No escape from group dynamics. ◆ "You can't... separate... the professional and the personal" ◆ "I don't wanna talk about these things" ◆ Baring your soul. ◆ Putting it 'out there'. ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ Intensity of openness. ◆ Managing the intensity of the experience.
<p>8) Were there any particularly difficult experiences your group faced whilst doing PBL? If so, can you describe them?</p>		
<p>Erm so we had the decision making, we had the power thing and the big thing over leadership because we're all quite vocal so we never had a leader but there was a feeling that in the first PBL that one person had more power like he kind of got his way a bit more and I think it's because it was kind of trying to live up to his vision because it was kind of borne out of one of his ideas and also I think we developed this identity of being very reflective and not kind of very content erm content or, I don't know what you'd call it (sucks her lip in, in thought) I don't know, very rigid, we were more free-flowing which fits his personality 'cos in the first PBL he was like, you know it</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Difficult experiences for the group: decision-making; power; leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Tribal.

<p>really got pointed out, you know this tension of the rushing, we called it rushing and reining which is the kind of you know, pulling things in or letting it kind of be loose and having a loose conversation so he very much kind of fell on that side of the continuum so to speak, so we kind of went in that direction so I think that's why he had a lot of power and I think he, he filled that purpose for the group because no one really wanted to make any decisions or 'take a stand' because we're all gonna be really reflective and cool about it and not be too bossy or anything. So he filled that role but then people felt marginalised, like their view wasn't heard and I think there was a bit of blame attributed to him and then, oh it got into a whole dynamic where whatever you said people would take it personally as an attack and then they would try and make you feel guilty about my telling you that it was like an attack and then you (laughs) would be angry at them or feel attacked and then that would make you feel guilty and it was just a bit of a circular process and it was like, 'we're not getting anywhere' Everyone needs to stop being so bloody sensitive, you just need to take responsibility for yourself. You can't take responsibility for how other people are going to react, yeah don't be insensitive about it but if you're constantly watching your back you just can't have an honest conversation and you won't get anywhere.</p> <p><i>Lou - Is that something you talked about within the group?</i></p> <p>Yeah we did, I mean, we talked like we at least talked about these dynamics, some people probably felt too much (laughs), yeah we always talked about the dynamics but a lot of the time we'd just be so 'up here', talking about talking about talking about talking that you'd lose any realism it would just be like so intellectual that you just kind of miss the point of what's going on in the moment so it took a bit of time to escape that cycle. Yeah so that was horrible.</p> <p><i>Lou - And I guess you're starting to talk about it there but I was just</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Metaphor of 'rushing and reining'. Pulling things in, or letting things out. Tightening and loosening their personal constructs? ◆ No one in the group wanting to make decisions or 'take a stand'. ◆ ^ (page 9 of this transcript). A repeat of the conversation above, in which someone being the leader led to another person feeling marginalised. This seems to have had a big impact upon this group. Led to a cycle of: tendency for some to take comments personally as an 'attack' → person comments it feels like an attack → 'attacker' makes 'victim' feel guilty → victim becomes angry with attacker. Melanie's triangle of conflict? ◆ Importance of self-responsibility in a group. This reminds me of Lizette's presentation at 'the diversity conference' wherein she said that creating the space to have difficult conversations comes from the actual <i>having</i> of those difficult conversations. ◆ Talking about talking about talking...reflecting can go so far that it can become an intellectual pursuit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Connecting with the flow. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. ◆ Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation x2. ◆ Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ Intensity of openness. ◆ Tension between process and content. ◆ No escape from group dynamics.
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<p>wondering how your small group managed those difficult experiences that you've been talking about?</p>		
<p>9) How did your small group manage these difficult experiences? What helped and hindered your small group to cope with these difficult experiences?</p>		
<p>Huhm, erm check in and check out probably the most valuable thing who started that, I don't know, the first session 'cos I know when I did some training like erm we'd have check-ins and check-outs. I'm not saying the idea came from me, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know if I suggested it or I don't know how it came about but I know I'd found it valuable in other group training sessions before.</p> <p><i>Lou - Just like you were saying earlier about the de-brief at the end of the whole PBL, you found it quite useful to check-out?</i></p> <p>Yeah it's essential. So we'd start like every session and there'd be, I think there were occasional times when we didn't do it because we felt really pushed for time and then we'd bring it up, the fact that we hadn't done it and we really needed to value that, so we kind of check in about how we're feeling, what we hoped to get out of it, what our worries were, any thoughts we had about it, how we're feeling in the moment. Sometimes it would be, <i>'I'm feeling really anxious and feeling quite pressured, arrgghh, I wanna just get something done you know?'</i>, depending on how you felt. Erm so yeah, so you just need that and I think especially if it's quite a content-heavy session or there's been a lot of emotion but it's not been explicitly talked about. I think if you have that like as a bit of a rule that you have a check-in and check-out, like people can say <i>'I don't know', 'I don't really feel like I got what was going on today' or 'I feel a bit out of the loop', you're able to help process those issues.</i> But I think I felt our group were really able to talk about process issues and I feel like, I don't know, I think the facilitator was really helpful in summing that up, like really scaffolding us to be able to do</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Is this about containment? Creating a boundary space. The value of 'checking in' and 'checking out' within a group context. 'Checking in' and 'checking out' almost seem like they have a double meaning: not only do they do this to try to find out what's going on / how people are, but almost as though they 'punch in' / 'clock in' with their emotions, and then 'punch out' or 'clock out' at the end of the session. ◆ Pushed for time. ◆ It seems like a very structured approach to managing emotions – is this part of what is containing about 'checking in' and 'checking out'? What is missed by doing this? Can emotions be discussed at other times? Who are they trying to reassure by providing this space? This approach seems somewhat naive or simplistic – can emotions be processed in this way? ◆ ^. Anxious. Pressured. ◆ Feeling 'out of the loop'. Is exploring out-of-the-loop-ness about maintaining group cohesion / identity? Who is this important for? ◆ Having 'checking in, checking out' as a rule to help process any issues, such as feeling 'out of the loop'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'. ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'. ◆ Facilitator is invaluable.

<p>that, to be able to have those conversations and to really value what we all brought and focus about, focus on what we, what we individually brought to the whole process and to remember that we need to value what everyone brings and not fight against it. Erm, what was the question? (laughs).</p> <p>Lou - I was asking how your small group managed with those difficult experiences and you told me a lot about that. Is there anything else about what helped and hindered you to cope with those difficult experiences?</p> <p>Erm, hindered erm, the time constraints like you know, having loads of sessions, like really close together and then not having any in the academic timetable and then you know, especially when you need them towards the end to get the actual presentation stuff together, like timetabling issues wreaked havoc. Erm yeah cos you felt like you had no time to talk about emotions and what was going on, well some people did some people didn't but it will create that conflict and that tension between content and process, even more. And what was necessary to talk about and what was indulgent or whatever. I think the facilitator is invaluable in terms of modelling. I don't know (sighs) how to have those questions to set up those conversations. I think in our group I think we took to it fairly easily like being explicit about what was going on and how we felt and how to move forward although she was worried about it at one point. Erm...</p> <p>Lou - You say that with a smile on your face</p> <p>(laughs), yeah I don't know it's quite amusing erm, I think she was a bit worried about us like, where we'd got ourselves into and yeah she kind of said you know, 'are you in or are you out?' (says this excitedly, containing her laughter) you know, to kind of people because oh that was another big thing that kind of kicked off erm, the second PBL, things got quite stressed and it felt like some people felt like they were out of the loop so I was speaking to (Marie) about it because I was on placement where she lived so we were all individually doing our bits so I went over to hers and we were</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Helpfulness of facilitator in summing things up, scaffolding and (modelling) valuing each individual and their experiences. ◆ Again, mentioning 'not fighting against it', like earlier (page 12 of this transcript) when she mentioned that it is better to embrace personal histories and experiences rather than denying that they are there. ◆ Time constraints: feeling pressured to get things done. Time constraints often seem to be mentioned in relation to task / getting things done rather than reflecting / addressing process issues. Why is this? ◆ Timetabling issues: but here, mentioning lack of time to talk about emotions and what was going on within the group. ◆ Tension between content and process. ◆ Who defines what is necessary / indulgent to talk about? As I've mentioned earlier, it has been my experience when talking about PBL in CPD slots on my clinical placements, that reflecting (especially on team dynamics) was deemed indulgent by some – perhaps by those who were perceived to be the most visibly 'powerful', within those teams. ◆ The facilitator was invaluable in terms of modelling. ◆ Stressful. ◆ 'Out of the loop'; reappearance of this phrase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Tension between content and process. ◆ Facilitator is invaluable. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'.
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<p>talking about it and I was trying to, she, she felt like she was a bit out of the loop and she wasn't making sense of where she thought the rest of the group were coming to so I was trying to explain it, like we were making sense about it so we thought let's write it down to make sense of it so we shared that as a group and a lot of people, not a lot, two people felt like really excluded like we'd gone away and like done something you know, just ourselves and we should have done that as a group. One person benefitted from it 'cos he felt out of the loop anyway so it made it concrete. 'These are the discussions we've been having, this is how we see it'. It was a working document but it created a lot of issues but I wouldn't take it back, what we did, because I think if we hadn't have done that, we'd have had a really messy presentation 'cos it was, you have all these conversations but you need to see it down in order to work out the flow of it and stuff. It's hard to explain but that created a lot of issues and you know (laughs) our facilitator you know kind of when she kind of noticed this big divide, this was really close to the presentation, she was just like 'you're in or you're out' and it was like, I don't know, you have to be in. We had to put it to one side and get on with it and I think it was towards the end of that she was really worried about it. (Marie) picked up on it more than me. I didn't think she was that worried about us but then we made a conscious effort to spend time together with each other that wasn't PBL, erm so we had the erm afternoon tea at (Marie's) and watched our presentation and we went to some like event as well to try and bond and have some connectedness and try and repair some of the damage that had been done, overcome the ruptures, all of that stuff. But erm yeah, once again I do not know what the question was (laughs) because I tend to waffle!</p> <p>Lou - I was asking you how your small group managed some of the difficult experiences and what helped and hindered that process so in terms of what helped you, told me a bit about your facilitator and learning how to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'Out of the loop'; reappearance of this phrase. ◆ 'Making sense of things' equated to writing things down / out. Very concrete way to make sense of things – to map things out. ◆ Two people felt excluded – repetition of the theme around marginalisation. ◆ 'Out of the loop'; reappearance of this phrase. ◆ Making anxieties concrete or 'out in the open' can be helpful to those who feel 'out of the loop' anyway. Why is this? So that they can then be talked about / worked through? Or again, is it that having fears confirmed is better than to sit with these pg 8 of this transcript. ◆ 'Making sense of things' equated to writing things down / out. Very concrete way to make sense of things – to map things out. ◆ Facilitator useful for noticing and naming big divides within the group. ◆ Metaphor: 'you're in or you're out' → is it possible to be neither / both? Is it both a choice as well as a position that you are given by the rest of the group? ◆ Bonding, connecting, repairing damage and overcoming ruptures via shared social experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'. ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. ◆ Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'. ◆ Putting it 'out there'. ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ Facilitator is invaluable. ◆ Importance of connecting with others. ◆ Importance of connecting with others.
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<p>ask questions to the group and reflecting on things that way as well as some other things; and what hindered was time constraints with your timetable. Do you think that sums that up? <1:00:19></p> <p>What helps? Talking. Talking. It will be difficult, it will bring up issues but that's how you need to work through them; talking. You just need to talk it out to get into the talk about talking, a bit repetitive but you need to talk about it and then you can move on. You need to get it out there (laughs)!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Talking is both difficult and helpful, in terms of overcoming group difficulties. ◆ Repeat of metaphor of 'out there'. E.g. they like to put it 'out there' (to their audiences), they like to get the conflict 'out there' so that it can be discussed. What is 'out there', and why is it necessary / helpful to get things 'out there'? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ Putting it 'out there'.
<p>10) Were there any difficult experiences for you personally about working in your PBL small group? if so, can you describe them?</p> <p>Prompt: things to do with the vignettes, group process, deciding to share / not share, being evaluated.</p>		
<p>Oh lovely, erm let's see. What were my big emotional points? Erm, one, I worked on my birthday, well it was the day before my birthday so I was having my birthday celebration so I think things get brought up about my birthday anyway, I'm trying to think, what time of year was this? Oh yeah</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><personal life event> and (Katy), who's the organiser of PBL, decided to play this lovely song about a relationship which sounded all nice and then it was abusive as you'd expect but it was still shocking 'cos you know you kind of lure yourself into a, 'they can't all be bad, there must be some nice relationships' and then it's oh no, no. It sounds like a nice song but it's really bad, so that's 'self', <1:01:52> a lot of stuff. I started off really angry like 'how could they do this, it's not been set up appropriately?!' but then you don't have to go much further beneath that to realise that I was really upset because it brought up all this stuff for me and I spent a lot of that time crying, erm, but worked through it.</p> <p>Erm, there was another one as well, all, my last PBL, the case was</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Angry when appearances have been deceptive. ◆ Anger at course / tutors for eliciting difficult emotions (do such feelings regularly get projected onto facilitators?). ◆ Anger being the flip side of personal sadness; anger as a coping mechanism to avoid personal sadness. Anger is a more empowered position, than sadness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Group context as a

<p><similar to personal life event> so and that was something I was working on personally in personal therapy as well erm and I don't know if I came across it in my clinical context, I don't know, but that seemed to be activated a lot so erm yeah, I felt like I was a bit targeted. I was like 'why is this stuff always bringing up stuff for me?!' So that tapped into a lot of personal stuff but I don't see that as a bad thing. It's emotional things, you don't wanna be completely hit with these things constantly but I don't know, it helps you grow. It helped me really kind of integrate that aspect of myself and kind of think you know, your personal experiences don't hinder you from being a good therapist. If you embrace them then they can help you, I don't know, so long as the wounded healer analogy then you can kind of empathise with people through your own pain but you've just gotta know what belongs to you and what belongs to other people, so I think you need to process that erm which I was. I also think therapy is important but I don't know, that, that PBL process kind of, it activated a lot of my personal stuff but it made me think, 'yeah I've had a lot of difficulties but that makes me human and that can be a good thing. I can give a different perspective you know no-one's perfect'. These difficult experiences I've had I can use to my advantage although it's really difficult if you only try and see it from the positive</p> <p><1:04:00> 'cos then you don't really fully acknowledge the pain so it's hard to be both - to acknowledge the pain and the difficulty but at the same time thinking you can use this in your therapies at work and it's hard to be both at the same time but that's the best place to be to be in touch with both of them at the same time so that really helped me do that, the PBL process, but it was difficult. It's like therapy isn't it? If you're willing to go there you're gonna benefit from it but you've just gotta be willing to take that journey, so yeah...</p> <p>Lou – Thank you for sharing those personal experiences It's okay.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'I felt like I was a bit targeted': content of vignettes / group dynamics can often feel very personally relevant. Again, this is a repeat of the idea that things can feel very personal within PBL and that people make sense of the external world via their internal experiences and their own personal histories. See pg 14 of transcript. ◆ Intensity of feelings: 'you don't wanna be completely hit with these things constantly'. ◆ It helps you grow. ◆ PBL helps you to integrate aspects of self (personal development). ◆ Being able to value / embrace personal experiences in order to facilitate professional development. Metaphor: wounded healer analogy. ◆ PBL helps you to find out what belongs to you and what belongs to other people. ◆ Importance of therapy for personal and professional development of clinical psychology trainees. ◆ PBL <u>activates</u> an individual's personal issues – is this similar to 'amplification' in systemic therapy and working through the transference in psychodynamic psychotherapy? ◆ Difficult experiences. ◆ Transformative power of PBL: being able to be in touch with the pain associated with our own personal experiences as well as embracing / acknowledging / integrating / seeing the advantages of our own experiences. ◆ Therapy / PBL as a journey of self-discovery. 	<p>catalyst for exposing individual difficulties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No escape from group dynamics. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience.. ◆ "You can't... separate... the professional and the personal" ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between.
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<p>Are there other things that were difficult personally for you? Maybe things to do with group process or decisions to share or not to share, or being evaluated, anything like that?</p> <p><1:05:35></p> <p>To be honest I always forgot I was being evaluated like when the facilitator was there, I never thought we were being evaluated. I never really thought about passing or failing I just always assumed we would pass though not because I thought we were great and we were ticking all the boxes, but I couldn't see why you would fail.</p> <p>Lou - Why's that?</p> <p>I dunno, I don't think of myself as an optimistic person but I just I don't know, (laugh) I was gonna say something really corny like... (Lou - go on) <i>something that feels so right can't be wrong!</i> (laughs, both laugh). Oh God I hate myself! But like yeah, if you're learning from it and you're growing and you're getting so much from it then you can't fail it. Like yeah, they can't, they wouldn't. I don't know, maybe I have too much faith in the course staff but we haven't (failed) so that will reinforce my beliefs that we won't, but I know there was someone in our group that was really focused on that like every time we get feedback she will not relax until we hear the pass word like, not password, but that we'd passed. Erm and like we even got like 'oh that was amazing, phenomenal' all that kind of stuff wouldn't matter until they said 'pass', I don't know why she thought 'oh yeah it's fantastic but you failed', so that's never gonna happen is it erm, I'd always get a bit nervy though before presentations like a bit of stage fright, need a bit calming down and get really really anxious erm, what was the question?</p> <p>Lou - Why do you think you got so nervous about presentations? If the pass feature wasn't really in your head?</p> <p>Because it means so much doesn't it and you kind of build it up and you're kind of waiting and so much anticipation and our group was always like, 'oh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Evaluative aspect of PBL doesn't enter her mind: it is more important to be with the experience than to try and pass / keep in mind 'pass criteria' etc. ◆ Great quote → '<i>...something that feels so right can't be wrong!</i>'. But why does she say that she hates herself for saying something 'corny' (below she mentions 'cheesy')? Does she feel guilty for having positive emotions from difficult experiences? Why? ◆ '<i>Oh God!</i>' ◆ Again, she is aware of the evaluative aspect on some level but deems it irrelevant – learning, growing → can't fail! Re: the tutors... '<i>Like yeah, they can't, they wouldn't</i>' → confidence that trainee learning / growth is the intention of PBL. Where was this confidence in the tutors before, when she wondered if the tutors wanted to 'damage' the trainees via PBL?! ◆ Intense feelings around presentations: '<i>stage fright</i>', '<i>need a bit calming down</i>', '<i>anxious</i>', '<i>anticipation</i>', '<i>nervy</i>'. ◆ Intense feelings around presentations stemming from the positive personal / group value ascribed to their PBL experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>"...it means more to feel something...on a real level"</i>. ◆ <i>"It's beyond language."</i> ◆ <i>"...it means more to feel something...on a real level"</i>. ◆ <i>"Opened my eyes to who I am"</i> ◆ <i>"...it means more to feel something...on a real level"</i>. ◆ Conspiracy theories. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ PBL is invaluable. ◆ PBL-dread.
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<p><i>it doesn't matter how prepared we are', we were always doing things to the last minute.</i> We were actually late for one of our presentations, we were the first group and people were thinking it was part of our presentation. We had no idea we thought we were starting at a later time so our group's always a bit haphazard erm yeah so <i>I always feel really nervy.</i> I don't know, people may be really surprised at that 'cos <i>people assume I'm confident and I mustn't get nervous but I do,</i> I don't know. I don't like, I don't like performing, that was one of the reasons I was like, I don't feel like singing and dancing 'cos I've never liked drama. I've never been in a play, I've never liked anything like that but I'll happily talk about things and talk to strangers and put my opinion across in groups of people. I don't know but yeah, when you think of it as a presentation or whatever it's just like orghh (sounds frustrated) yeah but <i>I feel quite protected in the group so I feel like it's okay even though I do still get nervous.</i></p> <p><i>Lou - So you've told me about some of the difficult experiences for you personally in your group when things remind you of what's happened or happening in your own life and also about presentations (participant is agreeing by 'hmm' noises) and you might get a bit anxious about those and I was just wondering...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Group-imposed time pressures: always doing things at the last minute. Why? ◆ Feeling protected within the group and so personal anxieties become accepted by the individual (and the individual learns to accept their personal anxieties themselves?). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Tribal. ◆ Intense emotions.
<p>11) How did you manage these difficult experiences? What helped and hindered you to cope with these difficult experiences?</p>		
<p>Erm, I don't know it's all in the name of the game like (laughs). <i>Uh I just follow these cheesy lines, 'no pain no gain' like that's how you learn who you are through your pain.</i> It's like, I don't know (sighs), <i>that's how you discover yourself. You learn most from your mistakes and the things that are difficult, not the things that are going well. So I don't know, I think because I have that kind of viewpoint that you know, you need to experience negative emotions, you need to dig deeper, you need to learn about yourself, I see it all as a learning experience so that kind of helps me</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'Cheesy'...(above she mentions 'corny'). ◆ Self-discovery through exploring personal pain. ◆ Learning most from her mistakes, rather than things that go well. ◆ Her willingness to experience her negative emotions is facilitated by her viewpoint that growth can occur when she explores difficult life experiences, and that in this way – those difficult experiences have a purpose / meaning. Is this where self-acceptance comes from? There seems to be themes of self / group acceptance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ Striving towards

<p>endure it 'cos it's got a purpose. It's got a meaning.</p> <p>Lou - Where does that purpose and meaning come from?</p> <p>Erm (laughs), God, erm (laughs), when you have a difficult childhood you have to place some meaning on why it's happening don't you, you have to make sense of it in some way (laughs) erm, I don't know I've always tried to find a meaning for things. It's like I started this course and I was like 'I wanna change', that sounds like I wasn't happy with myself but like I'm obsessed with change and growing and developing so it's all in aid of that which makes it difficult 'cos then you don't know when you have changed and developed and constantly asking people if I have. I can't see it but I'm sure I have, you can't see it when you're in it. God, I just go off in so many tangents. (silence), remind me?</p> <p>Lou - I was asking you what helps or hinders you to help manage what is personally difficult for you in PBL?</p> <p>Oh personal therapy is helpful as well erm...</p> <p>Lou - To deal with issues from PBL?</p> <p>Yeah so personal issues that may arise and get played out or you know, or group things that might come up or like I don't know, I don't really use it to process the group necessarily, it's usually issues from personal life that are getting played out in the group, or you know, things will, patterns will repeat themselves and stuff like that you know so that's useful, oh... Diary! You have to do a diary like from our first two I did a written diary. I even read out bits of my diary in my first PBL presentation which people thought was very, very fluid (laughs), it's how I make sense of things and in my last PBL I did, oh in my third one I didn't keep a diary for some reason which I thought was interesting in itself. I thought what am I not acknowledging here? And then my last one I did a video diary which was really useful just to process it and make some sense of what was going on.</p> <p>Lou - So when you say had to do a diary is that a course requirement or</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'God'. ◆ Finding meaning within difficult life experiences (as above). ◆ 'God...' ◆ Finding meaning within difficult life experiences (as above) in hindsight. What would hinder her in being able to find meaning whilst she's in a difficult experience? Does this link to not being able to reflect on things when emotions are heightened? See pg 9. ◆ Helpfulness of personal therapy for managing what is personally difficult for her from PBL. ◆ Personal issues may get played out in group contexts. ◆ Patterns in personal lives get played out in group contexts. Personal therapy helps develop an awareness of this. ◆ Usefulness of keeping a reflective diary to help process the personal impact of PBL. 	<p>meaning-making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ "You can't see it when you're in it". ◆ Parallels with family dynamics. ◆ "You can't see it when you're in it". ◆ "You can't see it when you're in it".
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<p>was that something you're saying people really should do?</p> <p>No it's not a course requirement I mean I think it was recommended but yeah I just think it's something you should do to make sense of things and you know things change so fast, how you feel about things changing so fast that you need to keep a like a trail of what you've gone through in order to really, 'cos when things are good it's hard to remember the tough times and when things are dark it's hard to remember the good times. You kind of you need to document that and especially for the reflective essay which I think as much of a pain that it is 'cos you're kind of forced to reflect, it's really helpful to kind of make sense of things and kind of sum up the main points of it and not get lost too much in the detail of this happened and this happened. You're kind of going, 'what's the bigger picture, what does this all mean?' 'What have I learnt about myself?' 'What does this all point to?' So yeah the diary and the, the diary and the essays, a really big part of the whole process. I think, I think you need all of the elements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Using personal reflective diaries to keep a trail of how things have unfolded etc – is this also why facilitators are useful? To capture / reflect back the experiences and emotions that trainees are experiencing in PBL? ◆ Again, wishing to make things concrete via writing things down – in a document. Usefulness of reflective essay for this purpose. ◆ Reflective essays as a pain because you're 'forced to reflect'. Is there something here about resenting being forced to reflect? Is this why some teams 'in the real world' resist reflective spaces? Just a thought! ◆ Reflective essays as mirrors to reflect the bigger picture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "You can't see it when you're in it". ◆ "You can't see it when you're in it". ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ "You can't see it when you're in it".
<p>12) Were there any particularly good experiences of working as a PBL group? if so, can you describe them?</p> <p>Prompt: feeling connected, a sense of belonging, achieving a task together.</p>		
<p>Erm, (tuts) I really liked, I liked our last presentation and our second presentation, they were the best erm, I don't know you feel a bit euphoric when it's all come together and you kind of I don't know, it's all been for a purpose. It's a huge sense of relief and achievement and I don't know you just prove to yourself you're able to manage it as a group and all the kind of doubts that you had that you can work as a group, they're just proved wrong, 'cos I think you have to trust in the process. You have to trust that you'll get there and you'll be able to pull it off, although you doubt it at times and sometimes majorly doubt it. You just think there's no chance. So it's nice to be proven wrong or proven right depending on what your outlook was. Erm, it's nice to see a group work together well and I know it was nice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Positive feelings after presentations that have come together / felt purposeful: 'euphoric' feeling / relief / sense of achievement. ◆ Doubts can be proved wrong: chance to succeed as a group. Reinforces group identity via successes? What happens to group identity when things don't go well? ◆ '...you have to trust in the process...'. What are you left with if you don't trust in the process → a lot of uncertainty! ◆ Positive group experience associated with being able to come through 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ You have to take the rough with the smooth. ◆ "...you have to trust in the process". ◆ "...you have to trust in the process". ◆ Parallels with group

<p>for us to be able to go into such a difficult place and then come out of it and then to laugh and smile and be normal (laughs). And not be like aarrgghh. I wanna pull my hair out erm, it's the kind of journey up, so you're kind of, we were stuck in a bit of a valley and then we kind of came up and seen the sun, erm yeah we were kind of like stuck in the mud (laughs) so we kind of got out of it and it was nice to kind of look back and see where we were and kind of think, aahhh but we needed to go through that to get to where we are now. There's no, there's no shortcut. We thought we had it sussed in the first one and was like, 'oh look how reflective we are and we're all about the process' and then obviously we missed a great big thing where someone felt marginalised so we needed to go through all that in order to be stronger. I don't know if it's true but like you hear about like if you break a bone and it grows back stronger like, it's probably a lie erm it's almost like that. But the cracks will still show, you know you're not (silence), you will be stronger but you'll also have scars and sensitivities so you won't be perfect. Actually there was a really big thing that (Pri) said, the facilitator, she said 'do you wanna be a perfect group or do you wanna be a great group?' and once you realise that you wanna be a great group then you kind of, I don't know, it's so much better! Like a perfect group is a group who doesn't, you know that just gets along and you know, does everything really well but it's a bit false, there's no such thing as a perfect group so I'd rather be a great group and yeah, take the rough with the smooth, yeah (laughs quietly) <1:17:41></p>	<p>difficult times together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Metaphor of a journey (with no shortcuts) through PBL, as a group: getting stuck, finding a way out and then being able to look back and see how far they had come. At the same time, being able to gain a different perspective via temporal distance from difficult times – which almost gives room for nostalgia / self-validation once they have an overview of the experience. Is this where the reflective essay comes in handy – to give temporal / emotional distance to difficult times? ◆ 'We thought we had it sussed in the first one...' → almost as though they thought that they had stumbled across 'the formula' for managing group dynamics? ◆ Another reference to someone in the group having felt marginalised: this seems to be a painful / emotive issue for her / her PBL group. ◆ Metaphor about how groups become stronger: broken bones heal stronger than they were before, although the scars will still be visible. In this way, she still views these scars as an indication of 'not being perfect'. ◆ The facilitator's question helped them to find out who they wanted to be, and helped them to reconnect with a shared group identity. ◆ However, she counteracts this with saying that she / her PBL group would rather be 'a great group' rather than 'a perfect group'. Is there something painful around imperfection and so this is why she has said this? Is this her way of finding the light within a dark situation? ◆ Laughing again, about what is emotionally difficult. 	<p>therapy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ You have to take the rough with the smooth. ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ Tension between content and process. ◆ Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. ◆ Parallels with group therapy. ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ The value of authenticity. ◆ Facilitator is invaluable. ◆ Finding self-acceptance.
<p>13) How do your experiences in your PBL small group compare to your experiences in other groups? Prompt: outside of training, family, similar / different?</p>		
<p>Lou - So I know you mentioned earlier study groups and things you'd been in but maybe also other groups outside of training, families, how is it</p>		

<p>similar or different? So how do your experiences in your PBL small group compare to your experiences in other groups?</p> <p>Erm family, <i>God, it's like a family in terms of, sometimes you think, 'I didn't choose to be with these people' like you know, it's pre-determined by someone else.</i> You know it's not necessarily a friendship group, you're thrown in with a random bunch of people and you just learn to get on and <i>just like a family you'll have ups and downs and arguments</i> but you'll bring it together, although I wish my family was a bit more like that. Erm <i>I think the difficulty is that I wanted my PBL group to be like I thought a family should be and not like how my family actually is, which is probably because I have some kind of idealistic idea of what a family should be like.</i> Erm so I don't know, <i>I would've liked to have been like a happy clappy group, it wouldn't be real erm, which I realise what we have is probably better than that but it's also difficult to see the similarities between PBL and my family. I'd rather they not be there (laughs).</i></p> <p><i>Lou - Why's that?</i></p> <p>Erm I don't know like <i>I'd rather people be connected and people be happy. It's like that's what I wanted for my family and I can't, you can't, you can't really create that so I wanted to re-create it in my PBL group which you can't force these things, you know that my, one of my, one of my hidden agendas which I'd put out there.</i> Yeah we all had a bit of a discussion about, before our last PBL like <i>what were our aims of this, what we wanted to get out of PBL and when we all kind of said what we wanted it made so much sense as to where we'd all been coming from (laughs), it made so much sense like you know me wanting the group to be connected and belong, made sense of the way I was approaching it and what I wanted from it and why I was getting upset about particular things</i> and you know people wanting it to experiment and be creative. That <i>made sense</i> as to why they were doing the things they wanted to do <i>so once we all kind of said what it was we</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'God'. ◆ PBL group = like a family, because of lack of choice around group membership. ◆ Intense feelings: ups and downs, just like a family. ◆ She wanted her PBL group to parallel a typical family. However, in families there is a clear power structure, with parents more often than not at the top of the power hierarchy. Would she have wanted such power dynamics in her PBL group? ◆ She says that she would prefer a 'real' group free of 'happy clappy' pretences, however she only says that what she has is 'probably' better. Does she wish that her group was more happy clappy? ◆ Painful to see similarities between PBL and her own family, but also painful to see the differences: more connections / happiness within PBL group? Easier to address difficulties in PBL context? ◆ Similarities and differences in the agendas / aims of individual PBL group members and how these get played out in the PBL group. Making these explicit was helpful to this PBL group. ◆ Making sense of things x4! ◆ Similarities and differences in the agendas / aims of individual PBL group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Parallels with family dynamics. ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ Parallels with family dynamics. ◆ Parallels with family dynamics. ◆ You have to take the rough with the smooth. ◆ Parallels with family dynamics. ◆ Putting it 'out there'. ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ Longing to belong. ◆ Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.
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<p>wanted to get out of it, you can see the similarities which brought us together but we could also value the differences and there was nothing anyone said that I thought, 'I don't want that', so once you learn it's not mutually exclusive, that you don't have to be one or the other, that you can be all of it, so a lot better. Once again (laughs) I've gone off on a tangent. Let me get back to what was the question, so it was similarities and differences between...</p> <p>Lou - Your PBL small group and experiences in other groups <1:21:00> So study groups, me just being bossy and not really acknowledging what was going on in the group dynamics which has been completely different to this experience. I can't not be aware of the group dynamics, it's just so there and I can't ever switch off to it.</p> <p>Lou - How come you can't switch off to it in PBL but you perhaps might have before in study groups? I don't know, 'cos I guess I wouldn't acknowledge what I was bringing and what was being played out and like the role of anxiety and I don't know, the impact you can have on other people or where other people are coming from and why they might be like they are.</p> <p>Lou - So what is it about the PBL context that means that you can't ignore that? I think 'cos we're so honest about it, about where we were coming from and it just made sense. It's like you almost get all the pieces of the jigsaw. Once you understand people are acting in this particular way because of, they are the way they are because of their experiences they've had and how they relate to the group and that kind of makes sense of how they are in the group and how you react to it because of your in-experiences. That, when you go into other groups now, you're mindful of that, you kind of, you bring that awareness with you, that intuition or whatever.</p> <p>Lou - So it's something you might not have known when you were in</p>	<p>members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Can't switch off to group dynamics now (mentioned frequently since pg 14 of this transcript). ◆ In other types of groups, she wouldn't acknowledge what she was 'bringing' to the group or what was being played out. ◆ Making sense of things. ◆ In her PBL group, people are more 'honest'. ◆ Metaphor of getting most of the pieces of the jigsaw in a PBL group. Having more of the pieces of the jigsaw in group contexts helps you to understand people's behaviour. ◆ Making sense of things. ◆ Since PBL, she is able to carry forth the sense that she has made about groups, in being able to be mindful, aware or intuitive about group dynamics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ "...you're fully switched on all the time" ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things. ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things. ◆ "...you're fully switched on all the time"
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<p>groups previously but now that you are more attuned to it now that you're in PBL it's something you're very aware of in PBL? And you said you were fully switched onto and then when you're in other groups from then on after PBL, it's something you take with you to those other groups (participant 'hmmms' throughout this question)?</p> <p>And it allows you to be a bit more sympathetic because erm like when erm I've been in like in MDT meetings, you know there've been people who've been really kind of domineering or bossy or really have their agenda or their point of view and yeah you'd still get a bit angry or annoyed but I don't know, when you think contextually 'ahhh they've got a lot of pressures on' or they're doing that because they're anxious' or I don't know, when you think more outside of it, you can relate to them a bit more and then you're able to, you don't, you don't meet fire with fire, you don't kind of react by going 'you're wrong, this is my view' (laughs), you kind of, I don't know, I guess you're a bit more constructivist or whatever you kind of, you appreciate that people have different ways of viewing the world and that's the way it is, you can't make (laughs) someone see the world from your eyes because they've not been in your position, but you can just acknowledge that people see it differently, erm I don't know and empathise a bit more. Yeah it's been tricky though like applying it to like MDT settings because other people don't see it that way, people just you know, offload or people just say things without thinking about other people or they don't acknowledge you know, they don't acknowledge their values or that it's very laden with their values and what they're bringing with them so it's difficult because people, other people, aren't thinking the way that you're thinking and the way other people would be thinking in your PBL so that makes it difficult to transfer that over but I don't know, it allows you to be a bit more thoughtful and a bit more contained and a bit more reflective without necessarily acting on it.</p> <p>Lou - I guess that brings us onto the next bout of questions about...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ PBL has helped her to become more sympathetic to people's positions. Is this where validation of others comes into the picture? ◆ Anger and annoyance towards others in groups when they are domineering or bossy. ◆ PBL helps you to think contextually (systemically) and (social) constructively about people's workplace pressures / personal stressors / anxieties and this understanding helps you to relate with them and their position. ◆ PBL facilitates social constructionist thinking and the acknowledgement of different positions: appreciating that people have different ways of viewing the world. This facilitates the development of empathy. ◆ Difficulty of applying this social constructionist / systemic thinking to MDT settings when others don't think the same way as you. Is it a lonely position to be in when you are the only one to see the bigger picture? Do facilitators have similar experiences? ◆ PBL facilitates an individual to become more thoughtful, contained and reflective without necessarily pushing you to act upon these things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "...you're fully switched on all the time" ◆ Intense emotions. ◆ "...you're fully switched on all the time" ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between
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C. PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	INITIAL REACTIONS	EMERGING THEMES
<p>14) In what ways have your PBL experiences impacted on your professional development? Prompt: clinical, MDT working, professional identity.</p>		
<p><i>Lou - So perhaps in terms of how you work clinically, MDT working or your professional identity</i></p> <p>I guess like 'd always valued the therapeutic relationship and kind of what goes on between us and it's almost just like validated that, it's given a stamp of approval (laughs) that's a good thing erm, it's kind of acknowledged in some way by the course, that's a good thing that it's okay to practice in that way erm, be yourself that's all we can be, that's a good thing erm, so it's made me more real more, bring me, erm not kind of be defensive like not feel like you have to kind of pretend that you're this big neutral person who doesn't bring anything with them. You kind of own your own stuff and that's okay. Like, my last placement, like my first day, like I had a conversation with my supervisor and it kind of came out in the conversation but I was like, oh yeah you know I'm interested in this area because I've had experience [personal life event]. I've not done that in any other placement yeah, it was in the context of being on a child and adolescent placement but I don't know, it enabled me to own it a bit more and not be so fearful as to what other people thought, their reactions to it and I think if they did react to it in a negative way I wouldn't take that, no I probably would take it a bit personally but that says more about them than it would about me so it makes me feel more confident about myself and who I am and bring in 'me' and the feeling that, I can be a good therapist. I don't have to copy someone else or be like them. I can be myself and have my own style erm and in terms of other professional things, erm working in MDT's erm I don't know, thinking more constructively erm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ PBL / the course, for her, has validated her desire to be authentic as a therapist by giving her a sense of 'permission' to bring herself into the room with her clients. She doesn't have to be 'this big neutral person'. ◆ Following on from the above, she has also felt able to be less fearful of what colleagues on her placement think about her, freeing her to be able to state that her professional interests are linked up with her own personal history. ◆ PBL has helped her to own her own experiences and to not fear what other people might think about her experiences and how these may have impacted upon her. ◆ PBL has helped her to see what belongs to her, and what belongs to others. But this time, in a professional-professional dynamic, rather than just within a professional-client context. ◆ More confident about herself, who she is and her abilities. ◆ Validation that she can be herself, with her own therapeutic style. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ Finding self-acceptance.

<p><i>Lou - What do you mean by that?</i></p> <p>Well like I went, it was funny, I went into this other service to do erm to be like be part of a reflecting team and it was a bit weird because it was a, (laughs) it was a looked after children's case where it was like two children and foster parents erm and I was coming from a different service erm and it was weird 'cos <u>I felt like I was holding all of these roles</u> and I was listening to what they were saying but <u>I was very aware of all of the systemic stuff</u> as well like, is this how this other person - because they were on about this other work, they were core CAMHS - and they were on about how a worker from looked after children's service worked with one of the boys and they thought that she had a very different opinion on the situation and saw them as damaged and things like that and I was like, 'is this how that worker actually sees it or is this their perception of what that worker thinks or would she say the same thing if she was here?' <u>so it kind of makes me think a bit more critically and think people are coming from certain points of view for whatever reason</u> and I was kind of able to say, 'I'm from a different place, I'm <u>aware</u> of, I don't know what's going on between these different teams but <u>there seems to be something going on</u>. I was kind of <u>able to say</u> because they were quite disparaging of the psychodynamic approach and after a lot of ranting about it erm, I kind of said, 'I'll be honest I kind of favour that approach' and then I kind of got made to defend it (laughs) which I was like okay fair enough, I'll defend it a bit but and then I kind of briefly said and <u>I also hold another position</u>.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><personal life event></p> <p>as well which no-one picked up on so no one asked me about it but afterwards the psychologist, after we came out of that whole de-brief experience, <u>the psychologist asked me about it and she said, 'oh I didn't wanna ask you in there in case you didn't feel comfortable with it but do you mind talking about it?'</u> and we talked a bit about that and that felt good. <u>It</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Novel to her that she was able to be aware of holding multiple roles at the same time and the interplay between these. ◆ PBL facilitates her critical thinking skills and the acknowledgement of others' different positions as well as her own. ◆ In this example, when the other psychologist became aware of the participant's background she was initially hesitant to speak with her about it in case the participant wasn't comfortable with speaking about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Finding self-acceptance.
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<p>felt good that she thought of it as a positive experience in terms of, I was able to give it a different perspective as opposed to, I'm damaged or ooh I'm not gonna be very objective erm, I keep going off on tangents, but that's because PBL is so interesting (both laugh).</p>	<p>such things. Despite our profession, do we feel inhibited about speaking with colleagues about their difficult life experiences? However, by owning her position and her personal history it seems to have been freeing for both of them to be able to speak about such things openly.</p>	
<p>15) In what ways have your PBL experiences impacted on your personal development?</p>		
<p><i>Lou - So I'd been asking you how PBL, how your PBL experiences had impacted on your professional development and you've told me quite a bit about how it's impacted on you professionally in terms of your clinical role and the therapeutic alliance you had with clients as well as a bit about your professional identity and you were touching on there about MDT working. Thinking about what you managed to bring to the MDT in that instance, if you think about wider MDT working so apart from just in a specific case, is there anything else about your PBL experiences that have impacted on your professional development of working in an MDT?</i></p> <p><1:30:33></p> <p>Erm yeah I know during my second placement, I found that quite difficult because there was a lot of team dynamics going on and coming to it new, I don't know, there was also some differences between me and my supervisor because she was quieter and didn't kind of interview much or say that much. I think she did it in different avenues because the MDT meeting was quite difficult and I was a bit vocal and it kind of got brought up in my placement review that she wasn't, she thought my, my comments were fine but she thought the team weren't ready for them and I don't know, I can see it from two points of view, I can - I think it kind of, I don't know, maybe the team weren't ready to accept them but maybe they could have acknowledged them at some level but I, it made me think and the reason this is linked to PBL is because we were a very active group, and I'm a very active person and so I kind of speak my mind but that doesn't work for all groups and I don't</p>	<p>◆ Difficulty in translating PBL experiences into MDT contexts. She learnt that sometimes in groups, people might not be ready to hear certain things.</p>	<p>◆ "...you're fully switched on all the time"</p> <p>◆ "...you're fully switched on all the time"</p> <p>◆ Learning to navigate the in-between.</p> <p>◆ Learning to navigate the in-between.</p> <p>◆ Importance of shared group values.</p>

<p>know, it made me think a lot about how I think the other groups operate in terms of erm I don't know, it's just a perception but they're not as kind as forthright or you know, 'let's go to those difficult places'. I've got a feeling, probably not true but as an outsider they're a bit more 'nicey nicey' erm and I think it's helpful probably to have that as well especially when you're a person going into a situation that's already been created and you're not really part of it. You need to think cleverly, you need to build alliances and not kind of go in where people feel attacked because they're not in a place to accept it so I don't know, I think my PBL experience helped and hindered in that respect - it made it I don't know, that's the way I was used to tackling it in our group because that was how we dealt with things. We just put it on the table and I think that's a helpful way of dealing with things but not all groups share that norm so it's like you have to judge what's going on in the, you have to get to know the group first before you can kind of decide that so I kind of, I think I acted before I thought about it so it kind of helped me, kind of take a take a step back and then I thought well, what different ways of we did it, what different ways have we kind of tackled things in PBL so we had where we kind of re-bonded and reconnected and we needed that in order to help us move forward as well so it made me think about that so it doesn't mean I'm giving up the fight you know, for things to be better, but you're just doing it in a different way so it kind of I don't know, I think my PBL group gave me a bit of flexibility in different creative ways of doing things and trying things out so I had then, try them out at placement, erm...</p> <p>Lou - How easy is it to try things out on placements that you've kind of practised within PBL?</p> <p>Erm</p> <p>Lou - Is it something that you can do? <1:34:03></p> <p>Yeah I don't think I necessarily like try out a question in PBL and then do it in an MDT. I think it just makes you aware of certain things and you know</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Being within other groups after having been in a PBL group highlighted the differences between different groups in different contexts. Her learning about groups therefore continues outside of her PBL group. ◆ She experiences MDTs as reluctant to '...go to those difficult places'. What might they lose if they do? What could they gain if they did? ◆ Being an outsider coming into a new MDT team – PBL has helped her realise that sometimes groundwork needs to be done first before group dynamics can be addressed: she needs to be able to think cleverly, to build alliances and to find ways to speak from a place which doesn't feel attacking for the other(s). ◆ However, she has also realised that her PBL group's values of 'putting things on the table' is her PBL group's norm, and not necessarily the norm of MDTs in which she works. PBL had helped her to take a step back and to judge what's going on first; to think before acting within a group context. ◆ Taking experiences from PBL and applying them to understanding other group contexts, e.g. learning that re-bonding and reconnecting needed to be done before they could move forwards as a group. But in doing so, not applying an exact formula from PBL to other groups, but being able to think flexibly / creatively about what might be helpful in MDTs. ◆ PBL has increased her awareness of power dynamics, leadership and decision-making. Learning taken across contexts seems to be more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Importance of connecting with others. ◆ Importance of shared group values. ◆ Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things. ◆ Importance of connecting with others. ◆ Value of learning to be flexible. ◆ Value of experiential learning. ◆ Difficulty of making decisions. ◆ "...you're fully switched on all the time" ◆ Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.
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<p>certain dynamics like power and leadership and decision-making erm and fairness, that's another one of my things, things being fair erm but I don't know, I think because you process the PBL process especially with the essay you can kind of reflect on the whole thing and think about you know, how you got there and you know different, everything's a different journey so groups don't take the same journeys. I kind of learned about this by thinking about the other groups is that they're all on different journeys, they might end up at the same place but they take different journeys and different speeds and stuff to get there and they'll have different goals as well so I needed to, I thought about applying that to different ways of working to different teams, you know, maybe their journey isn't gonna be like our journey where we just bare it all. That's (laughs) probably not gonna happen in an MDT meeting, it might not feel professional for some people to do that which is fair enough but, so their goal might be different and even if it's the same it will probably be a different journey because it's a different set of people who bring different things and there's different relationships so...</p> <p>Lou - I don't want to put words in your mouth but I was wondering if you were saying that PBL might not give you exact knowledge or skills to transfer to an MDT (participant laughs and says 'I wish!') but it might prepare you for those different journeys?</p> <p>Yeah, yeah it prepares you for the angst and the turmoil and the sitting with the uncertainty of, oh that's another good one - the uncertainty - it's always bloody uncertainty! To kind of just sit with it and just contain it and deal with it and cope with the uncertainty and you get plenty of that so it's a good experience for the real world, yep, yep (laughs).</p> <p>Lou - And in what ways has PBL impacted on your personal development? (Sighs), ahh, that's like the 'have I grown?' type question and I feel like I need a mirror erm I don't know, I think I have, I'm not sure how, I feel like I'm more connected to myself like I'm more aware of my values and my</p>	<p>implicit, rather than explicit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Usefulness of reflective essay in facilitating reflection and tracking the journey of your group / experience. ◆ Recognition of the fact that different groups take different journeys. ◆ Baring it all. ◆ Recognition of the fact that different groups take different journeys, depending upon the members who make up each particular group. ◆ PBL prepares you for the angst, turmoil and 'sitting with uncertainty' that comes with working in MDTs. ◆ Difficulty of learning to 'sit with uncertainty': but she has learned to 'sit with it', 'contain it', 'deal with it' and 'cope with it'. ◆ She feels as though she needs a mirror to tell if she has 'grown'. What would a mirror show her? In the ways in which she has already said that she feels like she has developed, was she only able to comment on these things because they were reflected back to her by the rest of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "...you're fully switched on all the time" ◆ Value of learning to be flexible. ◆ Baring your soul. ◆ Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am"
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<p>background and of who I am and what I stand for and what I believe in and who I wanna be. All of that sounds a bit cliché, I dunno how to put it in a more real way but, can you re-phrase the question for me? <1:37:14>, what was it again?</p> <p>Lou - So I was asking you in what ways your PBL experiences impacted on your personal development, which I think you were beginning to go into (participant says 'yeah')</p> <p>Erm it kind of opened my eyes actually to who I am 'cos I think I had this stereotype of what I was like as being quite erm, like bookish and quite erm serious erm and kind of, well people told me that I was a bit like this as well so it's not all of my imagination but a bit like, I think (Molly) said something like, I think she said like an army soldier or something a bit like, not rigid but a bit like you know, get on with it like, a bit of a fighter a bit harder, erm so it's kind of, I think it's softened me a bit. It's not made me soft don't get me wrong (laughs), it's allowed me to open up a bit more, to risk that and it's made me aware of things that I didn't know about myself so I'd never have described myself as playful erm or creative, they're never words I would have attached to myself because it didn't fit with my view of myself as being quite serious (laughs). I think I had a bit of a warped perception of myself. I think there's two things, I had quite a stereotyped view of myself which got shattered a bit but it made me see that I'm not like that but also it freed me from that as well so it allowed me to play being different things. Not different things that I wasn't but different things that I'd maybe restricted myself from being, so like to be more creative to be more playful and have more fun and erm yeah, I dunno yeah, just I don't know, open your eyes to who you are. It's like a mirror, I don't know (laughs). It kind of reflects back who you are in the group, in the people it kind of shows you who you are, it's like people are holding up mirrors to you so you kind of see yourself, warts and all. It depends whether you decide to concentrate on the warts or</p>	<p>group? Is this where a group comes in handy – to reflect things back to an individual, about themselves?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ^. Personally developed in terms of: being more connected within herself, more aware of her own values and background, her identity, what she stands for, what she believes in and who she wants to be. ◆ ^. Limits of language in describing the impact of PBL upon her development. ◆ Personal development: 'opened my eyes...to who I am'. Within the field of Clinical Psychology, we always have to think about the assumptions that we hold and how this guides our work with clients → doesn't seem possible for us to hold an 'ignorance is bliss' position! Also, with self-awareness comes the capacity to 'position yourself'. You need this knowledge to be 'meta'. ◆ PBL has 'softened' her from being an army soldier towards 'open[ing] up a bit more'. What is it about her that seems 'softer'? ◆ Made her aware of things that she didn't know about herself, such as being playful and creative. ◆ 'Shattered' / 'freed' her stereotyped view of herself. So stereotypes don't just serve the function of categorising others, but categorising self amongst others too? ◆ PBL has allowed her to play at being different things that she had restricted herself from being: playful and creative. How did PBL help her to play at being different things? ◆ PBL has opened her eyes to who she is. ◆ PBL as a mirror. This metaphor has been mentioned previously. PBL reflects back who you are in the group, in a 360 degree view. ◆ What you see reflected in the mirror depends upon what you choose to pay attention to (see pg 7 of this transcript). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Value of learning to be flexible. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ Finding self-acceptance.
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<p>not. You see your whole self almost like in a 360 degree kind of view. So you see more of yourself so the bits that would have been hidden, that you wouldn't have seen that you might not have been that aware of because you don't often look for them, you don't look in those places so, that was nice.</p> <p>Lou - So you said your PBL experiences impacted on your personal development (participant 'hms') in terms of opening your eyes to who you are and also (participant hms) you were talking about that 360 degree view. You were saying that with a smile on your face, I'm wondering what's nice or good about that?</p> <p>I don't know, it's nice to be appreciated. I don't know, it's nice to be valued.</p> <p>Lou - Appreciated by whom?</p> <p>I dunno, probably myself more than anything erm but it's easier to take from other people but I think it's more of an awakening when you, when you can kind of realise that for yourself, erm that after a while it just makes sense like you keep, like if people keep thinking of you as playful or whatever then you just, I don't know it kind of fits after a while, I don't know (laughs). It feels weird talking about it 'cos I don't think I've thought about it in that way, yeah.</p> <p>Lou - It just reminds me that earlier you were saying that PBL - it's so hard to define for you. Like, you had all these words for the painful and the bad things that were brought up in you. But when you were trying to say about the good things you were saying you couldn't find the words to describe them, to do it justice, and that 'something that feels so right can't be wrong!' (both laughing). You were also saying about the awakening (participant laughing), and that when you can realise things for yourself, that's when you can take it in (participant 'hmmm'). I was wondering if those two things are similar?</p> <p>They might be. I think it's difficult I don't know, I think I have a more elaborate construct of difficult feelings which is like what I like to dig out of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Trying to make sense of things x 2. ◆ It's nice to be appreciated / valued. ◆ It's nice to be appreciated / valued, by herself. This is more difficult for her to do, than to accept appreciation / being valued by others. ◆ PBL as an 'awakening' – when self-appreciation / value is realised. ◆ Making sense of things. ◆ It feels weird (nice?) to talk (with me?) about self-acceptance of other parts of her that she hadn't previously been aware of. Is it nice because she has used me as her mirror and it is nice for these parts of herself to be reflected back – by herself – to herself? Did being part of the research interview fulfil the same kinds of things that a reflective essay or debrief with the whole cohort does? Is she getting self-acceptance through thinking and reflecting about what she has learned and who she is? Is the performative aspect of PBL therefore necessary (or another way of...) to have the mirror held up to you?! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Finding self-acceptance ◆ Value of experiential learning. ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ Finding self-acceptance. ◆ Value of experiential learning.
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<p>the positive things and yeah I don't know because it's, even though I say it's an awakening, it's probably like a slowly dawning process like it's not like suddenly you're in the light like you've found the light, you've found the way, you know who you are now (laughs). I don't think I'll ever fully know who I am but I don't know, you kind of know a bit more and then it's not 'til you look back that you realise that you know more now than you did then, but it's not something you know intellectually, if that makes sense.</p> <p>Lou - So does PBL give you something you can know on a level that isn't intellectual?</p> <p>Yeah which means more to me because for all of the talking I like to do on an intellectual level, it means more to feel something on a real, on a real level. Like I don't know when something is real you just feel it, it's... I don't know, it's like a human thing. It's not about theory it's not about big words it's basic, simple, so simple it's hard to define (laughs), yeah. Maybe there's not a word for it yet (laughs).</p> <p>Lou - If you could make up a word then, what would it be?</p> <p>Oh God, Lou! (laughs) for what bit, the awakening? Erm.</p> <p>Lou - For the PBL awakening!</p> <p>Oh God like make up my own word or use an existing word?</p> <p>Lou - It's up to you...</p> <p>Oh God now I've just got random words coming into my head that make no sense...</p> <p>Lou - Like what?</p> <p>Jamboree, I dunno where the hell that word came from! Don't be using that (both laugh) yeah maybe sum it up as like a facial expression in like (laughing), how do you describe that? It's like a gasp, it's like a gasp and an intake at the same time (laughs), it's a...</p> <p>Lou - And if you were to put that into words...?</p> <p>A gasp-take</p>	<p>* More elaborate construct of difficult feelings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Metaphor: maybe more of a slowly dawning process than an awakening. You're not suddenly 'in the light' or that you have found 'the way'. ◆ She knows more about herself than she did before, but she can only recognise this in hindsight. ◆ What you gain from PBL isn't something that 'you know intellectually' → more of an implicit than explicit level. ◆ Implicit / 'felt' learning / knowledge means more to her than what can be known intellectually, explicitly. Feelings (not intellect) → 'a real level!' This seems somewhat paradoxical...but I like it! It feels like an authentic position to be in. Feelings can be a shared experience – cognitive knowledge, cannot. It doesn't connect; not in the same way. ◆ The felt experience is 'a human thing'. ◆ 'so simple, it's hard to define' (limitations of language...). ◆ Limitations of language to explain her PBL experiences. ◆ 'Oh God'. Overwhelmed at being challenged to make up a word which describes her 'awakening'! Because it is so all-encompassing?! ◆ 'Oh God'. Overwhelmed when asked to define PBL. Looking to me to provide more structure to frame her thinking, or permission to free her thinking? Needing external help to solve an internal struggle. ◆ 'Oh God' – overwhelmed // Trying to make sense of things. ◆ After an initial dalliance with finding a word to describe her PBL experiences – 'jamboree' – it is clear, again, that there is a limitation of the descriptive power of language to explain her PBL experiences: instead, she uses a facial expression / bodily process. Breathing is a passive act that you don't necessarily have control over (not like eating, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ◆ "...it means more to feel something...on a real level". ◆ "...it means more to feel something...on a real level". ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ Striving towards meaning-making. ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between.
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<p><i>Lou - A gasp-take? And what's the gasp-take about? (participant laughing)</i> <i>What are you gasping about and what are you in-taking breath about?</i> Oh God, erm you're gasping for air 'cos you can't breathe but you're taking something in but you don't know what you're taking in and it's coming out at the same time so you're kind of, you're doing it kind of before you know you're doing it. You're embodying it, you're part of it before you fully inhaled it 'cos it's inside you but you don't know it is. This is not making any sense at all.</p> <p><i>Lou - I think it's making perfect sense</i> I hope (laughs) it's making sense as well, it's not making sense to me. It's there, it's in-between, it's not in you or outside of you, it's between you. It's both at the same time, yes.</p> <p><i>Lou - So a bit like when you're saying PBL - it's not just something about you in a group, it's what you learn relationally, it's between you?</i> Yeah definitely - it's between you relationally. I think that's one of the most important things I've learnt generally, it's that in-between position is so difficult to be in 'cos sometimes you just wanna belong, to be one or the other, but if you can hold both at the same time then you've, you've got it sussed, you can kind of straddle both worlds. So whether that's the personal and the professional, be in the group and be a person, I don't know, to hold it all at the same time. It's difficult you'll wobble if you can manage that way to stay on it (laughs), erm it's kind of where you need to be to fully appreciate everything. Yeah it's like to appreciate the view like walking the tightrope to see the whole thing. It's like to see maybe like on a valley or something or on a cliff edge to see both sides, you kind of need to be walking in the middle but you can fall off and it feels like you're falling sometimes and you're, you're gonna die. I like my dramatic metaphors (laughs) but if you can hold the course and keep going and trust (laughing) that you're not gonna die, you've just gotta carry on and just put one foot in</p>	<p>etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'Oh God' – overwhelmed. ◆ Sense of a lack of control over what PBL does to her: 'you're gasping for air 'cos you can't breathe'; 'you're taking something in but you don't know what'; 'it's coming out at the same time so you're kind of, you're doing it kind of before you know you're doing it'; 'you're part of it before you fully inhaled it 'cos it's inside you but you don't know it is'. ◆ Trying to make sense of things. ◆ Hoping that things make sense to me – because then it's 'known' and we've connected? ◆ What PBL is / does → '...it's between you'. 'Yes' → this seems to hit the nail on the head for her. ◆ What PBL is → relational. One of the most important things that she has learnt – to 'straddle both worlds' (of the in-between position). ◆ Desire to belong. ◆ Learning to balance dichotomies: belonging to one or the other; straddling both worlds; personal and professional; being in the group and being a person. ◆ You need to balance dichotomies, to be in the in-between position to fully appreciate everything, to see both sides. ◆ Doing this ^ is a tricky balancing act, where it feels as though a lot is at stake. What is it that is at stake? ◆ Trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Longing to belong. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Longing to belong. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ "...you have to trust in the process". ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ "...you have to trust in the process". ◆ "...you have to trust in the process". ◆ "...you have to trust in the process".
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<p>front of the other and you'll be fine, then you'll be alright. You've just gotta trust, trust that, it sounds like that trust the sunscreen, you know that Baz Luhrmann.</p> <p>Lou - Don't buy, oh everybody needs... Trust the something. Lou - yeah Is that it? Lou - Is it everybody needs sunscreen or Yeah Lou - I know the one you mean Yeah yeah that one Lou - And why is it like that? There's a bit that says, trust the something. I dunno what you're supposed to trust but you're supposed to trust in it. Trust in the process, trust that it will see you through to the end. Trust people. It's a very hard thing to do but you've gotta trust them 'cos you need to, everything's inter-dependent, isn't it? There's no point in just trusting yourself if you don't trust other people. That'll only get you so far, there's no point in trusting other people if you don't trust yourself 'cos it's not gonna get you anywhere, you need to do both. The story of my life (laughs)!</p> <p>Lou - And so the last question is to ask you about the...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Trust, trust, trust. Trusting in the process. ◆ Looking to someone else's words to describe her internal emotional experience. Limitations of her own language. ◆ Trust. ◆ Is all of this talk of 'trust' about her having learned to 'sit with uncertainty'? Has she developed a comfortable relationship with uncertainty? Is the certainty of uncertainty where the trust has come from? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 'Trust in the process, that it will see you through to the end'. ◆ 'Trust people'. Acknowledgement that this is a very hard thing to do but that this trust is necessary because 'everything's inter-dependent'. ◆ Relational nature of trust: if it is only uni-directional, it will only take you so far. Learning to trust / rely upon others seems to be the key to getting 'somewhere'. Where is this place that it will get her to? 	<p>the process".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "...you have to trust in the process". ◆ Learning to navigate the in-between. ◆ "...you have to trust in the process".
<p>16) This question wasn't asked of this participant.</p>		
<p>D. EXPERIENCE OF THIS INTERVIEW</p>	<p>INITIAL REACTIONS</p>	<p>EMERGING THEMES</p>
<p>17) What was it like being interviewed by a peer who has also been through the PBL experience?</p>		
<p>Erm I don't know, I've, I don't know, there were smirks of recognition (laughs) so I wonder whether bits rang true erm, I don't know, it's funny I didn't overly think. I didn't think like, oh, 'did she have the same experience or different?' but it felt like you must have known about it cos you were kind</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Smirks of recognition – perhaps it was a comfort to her that I could understand, from within my own experiences of PBL, some of her experiences? This has me thinking of my own experiences of PBL and how I often thought that my PBL group facilitator and the 'head of PBL' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "Pandora's box".

<p>of just approaching it like a normal conversation so it felt fine to talk about it so it wasn't a scary thing to talk about, but it felt like it must have been a valuable thing in order for you to ask the questions and be bothered about the answer (laughs). Yeah, it's been interesting, even though I'm always thinking and always reflecting things that made me think more, it's made me think more about the positives and my own growth. I always talk about growth but I find it hard to kind of say, how it is that I've changed or how I think I've grown as a person, erm so it's helped me think about that.</p> <p>Lou – You say I gave some of the smirks of recognition, that you think that I perhaps understood your experiences because I'd also (participant 'hmms') been through PBL. How did that feel, to have smirks of recognition?</p> <p>It was good 'cos like you know if I was describing this to someone who had no idea about this, I'd probably feel really frustrated that I can't put some of it into words. It would just be like arrgghhh, and I think you'd be tempted just to like dumb it down and like lose, I don't know you'd probably just give up a lot easier and just find some approximation and just go, 'oh it's just it's just like this' or just say something quite blasé oh like 'intense', just intense, that's what you'd use as a summary. Intense – which just says everything and then nothing at the same time erm so, (laughs) I felt like you persevered with it, me trying to find some words, or like there was acknowledgement that yeah it's hard to put into words and it's like a feeling that was hard to describe which was reassuring that it's not just me being incapable of language (laughs)! Yeah</p> <p>Lou – Okay, so is there anything else you want to say before we end?</p> <p>I'm tempted to ask questions about your PBL experience, but no (laughs)!</p> <p>Lou – Okay, thank you very much.</p> <p>Thank YOU!</p>	<p>knew things but weren't saying them; I remember talking about / with each of them about these 'smirks'. And as much of an annoyance it was to feel that someone else had 'the answers' but wasn't sharing them, it also felt like a relief that there were answers to be had, or that my experience, or myself, was understood. I wonder if the same thing was at play here, in my interviewing of this participant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ^ She didn't 'overly think' about what it was like to be interviewed by someone who had similar experiences to her → gives my data credibility → minimal demand characteristics at play? ◆ ^ 'must have been a valuable thing in order for you to ask the questions' → searching for meaning / validation of her experiences, that everything has had a purpose? ◆ ^ This research interview has encouraged her to reflect – and also to think about the positive and her own growth. This seems to have been surprising, but nice, for her. ◆ ^ Acknowledgement of the limitations of language when trying to describe what she has gained on a 'felt' level. Frustration with this when trying to explain to lay people. ◆ Intensity of feelings. And how this phrase says everything but nothing (another dichotomy!!) ◆ Valuable to have the difficulty of putting PBL experiences into words, acknowledged. ◆ Since PBL is relational, I find it not so surprising that she wishes to know about my own experiences of PBL. I would have been happy to share these with her, as my smirks of recognition must have come from somewhere! ◆ Emphatic 'Thank YOU!' conveys that this was a meaningful experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things. ◆ "You can't... separate... the professional and the personal" ◆ "Opened my eyes to who I am" ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ Intense pressure. ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ "It's beyond language." ◆ Difficult to define. ◆ "It's beyond language."
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PRELIMINARY LIST OF EMERGING THEMES

<p>"Opened my eyes to who I am" "...you're fully switched on all the time" No escape from group dynamics. "...you're fully switched on all the time" Parallels with a therapeutic experience. Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. "...you're fully switched on all the time" Group context as a catalyst for exposing individual difficulties. "...you're fully switched on all the time" Longing to belong. Desire to impress and be validated. Putting it 'out there'. Longing to belong. Difficulty of making decisions. Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty. Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty. Intense emotions. Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty. Tribal. Importance of connecting with others. Tribal. No escape from group dynamics. Intense emotions. "It's beyond language." No escape from group dynamics. Tribal. Parallels with family dynamics. Unable to speak out due to trust and loyalty. PBL-dread. Using humour to talk about difficult experiences. Intense emotions.</p>	<p>Intense pressure. Using humour to talk about difficult experiences. PBL is invaluable. PBL is invaluable. "It's beyond language." Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty. Conspiracy theories. Intense emotions. Intense pressures. "You'll come out the other end and you'll start to be nostalgic about it". "You'll come out the other end and you'll start to be nostalgic about it". "You'll come out the other end and you'll start to be nostalgic about it". The value of authenticity. Importance of connecting with others. The value of authenticity. "You'll come out the other end and you'll start to be nostalgic about it". Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things. Difficulty of making decisions. Difficulty of making decisions. Difficulty of making decisions. Intense pressure. Difficulty of making decisions. Putting it 'out there'. Difficulty of making decisions. Difficulty of making decisions. Difficulty of making decisions. Difficulty of making decisions. Intense pressure. Difficulty of making decisions. Intense pressure. Difficulty of making decisions. Intense pressure. Difficulty of making decisions. Difficulty of making decisions. Difficulty of making decisions.</p>	<p>Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. Difficulty of making decisions. Putting it 'out there'. Putting it 'out there'. Baring your soul. Difficulty of making decisions. Putting it 'out there'. Baring your soul. Importance of shared group values. The value of authenticity. Difficulty of making decisions. Importance of shared group values. Putting it 'out there'. Importance of shared group values. "You can't... separate... the professional and the personal" Tribal. No escape from group dynamics. "You can't... separate... the professional and the personal" "I don't wanna talk about these things" Baring your soul. Putting it 'out there'. Importance of shared group values. Intensity of openness. Managing the intensity of the experience. Difficulty of making decisions. Tribal. Tribal. Connecting with the flow. Difficulty of making decisions. Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation.</p>	<p>Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. Importance of shared group values. Intensity of openness. Tension between process and content. No escape from group dynamics. Parallels with group therapy. Intense pressure. Parallels with group therapy. Intense emotions. Intense pressure. Parallels with group therapy. Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'. Parallels with group therapy. Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'. Facilitator is invaluable. Intense pressure. Tension between content and process. Facilitator is invaluable. Intense emotions. Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'. Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'. Striving towards meaning-making. Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'. Putting it 'out there'. Striving towards meaning-making. Facilitator is invaluable. Importance of connecting with others. Importance of connecting with others. Parallels with group therapy. Putting it 'out there'. Intense emotions. Intense emotions. Parallels with a therapeutic experience. Intense emotions.</p>	<p>Group context as a catalyst for exposing individual difficulties. No escape from group dynamics. Intense emotions. Parallels with a therapeutic experience. Finding self-acceptance. Learning to navigate the in-between. Parallels with a therapeutic experience. "You can't... separate... the professional and the personal" Parallels with a therapeutic experience. Learning to navigate the in-between. Learning to navigate the in-between. "...it means more to feel something...on a real level". "It's beyond language." "...it means more to feel something...on a real level". "Opened my eyes to who I am" "...it means more to feel something...on a real level". Conspiracy theories. Intense emotions. Intense emotions. Intense emotions. PBL is invaluable. PBL-dread. Intense pressure. Intense emotions. Tribal. Intense emotions. Parallels with a therapeutic experience. Parallels with a therapeutic experience.</p>
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PRELIMINARY LIST OF EMERGING THEMES

Striving towards meaning-making.	Importance of shared group values.	Value of learning to be flexible.	Learning to navigate the in-between.
Striving towards meaning-making.	"...you're fully switched on all the time"	Value of experiential learning.	Learning to navigate the in-between.
Striving towards meaning-making.	"Opened my eyes to who I am"	Difficulty of making decisions.	Learning to navigate the in-between.
Striving towards meaning-making.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	"...you're fully switched on all the time"	"...you have to trust in the process".
"You can't see it when you're in it".	Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.	Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.	Learning to navigate the in-between.
Parallels with family dynamics.	Importance of shared group values.	"...you're fully switched on all the time"	"...you have to trust in the process".
"You can't see it when you're in it".	Learning to navigate the in-between.	Value of learning to be flexible.	"...you have to trust in the process".
"You can't see it when you're in it".	Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.	Baring your soul.	"...you have to trust in the process".
"You can't see it when you're in it".	Importance of shared group values.	Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty.	Learning to navigate the in-between.
Striving towards meaning-making.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	"Opened my eyes to who I am"	"...you have to trust in the process".
Striving towards meaning-making.	Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.	Finding self-acceptance.	"Pandora's box".
Striving towards meaning-making.	"...you're fully switched on all the time"	"Opened my eyes to who I am"	Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.
"You can't see it when you're in it".	"...you're fully switched on all the time"	"Opened my eyes to who I am"	"You can't... separate... the professional and the personal"
Intense emotions.	Intense emotions.	"Opened my eyes to who I am"	"Opened my eyes to who I am"
Striving towards meaning-making.	"...you're fully switched on all the time"	Striving towards meaning-making.	Difficult to define.
Intense emotions.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	Finding self-acceptance.	"It's beyond language."
You have to take the rough with the smooth.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	Finding self-acceptance	Intense pressure.
"...you have to trust in the process".	Learning to navigate the in-between.	Value of experiential learning.	Difficult to define.
"...you have to trust in the process".	Learning to navigate the in-between.	Striving towards meaning-making.	"It's beyond language."
Parallels with group therapy.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	Finding self-acceptance.	Difficult to define.
You have to take the rough with the smooth.	Finding self-acceptance.	Value of experiential learning.	"It's beyond language."
Parallels with group therapy.	Finding self-acceptance.	Parallels with a therapeutic experience.	
Tension between content and process.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	"...it means more to feel something...on a real level".	
Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation.	Finding self-acceptance.	"...it means more to feel something...on a real level".	
Parallels with group therapy.	Finding self-acceptance.	Difficult to define.	
Parallels with a therapeutic experience.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	"It's beyond language."	
Facilitator is invaluable.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	"It's beyond language."	
Finding self-acceptance.	Finding self-acceptance.	Difficult to define.	
Parallels with family dynamics.	"...you're fully switched on all the time"	"It's beyond language."	
Intense emotions.	"...you're fully switched on all the time"	Striving towards meaning-making.	
Parallels with family dynamics.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	"It's beyond language."	
Parallels with family dynamics.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	"It's beyond language."	
You have to take the rough with the smooth.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	
Parallels with family dynamics.	Importance of shared group values.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	
Putting it 'out there'.	Importance of connecting with others.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	
Importance of shared group values.	Importance of shared group values.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	
Longing to belong.	Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.	Learning to navigate the in-between.	
Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.	Importance of connecting with others.	Longing to belong.	

Appendix 7c: Final list of emerging themes for Emily

FINAL LIST OF EMERGING THEMES	
Intense emotions.	Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation.
“Pandora’s box”.	Value of formal reflection in bringing words to meaning.
Difficult to define.	Somatic complaints.
Tension between process and content.	PBL-dread.
Parallels with a therapeutic experience.	PBL is invaluable.
Parallels with group therapy.	Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.
“Opened my eyes to who I am”	Finding self-acceptance.
Parallels with family dynamics.	“Better to embrace it than deny that it’s there.”
Using humour to talk about difficult experiences.	Striving towards meaning-making.
Intense pressures.	Value of experiential learning.
Tribal.	Learning to navigate the in-between.
Difficulty of making decisions.	“...it means more to feel something...on a real level”.
Desire to impress and be validated.	“It’s beyond language.”
Conspiracy theories.	Group context as a catalyst for exposing individual difficulties.
Importance of shared group values.	No escape from group dynamics.
Importance of connecting with others.	“...you’re fully switched on all the time”
Putting it ‘out there’.	Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty.
Baring your soul.	Unable to speak out due to trust and loyalty.
Intensity of openness.	The value of authenticity.
“...you have to trust in the process.”	<i>“I don’t wanna talk about these things”</i>
Value of learning to be flexible.	Managing the intensity of the experience.
Longing to belong.	Difficulty of feeling ‘out of the loop’.
“You can’t... separate... the professional and the personal”	Facilitator is invaluable.
Connecting with the flow.	“You can’t see it when you’re in it”.
“You’ll come out the other end and you’ll start to be nostalgic about it”.	You have to take the rough with the smooth.

Appendix 7d: Clustering of themes for Emily

THEMES CLUSTERED TOGETHER				
INTENSITY OF THE EXPERIENCE	"IT'S BEYOND LANGUAGE": Trying to make sense.	LONGING TO BELONG	RESPONSES TO MANAGE THE EXPERIENCE(S) CAN BE UNHELPFUL AND HELPFUL	THE VALUE OF REFLECTIVE SPACES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intense pressures. ● Intense emotions. ● Intensity of openness. ● Putting it 'out there'. ● No escape from group dynamics. ● Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty. ● Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'. ● "Pandora's box." ● Somatic complaints. ● PBL-dread. ● Difficulty of making decisions. ● Tension between process and content. ● "...you're fully switched on all the time." ● Baring your soul. ● Group context as a catalyst for exposing individual difficulties. ● Using humour to talk about difficult experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Difficult to define. ● "It's beyond language." ● Conspiracy theories. ● "You can't...separate...the professional and the personal." ● "You can't see it when you're in it." ● "...you have to trust in the process." ● Learning to navigate the in-between. ● "...it means more to feel something...on a real level." ● Connecting with the flow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parallels with family dynamics. ● Tribal. ● Importance of connecting with others. ● Importance of shared group values. ● Longing to belong. ● Desire to impress and be validated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unable to speak out due to trust and loyalty. ● Value of formal reflection in bringing words to meaning. ● Striving towards meaning-making. ● "I don't wanna talk about these things". ● Value of experiential learning. ● Value of learning to be flexible. ● The value of authenticity. ● You have to take the rough with the smooth. ● Facilitator is invaluable. ● Finding self-acceptance. ● "Opened my eyes to who I am." ● Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. ● "You'll come out the other end and you'll start to be nostalgic about it." (N.B: renamed below as 'Disconnecting and reconnecting: "You'll come out the other end and you'll start to be nostalgic about it."') ● Managing the intensity of the experience. ● "Better to embrace it than deny that it's there." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parallels with group therapy. ● Parallels with a therapeutic experience. ● PBL is invaluable. ● Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.

Appendix 7e: Super-ordinate themes for Emily

SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES	SUB-ORDINATE THEMES	PAGE:LINE	QUOTES
<p>Theme 1:</p> <p>INTENSITY OF THE EXPERIENCE</p>	Intense pressure.	17:6-9 17:19-20	"I think I inadvertently put some of the first years off...I think they were saying they were starting PB-Hell...I mean PBL! God, Freudian slip! And I'll say 'it gets worse' or 'yeah it gets intense' (...) 'it will feel like hell at times. It will feel like it's just not worth it."
	Intense emotions.	1:1	"Oh wow! Define. Erm... [it's a] roller coaster of intense emotions."
	Intensity of openness / Putting it 'out there'	6:10-16	"(...) there were times that were dark and you know people were fearful for our group, they didn't quite know what they were gonna get [within the presentation] and (...) some of the feedback we had was like, watching us was very tense because we put it all out there...[we just] kind of hit people with it which erm, yeah we weren't afraid to hold back which is a quality I really like, that kind of brave bruising kind of ness, yeah, hmm."
	No escape from group dynamics.	16:12-24	"Unhelpful aspects, erm just the (...) group rivalry, kind of aspect. But I feel like the debrief you have at the end of the presentation brings us back together again so that kind of gives us a bit of closure together again so that's not too bad but for the time being it does feel like there's divisions and it's very secretive. And 'cos everyone's going through it as well there's like no escape from it. You know everyone's going through it so it gets a bit urrgghh, you know a bit hmmm, not very nice a bit, erm (laughs), words fail me! Erm I don't know, I feel like I'm screwing my face up in disgust but it's not disgust it's er, I don't know it's horribleness like orghh everywhere you turn. Everyone's going through it, there's no escape from it."
	Difficulty of sitting with uncertainty.	41:20-24	"It prepares you for the angst and the turmoil and the sitting with the uncertainty of, oh that's another good one - the uncertainty - it's always bloody uncertainty! To kind of just sit with it and just contain it and deal with it and cope with the uncertainty and you get plenty of that so it's a good experience for the real world."
	Difficulty of feeling 'out of the loop'.	25:24-27	"Oh that was another big thing that kind of kicked off in the second PBL; things got quite stressed and it felt like some people felt like they were out of the loop."
	"Pandora's box."	24:19-22	"I think if you have that like as a bit of a rule that you have a check-in and check-out, like people can say 'I don't know', 'I don't really feel like I got what was going on today' or 'I feel a bit out of the loop', you're able to help process those issues."
	Somatic complaints.	6:26-29	"Hopes and fears at the beginning. Erm (sighs). It's quite difficult to put yourself back there. It's almost like Pandora's Box: once you've opened it (...) you can't go back (...) you can't un-know what you know now."
	PBL-dread.	10:6-14	"I get a lot of somatic complaints; you know, chest pains (...) It's probably because I'm not expressing my emotions, well verbally I do but it's hard to process them. But yeah, you have like heart pounding and when I felt angry or just stressed – a really kind of anxious feeling, a lot of us used to talk about how we had that (...) feeling really nervous and really on edge."
	Difficulty of making decisions.	10:21-26	"We talk a lot about the PBL dread and especially when we're going through the really rough patch that kind of, you just dread what's gonna come up and the fact you knew you had to make decisions and stuff like that, it was just orrgh, you were just preparing yourself for the angst and it was just, I don't know it was so intense."
	19:17-18	"Decision making has been so difficult. There were moments when it was like having a gun to your head."	
		"We always pile up the pressure like ten minutes before the end of the session when suddenly you have to make everything get serious and you have to make a decision. And even though we didn't actually do	

	20:7-12	that much in between then and the next session, we had to make this decision and literally, it was like having a gun to your head.”
Tension between process and content.	7:20-27 / 8:1-5	“(…) so much happens at different levels at the same time so it depends what you’re paying attention to or what you tune into. So there’s multiple levels so at some levels you are a work group and you, you think about a case and you think how you would work with this therapeutically and professionally and you think about theory and stuff to help with that, then you’ve got the group contact so working with other people to make decisions to kind of erm you know generate hypotheses and ways of thinking about things and coming together in some ways to get some kind of agreement of where to go. Also sharing and expanding your view on it and their individual level, being in a group and bringing yourself, your personal context and how that interacts with the professional, the professional role and you in a group-type role. It’s really hard to unpick.”
	25:11-15	“You felt like you had no time to talk about emotions and what was going on, well some people did some people didn’t, but it will create that conflict and that tension between content and process, even more. And what was necessary to talk about and what was indulgent or whatever.”
“...you’re fully switched on all the time.”	35:8-11	“I can’t not be aware of the group dynamics [now], it’s just so there and I can’t ever switch off to it.”
	5:25-26 / 6:1-4	“When we do the presentation, we kind of bare it all. And (…) all the feedback we tend to get, you know in the discussion bit after our presentation, is that we’re kind of really honest and open about, you know, even the conflicts we’ve had and how we’ve tried to go through that. (…) we’re not kind of afraid to show our flaws and the difficulties we’ve had and the fact we’re a work in progress.”
Baring your soul / Putting it ‘out there’	21:2-15	“The difficulty was that these two ideas, were positioned in two different ways of doing it, so being yourself or being a character was a big decision because some people didn’t wanna put up with putting it all out there just for the sake of putting it all out there and people were afraid if you were playing yourself then you were expected to tell everyone about all the things we’ve discussed in PBL, or you know you’re expected to bare your soul, just for an audience. So people understandably didn’t wanna do that so there was a bit of fear. And obviously you don’t wanna make anybody feel uncomfortable by (…) choosing that idea, that you’re endorsing the view that you need to put it all out there, even though it was kind of valued by our group.”
	14:8-17	“I don’t think it’s brought up various things but it’s been a bit of a catalyst but I don’t necessarily see that as a negative thing. It’s just my relationship to emotions. There’s been times when it’s just like ‘aaaw, I can’t escape from this, why have I always gotta think about myself? Why is everything related to me?’
Group context as a catalyst for exposing and developing from individual difficulties.	27:13-21	“The organiser of PBL, decided to play this lovely song about a relationship which sounded all nice and then it was abusive (…) it was still shocking ‘cos you know you kind of lure yourself into a, ‘they can’t all be bad, there must be some nice relationships’ and then it’s oh no, no. It sounds like a nice song but it’s really bad (...). I started off really angry like ‘how could they do this, it’s not been set up appropriately?!’ but then you don’t have to go much further beneath that to realise that I was really upset because it brought up all this stuff for me and I spent a lot of that time crying, but worked through it.”
Using humour to talk about difficult experiences.	2:25-29	“I haven’t got a nickname but for some reason, the thing that’s coming into my head at the moment is PB-Hell, which is ironic because it’s meant to be beneficial (laughs). Yeah sometimes when it’s in the dark recesses of it, in the middle of it, like towards the presentation, it feels like a pressure cooker, kind of PB-Hell. So you’re kind of in PB-Hell.”

SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES	SUB-ORDINATE THEMES	PAGE:LINE	QUOTES
<p style="text-align: center;">Theme 2:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“IT’S BEYOND LANGUAGE”: Trying to make sense.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Difficult to define.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">47:12:23</p>	<p>“If I was describing this to someone who had no idea about this, I’d probably feel really frustrated that I can’t put some of it into words. It would just be like arrgghhh, and I think you’d be tempted just to like dumb it down and like lose, I don’t know you’d probably just give up a lot easier and just find some approximation and just go, ‘oh it’s just it’s just like this’ or just say something quite blasé oh like ‘intense’, just intense, that’s what you’d use as a summary. Intense – which just says everything and then nothing at the same time.”</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">“It’s beyond language.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“...it means more to feel something...on a real level”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">44:9-29 / 45:1-11</p>	<p>“For all of the talking I like to do on an intellectual level, it means more to feel something on a real level, like...It’s not about theory, it’s not about big words; it’s basic, simple, so simple it’s hard to define, yeah. Maybe there’s not a word for it yet (laughs).”</p> <p>Interviewer – “If you could make up a word then, what would it be?”</p> <p>“Oh God! laughs) for what bit, the awakening? Erm...Oh God, like make up my own word or use an existing word?”</p> <p>Interviewer – “It’s up to you...”</p> <p>“Oh God, now I’ve just got random words coming into my head that make no sense...”</p> <p>Interviewer – “Like what?”</p> <p>“Jamboree! I dunno where the hell that word came from! (both laugh). Yeah maybe sum it up as like a facial expression in like (laughing), how do you describe that? It’s like a gasp, it’s like a gasp and an intake at the same time (laughs), it’s a...”</p> <p>Interviewer – “And if you were to put that into words...?”</p> <p>“A gasp-take.”</p> <p>Interviewer – “A gasp-take?! And what’s the gasp-take about? What are you gasping about and what are you in-taking?”</p> <p>“Oh God, erm you’re gasping for air ‘cos you can’t breathe but you’re taking something in but you don’t know what you’re taking in and it’s coming out at the same time so you’re kind of, you’re doing it kind of before you know you’re doing it. You’re embodying it, you’re part of it before you fully inhaled it ‘cos it’s inside you but you don’t know it is. (...) It’s there, it’s in-between, it’s not in you or outside of you, it’s between you. It’s both at the same time, yes.”</p>
		<p style="text-align: center;">7:20-21</p>	<p>“What happens in it? Erm what in terms about what’s supposed to happen or (laughs) what does happen?”</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Conspiracy theories.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4:1-7</p>	<p>“Interviewer - what makes you want to create this big presentation, to make it really good? Where does that pressure come from?”</p> <p>It comes from us. I think it’s funny; different groups have different theories about it. You know, some people think it’s the course expects certain things, and it’s like you’re playing to their expectations.”</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">“You can’t...separate...the professional and the personal.”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">17:20-26</p> <p style="text-align: center;">11:19-28 / 12:1-3</p>	<p>“(...) you will question the whole course as to why the hell we’re doing this and why they want the trainees to have a breakdown and what is their purpose of this, what is like, have they got some evil plan to damage us all or (laughs) I don’t know, like, you will question why you are doing this, what the value of this is. At times you will think there is no purpose to this, you know it’s just madness but I don’t know, you’ll come out the other end and you’ll start to be nostalgic about it.”</p> <p>“You can’t really separate (...) the professional and the personal...You bring your own values, you bring your context and that’s gonna influence your clinical work for the good and the bad so you need to be aware of...you know, what you bring with you (...) better to recognise it and embrace it than deny that it’s</p>

		there.”
“You can’t see it when you’re in it.”	31:5-10	“I started this course and I was like ‘I wanna change’, that sounds like I wasn’t happy with myself but I’m obsessed with change and growing and developing so it’s all in aid of that, which makes it difficult ‘cos then you don’t know when you have changed and developed (...). I can’t see it but I’m sure I have, you can’t see it when you’re in it.”
	7:6-12	“When I’ve been in previous study groups at University, I’ve taken on quite a leadership bossy role...so I wanted a chance to be something different and try out something new and to be able to trust in the process but you don’t have to be, you know, leading or ‘hands on’ to get what you want, you can trust that other people will fulfil their roles so a chance to kind of try out some different ways of groups and different roles.”
“...you have to trust in the process.”	32:16-26 / 33:1-13	“You feel a bit euphoric when it’s all come together and it’s all been for a purpose (...) you have to trust in the process. You have to trust that you’ll get there and you’ll be able to pull it off, although you doubt it at times and sometimes majorly doubt it...So it’s nice to be proven wrong or proven right depending on what your outlook was. (...) We thought we had it sussed in the first one and we were like, ‘oh look how reflective we are’ and ‘we’re all about the process’ and then obviously we missed a great big thing where someone felt marginalised so we needed to go through all that in order to be stronger. I don’t know if it’s true but you hear about, like, if you break a bone and it grows back stronger...it’s almost like that. But the cracks will still show...you will be stronger but you’ll also have scars and sensitivities so you won’t be perfect.”
Learning to navigate the in-between.	45:14-29	“It’s between you, relationally. I think that’s one of the most important things I’ve learnt generally, it’s that in-between position is so difficult to be in ‘cos sometimes you just wanna belong, to be one or the other, but if you can hold both at the same time then you’ve got it sussed, you can kind of straddle both worlds. So whether that’s the personal and the professional, be in the group and be a person, to hold it all at the same time. It’s difficult: you’ll wobble, if you can manage that way to stay on it (laughs), erm it’s kind of where you need to be to fully appreciate everything. Yeah it’s like to appreciate the view... on a cliff edge, to see both sides, you kind of need to be walking in the middle but you can fall off and it feels like you’re falling sometimes and you’re gonna die. I like my dramatic metaphors (laughs) but if you can hold the course and keep going and trust (laughing) that you’re not gonna die, you’ve just gotta carry on and just put one foot in front of the other and you’ll be fine, then you’ll be alright.”
Connecting with the flow.	8:16-27 / 9:1-3	“With the last PBL there were highs and there were lows; so there was literally one session when (...) I was just like, ‘this is amazing, I love this group!’. We were all saying to each other that this is the best session we’ve ever had and ‘oh look at us all bonding’ and we made decisions, and it was fun, and it was painless and we were able to deal with real issues and be real people and I was on a proper high (...). I was like awww (...) ‘I’ve got the best PBL group ever’, not in a competitive way but, ‘I love my PBL group!’”

SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES	SUB-ORDINATE THEMES	PAGE:LINE	QUOTES
<p style="text-align: center;">Theme 3:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LONGING TO BELONG</p>	Parallels with family dynamics.	34:4-6	"It's like a family (...) sometimes you think, 'I didn't choose to be with these people' like, it's pre-determined by someone else. It's not necessarily a friendship group, you're thrown in with a random bunch of people and you just learn to get on and just like a family you'll have ups and downs and arguments but you'll bring it together."
	Tribal.	4:8-14.	"(...) it almost becomes a bit tribal (...); I don't know whether (...) in order to be like a cohesive group. You almost need an out-group in order to create that. So it's like an 'us and them' and it becomes very tribal and almost like competitive and it's like 'sshhh sshhh sshhh don't say anything in front of them'. And it's not like you're going to steal anyone's ideas but you're very careful at being kept in close quarters and you don't want anyone to find out what you're doing."
	Importance of connecting with others.	9:16-26	"We had a tea party one time to kind of bind as a group and we went to watch like a show thing as well, to get inspired but also to connect as a group because that's what we were working on."
	Importance of shared group values.	4:22-25	"And for our group as well like we really value the end product, like being able to be open about things and share what we've learnt with everyone else cos that's kind of some of our group values about being open and sharing and being transparent as also the process to get to know yourself..."
		21:21-28	"I think certain group norms or a culture gets developed that might be an extreme version of what people might hold and I think that our group was seen as like 'the brave group', 'the out-there group', 'the very in-your-face, say it as it is, dig deep, push it out there group' and maybe erm maybe that's an exaggeration of who we are, individually. You almost adopt an identity and live up to it..."
	Longing to belong.	7:12-13	"In terms of fears, erm (...) not feeling like I belong or fit in."
		15:10-12	"I think I have sensitivities around belonging (...) so it can sometimes feel like that's magnified depending on how you're feeling at the time."
	Desire to impress and be validated.	3:23-29	"(...) it becomes all-encompassing, like especially the build up to it. You're thinking, working on it, you're trying to (...) arrange meetings outside of the PBL allocated time to try and just get it done, so it becomes really pressured and I don't know why we place so much emphasis on the final product and presentation but it but it feels like you wanna just give it everything, so you just make it this big thing, you're crazy, you create a monster."
		15:12-17	"I [think group situations] can kind of make you feel a bit funny...if you put yourself out there and people don't have the same opinion or whatever, it might make you feel a bit left out or you know if you're making decisions and someone doesn't take up your idea that might make you feel not that valued."
			4:14-20

SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES	SUB-ORDINATE THEMES	PAGE:LINE	QUOTES
<p>Theme 4:</p> <p>RESPONSES TO MANAGE THE EXPERIENCE(S) CAN BE UNHELPFUL AND HELPFUL</p>	Unable to speak out due to trust and loyalty. (unhelpful)	16:24-28	“Unhelpful aspects, erm (...) you feel like you can’t really talk about it because of these loyalties and if you talk to someone who’s in a different group, are you betraying the trust of the people in your group?”
	“I don’t wanna talk about these things” (unhelpful)	22:3-10.	“When I was going through, I wouldn’t say a personal crisis, but it felt like it was all a bit sensitive and everything was going off in every area of my life, everything was relating to my background and stuff like that, I felt like ‘Oh my God, I don’t wanna talk about these things, I don’t wanna present on these things’ and I could relate a bit more to some people’s positions of not wanting to go there and not wanting to bare your soul but until I had that experience I couldn’t fully see it. I was just like you know, ‘you’re supposed to be ‘out there’, that means you’re learning and being open and being honest’, but you need to protect yourself as well.”
	“I don’t wanna talk about these things” (unhelpful)	14:15-19	“You’ll find these connections and sometimes you do just wanna kind of just disconnect and not think about these things and you don’t get the opportunity to do that with PBL. You’re fully switched on all the time or at least I am. So, if you want an easy life then erm, it’s a problem.”
	You have to take the rough with the smooth. (helpful in the long-term)	32:16-23	“It’s a huge sense of relief and achievement and you just prove to yourself you’re able to manage as a group and all the kind of doubts that you had that you can work as a group, they’re just proved wrong,”
		33:1-13	“It was nice for us to be able to go into such a difficult place and then come out of it and then to laugh and smile and be normal (laughs). And not be like ‘aarrgggh, I wanna pull my hair out! It’s the kind of journey up, so you’re kind of, we were stuck in a bit of a valley and the we kind of came up and seen the sun, erm yeah we were kind of like stuck in the mud (laughs) so we kind of got out of it and it was nice to kind of look back and see where we were and kind of think, aahhh but we needed to go through that to get to where we are now. There’s no, there’s no shortcut.”
		20:23-29	“(Christian) was a bit of leader in the first one and then after the whole thing came off worse and someone felt marginalised and there was a bit of blame put towards him, he really went underground and distanced himself a lot from the group.”
	Speaking out about feelings of marginalisation. (helpful in the long-term)	9:9-14	“Someone kind of said erm that they felt left out and like marginalised and there was a big silence and I was like whoa, a big spanner in the works, and it really brought morale down but it was a kind of opportunity to learn and think about what was going on and try and correct some of it so that took a while to come back up and trust in ourselves and in each other again.”
	Disconnecting and reconnecting: “You’ll come out the other end and you’ll start to be nostalgic about it.” (helpful in the long-term)	15:3-9 17:6-9 17:19-27	“I felt a bit taken aback when someone said they felt so silenced and marginalised so that made me then very wary to kind of look out for what was going on and to check-in and to really kind of dig beneath things and not expect things or what they were at one level so it made me very wary and very tuned in even more so of what was going on so then I couldn’t, I can’t switch off.” “I think I inadvertently put some of the first years off...I think they were saying they were starting PB-Hell...I mean PBL! God, Freudian slip! And I’ll say ‘it gets worse’ or ‘yeah it gets intense (...) You would have to temperate it with, ‘it will feel like hell at times. It will feel like it’s just not worth it, you will question the whole course as to why the hell we’re doing this and why they want the trainees to have a breakdown and what is their purpose of this, what is like, have they got some evil plan to damage us all or (laughs) I don’t know, like, you will question why you are doing this, what the value of this is. At times you will think there is no purpose to this, you know it’s just madness but I don’t know, you’ll come out the other end and you’ll start to be nostalgic about it’. I mean, I’ve not finished PBL but I’m already feeling a

		bit nostalgic.”
Value of formal reflection in bringing words to meaning. (helpful)	32:7-14	“(…) the reflective essay (….) it’s really helpful to kind of make sense of things and kind of sum up the main points of it and not get lost too much in the detail…You’re kind of going, ‘what’s the bigger picture, what does this all mean?’, ‘What have I learnt about myself?’, ‘What does this all point to?’”
Managing the intensity of the experience. (helpful)	22:8-10	“You’re supposed to be ‘out there’, that means you’re learning and being open and being honest but you need to protect yourself as well.”
Striving towards meaning-making. (helpful)	30:19-27	“I just follow these cheesy lines, ‘no pain no gain’; like that’s how you learn who you are through your pain…that’s how you discover yourself. You learn most from your mistakes and the things that are difficult, not the things that are going well. (….) you need to dig deeper, you need to learn about yourself, I see it all as a learning experience so that kind of helps me endure it ‘cos it’s got a purpose, it’s got a meaning.”
	31:2-5	“When you have a difficult childhood you have to place some meaning on why it’s happening…you have to make sense of it in some way (laughs).”
“Better to embrace it than deny that it’s there.” (helpful)	11:19-24 / 12:2-3	“You can’t really separate (….) the professional and the personal…You bring your own values, you bring your context and that’s gonna influence your clinical work for the good and the bad so you need to be aware of…you know, what you bring with you (….) better to recognise it and embrace it than deny that it’s there.”
	12:27-29 / 13:1-5	“It’s about what you learn about yourself or what you learn about the dynamic between people and relationally. That, that thing that you can’t learn in a book, that thing that’s just there between people… you can take to any context because you’re learning about what it means to be a person (laughs), if that makes any sense?”
Value of experiential learning. (helpful)		“Even though I say it’s an awakening, it’s probably like a slowly dawning process. It’s not like suddenly (….) you’ve found the light, you’ve found the way, you know who you are now (laughs); I don’t think I’ll ever fully know who I am but I don’t know, you kind of know a bit more and then it’s not ‘til you look back that you realise that you know more now than you did then, but it’s not something you know intellectually, if that makes sense.”
	42:1-6	
	40:20-22	“I think my PBL group gave me a bit of flexibility in different creative ways of doing things and trying things out so I then try them out at placement.”
		“I think, because you process the PBL process especially with the essay you can kind of reflect on the whole thing and think about how you got there and how groups don’t take the same journeys. I kind of learned about this by thinking that the other groups are all on different journeys; they might end up at the same place but they take different journeys and different speeds and stuff to get there and they’ll have different goals as well. So I thought about applying that to different ways of working in different teams, you know, maybe their journey isn’t gonna be like our journey where we just bare it all. That’s (laughs) probably not gonna happen in an MDT meeting, it might not feel professional for some people to do that which is fair enough, so their goal might be different and even if it’s the same, it will probably be a different journey because it’s a different set of people who bring different things and there’s different relationships.”
Value of learning to be flexible. (helpful)	41:2-15	
	42:14-15	
	42:19-29	“I think it’s softened me a bit. It’s not made me soft don’t get me wrong (laughs), it’s allowed me to open up a bit more, to risk that.”

		“I had quite a stereotyped view of myself which got shattered a bit but it made me see that I’m not like that but also it freed me from that as well so it allowed me to play being different things.”
The value of authenticity. (helpful)	18:23-29 / 19:1-6 33:16-23	“I always remember like (Marie) sharing her [experiences]... And she talked a lot about her personal life and kind of what it meant to her from a personal point of view and that’s always stuck with me, that kind of realness...[so] I’ve had her as a bit of a role model in that respect like, kind of looked up to her in terms of how she was able to be herself and bring herself and I’ve tried to emulate that.” “Actually there was a really big thing that (Pru) said, the facilitator, she said ‘do you wanna be a perfect group or do you wanna be a great group?’ and once you realise that you wanna be a great group then you kind of, I don’t know, it’s so much better! Like a perfect group is a group who doesn’t, you know that just gets along and you know, does everything really well but it’s a bit false, there’s no such thing as a perfect group so I’d rather be a great group and yeah, take the rough with the smooth, yeah (laughs quietly).”
Facilitator can be invaluable. (helpful)	24:22-25 / 25:1-3 25:11-16	“I felt our group were really able to talk about process issues and (...) I think the facilitator was really helpful in (...) scaffolding us to be able to do that, to be able to have those conversations and to really value what we all brought and focus about, focus on what we individually brought to the whole process and to remember that we need to value what everyone brings and not fight against it.” “You felt like you had no time to talk about emotions and what was going on, well some people did some people didn’t, but it will create that conflict and that tension between content and process, even more. And what was necessary to talk about and what was indulgent or whatever. I think the facilitator is invaluable in terms of modelling, I don’t know (sighs) how to have those questions to set up those conversations.”
	26:12-15	“It’s hard to explain but that created a lot of issues and (laughs) our facilitator kind of, when she kind of noticed this big divide, this was really close to the presentation, she was just like ‘you’re in or you’re out’ and it was like, I don’t know, you have to be in.”
Finding self-acceptance. (helpful)	28:7-9 37:3-10 41:27-29 / 42:1-2	“It helped me integrate that aspect of myself and kind of think you know, your personal experiences don’t hinder you from being a good therapist. If you embrace them then they can help you.” “I’d always valued the therapeutic relationship and kind of what goes on between us and it’s almost just like validated that, it’s given a stamp of approval (laughs) that it’s a good thing erm, it’s kind of acknowledged in some way by the course, that’s a good thing that it’s okay to practice in that way, be yourself that’s all we can be, that’s a good thing, so it’s made me more real more, bring me, not kind of be defensive like not feel like you have to kind of pretend that you’re this big neutral person who doesn’t bring anything with them.” “I feel like I’m more connected to myself like I’m more aware of my values and my background and of who I am and what I stand for and what I believe in and who I wanna be. All of that sounds a bit cliché; I dunno how to put it in a more real way.”
	43:9-17	“It’s nice to be appreciated. I don’t know, it’s nice to be valued. Interviewer - Appreciated by whom? I dunno, probably myself more than anything erm but it’s easier to take from other people but I think it’s more of an awakening when you can kind of realise that for yourself, erm that after a while it just makes sense like you keep, like if people keep thinking of you as playful or whatever then you just, I don’t know it kind of fits after a while, I don’t know (laughs). It feels weird talking about it ‘cos I don’t think I’ve thought about it in that way, yeah.”
“Opened my eyes to who I am.”	42:25-29 /	“It’s like a mirror (...). It kind of reflects back who you are in the group...so you kind of see yourself, warts

(helpful)

43:1-3

and all. It depends whether you decide to concentrate on the warts or not. You see your whole self almost like in a 360° degree kind of view. So you see more of yourself - the bits that would have been hidden, that you wouldn't have seen that you might not have been that aware of..."

SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES	SUB-ORDINATE THEMES	PAGE:LINE	QUOTES
<p>Theme 5:</p> <p>THE VALUE OF REFLECTIVE SPACES</p>	<p>Parallels with group therapy.</p>	2:9-18	<p><i>“So for me, it works on so many levels. So, it’s a group experience, it’s almost like...a therapeutic experience. Erm, it’s a learning experience, it’s like personally and professionally...it’s a chance to get to know yourself, as a person, a person in a group, professionally.”</i></p>
		1:9-13	<p><i>“If you try and disentangle some of it I guess there’s some bits I’ve learnt from PBL that I haven’t got from personal therapy but because it’s the group experience I guess you learn what you’re like in a group. And I think because it’s quite intense it almost has parallels with family issues so it kind of recreates a family environment which can, I guess, bring up a lot of erm, kinds of difficulties (...), so it really kind of helps you think about yourself in a group, how you work with other people, what your sensitivities are, how you deal with conflict, how you deal with difficult emotions, how you manage difficult emotions.”</i></p>
		12:27-29 / 13:1-5	<p><i>“It’s about what you learn about yourself or you know, what you learn about the dynamic between people and relationally. That, that thing that you can’t learn in a book, that thing that’s just there between people, you know, learning about that - that you can take to any context because you’re learning about what it means to be a person (laughs).”</i></p>
		27:3-6	<p><i>“Talking. It will be difficult, it will bring up issues but that’s how you need to work through them; talking. You just need to talk it out to get into the talk about talking, a bit repetitive but you need to talk about it and then you can move on. You need to get it out there (laughs)!”</i></p>
	<p>Parallels with a therapeutic experience. (personal development)</p>	28:6-12	<p><i>“It helps you grow. It helped me integrate that aspect of myself and kind of think your personal experiences don’t hinder you from being a good therapist. If you embrace them then they can help you, I don’t know - the wounded healer analogy- you can kind of empathise with people through your own pain but you’ve just gotta know what belongs to you and what belongs to other people, so I think you need to process that.”</i></p>
	<p>PBL is invaluable.</p>	10:1-14	<p><i>“I think it’s invaluable. It’s funny because I haven’t really painted a rosy picture, it’s this traumatic thing but what doesn’t kill you makes you (laughs) stronger. (...) I think you just learn so much about yourself and about other people and about groups and those kind of systemic contexts and (...) it makes sense if you’re gonna be in a setting where you’re in MDT meetings, you’re gonna get all of these issues so, better to have it in PBL where you can work through it then think about it thoughtfully so you can then kind of deal with it in the professional context and (...) I think it’s invaluable where you’re not gonna get clear-cut cases so you need to be able to problem-solve and think outside the box and kind of be creative with things and I think it allows you to do that. It kind of enables you to do that. (...) it kind of takes away all the rules, it’s like it’s up to you. You know - trust yourself, use your own initiative so, yeah it’s encouraging.”</i></p>
	<p>Value of reflective space in helping to make sense of things.</p>	11:3-14	<p><i>“You just learn so much about yourself and about other people and about groups and those kind of systemic contexts and it makes sense if you’re gonna be in a setting where you’re in MDT meetings, you’re gonna get all of these issues so, better to have it in PBL where you can work through it then think about it thoughtfully so you can then kind of deal with it in the profession context (...). I think it’s invaluable - you’re not gonna get clear-cut cases so you need to be able to problem-solve and think outside the box and kind of be creative with things and I think it allows you to do that. It kind of enables you to do that. I don’t know it kind of takes away all the rules, it’s like it’s up to you. You know trust yourself, use your own initiative so, yeah it’s encouraging.”</i></p>
		12:10-19	<p><i>“I don’t think managers are as thoughtful about it to be honest, I don’t think they would really create that space. (...) because you’ve got the group context as well and you bounce off other people and you have so much time to think about one case, you really get to think in-depth about what you’re bringing and how that relates to the case and you’ve got time to unpick it whereas I don’t think you’d necessarily be able to kind of make that sense straight away, if you were on placement.”</i></p>

APPENDIX 8: TABLE OF RECURRENCE OF MASTER THEMES FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

		PARTICIPANTS								
		EMILY	MICHELLE	PETER	ANGELA	OLIVIA	ANN	JEAN	KATHLEEN	
SUPER-ORDINATE AND SUB-ORDINATE THEMES	THEME 1: INTENSITY OF THE EXPERIENCE									
	•	THE GROUP CONTEXT AS A CATALYST FOR EXPOSING AND DEVELOPING FROM DIFFICULTIES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
	•	YOU CAN'T ESCAPE PANDORA'S BOX	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	THEME 2: STRIVING TOWARDS CONNECTION VERSUS FEAR OF DISCONNECTION									
	•	IT BECOMES VERY TRIBAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	•	PEOPLE BRING TO THE GROUP THEIR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES OF RELATING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	•	THE DESIRE TO IMPRESS AND BE VALIDATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
	THEME 3: RESPONSES TO MANAGE THE EXPERIENCE(S) CAN BE UNHELPFUL AND HELPFUL									
	•	I CAN'T TALK ABOUT THESE THINGS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
	•	THE FACILITATOR CAN BE INVALUABLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
	•	LEARNING TO CONNECT TO THE STRUGGLE IN ORDER TO GROW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
	THEME 4: TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF PBL									
	•	IT'S NOT A CONCRETE THING; YOU CAN'T PIN IT DOWN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
	•	THE VALUE OF REFLECTIVE SPACES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
•	PARALLELS WITH GROUP THERAPY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
•	APPLICATIONS OF PBL TO MDT WORKING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		