

Portfolio Volume 1: Major Research Project

Exploring the experiences of facilitators of reflective practice groups in clinical psychology
training: a thematic analysis

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Abstract

Despite many Clinical Psychology training programmes utilising reflective practice groups (RPGs) as a means of developing reflective practice skills, there remains little research examining facilitator perspectives of such groups. A qualitative approach was taken whereby 12 reflective practice group facilitators affiliated with seven different training institutions across England, Scotland and Wales were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. This study aimed to build on previous research by exploring (1) facilitators' experiences of such groups, (2) facilitators' experiences of challenges that arise, (3) facilitators' experiences of conversations in relation to difference and diversity, and (4) how facilitators make sense of their role. Data was analysed using Thematic Analysis from a critical realist epistemological position. Three main themes were constructed: 'Creating boundaries and safety', 'A vehicle for growth and development', and 'RPGs don't take place in a vacuum'. The role of the facilitator was viewed as complex and multi-layered, and the groups were viewed as an opportunity for trainees to engage in reflection about a range of topics, including difference and diversity. The analysis is conceptualised in terms of existing psychological theory and literature. The strengths and limitations of the research are considered and suggestions for future studies offered, including exploring the experiences of peer facilitators of RPGs, and the views of the trainees regarding conversations about difference and diversity within RPGs. The implications of the study are outlined, including recommendations relating to training and support structures for facilitators, and consideration of how training programmes outline the aims of RPGs and share this information with trainees.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This research aims to explore the experiences of facilitators of reflective practice groups (RPGs) within Clinical Psychology (CP) training. This chapter will outline the rationale for the chosen topic and the epistemological position taken. An overview of current research and a systematic literature review pertinent to the area will also be presented.

1.2 Language

This thesis will contain several sections relating to my self-reflexive position. Reflexivity requires researchers to be aware of what is influencing their internal and external responses in the moment, whilst being aware of what influences their relationship to the topic and the participants (Etherington, 2004). These influences inform the constructs which guide interactions throughout the process of engaging in the research and representing the data (Etherington, 2004).

These self-reflexive sections will be written in the first person, in order to avoid a sense of passivity and distance from the topic (Crotty, 1998). This is particularly pertinent for a study on reflective practice (RP), and fits with my epistemological position; my own views, experiences, and perceptions will have influenced each decision throughout this research process.

RPGs are given various terms within the literature and by different Doctoral Training Programmes (DTPs). In some settings, for example, they are referred to as reflective practice seminars, personal development groups, or experiential groups. For ease of reading, the term ‘reflective practice group’ (RPG) will be used throughout this thesis, unless otherwise specified. For the purposes of this thesis, RPGs will be defined as facilitated groups whereby

trainees have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of training, their clinical work, and themselves (Binks et al., 2013).

1.3 Current Context for Clinical Psychologists in the United Kingdom

Within the United Kingdom (UK), training as a Clinical Psychologist requires completion of a postgraduate, doctoral three-year training programme (British Psychological Society, BPS, 2019). This comprises of university-based learning, clinical placements usually within the National Health Service (NHS), and a research thesis (Lyons et al., 2019.) Training promotes development of transferable knowledge and competencies required for working across a range of settings, and with a range of ages and presentation configurations (BPS, 2019). The role of Clinical Psychologists (CPs) is to promote psychological wellbeing and reduce psychological distress via the systematic use of knowledge obtained from theory and research (BPS, 2019). Interventions offered by CPs aim to promote the autonomy and wellbeing of service users, reduce exclusion and inequality, and enable them to engage in valued and meaningful relationships and activities (BPS, 2019). By the end of the training programme, trainee CPs should be equipped with the competencies set out by the BPS (2019) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2015). The HCPC (2015) highlight in their Standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists, that CPs should be able to draw on knowledge and skills to inform practice based on scientist-practitioner and reflective-practitioner models. Similarly, the BPS (2019) in their Standards for the accreditation of doctoral programmes in CP conceptualise CPs as reflective scientist-practitioners. One of the core competencies which trainee CPs are required to acquire includes exercising personal responsibility and initiative in complex, unpredictable situations; demonstrating self-awareness and sensitivity; and working as a reflective practitioner within appropriate professional and ethical frameworks (BPS, 2019).

1.4 Reflective Practice

The importance of reflection has been formalised in an overarching approach to professional practice and training, termed RP (Lilienfeld & Basterfield, 2020). Offering a definition of RP is not straightforward, given that it has been described as an intangible, immeasurable and atheoretical construct (Cushway & Gatherer, 2003; Gillmer & Marckus, 2003). Writers in the field of education first formally introduced the concept, when Dewey (1933) stated that “reflective thinking is closely related to critical thinking; it is the turning over of a subject in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration” (p. 3). Dewey (1933) conceptualised reflective thinking as a process which lay between recognising a problem and solving it. Schön (1983, 1987) later went on to highlight the importance of reflection in the development of skills and knowledge, and the shortcomings of a solely scientific approach. Schön (1983, 1987) introduced a distinction between ‘reflection in action,’ or pondering whilst doing something, and ‘reflection on action,’ or thinking about something retrospectively to develop understanding in light of the experience. Lavender (2003) further developed these concepts and added ‘reflection about impact on others,’ which entails obtaining feedback from others about our impact on them, and ‘reflection about self’ which entails developing an awareness of one’s personal vulnerabilities, which deepens respect and understanding of clients’ difficulties.

To make the process of RP more explicit, Kolb (1984) proposed a cycle of ‘experiential learning’ which comprises of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Central to this theory is the idea that learning requires resolution of conflicts, moving back and forth between modes of reflection, action, feeling and thinking (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Grounded in experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), Schutz (2007) more recently conceptualised reflection as a

conscious, focused way of thinking which helps individuals learn about practice and make sense of their experiences, which can result in a change in practice.

Gibbs (1988) also proposed a model of RP, a six-stage cycle which comprises of: describing the interaction; examining any thoughts and feelings that arose; evaluating what was positive and negative about the experience; carrying out an analysis of the situation, including what sense one can make of it; drawing conclusions, such as what else one could have done; and development of an action plan for what one might do if a similar situation arose again. The model makes a key assumption that professionals can learn from both positive and negative experiences by reflecting on them, which can improve their future performance in similar situations (Lilienfeld & Basterfield, 2020).

Several models and definitions of RP therefore exist, without one clear consensus position. The positions seem to be complementary rather than conflicting, however. RP could thus be conceptualised as a means of carefully and analytically considering a topic, situation, the self, or one's impact on others, as a means of learning and making sense of one's experiences.

Despite RP being a key concept in CP, it has been argued that it has been somewhat neglected within the field, in part due to the historical roots of the profession in the UK (Lavender, 2003). In 1949, Eysenck proposed that trainee CPs in the UK should not be trained in therapy, which was in contrast to the USA context, whereby the widespread therapeutic model at the time was psychoanalysis. It was argued that a psychoanalytic approach was unscientific, and therefore, UK trainees should be taught "objective, methodologically sound, impartial, and scientifically acceptable research" (Eysenck, 1949 p. 174). Lavender (2003) suggests that these views had a large influence on what was taught on the early UK courses, fusing CP with a positivist approach to science; a dilemma which has led to ongoing ripples in professional debates and for DTPs. Stedmon et al. (2003) note that

given that a sense of safety comes with certainty, the profession of CP has understandably shown some reluctance to move away from the safe base which the scientific model provides.

RP has gained traction within CP and other professional fields over recent years in order to address the problem that scientific data can only take practitioners so far; for example, thoughtful reflection is required when responding to a question from a client or hypothesising about apparent resistance to an intervention, (Lilienfeld & Basterfield, 2020). RP has been named as the key ingredient for achieving a number of positive outcomes including increased self-awareness, professional expertise, critical thinking skills, ability to link theory and practice, and improved client care (Cotton, 2001; Zimmerman et al., 2007).

Some authors have been critical of the concept of more public RP, however, and suggest that in allowing private thoughts to enter public spheres, they are then subject to processes such as interpretation, judgement, surveillance, assessment, classification and control (Cotton, 2001). Others have highlighted the potential for psychological harm when engaging in RP in the absence of explicit and thorough preparation for facilitators and group members, critical incident analysis, careful planning, and structure (Rich & Parker, 1995). Lavender (2003), however, encourages consideration of the alternative to RP; what it would be like to be an unreflective practitioner, and what the implications would be on one's practice and clients. It is, however, imperative to consider these potential pitfalls of RP and to reduce the potential for harm.

Conditions which either facilitate or create barriers to RP were explored by Wong-Wylie (2007), who interviewed doctoral level counselling students about their experiences. Several conditions were found to facilitate RP including trusting relationships, opening up with peers, risk taking, engaging in reflective tasks, and perceiving academic personnel as supportive. Various conditions were found to impede open reflection including mistrust in relationships, perceiving peers to be non-reflective, receipt of unsupportive/jarring feedback,

facing systemic barriers or feeling unsafe, and perceiving academic personnel as unsupportive (Wong-Wylie, 2007).

1.5 Reflective Scientist-Practitioner Model

Given that professional bodies such as the BPS (2019) have characterised being a reflective practitioner within the core competencies for trainee CPs, the reflective scientist-practitioner model is prominent (Lilienfeld & Basterfield, 2020). Within this model, self-reflection is afforded roughly equal priority to more scientific evidence-based approaches (Lilienfeld & Basterfield, 2020). Some have argued that in comparison to the scientist-practitioner model, which emphasises an empirical approach to clinical work, the reflective scientist-practitioner model is more in line with a phenomenological approach to understanding experiences (Youngson, 2009). This model acknowledges that there are limitations of a purely scientific approach, with real-life clinical practice presenting a number of complexities (Lavender, 2003).

Stedmon et al. (2003) propose that the scientific and reflective positions are in fact complementary, and that by accepting the rigour of science alongside the creativity afforded by RP, there is a richness to be gained. Whilst the two positions can be seen as complementary, they have very different aims; whereas the scientific position seeks to discover truths, the reflective position offers a framework for considering the status of these ‘truths’ (Stedmon et al., 2003).

1.6 Personal and Professional Development

The core objective of personal and professional development (PPD) as a training construct is to enhance self-reflection in CP trainees’ professional and academic life (Gillmer & Marckus, 2003). By developing trainees’ capacity to critically and systematically reflect on

the work-self interface, the objective is to nurture personal awareness and resilience (Gillmer & Marckus, 2003).

DTPs are required to have a clear strategy by which they support trainees' personal and professional development (BPS, 2019). Whilst the exact nature of what this strategy should comprise of is not specified, DTPs are expected to ensure that trainees develop skills in self-reflection and critical reflection on practice, for example via supervision (BPS, 2019). RP is said to be the key ingredient within PPD to developing practitioners who have a good awareness of their strengths, skills, and areas of weakness; knowledge which they can use to continually learn and develop (Zimmerman et al., 2007). RPGs therefore offer one major method for PPD, and have been said to contribute to the training of competent reflective scientist-practitioners (Knight et al., 2010).

1.7 Reflective Practice Groups

The most dominant, beneficial model for addressing CP trainees' PPD needs have been said to be RPGs (Horner et al., 2009). Whilst the utilisation of RPGs can vary across DTPs for example in the specific aims, frequency and duration of the group (Horner et al., 2009), RPGs are facilitated groups whereby trainees have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of training, their clinical work, and themselves (Binks et al., 2013). Attendance at RPGs is usually mandatory (Gillmer & Marckus, 2003). The groups have been said to offer a unique opportunity to explore aspects of self, i.e., the social self and self in relation to others, to experience being in the position of a client, and to experience and learn about group processes and dynamics (Kiff et al., 2010). The success of reflective group work has been described as resting on the ability and desire of group members to share their experiences; therefore trust, support and commitment to participate are required in order for the experience to be productive (Williams & Walker, 2003). Despite the multitude of potential opportunities

and benefits afforded by RPGs, research has found that they have the potential to cause distress (Knight et al., 2010). In addition, some authors have argued that there remain some uncertainties about RPGs as their purpose is obscure, little evaluation takes place, and there is slim evidence for good practice (Gillmer & Marckus, 2003).

1.7.1 Grey literature relating to reflective practice groups

Despite the widespread utilisation of RPGs within CP training, there remains little published research in the area (Lyons et al., 2019). The systematic literature review presented in section 1.14 outlines empirical articles published in peer reviewed journals. Electronic searches of the ‘grey literature,’ or literature which has not been controlled by commercial publishers (Siddaway et al., 2019), on the topic of RPGs in CP training using Google Scholar were therefore carried out. This has been described as an effective means of locating work such as dissertations and articles published by institutions (Siddaway et al., 2019). Relevant literature identified included an article by Kiff et al. (2010) published within the *Clinical Psychology Forum* (2010), which describes the nature of the groups and what trainees can get from them, from the perspective of the DTPs in the West Midlands. A Special Issue on RP was also identified, which was published in *Clinical Psychology* (2003). This is comprised of nine articles which were presented at a workshop organised by Coventry and Warwick DTP, with the aims of reviewing reflection within clinical practice, discussing how to develop RP, and developing an understanding of how creative writing can improve self-reflection. This Special Issue therefore gives useful insight into how RP is approached by several DTPs.

Two unpublished doctoral dissertations were also identified (Fairhurst, 2011; Wigg, 2009). Wigg (2009) carried out an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study to investigate CPs experiences of RPGs during training. Themes identified included The Group vs. the Individual, Sense-making, Developing a Professional Self and The Nature of

Reflective Practice. The findings highlighted that the facilitator role was experienced as a highly significant factor in the group, as participants reported that learning through observation of the facilitator took place, and helpful facilitator qualities were identified as being nurturing, protecting, strong, and warm, and unhelpful qualities as being critical, absent, and unable to protect. The author concluded that the qualities which were seen as desirable in facilitators reflect those of a parent figure (Wigg, 2009).

Fairhurst (2011) carried out a grounded theory study of CPs experiences of attending an RPG during training. The author constructed a preliminary interactional map from the data which outlined five categories which were important in understanding how the RPGs were perceived as valuable in the context of varying degrees of distress: negotiating the unknown, managing emotion, negotiating the development of self-awareness, negotiating the reciprocal impact of others, and reflection-on-reflection. Once again, participants spoke of their experiences of the facilitator, with the majority of participants reporting that the facilitators had not been proactive with regards to offering guidance or support or addressing conflict. A minority of participants, however, reported that the role and style of the facilitator had enabled them to derive meaning and value from the group.

1.7.2 The context of reflective practice groups in clinical psychology training in the UK

The grey literature provides relevant information regarding the context of training in RP and RPG provision across UK CP training programmes. Kiff et al. (2010) provides information about RPGs offered by DTPs in the West Midlands. The groups were said to typically have between seven and 10 members, run for between one and two years, comprise of between 24 and 50 sessions, and last for 90 minutes. Attendance at the groups was said to have been voluntary historically, however there had been a trend towards mandatory

attendance. Groups were said to focus on four areas: group processes, personal difficulties and issues arising from past experiences, clinical/placement issues and academic issues. Participants were said to be encouraged to talk about whatever comes to mind, which is then analysed by the group.

The Special Issue on RP published in *Clinical Psychology* (2003) provided further contextual information. Gillmer and Marckus (2003) carried out a survey of DTPs in the UK to ascertain how programmes were implementing PPD. Seven out of 17 responding courses confirmed that they offer group work, and of these seven, on five of the programmes attendance was mandatory. Other scaffolds offered by courses to promote PPD included a peer group buddy system, a personal course tutor, personal therapy, and a mentor who is not a course team member. This survey was later updated by Horner et al. (2009), who found that 12 out of 14 responding courses offered personal development group work, and of these 12, attendance was mandatory at nine DTPs. Stedmon et al. (2003) provided some context with regards to the three DTPs in the South West region. All courses were said to draw on the Hawkins and Shohet (2000) model of supervision within workshops and preplacement meetings. Plymouth were said to offer a 'reflective tutorial group' facilitated by a course team member, with the aim of providing the opportunity to safely share personally challenging material. The Exeter course was described as offering an RPG facilitated by an external art therapist, drawing on Winnicott's (1971) psychoanalytic notion that learning is most creative when it develops through play.

With regards to unpublished theses, the participants in the study carried out by Fairhurst (2011) attended externally facilitated mandatory RPGs, which took place on a fortnightly basis for 90 minutes and were informed by a group analytic theoretical perspective. The participants in the study carried out by Wigg (2009) attended a mandatory RPG, the theoretical orientation was not specified.

In order to ensure the most current contextual information in relation to RPGs was obtained, programme descriptions were also read for each of the 30 DClinPsy courses listed on the Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology (2021) website. 28 of the 30 course descriptions mentioned RP, and of these 28, 19 stated that they offer RPGs. Whilst the courses outline the overall theoretical orientation of the programme, the majority do not specify the theoretical orientation of reflection used.

When looking at the grey literature overall, it was noted that other than for a few exceptions, the theoretical orientation of the groups were often not outlined, there was little information provided about training which facilitators received, and it was often not specified whether facilitators were internal or external to the course team.

1.7.3 Theoretical foundations of reflective practice groups in clinical psychology training in the UK

RPGs are said to be typically underpinned by group analytic thinking, which is informed by psychoanalytic principles (Noack, 2002). From this theoretical perspective, the group; despite not being a therapeutic group, is thought to develop a therapeutic function (Noack, 2002). It is proposed that transferences and countertransferences surface in relation to conflicts such as envy and competitiveness, and lead to defences and psychological mechanisms including projection and idealisation (Noack, 2002). From this perspective, the group is said to provide the opportunity for trainees to develop a mutual understanding and consideration for one another (Noack, 2002). The role of the ‘conductor’, or facilitator is highlighted as a powerful position, which may be interpreted as a role model or authority figure, which can be particularly pronounced in situations whereby the facilitator is also involved in the assessment of trainees (Noack, 2002).

The literature in the area highlights that RPG facilitators may also use alternative models when working with groups of CP trainees, including person-centred, systemic and integrative approaches (Knight et al., 2010). It is also clear that DTPs hold particular theoretical orientations, for example, a focus on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) theory and practice, which may then be reflected in the approach taken to RPGs. Similarly, when considering the CP context more broadly, reflective staff groups are regularly facilitated by CPs working within clinical NHS settings, and are said to be influenced by psychodynamic, systemic, and group process theory, as well as facilitator experience (Heneghan et al., 2014). Facilitators have reported that they tend to rely on their general therapeutic understanding in facilitating RPGs (Binks et al., 2013); thus there are a myriad of theoretical perspectives which may underpin RPGs, both within and across DTPs.

Reflection plays a central role within CBT (Stedmon & Dallos, 2009). Self-reflection within this model has been said to enhance the therapist's understanding of their role and change processes, therapist skills including communicating the conceptual framework and developing the therapeutic bond, and therapist self-concept including having enhanced self-confidence (Bennett-Levy, 2003). Since the important elements of reflection within this model involve internal cognitive strategies, as well as facilitative environmental supports such as group reflections (Bennett-Levy, 2003), RPGs may adopt a CBT approach; both within a CP training setting (Fairhurst, 2011) and clinical settings (Thwaites et al., 2015).

The aim of compassion-focused therapy (CFT) is to help people develop compassion towards self and others (Beaumont et al., 2021). Recent research has explored the effects that this has approach has on those embarking upon a career in the helping professions, with the belief that interventions which encourage self-reflection and self-practice of CFT may lead to enhanced self-compassion and self-care, and consequently improved clinical practice

(Beaumont et al., 2021). Given the high level of demands and competitive environment of CP training, a CFT approach to RPGs may therefore be utilised by some.

Within systemic theory and therapy, reflective practice is a central concept and there is a strong focus on the connections between personal and professional selves and the systemic work undertaken (Lask, 2010). Identifying and reflecting on personal resources and constraints, such as situations which may potentially trigger feelings and reactions in relation to the clinical work (Lask, 2010) are therefore likely to be key aims of RPGs underpinned by a systemic theoretical orientation. RPG facilitators may adopt a systemic approach; both within a CP training setting (Fairhurst, 2011) and clinical settings (Heneghan et al., 2014).

The key feature of person-centred therapy is the therapeutic relationship, which is said to be necessary and sufficient for change to occur, and requires the therapist to reflect on their own subjective experiences, perceptions and emotions, so as to get a closer understanding of the client's processes (Stedmon & Dallos, 2009). Since self-reflection within this model is seen as an essential and ongoing process (Stedmon & Dallos, 2009); a person-centred approach may therefore be adopted within an RPG setting.

Whilst the theoretical underpinnings and precise aims of RPGs may therefore vary, the key commonality of such groups is the belief that interpersonal feedback and exchange are as important as intrapersonal reflections in developing self-awareness (O'Leary & Sheedy, 2006).

1.8 Group Process

It has been argued that trainees' experiences within RPGs can highlight to them the potential difficulties in developing a good atmosphere in teams and the challenges that can present in managing group processes, which can prepare them for work as a CP (Kiff et al.,

2010). Examples of relevant processes which may arise include clarifying the aims and focus of the group, scapegoating, transferences on to the facilitator and endings (Kiff et al., 2010).

It has been noted that Tuckman's (1965, Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) five-stage group development model remains one of the most widely accepted and influential models of group sequential-stage development (Kiweewa et al., 2018). Tuckman (1965) sought to identify a generalisable model of change in groups over time by reviewing the research and theoretical literature in the field (Kiweewa et al., 2018). The model comprised of five stages: "forming," "storming," "norming," and "performing" and "adjourning" (Tuckman & Jensen 1977). It was proposed that each stage is characterised by a set of predictable themes and by two connected functions which occur simultaneously (Tuckman & Jensen 1977). The interpersonal function refers to how group members interact and relate to each other, and the task function refers to the content of the interactions in relation to the task (Tuckman & Jensen 1977). The stages of the model will be briefly outlined. Within the forming stage, the group is said to become oriented to the task, set ground rules, and test the boundaries both interpersonally and in relation to the task. Relationships with facilitators, organisational standards and peers are established. The storming stage is said to be characterised by conflict within the group and polarisation regarding interpersonal issues. Group members may become hostile towards each other or the facilitator as a way of expressing individuality or resisting forming the group structure. It is stated that group members may have an emotional response to the task of the group, particularly if it relates to self-understanding or change. During the norming phase, the group is said to develop cohesion, with group members accepting each other, and roles and norms are established. Conflicts are avoided within this stage to ensure harmony, and group members seek to maintain and continue the group. Within the performing stage, the group is able to problem-solve as members adapt and take on roles to work towards the task. The adjourning stage reflects a group life cycle model,

with separation being an important issue throughout the whole life of the group (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

More recently, Yalom and Leszcz (2008) proposed a three-stage theory of group development which will be briefly described. The key aspects of the initial stage include orientation, some hesitant participation, searching for meaning, and dependency. If members are not well oriented to the aims of the group, this may lead to confusion and questioning of its relevance and rationale, meaning that attendees may seek to reduce their confusion by asking questions, which can last several months into the group. This can be a vulnerable time for group members, as they search for a role for themselves and experience concerns about social dynamics. Members often seek approval, structure, direction and acceptance from the facilitator at this stage; thus a silent, non-directive facilitator could increase anxiety and foster regression. Conversations may be in relation to topics of little interest to attendees at this stage, and instead resemble those common in fleeting social events, such as a cocktail party. In line with Tuckman's (1965) storming stage, Yalom and Leszcz (2008) propose that the second stage is characterised by themes of conflict, control, power, rebellion and dominance. Within this stage, criticism or conflict may arise between attendees, and hostility towards the facilitator is viewed as inevitable. Reality is subsequently said to set in, as the limitations of the facilitator are accepted, and hostility dissipates. The final stage is said to relate to the development of group cohesion, which is characterised by safety, trust, closeness and self-disclosure. Within this stage, the group may suppress any expression of negative emotions to maintain cohesion, however it is proposed that all emotion should be expressed and worked through in order to become a mature group (Yalom & Leszcz, 2008).

These two models appear to be complementary given the significant levels of overlap, and may be relevant to the experiences of RPG facilitators, specifically the way in which

their role and the challenges they may face may shift at different stages of group development.

1.9 Reflective Practice Group Facilitators

From the very early writings about RP, the importance of another person when engaging in this process has been emphasised. Schön (1987) argued that true RP cannot be done alone, but rather requires a mentor or a supervisor to ask questions and ensure that reflection has direction and does not result in unhelpful outcomes such as self-justification. More recently, research has highlighted that skilled facilitation of RPGs is required to create a safe learning environment (Binks et al., 2013). The main roles of the facilitator have been described as enabling norms to develop within the group which allow participants to feel sufficiently safe to ‘think aloud’ as well as to ensure that discussions remain focused and in line with the purpose of the group (Kiff et al., 2010).

RPG facilitators are typically independent therapists who have training in a particular therapeutic orientation, such as group analysis (Lyons et al., 2019). RPGs therefore afford trainees the opportunity to observe the facilitator, who is usually an experienced clinician, modelling therapeutic style and behaviour in action as they respond to conversations and dilemmas which arise (Kiff et al., 2010). Furthermore, trainees can learn about the limits of therapy from such groups, for example by needing to manage any disappointments which may arise about the group, or to cope with ‘good enough’ outcomes (Kiff et al., 2010). There is the possibility of blaming reactions to arise about the outcome of the group, which may be directed towards the facilitator, peers, or perceived flawed selves; potentially leading to further reflection (Kiff et al., 2010).

1.10 Difference and Diversity

One of the overarching goals for all DTPs is for trainees to develop the skills and knowledge to work effectively with clients from a diverse range of backgrounds, acknowledging and respecting the impact of difference and diversity on their lives (BPS, 2019). Effective and ethical practice in relation to diversity has been said to arise through a considerable degree of reflective practice (Jones, 2019). The Social Graces is a mnemonic tool which helps practitioners to reflect on their work in relation to various aspects of sameness and difference (Burnham, 2012). The acronym offers a prompt for practitioners to consider the characteristics of themselves and others through multiple lenses: gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality (Burnham, 2012). The framework also considers the visibility and non-visibility, and the voiced and unvoiced aspects of difference, which has implications for the way individuals interact with the environment and others (Burnham, 2012).

Some authors have critiqued the diversity agendas and argued that they do not go far enough (Wood & Patel, 2017). Instead, it has been suggested that the decolonising of the profession is needed via scrutinising its theories, methods and training practices for Whiteness and its harmful consequences (Wood & Patel, 2017). The term Whiteness refers to a social construct rather than a racial category (Wood & Patel, 2017), which acknowledges the operation of systemic rules, norms and discourses that lead to and perpetuate the elevation of those who are socially racialised as white over people of colour (DiAngelo, 2018).

The need to find ways of challenging Whiteness, racism and Eurocentricity within CP models and practice has been long been highlighted (Pilgrim & Patel, 2015; Wood & Patel, 2017; Ahsan, 2020; Wood, 2020). This was brought the fore again recently following the annual Group of Trainers in Clinical Psychology (GTiCP) conference held in November

2019, following which, the BPS (2019) issued an apology from the conference organising committee regarding the distress caused by a performance involving a slave-trade re-enactment (Busby, 2019). The organisers explained that had intended the re-enactment to form part of a challenging social programme for the conference, by acknowledging the oppressive colonial history of the UK (Busby, 2019). They later acknowledged, however, that they had not thought sufficiently about the timing and nature of the performance, and how it would be received (Busby, 2019). Conference attendees were not given any pre-warning about the performance, and later described it as “unexpected” and “ill-judged” (Busby, 2019).

The statement highlighted that the worst outcome from the conference would be for people to avoid difficult conversations about race, ethnicity and the profession of CP (BPS, 2019). The BPS offered an invitation to continue the conversation, and stated that they remained committed to challenging racism. This topic is therefore now very much at the forefront for DTPs, as they consider how best to decolonise their curriculum. As reflection has been highlighted as a central component of anti-racism and decolonising training (St Clair & Kishimoto, 2010), RPGs could potentially be one forum for continuing discussions about diversity and difference. Indeed, the University of East London DTP offers workshops on the topics of ‘Whiteness’ and ‘Decolonising Psychology’ with reflective ‘Personal and Professional Development’ groups deliberately timetabled following the workshops to act as a support mechanism (Wood & Patel, 2017).

The BPS (2020) have recently issued a statement on racial injustice in which they recommitted to valuing diversity and reducing inequality. The disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on those from minority and marginalised ethnic groups was acknowledged, as well as the impact of the murder of George Floyd on the Black community (BPS, 2020). It was acknowledged that the inequities in society are not separate to the profession of CP, but that they inevitably play out within the profession (BPS, 2020). The

importance of highlighting and addressing issues of inequity across all social characteristics was therefore emphasised (BPS, 2020).

Worthington and Arévalo Avalos (2017) argue that “higher education institutions have a major responsibility for preparing students and future leaders to foster constructive dialogue about some of society’s most contentious social issues” (p. 372). Authors have recently highlighted that Counselling Psychologists are equipped with a number of skills which make them suited to be leaders in engaging in effective dialogues across differences (Wilkins-Yel et al., 2020). They argue that as society continues to be plagued with widespread acts of discrimination and oppression such as racism, sexism, transphobia and hate crimes, engaging in such difficult conversations is imperative (Wilkins- Yel et al., 2020). A social justice approach, Community Conversations, has been developed, whereby Counselling Psychology trainees facilitate spaces for small groups of college students to engage in interactive, experiential dialogues to promote self-reflection and explore topics relating to power, privilege and marginalisation (Wilkins- Yel et al., 2020). Given the substantial similarities between the professions of counselling and CP (Cobb et al., 2004), it could be argued that CPs too could be well placed to lead/facilitate such dialogues.

In light of recent events within the profession such as the GTiCP conference, as well as global events such as the murder of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the Covid-19 pandemic, which highlighted the structural inequalities faced by those from minority ethnic backgrounds (Wood, 2020), it is likely that such conversations are already taking place within RPGs. No research to date has explicitly explored this, however.

1.11 Why is it Important to Research Reflective Practice Groups in Clinical Psychology Training?

Given that RP is a central mechanism in human learning (Bennett-Levy, 2003), and a formal goal for CP training (BPS, 2019), it is a topic of great relevance to professional training programmes. It is therefore envisaged that RPG research will be of interest to those facilitating such groups, those completing CP doctoral training and those delivering the training, so that there is a good understanding of how to develop this competency. It is also envisaged that the research may have resonance to fields beyond CP, such as other fields of psychology, education, nursing, medicine, or social work, in which RP is prioritised and researched. Research has highlighted the varied and complex experiences of trainees attending RPGs (Lyons et al., 2019), which demonstrates that offering RPGs is not a straightforward task for DTPs, and there are multiple considerations required to ensure that the needs of individual trainees are met. One study found that almost half of the respondents who completed a questionnaire about their experiences of RPGs reported distress as a result of the groups, and of these, a significant proportion did not perceive these challenges to have been of benefit (Knight et al., 2010). Some would argue that experiences of distress are not too surprising given that a degree of pain or distress has been reported to be inherent to the learning process of such groups (Smith et al., 2009; Youngson & Hughes, 2009). The findings do, however, clearly raise ethical considerations for DTPs and highlight the need for careful facilitation of such groups to avoid trainees being harmed by very distressing experiences (Binks et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the need to continuously challenge the methods and content of what is taught on DTPs, including RPGs, has been highlighted, in order to train CPs who are fit for purpose in a context that is fast moving, morally ambiguous and hostile, and where new forms of discrimination regularly arise (Wood & Patel, 2017). Given that, to date, only three

empirical studies have been published on RPGs within a CP training context, further research is warranted.

A systematic review of RP in health professions education (Mann et al., 2009) concluded that several questions remain unanswered, including whether RP can be effectively taught, enhance clinician self-reflection and self-assessment, improve client outcomes, or cause negative effects such as distress or an illusion of understanding. Lilienfeld and Basterfield (2020) note that these questions currently remain largely or entirely unanswered; thus further research in the field is required.

1.12 Self-Reflexive Position

My initial interest in the process of reflection was stimulated by my first experiences of reflective writing during my MSc in Research in Clinical Psychology, and my Diploma in Social Work. Prior to commencing CP training, my formal, assessed experiences of engaging in reflection had therefore taken place whilst alone, writing reflective essays about the various aspects of my training. RP in a group setting therefore felt very new, unusual and somewhat nerve wracking to me personally when starting CP training. I was struck by how intangible the nature of the group seemed, and grappled with what were we supposed to bring to this space as 16 relative strangers. I recall anxiously wanting more direction from the facilitator. The private nature of the previous written reflections I had engaged in meant that I could potentially remain somewhat detached, avoiding going into areas which felt too uncomfortable. There was therefore something which felt confronting to me about reflecting in a group setting, and having less control over what topics were brought to the group and reflected on. Personally, I found RPG to be a process which provoked a lot of self-questioning, and opened up new trains of thought which I hadn't previously considered. Therefore, whilst I didn't find RPG to be the most comfortable of experiences, I feel I

benefitted and developed from it a great deal. Over time, I developed a recognition of the role of the facilitator, and my earlier frustrations about wanting more direction lifted as I recognised that they would help us navigate what we as a cohort wanted to bring to the group and use the space for. I remember first reading the Lyons et al. (2019) paper about trainees' experiences of RPGs in preparation for a research exam, and I was completely engrossed in this as I resonated so strongly with the experiences described by participants. This was the point at which I was inspired to carry out research into this area, as I was struck by how little research had been carried out into this process which felt like such a big part of my CP training experience.

1.13 Epistemological Position

This research takes a critical realist stance, which states that there is a world that is independent of the researcher, and that the production of knowledge is fallible and theory dependent; in other words, is influenced by the theories that the researcher adopts (Fryer, 2020). Whilst focusing on the material and the limits of the ability to get to the 'reality' of participants' experience, the stance acknowledges that people make meaning from their experiences, and this is influenced by the wider social context (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The rationale for taking a critical realist position is that an assumption has been made that the data gathered will be able to tell us about the reality of participants' experiences, however will not be able to provide a direct mirror of reality (Harper, 2011).

With regards to the implications of this stance on the research, it is assumed that participants can provide an account of their experiences within interviews, which somewhat reflects their reality. It is acknowledged, however, that their accounts will also have been influenced by factors such as the characteristics of the researcher, the questions that were asked and followed up on, participants' broader contexts, and the time and cultural context in

which the research was carried out. As such, the aim is to add to the evidence base in this area, rather than providing a definitive, final answer to the research questions posed. As it is acknowledged that the findings will be influenced by the theories, approaches and perspectives that are adopted by the researcher, these have been outlined, along with the steps taken to consider and acknowledge the researcher's opinions and perspectives.

1.14 Systematic Literature Review

It was initially felt appropriate to systematically review empirical research on the topic of RPG facilitation within a training context for the various therapeutic modalities of counselling and psychotherapy. Early searches therefore looked at training courses for the 32 therapeutic modalities listed by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2021). This returned an extremely large, unmanageable volume of papers, however, with many of the papers relating to contexts which were not sufficiently similar to a CP training context. A decision was therefore made to focus the literature search on facilitation of RPGs within a CP and Counselling training context. Counselling training was selected as, like CP training, it has a strong focus on reflective experiential group work. The Council for the Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programmes (2021), the organisation that accredits counselling programmes, for example, requires that trainees must participate in a small experiential group as part of their training.

The following question was therefore the focus of the systematic literature review:

What does the empirical research tell us about the facilitation of RPGs within Clinical Psychology, Counselling and Counselling Psychology training programmes?

A systematic review of the literature related to this question was completed between November 2020 and May 2021 drawing on the method outlined by Siddaway, et al. (2019). This method encompasses several stages in relation to scoping, planning, searching,

screening, checking for eligibility, and assessing study quality (Siddaway et al., 2019).

Articles were carefully read twice to gain familiarity with the papers, with particular attention given to the method and results sections. Central concepts regarding the findings and implications of each paper were identified and written down so that similarities, differences and links between concepts across all papers could be seen. Narrative synthesis was selected as an appropriate way to present the results of the review, as the review question meant that studies using a variety of research designs, including both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, were included (Popay et al., 2006). Narrative synthesis refers to an approach which primarily relies on words and text to summarise the included studies and explain the findings of the synthesis (Popay et al., 2006).

The review was carried out using the following databases: PubMed, Scopus, PsycARTICLES and Education Research Complete. Three major psychology-related databases were therefore selected, in addition to an education database. This decision was made due to the focus being on a training context, and because RP is frequently discussed and reviewed within the education literature (Cushway & Gatherer, 2003). To ensure search terms were comprehensive, they were developed and selected by comparing them to a previous systematic literature review of the area (Lyons, 2017) as well as being discussed with research supervisors. Table 1 shows the search terms used.

Table 1: Literature search terms used in systematic review.

"clinical psycholog*" OR counsel* OR "counseling psycholog*" OR "counselling psycholog*" AND trainee* OR student OR training
AND
facilitation OR facilitator OR "facilitator perspective" OR "facilitat* style" OR "facilitator role"
AND
reflecti* OR "reflective group" OR "reflective practice group" OR "reflective mentoring group" OR "reflective practice" OR "personal development group" OR "experiential group"

Table 2 outlines the inclusion and exclusion criteria set for research included in the systematic review. Due to the small number of publications in the area, an earliest publication date was not specified, and a country of origin was not set.

Table 2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for research included within systematic review.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Studies focusing on RPGs for trainee Clinical Psychologists, trainee Counselling psychologists or trainee Counsellors. Participants may be either attendees or facilitators of such groups. Participants may now be qualified and commenting on their experiences as trainees retrospectively.	Disciplines other than those mentioned in the inclusion criteria or RPGs in which the attendees are qualified Clinical Psychologists, Counselling Psychologists or Counsellors.
Original research articles, empirically acquired or tested data and published in a peer-reviewed journal.	Articles published in non-peer reviewed journals, theoretical or reflective articles with no empirical component.
Qualitative studies, quantitative studies, or those using mixed methods.	
Published in any year.	
Full text available in English, location of study can be worldwide.	Full text available only in another language than English.

In total, 81 articles were identified, 16 of which were duplicates, giving an initial pool of 65 unique articles for consideration. It was clear from the title of 20 of these articles that they were not relevant to the systematic review, therefore these were screened out. Examples of studies screened out included those that related to undergraduate courses, RP in qualified professionals rather than trainees, and studies relating to other professions such as nursing or physiotherapy. The abstracts of 45 studies were therefore read and of these, 18 did not meet the participant criteria, nine did not relate to RPGs, and eight were not empirical papers. A search was also carried out of the reference lists of papers taken forward for full text review, which did not result in any additional inclusions. A total of 10 articles were therefore taken forward for full text review, however on detailed reading, two of these were not empirical

papers, meaning that eight studies were included in the final review. This process is summarised in Figure 1.

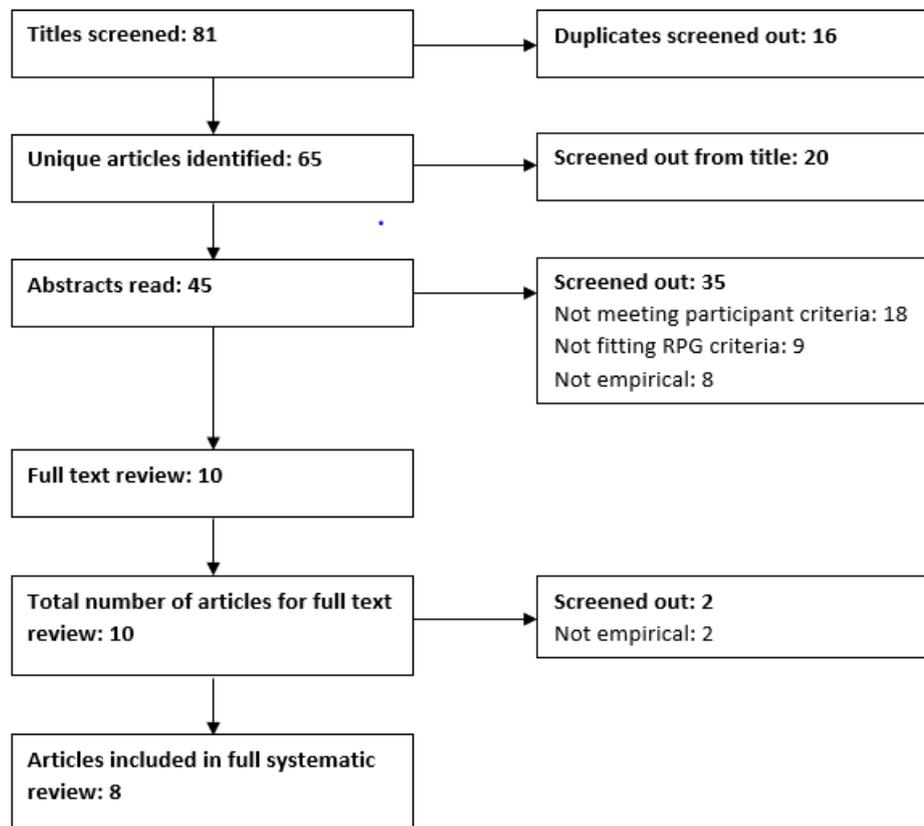


Figure 1. Flow chart to show the systematic review process.

1.14.1 Overview of papers.

Eight studies were included in the final systematic review. Six employed qualitative methods solely (Lyons et al., 2019; Binks et al., 2013; Moller & Rance 2013; Kit et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2020; Tobin et al., 2013). One employed critical incident technique methodology (Kiweewa et al., 2018). One employed mixed method survey methodology (Knight et al., 2010).

Six studies focused on the experiences and perspectives of trainees who attend RPGs (Lyons et al., 2019; Moller & Rance., 2013; Kit et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2020; Tobin et al., 2013; Knight et al., 2010). Two studies focused on the experiences and perspectives of RPG facilitators (Binks et al., 2013; Kiweewa et al., 2018).

Five studies focused on a counselling training context (Moller & Rance, 2013; Kit et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2020; Tobin et al., 2013; Kiweewa et al., 2018). Three studies focused on a CP training context (Lyons et al., 2019; Binks et al., 2013; Knight et al., 2010).

Four studies were carried out in the UK (Lyons et al., 2019; Binks et al., 2013; Knight et al., 2010; Moller & Rance, 2013). Three studies were carried out in the United States (US) (Kiweewa et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2020; Tobin et al., 2013). One study was carried out in Singapore (Kit et al., 2014).

Descriptive summaries of the articles are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Summaries of articles included in systematic review.

Author, (date), title, location	Summary	Participants	Methodology	Results / Implications
Lyons, A., Mason, B., Nutt, K. and Keville, S., 2019. Inside it was orange squash concentrate: Trainees' experiences of reflective practice groups within clinical psychology training. UK.	An exploration of qualified Clinical Psychologists' experiences of attending RPGs during their training.	8 qualified clinical psychologists from one UK clinical psychology training programme.	Qualitative, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Semi-structured interviews about participants' experiences of RPGs.	Five superordinate themes were identified: 'The process: there were so many layers'; 'The impact: an ongoing process'; 'Commitment: I hated it, but I still went'; 'The facilitator: a presence who was not always present' and 'Getting through it: finding ways to cope'. The following recommendations were made: altering practical aspects of the group such as the size and location of the group, considering the match between facilitation style and group contract, considering the purpose and aims of the group, and providing opportunities for meta-reflection.
Binks, C., Jones, F. W., & Knight, K. (2013). Facilitating reflective practice groups in clinical psychology training: A phenomenological study. UK.	An exploration of RPG facilitators' perspectives, with a focus on how they made sense of (1) trainee distress, (2) the relationship between distress and outcome, and (3) their facilitation role.	7 RPG facilitators from one UK clinical psychology training programme.	Qualitative, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews.	Three master themes were identified: conceptualising the meaning and value of trainee distress/difficulty; complexity and challenge of the group boundaries; and experience of the facilitator's role. Implications included: training programmes to consider communicating the philosophy underpinning RPGs at selection and during training; training programmes to consider whether engagement would be increased by offering a choice of different methods for developing reflective skills, with RPGs as one option; the importance of regular supervision for RPG facilitators.

Knight, K., Sperlinger, D., & Maltby, M. (2010). Exploring the personal and professional impact of reflective practice groups: A survey of 18 cohorts from a UK clinical psychology training course. UK.	An investigation of the personal and professional impact of RPGs on former clinical psychology trainees.	124 qualified clinical psychologists from one UK clinical psychology training programme.	Analytic survey design. Factor analysis. An RPG questionnaire (RPGQ) was developed for the purposes of the study.	Factor analysis yielded two underlying constructs: 'value' and 'distress'. The majority of participants rated RPGs as valuable for both personal and professional development and learning about group processes. Just under half reported distress as a result of the groups however. Some trainees who reported distress were able to view the challenges positively, however one-sixth were not. Potency of facilitation and group size were found to significantly predict levels of perceived value and distress. The following recommendations were made: keep group sizes between 10–13; utilise facilitators with sufficient training in group processes; and ensure the availability of additional methods of reflective practice development.
Moller, N. P., & Rance, N. (2013). The good, the bad and the uncertainty: Trainees' perceptions of the personal development group. UK.	An exploration of trainee perceptions of the purpose of personal development groups and their expectations regarding support, difficulties and the scope of their participation.	25 trainees enrolled on either a counselling diploma or counselling psychology doctoral course.	Qualitative data was collected using open-ended questions in an anonymous survey and was analysed using thematic analysis.	Trainees held mixed and sometimes conflicting views about the personal development group. For some it was a positive experience that facilitated learning about self and clients, and helped in the processes of developing counselling skills and keeping the training group healthy. For others it was a feared space which could elicit negative emotional experiences, and impact negatively on both learning outside of the personal development group and the health of the group itself. Others were unclear about its purpose. Hope/idealisation (of the process, the facilitator and course tutors) were also evident in the trainees' responses. Implications included preparing students for the group so as to maximise their learning, and to offer alternative methods of self development.
Kit, P. L., Wong, S. S., D'Rozario, V., & Bacsal, R. M. (2014). The	Sought to understand how participants co-constructed their	8 trainee group counsellors who attended an in-class face-to-face	Qualitative study using Conversation Analysis.	Results suggested that two cofacilitators and one attendee had used interactional features such as the turn allocation process, conversational practices, declarations and prescriptions, to create and implement their authority and

<p>language of resistance in a counselling group: Dynamics of authority and power. Singapore.</p>	<p>experiences of a critical incident of resistance within a group, which they had identified as significant in their written post-group reflections.</p>	<p>and on-line support group.</p>	<p>power in influencing the other attendees. Recommendations included that group counsellors should remain aware of the power which their roles give them, and how accidental misuse of this power could impact the group. Furthermore, it was recommended that they should understand their motivations for wanting to control group conversations and directions. Finally, it was recommended that they should understand how to use conversational devices and practices in ways that allows the co-sharing of power and use of collaborative language.</p>	
<p>Kiweewa, J. M., Gilbride, D., Luke, M., & Clingerman, T. (2018). Tracking growth factors in experiential training groups through Tuckman's conceptual model. USA.</p>	<p>Tracked growth factors in experiential training groups using Tuckman's conceptual framework of group development using Critical Incidents methodology and quantitative description.</p>	<p>4 experiential course instructors and group facilitators from 3 counsellor preparation programmes.</p>	<p>Critical incidents methodology and quantitative description. Data was collected by a group development checklist which was developed by the authors.</p>	<p>Growth factors varied across stages of group development and over time, offering partial support to Tuckman's model. Implications included a recommendation that facilitators may wish to more directly and intentionally focus on particular growth factors during different stages of group development, and may wish to consider how they can intentionally utilise these interventions and structures to support group development. It was suggested that what group participants find beneficial may vary depending on a particular stage in a group's life.</p>
<p>Thompson, H., Frick, M., & Curtis, R. (2020). A Multipoint Qualitative Analysis of Group Training: Counseling</p>	<p>Explored participants' perceptions of their self-efficacy and group leadership development across three</p>	<p>26 master's level counselling students.</p>	<p>Qualitative. Consensual qualitative research method used to analyse the qualitative survey data gathered at three</p>	<p>Results demonstrated increased tolerance for ambiguity, appreciation for self-disclosure, an understanding of unique group facilitation skills, enhanced self-efficacy, and appreciation for observational learning coupled with supportive and constructive feedback. Participants reported feeling uncomfortable with the ambiguous nature of the group experience, and occasionally frustrated. They expressed a desire for more structure and direction from</p>

Student Perspectives and Self-Efficacy. USA.	scaffolded group counselling experiences: (a) membership in a counselling group led by a licensed counsellor; (b) membership, co-facilitation, and observation in a peer-led counselling group; and (c) cofacilitation of a counselling service group in a school / other agency.	different points about participants' experience, knowledge, and perceived self-efficacy related to the three experiential group activities.	their facilitators. However, upon completion of the third group experience, participants reported feeling more comfortable with the ambiguous nature of groups. They reported an appreciation for structure combined with a flexible style of running groups which included having a solid plan and a willingness and ability to adapt or abandon their plans to meet the groups' emergent needs.	
Tobin, D. J., Brown, S. L., & Carney, K. E. (2013). Student goal statements for the experiential learning group. USA.	Aimed to delineate teaching strategies for supporting counselling students to develop appropriate goal statements designed to facilitate participation in the group work	21 students in a Council for Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programs accredited Community Counselling programme.	Qualitative, methodology not further specified. Students were assigned to task groups of between three and five members. Task groups were instructed to form a list of twelve goal statements relevant to the learning process	Analysis yielded a final list of 14 goal statements. Goal statements were formulated into positive self-statements. The goal statements were then coded into emergent themes: involvement; awareness; emotions and skill building. The authors recommended that counsellor educators and group facilitators systematically address the formation of student goal statements to facilitate participation and positive group outcomes.

experiential group
process.

of the group
experience. Two
students combined
all of the lists into
one master list of
60 goal statements
which were
collapsed, coded,
and categorized
based on emergent
themes.

1.14.2 Assessment of quality.

The quality of each study was appraised in relation to relevant quality criteria (Siddaway et al., 2019). Qualitative studies were appraised using Tracy's (2010) "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research, see table in appendix A. This quality assessment tool explores eight key indicators of quality in qualitative research, and was selected as it is a flexible, expansive framework which can be used to appraise studies using various qualitative methodologies (Tracy, 2010). A potential danger of using quality criteria is they can be viewed as fixed and reduced to a checklist, which can defeat their purpose and utility (Gordon & Patterson, 2013). The application of the tool has therefore not been used as a dichotomous checklist, but rather each of the quality indicators has been considered in the table in appendix A and reflected on in the main body of the text.

The study employing critical incident technique methodology (Kiweewa et al., 2018) was quality assessed using Gremler's (2004) guidelines, see table in appendix B. Gremler's (2004) paper aimed to help researchers employing critical incident technique methodology to examine their decisions closely and to suggest guidelines for the application and reporting of studies using this method. Whilst it would have been preferable to use a quality assessment framework pertinent to this methodology, as it was not possible to identify one, this was deemed the most suitable, relevant way to carry out a quality assessment.

Whilst it would have been possible to use a specific mixed-method quality assessment tool (e.g., Leech et al., 2010) for the study using survey methodology (Knight et al., 2010), the study appeared to have more of a focus on quantitative data given that 98 of the items were quantitative and 15 were qualitative. The study also presented little information about the qualitative element of the research; thus it was deemed to be most appropriate to quality assess this study using the Burns and Kho (2015) recommendations for assessing a survey report. This is summarised in the table in appendix C. This framework was chosen as it offers

a structure to appraise survey methods and reporting, and is particularly suited to aiding the evaluation of reports of self-administered questionnaires, which was relevant to this study. The authors of the assessment tool acknowledge that their framework was not developed from a systematic review, and as such, may not include items thought to be important by other researchers (Burns & Kho, 2015). Ethical considerations of studies are not included in the framework, and whilst the authors acknowledge that by completing and returning the questionnaire, participants are implying consent to participate (Burns & Kho, 2015), broader ethical considerations are not considered, hence this is a limitation of the framework.

1.14.3 Findings.

This section will present the findings of the systematic literature review. The six studies carried out with trainees as participants will be presented first, followed by the two studies carried out with facilitators as participants, prior to a synthesis of the findings and consideration of the overall quality of the literature.

1.14.3.1 What does empirical research suggest about facilitation of RPGs from a trainee perspective?

Moller and Rance (2013), a UK based study, explored counselling trainees' beliefs about personal development groups prior to the groups starting. Data from 25 participants was gathered via an anonymous open-ended question survey and analysed using TA. The theme 'the good' was comprised of four interrelated functions of the group: learning about self, learning about clients, developing counselling skills and keeping the group healthy. In contrast, the theme 'the bad' captured trainees' concerns that the group may be not particularly helpful or even harmful, with the potential to bring up personal difficulties or damage peer relationships, possibly leaving people feeling raw and unsafe. The theme 'the

uncertainty' depicted the numerous aspects of the groups which trainees felt anxiously uncertain about, such as the purpose of the group and why they were expected to participate.

In terms of quality, the researchers acknowledged that due to a course tutor being involved in data collection, trainees may have felt unable to be open about any negative feelings in relation to the group. This concern appears to have been appropriately addressed by participants being reminded that they were not under any obligation to participate, and steps being implemented to ensure the anonymity of survey responses. The credibility of the findings was enhanced by the analysis being conducted by two researchers, prior to being checked by an independent colleague with no previous involvement in the data analysis process.

Implications of the study included highlighting the importance of trainee preparation for such groups so as to maximise learning, and offering alternative means of self-development in addition to RPGs. With specific relation to the facilitator role, the researchers recommend explicit conversations from the outset of the groups about ground rules and how to seek support in the event of distress, and encouragement of trainees to express their expectations, fears and hopes for the groups.

Tobin et al. (2013) a US based study, explored the development of personal goal statements for RPGs within counselling training. 21 trainee participants were asked to identify goal statements prior to the group, then to reformulate them at the end of the group. Analysis yielded a list of 14 goal statements e.g. 'I will become aware and be comfortable addressing multicultural diversity'. The goal statements were then coded into themes: involvement, willingness to engage in group activities; awareness, striving towards increased self-awareness and understanding of others; emotion, developing emotional intelligence; and skill building, acquiring counselling skills.

In relation to the role of the facilitator, the authors recommended that they explicitly explain the expectations for self-disclosure in the group setting. They also recommended that the facilitator should engage in modelling of appropriate self-disclosure and setting clear group norms around this. A focus on here-and-now active participation, as opposed to an expectation for self-revelation was suggested to be a contributing factor to developing a safe learning environment. The study also recommended that in order to facilitate participation and enhance positive group outcomes, counsellor educators and group facilitators should consider utilising formation of goal statements.

Whilst this study provides a good level of detail about the method, there are some methodological concerns. For example, there is a lack of discussion of ethical approval or considerations, and no context is provided about the researcher's position on the topic. Whilst it states that research assistants engaged in reflexivity, the use of the term 'emergent themes' implies that they may have not considered the potential impact of their own views and assumptions on the findings.

Kit et al. (2014) carried out a qualitative study in Singapore exploring 8 trainee group counsellors' experiences of a support group. Conversation analysis was used to analyse transcripts from the groups, in an attempt to understand how participants co-constructed their experiences of a critical incident of resistance.

Masters level trainee counsellors were randomly paired as co-facilitators of the group. The research team reviewed recordings and transcripts from the group to identify phenomena which were deemed as significant to group outcomes. Results identified three key interactional features which were said to create and maintain resistance. The first was the turn-taking process, in which co-facilitators presented themselves as authority figures by controlling the discussions and allocating the right to speak to themselves and selected group members. The second was declarations, in which the co-facilitators were found to control the

direction of the group discussion by using declarations. The third was prescriptions, whereby a co-facilitator prescribed a course of action for group members, which placed them in a position of authority and placed an expectation on the group member to perform that action.

The study concluded that resistance can arise from the way co-facilitators use interactional features to create and use authority in a group. In terms of implications, the study highlighted interactional features which may potentially lead to resistance from attendees, and proposed practices which are likely to reduce resistance, such as co-sharing of power and use of collaborative language. It should be noted, however, that within this study, the co-facilitators of the group were peers of the attendees, who had been randomly allocated to that position, therefore it is possible that resistance may have been due to the peer dynamics which preceded the group. Attempts were made to triangulate the findings by using multiple sources of data, however there was no discussion of the researchers' self-reflexivity on the topic.

A further study which explored peer facilitation of experiential groups was a recently published by Thompson et al. (2020). A qualitative design was used to explore the perceptions of 26 master's level counselling students in the US who took part in scaffolded group counselling experiences.

The first task involved students attending six counselling group sessions led by a local counsellor, with the aim of providing participants with an initial group experience in which they could process their transition to training and connect with peers. Following the group, a survey was administered to gather information about the learning that had taken place. Themes identified included desire for structure, recognition of facilitator influence, appreciation of self-disclosure, and experiencing discomfort. The second task involved participation in eight peer group sessions about peer leadership, where all students experienced the role of group member, facilitator and observer. Participants were required to

co-facilitate one of the sessions which enabled them to practise facilitator skills e.g., informed consent, goal setting, productive silence, and conflict management. Following this, participants completed a survey of open-ended questions. Themes identified from this time point included appreciation for self-disclosure, discomfort with disconnection, processing disconnection facilitates trust, experiencing the group as both rewarding and scary, facilitator flexibility, understanding of group facilitation skills, and appreciation for feedback that is specific and supportive. The study concluded that multi-layered experiences in groups can enhance students' group facilitation skills.

In terms of strengths, the researchers reported that they engaged in reflexivity, as they discussed and noted their assumptions about the topic and what the results would reveal, and revisited this during the data analysis process. A limitation of this study is that participants may have described their experiences more favourably, due to the inherent power and hierarchy within the relationship between trainees and the course team (in this case, the researchers).

Knight et al. (2010), a UK based study, used an analytic study design to investigate the perceived personal and professional impact of RPGs for former trainees from one CP training programme. A questionnaire was designed for the purposes of the study. 124 participants responded. Findings revealed that 71% rated the group to be valuable and 43% reported the groups to have resulted in high distress. Nearly half of the participants reported finding RPGs to be high in value and low on distress, and just under a third reported finding the groups to be high in value and high on distress. One-sixth of participants reported the groups to be highly distressing and of low value, which raises ethical questions about the groups, given their mandatory status.

The implications of the findings included: keeping group sizes between 10-13; the importance of facilitators having sufficient training in group theory and processes; offering

alternative means of RP; offering trainees the opportunity to reflect on the group with an external mentor; and conveying information to trainees about the potential costs, benefits and barriers to participation. Furthermore, the possibility of introducing a group exercise to the course selection process is suggested, so as to help applicants and interviewers decide whether prospective trainees would benefit from and cope with the challenges of RPGs.

The researchers acknowledged that their sample was limited to former trainees from one DTP, therefore generalisation more broadly should be applied with caution. There was also a potential response bias, as participants who had particularly positive or negative experiences may have responded to the survey. Nevertheless, the study was of high quality in that the findings achieved satisfactory power, with medium to large effect sizes, and data was appropriately handled, with data being excluded for participants who rated having little confidence in the accuracy of their answers, and reanalysing of data to ensure that excluding missing cases did not affect the significance of the findings.

Lyons et al. (2019) further developed the UK evidence base around RPGs within a CP context by asking eight now-qualified CPs from one DTP to look back retrospectively on their experiences of RPGs during their training. Semi-structured interviews were analysed using IPA.

The first superordinate theme constructed was ‘the process: there were so many layers’, which highlighted the impacts on participants’ experiences of RPGs, including practical, personal and relational experiences, in addition to the broader demands of training. The second superordinate theme was ‘the impact: an ongoing process’ which captured the ongoing processes of development for participants, both during their training and post-qualification. The third superordinate theme was ‘commitment: I hated it, but I still went’ which captured the difficulties which many participants described, and an acknowledgement that distressing experiences could be valued. The fourth superordinate theme was ‘the

facilitator: a presence who was not always present', which is particularly pertinent to this literature review, and demonstrates the mixed feelings of participants in relation to the facilitator. The final superordinate theme was 'getting through it: finding ways to cope', which highlighted the ways that participants found to navigate the challenging nature of the RPG, which involved using other means to explore and process their experiences.

With regards to implications for facilitation of RPGs, the study concluded that that it is crucial for facilitators to foster a safe and open environment, and suggested use of an active facilitation style. The authors also concluded that given facilitators play such a crucial role in the group process, further research is warranted into this role.

With regards to strengths, the researchers clearly stated their epistemological position, and used triangulation to enhance the credibility of the findings. The researchers acknowledged that since their participants were drawn from one DTP, it would be useful for future research to explore the experiences of CPs who trained at other programmes.

1.14.3.2 What does empirical research suggest about facilitation of RPGs from a facilitator perspective?

Binks et al. (2013) interviewed seven facilitators from a single CP DTP in the UK, and analysed data using IPA. The first theme identified was 'conceptualising the meaning and value of trainee distress/difficulty', which reflected the complexity of facilitators' understandings regarding trainees' experience of distress within RPGs and the significance of trainee engagement in the group to beneficial outcomes. The second theme was 'complexity and challenge of the group boundaries', which captured facilitators' perceptions of complex and challenging boundary issues in RPGs, and their reflections on the future role of RPGs in clinical training. The final theme was 'experience of the facilitator's role', which highlighted

participants' experience and understanding of the role, and what they viewed as significant in supporting them to be effective facilitators.

The study concluded that for many trainees, distress within RPGs may play a key part in the learning process, and that skilled facilitation is required to create a safe learning environment. A recommendation was made that facilitators should be offered regular supervision so that they feel held and can process their own emotional experiences of the group. The study suggests that offering alternative means of PPD may be appropriate as not all trainees find RPGs valuable. There is a suggestion that CP training programmes that require RPG attendance may need to communicate this clearly, along with the underpinning philosophy of the groups, at point of selection and during training.

This study provides a significant contribution conceptually given that it was the first study to explore facilitator experiences in a CP training context. The researchers acknowledged the homogeneity of the sample, which could potentially limit the theoretical transferability of the findings. Many of the key themes resonate with findings from other studies and/or perspectives present in the literature, however, which suggests that the findings are likely to be of relevance to broader contexts.

Kiweewa et al. (2018) a US based study, focused on process factors of experiential training groups in counselling training, by tracking growth factors using Tuckman's (1965) framework of group development. The aim was to study whether different growth factors would vary in salience across the lifetime of a group, which was measured by four group facilitators completing a Group Development Checklist following each group. Three of the four groups studied identified the four stages; forming, storming, norming and performing, as proposed by Tuckman (1965); thus providing partial support for the model.

The authors suggest that a possible reason for one of the groups not experiencing all four stages of group development may be that the facilitator of that group was a third-year

doctoral student who had the least amount of facilitation experience. A hypothesis was that that the facilitator's student status may have influenced their self-ratings of the group's process and dynamics due to social desirability bias. As there were only four participants within this study, it is difficult to draw this conclusion, as an alternative explanation is that not all groups necessarily go through these four distinct stages.

With regards to implications for facilitators, the authors state that a direct focus on particular growth factors at the different stages of group development may be beneficial, so that interventions and structures required at each stage can be used intentionally to support the group's development.

A strength of this study is that it followed only one previous study (Maples, 1988) to test Tuckman's (1965) influential model. Only content/face validity of the checklist was conducted however, thus without other measures such as factor analysis or construct validity, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Additionally, social desirability bias may have impacted on the findings, as facilitators were required to self-report; this could have been minimised if the sessions were recorded and the checklist completed by independent raters.

1.14.4 Synthesis of findings.

1.14.4.1 Literature focusing on trainee perspectives.

A number of studies highlighted that RPGs can bring up complex and varied expectations, emotions and experiences for trainees. Even prior to having started RPG, trainees are reported to anticipate both beneficial and negative outcomes of the group, and experience anxiety about the prospect of the group (Moller & Rance, 2013). A sense of anticipating and achieving positive developmental outcomes from RPGs were outlined in a number of studies (Tobin et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2020; Moller & Rance, 2013; Lyons

et al., 2019), and the nature of these outcomes were broad, encompassing better understanding of self and others, and enhanced clinical skills.

Despite these positive developmental outcomes from the groups, many studies highlighted that RPGs can be perceived as anxiety-provoking and distressing, with some individuals finding value in this distress, and others not (Knight et al., 2010; Lyons et al., 2019). In light of this, there appeared to be a theme across the studies of sufficient preparation being required prior to trainee participation in RPGs. Suggestions for this preparation ranged from trainees setting personal goal statements for the group (Tobin et al., 2013) to group exercises being used at point of selection for training (Knight et al., 2010).

In acknowledging the vast possible responses to RPGs, and that they may not be the most conducive means of developing RP skills in all trainees, some studies recommended that training programmes should offer alternative means of PPD in addition to RPGs (Moller & Rance, 2013; Knight et al., 2010).

The studies highlighted the importance of the facilitator role from a trainee perspective. Transparent conversations between facilitators and trainees were regarded as a potentially beneficial means of preparing trainees for the group and supporting their engagement. Suggestions for this included explicit explanation of the expectations for the group (Tobin et al., 2013), and co-sharing of power and use of collaborative language (Kit et al., 2014).

With relation to difference and diversity being discussed within RPGs, Tobin et al. (2013) found that trainees aimed to become aware of and comfortable in addressing multicultural diversity in the groups, and Thompson et al. (2020) highlighted that exploring cultural similarities and differences was a topic of conversation in the group. Despite this, none of the studies reviewed explored this area in any detail.

In summary, the articles appraised suggest that the development of RP skills via engagement with a mandatory group process can result in diverse and sometimes ambiguous experiences for trainees, which can raise ethical questions about such groups. Given that RPGs are often a mandatory requirement of training, and the fact that trainees in the studies reviewed highlighted the importance and power of the facilitator role, further research into the perspectives of the facilitator may be beneficial.

1.14.4.2 Literature focusing on facilitator perspectives.

The studies reviewed which were carried out from a facilitator perspective were much more limited, with only two being identified for this systematic literature review. The two studies had very different aims and focus. One explored the perspectives of RPG facilitators in a CP training setting, with a focus on how they made sense of trainees' distress, the relationship between distress and outcome, and their facilitation role (Binks et al., 2013). In contrast, the other study explored whether groups go through the distinct stages of group development as suggested by Tuckman's (1965) conceptual framework of group development, by looking at data reported by facilitators in a counselling training context (Kiweewa et al., 2018). Both studies highlighted the complex, multi-faceted nature of the facilitator's role, in which flexibility is required, so as to offer the group what they need at that particular stage in development.

Within the Binks et al. (2013) study, facilitators understood trainee distress as an inherent feature within RPGs, which somewhat echoes the findings from the literature concerning trainee perspectives, as outlined above. In the Kiweewa et al. (2018) study, the storming stage was said to be characterised by issues of conflict, anxiety, defensiveness, and trust for trainees; thus providing a possible conceptualisation of what may lead to distress for some trainees within such groups. Both studies concluded that there may be valuable aspects

of personal growth, awareness and learning which are gained from the distress and storming stages of RPGs.

Within the Binks et al. (2013) study, participants expressed that some trainees may not engage with the groups due to the training provider not sufficiently embodying or communicating a philosophy viewed as consistent with personal development within the RPGs. This again links with the literature concerning trainee perspectives, in which it was suggested that sufficient preparation and communication regarding RPGs is essential. Furthermore, a suggestion is made that training institutions should offer a range of different methods for developing RP skills, in addition to RPG groups, (Binks et al., 2013), which mirrors the suggestions from the studies concerning trainee perspectives outlined above.

Self-disclosure was said to increase within each stage of group development within the Kiweewa et al. (2018) study, whereas within the Binks et al. (2013) study, self-disclosure was said to be inhibited for some trainees due to current and potential future relationships outside of the group. This implies that the boundaries of the group may be important to establish, since risk taking and vulnerability may be important considerations for trainees.

It could be argued that the exploration of distress in previous studies is too narrow, since particular stages of the group are said to be characterised by broader issues such as conflict, anxiety, and defensiveness. Further research into the broader concept of challenges in RPGs may therefore be illuminating.

1.14.4.3 Areas of methodological strengths and limitations in the research.

All the research reviewed demonstrated methodological quality through the research questions or area of research being well defined, which enabled the results to relate back to these clearly. Results were also presented clearly and with sufficient data to allow the reader to generate their own conclusions. The interpretations and conclusions drawn by the

researchers about their results aligned with the findings presented. Studies also clearly identified their target population and the context of the research, which enabled the reader to consider potential similarities or differences to the target population or setting they have in mind. All of the articles were considered to focus on worthy topics, and they all extend the limited literature on RPGs in a CP, counselling psychology, or counselling training context.

Some of the authors of the reviewed studies appropriately stated their epistemological position (e.g., Lyons et al., 2019) and engaged in self-reflexivity in order to acknowledge their assumptions and personal experiences of the research topic (e.g., Binks et al., 2013). Other researchers, however, did not state their epistemological stance, or report that they engaged in any self-reflexivity (e.g., Kit et al., 2014). When the analysis is not positioned like this, an in-depth analysis of the data is less likely, and findings may merely represent the researcher's opinions (Willig, 2013), thus reducing the credibility of the findings.

Some studies offered a clear description of where ethical approval was obtained and the pertinent ethical considerations for their study (e.g., Lyons et al., 2019), whereas other did not mention ethics or ethical considerations (Tobin et al., 2013).

All studies reviewed except Kiweewa et al. (2018) focused on the perspectives of trainees or facilitators from a single training programme, thus limiting the potential generalisability of the findings, as it is unclear whether the findings are specific to that particular training institution.

1.14.5 Gaps identified from the systematic review.

This systematic review has highlighted that there have been few studies looking at the facilitation of RPGs within CP and counselling training contexts. Whilst there are consistencies across the findings, significant gaps remain.

Most of the research within the review was carried out with samples of trainees who attend RPGs, and there were also more studies carried out within in a counselling rather than CP context. Of the two studies that explored facilitator perspectives, one of these was within a CP training context. This study focused on facilitators from only one institution; thus, potentially limiting the theoretical transferability of the findings to other settings (Binks et al., 2013).

The findings of two studies reviewed highlighted the relevance of difference and diversity being discussed within RPGs. Despite this, none of the studies explicitly explored conversations in relation to diversity and difference within this setting.

It is clear that there is a diversity of theoretical models used within RPGs across training programmes, and even within training programmes. Within the Knight et al. (2010) study, for example, trainees attending different RPGs from one CP training programme described their facilitators' model/style as group analytic, psychodynamic, person centred, systemic, or integrative. Some participants were also unclear about the facilitator's model. It could therefore be argued that due to the diversity in facilitators' approaches within and across institutions, it makes it difficult to draw conclusions if we are not comparing 'like with like'. Nevertheless, as described above, there are considerable overlaps and resonances in the findings of the studies contained within this literature review, which implies that there are some key features which pertain to RPGs in general, despite some diversity in the models and approaches used.

1.14.6 Rationale.

As a result of the above, the present study aimed to fill these gaps by exploring the experiences of RPG facilitators across DTPs in the UK CP training context. The focus was on facilitators' experiences of challenges which arise within such groups, and the topic of

difference and diversity being navigated within this setting. The study aimed to use methods such as researcher reflexivity to ensure sincerity; and crystallisation processes to enhance credibility. The aim was to identify important practice and educational implications for the training of CPs by exploring facilitators' experiences.

The present study therefore sought to explore the following four research questions:

- 1) What are facilitators' experiences of facilitating RPGs?
- 2) What are facilitators' experiences of challenges which have arisen within RPGs?
- 3) What are facilitators' experiences of conversations in relation to diversity and difference within RPGs?
- 4) How do facilitators of these groups understand and make sense of their role, including in relation to conversations around diversity and difference and any challenges which arise within the group?

Chapter 2: Method

2.1 Overview

This chapter will outline the methodology used to address the research questions outlined above. The chapter will begin with a description of the research design, participant recruitment and characteristics, and relevant ethical considerations. A description of how the method was developed and adapted through consultation will also be given, before moving on to describe the processes of data collection and analysis. A discussion of the quality of the study will then be provided, before the final section on self-reflexivity, which will offer reflections on my own position in relation to the method.

2.2 Design of the Study

2.2.1 Qualitative approach.

A qualitative approach was considered to be most appropriate to explore the experiences of RPG facilitators, given that this type of research aims to offer an in-depth understanding of people's experiences and the meanings that they give to their experiences (Willig, 2019). Furthermore, qualitative methods have been noted as being particularly useful when studying topics relating to group work, given the complexity and dynamic nature of group settings (Rubel & Okech, 2017). A qualitative approach therefore allows for a rich exploration of complex, hard to measure factors, such as multiple layers of interaction, change over time, and group facilitation (Rubel & Okech, 2017).

2.2.2 Thematic analysis: considerations and justification.

Braun and Clarke (2012) define Thematic Analysis (TA) as a way of analysing data by systematically identifying, organising, and giving insight into the meaning, patterns or themes in the data. As the focus is on meaning and commonalities across the data set, TA

enables the researcher to make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012), is and is therefore suitable for exploring the experiences of RPG facilitators in the present study. There are many advantages of TA such as the flexibility it affords, as well as being an accessible, relatively straightforward method to learn and carry out (Braun & Clark, 2006). Additionally, TA can summarise the key features of large sets of data, offering a thick description of the data, as well as offering unanticipated insights and highlighting similarities and differences across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is acknowledged that there are some disadvantages of TA, which mainly occur as a result of an inappropriate research questions or poorly constructed analyses (Braun & Clark, 2006). In order to avoid these pitfalls and ensure a rigorous approach, the research questions in the present study were carefully developed collectively with the research team following a review of the current literature, to ensure that they built on what had already been explored by previous research. Additionally, regular meetings with the research team throughout the analysis process, and crystallisation (Tracy, 2010) in the coding process was undertaken to enhance the quality of the analysis. A further disadvantage of TA is that, unlike other qualitative methods such as narrative analysis, it is not possible to retain any sense of continuity or contradiction from an individual account, which may be of relevance and interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As this research aims to explore collective RPG facilitator experiences from a variety of settings, however, TA was deemed appropriate to this study.

Since TA is not connected to any pre-existing theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006), it is consistent with the critical realist epistemological position of the present study. This position acknowledges the way broader social context impacts on the meanings that individuals make of their experiences, whilst maintaining a focus on the material reported by participants and other limits of this given 'reality' (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

2.2.3 Consideration of other methods.

Other qualitative methods were considered, most notably Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), given that a previous study which explored RPG facilitators' perspectives (Binks et al, 2013) adopted this methodology. IPA aims to explore how participants make sense of their personal and social world and involves detailed examination of the participants' lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The homogeneity of participants that is required of IPA might mean that themes from participants who facilitate RPGs in very different contexts (e.g., different therapeutic approach, geography, and training course) may be more difficult to analyse using this approach. TA allows for a larger sample and a more diverse range of participants than IPA, providing a greater breadth to the study.

A further qualitative method which was considered was narrative analysis. The focus of narrative analysis is typically the way that individuals present accounts of themselves; self-narrations are viewed as both constructions and claims of identity (Linde, 1993). Narrative interviews typically require that the research topic is sufficiently broad and temporal in nature, in order to allow the participant to develop a long story starting from the initial event(s), through past events, and leading to the present situation (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). As the present study has a number of focused research questions, it was therefore felt that narrative analysis was not the most appropriate methodology.

2.3 Participants

2.3.1 Recruitment of participants.

A purposive sampling strategy, whereby the researcher deliberately selects participants due to the qualities, knowledge or experience that they possess (Etikan et al., 2016) was used to recruit participants to the study. The purposive criteria used to select participants are outlined in the inclusion / exclusion criteria section below. All 30 DClinPsy

courses listed on the Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology (2021) website were contacted via email. The email provided an overview of the study and requested that a recruitment advert (see appendix D) was circulated to RPG facilitators associated with their programme.

A total of 12 DTPs responded, either by responding to the email or by participants coming forward from that DTP. Figure 2 outlines this process.

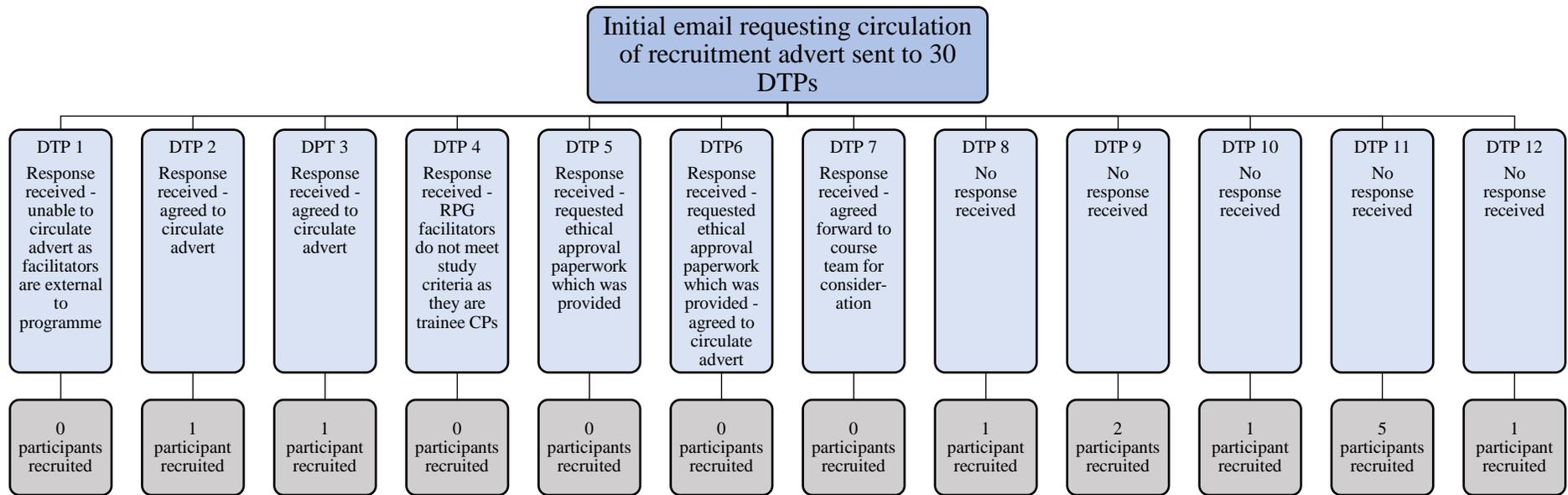


Figure 2. Recruitment flowchart.

Potential participants made direct contact with the primary researcher to request further information or arrange a time for an interview. Those who agreed to participate following the initial email were sent a copy of the study participant information sheet (see appendix E) and a time and date for the interview was arranged. Potential participants who requested further information were also sent a copy of the participant information sheet and any specific questions were answered. A follow-up email was sent to potential participants if no response had been received two weeks following the participant information sheet being provided. One potential participant who made contact with the primary researcher was later unable to participate due to personal circumstances. All other potential participants who expressed an interest in the study went on to be interviewed. A snowballing sampling strategy was also used: the study consultant provided access to one participant by directly contacting a colleague who fitted the study criteria, to ask whether they may be interested in participating.

2.3.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria required that participants had facilitated an RPG on a UK DClinPsy training programme for a period of at least 12 months. The decision to recruit participants from UK courses only was made because different countries use varying methods and models to train CPs (Helmes & Pachana, 2005); it was therefore felt to be most appropriate to focus on the UK context. The inclusion criterion of having had a minimum of 12 months experience of facilitation was implemented to ensure participants had sufficient experience to reflect on in the interviews. This time frame was also felt to be most appropriate as it is recognised that RPGs take place at various frequencies across different courses. An inclusion criterion of having facilitated an RPG within the past five years was also specified, to ensure the relevance of participants' experience to the current CP training context. A decision was made to include only qualified Psychologist or Psychotherapist facilitators, as it was

considered that trainee CPs who offer peer facilitation of these groups may have had markedly different experiences to qualified facilitators.

2.3.3 Number of participants.

It has been argued that saturation, or the point at which no additional themes are found from reviewing successive data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), is important in TA to ensure the validity of the findings (Ando et al., 2014). Previous research has found that 12 interviews are sufficient to reach saturation (Ando et al., 2014; Guest et al., 2006). Braun and Clarke (2021), however, have recently argued that meaning is not self-evident in data, but rather it resides at the intersection of the data and the researcher's interpretation of this. As such, new meanings are always possible (Lowe et al., 2018), and saturation can be viewed as a concept more generally coherent with broadly realist, discovery-oriented types of TA (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Since the current research was conducted from a critical realist perspective, the concept of saturation was therefore deemed less relevant. Instead, the decision about the final sample size was shaped by the adequacy of the data, in terms of the richness and complexity, in addressing the research questions.

A total of 12 participants from seven different institutions across England, Scotland and Wales were interviewed. The exact reasons why there were several participants from certain institutions, whereas other institutions were not represented in this study, are unknown. It may be that some institutions do not have permission from their RPG facilitators to contact them regarding research, therefore not all facilitators may have received the study advert. Furthermore, facilitators at certain institutions may not have met the inclusion and exclusion criteria, for example peer facilitators. Additionally, programmes which have larger cohorts and / or offer RPGs with fewer trainees are likely to have more RPG facilitators

associated with their programme, meaning there were more potential participants from particular programmes.

2.3.4 Demographic characteristics.

Information about participants' gender identity, ethnicity and age was collected prior to the interview using a demographic information sheet (see appendix F) and is presented in Table 4. In terms of gender identity, seven participants identified as female, and five as male. With regards to the ethnicity of participants, nine identified as being white British, one identified as white, and two identified as being from minority ethnic backgrounds; their ethnicity within broad groups (rather than the exact details) has been reported, however, in order to preserve anonymity. Age ranges rather than exact ages will be reported, again for the purposes of anonymity. Ranges of number of years facilitating and preferred orientation are also reported. In some cases it has been necessary to change details slightly to preserve anonymity.

According to the latest BPS demographics, 88.2% of CPs are white and 81.7% are female (BPS, 2015). As 58.3% of this sample were female, it may be that there was an over representation of males. It is important to note, however, that as the demographics of all RPG facilitators are unknown, it may be that males are generally over-represented in this population. The percentage of participants who identified as white in this study was 83.3%, which is in line with the current demographics of the profession (BPS, 2015).

Table 4: Participant information.

Participant pseudonym	Gender identity	Age range	Ethnicity (in broad groups)	Years of RPG facilitation experience	Theoretical orientation / therapeutic model
Tom	Male	46 - 55	White British	6 – 10	Integrative
Patricia	Female	46 - 55	Asian	1 – 5	Psychodynamic
Michael	Male	46 - 55	White British	6 – 10	Psychodynamic
Kelly	Female	35 - 45	White British	1 – 5	Compassion focused therapy
Yasmin	Female	46 - 55	White	6 – 10	Psychodynamic
Zara	Female	46 - 55	White British	1 – 5	Integrative
Dave	Male	56+	White British	1 – 5	Systemic
Anita	Female	35 - 45	Asian	1 – 5	Person-centred
Paul	Male	46 - 55	White British	11+	Integrative
Josie	Female	46 - 55	White British	1 – 5	Integrative
Sam	Male	35 - 45	White British	1 – 5	Integrative
Alison	Female	46 - 55	White British	6 – 10	Integrative

2.4 Ethical Considerations

2.4.1 Ethical approval.

Ethical approval was sought from the University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering and Technology Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority on 08/10/2020 (see appendix G) and received on 14/10/2020 (see appendix H), protocol number LMS/PTG/UK/04289. As participants were not being recruited as service users of the NHS, this study did not require NHS Health Research Authority approval.

2.4.2 Ethical considerations for the present research.

The BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2014) was adhered to throughout the study. One key ethical consideration was confidentiality and anonymity, both of the facilitators and the trainees who attend RPGs. Specific details about incidents within the groups which were reported in interviews were therefore not included in the write up of the findings. All participants were given pseudonyms for the write up. Further data which was excluded from the write-up to prevent participants being identifiable included exact length of time facilitating RPGs (instead, ranges are provided) and programme at which participants facilitate RPGs.

A second key ethical consideration was the possibility that interviews could potentially bring up distressing themes or memories for the participants. The following debrief questions were therefore asked following the interview:

- How did you find talking about your experiences?
- Was there anything that was difficult to talk about?
- Did it bring up any difficult feelings for you?

None of the participants reported experiencing any distress as a result of being interviewed. Some reported that they found the interview helpful as they found the questions thought-provoking and it led to them to consider topics more deeply than they had previously. A debrief form was also sent to all participants via email (see appendix I).

The final area requiring careful ethical consideration was the storage of data. Demographic information was stored in anonymised format, password protected and on an encrypted device. Audio recordings were password protected, stored on an encrypted device using anonymised file names, and stored separately from identifying information. All encrypted storage devices were stored in a locked cupboard in the researcher's home.

A transcription service with a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy in place was used (see appendix J) and the service was also asked to sign a confidentiality agreement (see appendix K). Any names or education institutions mentioned during the interviews were not included in the transcripts. Consent forms, demographic data and audio recordings will be deleted on completion of the study. Ethical approval has been given for transcripts to be kept for five years following completion of the study in the event that secondary analysis is carried out. This was agreed by participants, as detailed in the consent form (see appendix L).

2.5 Consultation in Research Development

The research team have relevant personal experience of attending RPGs which was drawn upon and reflected on throughout the research. The external supervisor also has experience of carrying out a related study exploring the experiences of attendees of RPGs (Lyons et al., 2019). It was therefore important to recruit an external consultant who could assist in the development of the study from a facilitator perspective. An email advertising for the consultant role was sent to courses listed on the Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology (2021) website. A highly experienced RPG facilitator was identified as a consultant via this process. The consultant was from a different institution from the other members of the research team, which was viewed as a strength, as their input offered a broader perspective.

The consultant was key in supporting the development of the interview guide (see appendix M) and also gave comments on the initial draft of the ethics application, including the wording of the participant information sheet and consent form. As mentioned above, the consultant also aided in the recruitment of one participant by directly contacting a colleague who met the study criteria to ask whether they may be interested in participating in the study.

A pilot interview was carried out with the consultant prior to the interviews starting, in order to receive feedback on the wording of the questions and their experience of being asked the questions. Finally, the consultant also read and provided comment on anonymised draft copies of this thesis.

Key changes implemented as a result of consultation included having an inclusion criterion of a minimum of 12 months' experience rather than the initial plan of six months. This was because the consultant pointed out that due to different frequencies of groups on different programmes, 12 months is a more reasonable timeframe for facilitators to have observed any patterns across RPG sessions. Furthermore, the original plan was for the second research question to focus on distress, given that findings of previous research have highlighted distress as a potential outcome of RPGs (Knight et al., 2010 & Binks et al., 2013). The consultant suggested, however, that this concept could be broadened to challenges, which could incorporate distress, as well as other potential areas of challenge.

2.5.1 Pilot interview.

A pilot interview was conducted with the study consultant prior to any participant interviews being carried out. None of the questions were changed significantly as a result of the pilot interview. During this interview, the consultant reported that the topics of difference and diversity had not been a major theme throughout their experience of facilitating RPGs, therefore it was noted that there may be varied experiences of this during the participant interviews.

2.6 Data Collection

2.6.1 Interviews.

In line with University of Hertfordshire ethics guidance on Covid-19 at the time of conducting the interviews, it was not possible to conduct face to face interviews. Data was therefore collected via semi-structured interviews conducted on the telephone or a video conferencing platform. The decision was made to offer two methods of data collection (telephone and video interview) as it has been proposed that this flexibility may improve participants' access to research (Heath et al., 2018). Additionally, Riessman (2008) highlights the importance of ensuring an environment that will enable sharing of experiences, therefore it was deemed appropriate to offer participants these options, and if they opted for video, they were given the choice as to which platform. Of the 12 participants, eight opted to have their interview on Zoom, one on Microsoft Teams, and three on the telephone.

It is acknowledged that as the participants who were interviewed on the telephone were not able to observe the interviewer's visible Social Graces (Burnham, 2012), there may be a difference in terms of what was shared in the telephone and video interviews. During the debrief, one participant who was interviewed on the telephone commented that they found it easier to answer the questions in relation to diversity and difference as they were not able to see my visible characteristics.

Each interview took place following receipt of a completed consent form and demographic information form. Consent was also re-checked verbally prior to the interview commencing. Participants were reminded that although some names and the course which they are associated with may be mentioned during the interview, these would not be included in the transcript or write-up. Participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions prior to the dictaphone being turned on and the interview commencing. One interview ended at a pre-set time as the participant had other commitments. This did not undermine the

interview, however, as all areas of the interview guide had been covered. All other interviews did not have a pre-set end time, and continued until the interview guide had been explored fully and participants had the opportunity to say anything that they had not specifically been asked about.

Participants were informed that it was envisaged that the interview process would take around 60 minutes. Interviews lasted between 25 – 65 minutes, (average 46 minutes). Two of the interviews were less than 30 minutes long. It was noted that these two participants had been facilitating for a shorter length of time than other participants; therefore they had less experience in the role to reflect on. Nevertheless, these interviews still provided rich data which was relevant to the research questions. The interviews closed with debriefing and thanking participants for their time.

All interviews were then transcribed verbatim from an audio recording. Due to time constraints, the majority of the transcription work was professionally outsourced. All transcripts were checked for accuracy by listening back to the audio recording of the interview whilst reading the transcript several times.

2.7 Data Analysis

The six-phase procedure for carrying out TA as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2012) was followed. Data was analysed from a critical realist epistemological stance; thus semantic, descriptive codes which stayed close to the words of the participants codes were generated, as well as latent codes, which identify meanings beneath the surface of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It was noted that during the initial coding stages, codes tended to be at a semantic, descriptive level, staying close to the words used by participants. As the process continued with coding further interviews, it was noted that coding was going beyond the semantic level, towards a latent one, whereby the code would offer an interpretation about the

data. An example of this is when one participant discussed how a conversation within the RPG led to a shift in how a trainee discussed a particular topic with their colleagues and family members, which was conceptualised and coded as conversations within RPG having ripple effects.

TA can be used for both inductive, data-driven analyses and deductive, theory-driven analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Given that the present research was not based on one particular theory and aimed to explore some new research questions other than those posed by previous studies, a decision was made that a primarily inductive TA was most appropriate. It was noted, however, that it felt impossible to take a purely inductive approach, as links were inevitably made between participants' words, previous research findings, and the researcher's own experiences. Braun and Clarke (2012) acknowledge that in reality, a combination of both inductive and semantic approaches is typically used, as researchers always bring something to the data, and rarely ignore the semantic content. This tendency to make such links therefore remained conscious, and participant-based meaning was prioritised. An example of a theoretical consideration was when one participant talked about their perception of the group being resistant to reflecting at one point. A potential connection to the initial stage in Yalom and Leszcz's (2008) model of group development was made, in which group members may question the group's relevance if they have not been well oriented to the aims of the group. This potential hypothesis was held lightly to ensure that the process remained grounded in the participant data. A description of how each phase was completed for the present study is outlined below, however it should be noted that this was not a linear process; the analysis involved moving back and forth between the phases as necessary.

2.7.1 Phase 1: Becoming familiar with the data.

This phase involved a process of becoming immersed within the data; listening back to the audio recordings of the interviews and re-reading the transcripts several times, whilst making notes on potential points of interest from the data.

2.7.2 Phase 2: Generating initial codes.

This phase entailed generating initial codes, which are described as the building blocks of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Transcripts were coded line-by-line, in order to stay close to the text. The first transcript was coded by hand, and the second using Nvivo so that a decision could be made about how best to proceed with coding. A decision was made to code the remaining 10 interviews on Nvivo, so that the data relating to each code could be located easily. An excerpt of a coded transcript from this phase can be found in appendix N. As the coding process continued with each interview, some line-by-line codes were combined to form overarching codes.

In order to improve the credibility (Tracy, 2010) of the coding process, the principal supervisor and the primary researcher met on several occasions throughout this stage to read through and discuss coded transcripts. Similarities and differences of opinion were discussed reflexively, and the researcher reflected on potential assumptions or biases which may have influenced the coding process. An example of this was when ‘perception of trainees’ anxieties about the RPG’ was coded, however the supervisor also felt that this part of the transcript spoke to the participant’s fear that trainees would be coming to the group with negative preconceptions of it. In this case, the portion of the data was then given more than one code. The transcripts were recoded, taking into account new perspectives gained from these conversations.

The external supervisor also independently coded a transcript line-by-line, prior to meeting with the primary researcher to reflect on points of similarity and difference of opinion. A peer also coded a section of anonymised transcript in order to compare and contrast what had been coded and how. In both cases it was noted that similar parts of the data had been coded and with very similarly worded codes. One new avenue which was picked up on during this process, however, was a section which had originally been coded around the RPG supporting trainees to develop personal resilience. During this process of comparing coding, it was highlighted that it may have initially been overlooked that the participant was also talking indirectly about how the RPG can offer the opportunity to foster a sense of collective strength rather than personal struggle.

These processes can be described as crystallisation, which encourages researchers to “employ various methods, multiple researchers, and numerous theoretical frameworks” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). This approach fits with the epistemology of the research; enabling the synthesis of multiple perspectives to open up a more complex, yet still partial, understanding of the data, without the need to search for a single valid truth (Tracy, 2010).

2.7.3 Phase 3: Searching for themes.

This phase involved exploring broader themes across the data set, which captured important aspects of the data in relation to the research questions and represented patterns of responses or meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This was an active process, themes were constructed from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Initial ideas for themes generated during the coding phase were further developed by attempting different groupings of codes, and a preliminary thematic map was put together to see how subthemes and themes may fit together, see appendix O.

2.7.4 Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes.

This phase involved a recursive process, in which developing themes were quality checked by an analytic process of back and forth movement, reviewing them in relation to both the coded data from individual interviews and the entire data set. Some codes and themes needed to be discarded, relocated and tweaked during this stage, to ensure that they captured the shared meanings in sufficient depth (Braun & Clarke, 2012). On discussion with the research team, it was considered that some parts of the initial thematic map were too driven by the data collection questions. The theme ‘the inevitability of challenges’ from the initial thematic map, for example, incorporated participants’ responses to the question about challenges that have arisen within RPGs. This approach had resulted in too much overlap between themes, and further refinement was therefore required to ensure that themes had been identified across the content of what participants said rather than in response to specific questions they were asked. The initial theme names were therefore removed, prior to searching for connections between subthemes and regrouping of them, which captured something more complex about what participants were saying across the whole data set. See appendix O for the development of themes.

2.7.5 Phase 5: Defining and naming themes.

This stage involved identifying the essence of the themes, ensuring that they had a singular focus, were related but distinct from each other, and directly addressed the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Meetings with the principal supervisor were held to refine the themes and subthemes and their names, to ensure that the data was accurately represented, and that themes and subthemes were coherent and built and developed from each other. The final thematic map is depicted in appendix O.

2.7.6 Phase 6: Producing the report.

In this final phase the analysis chapter was written up. Consideration was given to how the themes and subthemes were presented in order to offer a coherent narrative so that the reader could easily follow the story of the data. Illustrative quotes were chosen with the aim of providing a rich description of each subtheme.

2.8 Quality Assurance

It was important to select a measure of quality which was appropriate to the present study and its critical realist epistemological position. As such, a focus on validity, reliability, and objectivity, which are well-established measures of quality in the quantitative research community, were not appropriate (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). The aim of this study was not to uncover an objective truth, but rather to explore participants' experiences and the meanings that they give to them (Willig, 2019). Tracy's (2010) eight 'big-tent' criteria for excellent qualitative research were therefore selected to review the quality of the study, as the criteria are qualitative-specific and not tied to a particular epistemology. Table 5 details the processes taken in this research to meet the quality criteria.

Table 5: Quality criteria for this study.

Criteria for Quality (Tracy, 2010)	Description of criterion, ways to achieve it (Tracy, 2010)	Evidence for meeting criterion
Worthy topic	Whether the research topic is relevant, timely, significant and interesting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Given that RPGs are the most favoured method for addressing CP trainees' personal and professional development needs, the topic is of relevance to those who facilitate and attend RPGs, as well as to DClinPsy course teams. - Recruitment of an RPG facilitator to a consultant role on the project established and enhanced the topic's worthiness to the population being researched. - The topic of difference and diversity is timely and significant in light of the current political climate and controversies in the profession e.g., the Black Lives Matter movement, GTiCP conference.
Rich rigour	Use of sufficient and abundant theoretical constructs, data, time spent gathering data, sample, contexts and processes of data collection and analysis. These must be appropriate for the research and suitably complex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A sample size of 12 was used, which is appropriate for a TA study. - The process of recruitment and data gathering took place over a three-month period, which was sufficient to obtain interesting, rich and relevant data. - The recruitment of a sample of RPG facilitators associated with several DClinPsy training programmes, and gathering data via interviewing them about their experiences of facilitating such groups, enabled the content of the data to align clearly with the aims of the study. - The methodology chapter provides in depth descriptions and discussion of the process of data collection and analysis, which is supported by the thematic map development and samples of coding and the reflective diary in the appendices.
Sincerity	Self-reflexivity about researcher's values and biases. Transparency about the research methods, process and analysis, including openness about any challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-reflexivity was achieved via keeping a reflective diary throughout the research process and reflective conversations with the supervisory team, which enabled consideration of how personal assumptions and biases may impact on how the data was interpreted and reported. - Sections which refer to the researcher's self-reflexive position were written in the first person to acknowledge and remind readers of the researcher's presence, influence, and role in the study. - Transparency was achieved by ensuring that the researcher's position in relation to the topic and the epistemological position were clearly outlined.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The study aimed to leave a clear audit trail by offering sufficient detail of the research process within the methodology section, and by providing examples of these steps within the appendices.
Credibility	<p>The research demonstrates that it is trustworthy and the findings are plausible. Includes thick description, showing rather than telling, triangulation or crystallisation and multivocality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Throughout the results chapter, extracts from the transcripts are abundant, which offers thick description, with the aim to “show rather than tell” (Tracy, 2010, p. 843), so that the reader can come to their own conclusions about the data. - Multivocality was achieved within the study as the researcher, supervisors and consultant were made up of an RPG facilitator, RPG attendees (past and present) and a DClinPsy course team member. - The processes of crystallisation in the coding and theme development process enabled the researcher and supervisors to synthesise multiple perspectives and enhanced the credibility of the analysis process.
Resonance	<p>The research’s ability to impact and affect a variety of audiences. The report is written in a way that is evocative of empathy and emotion. The findings feel relevant or transferable to different audiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The study was written up with the aim of achieving resonance and meaningfully connecting with the audience. This was achieved through weaving in selected extracts to support the themes, which were chosen to enable connection with the data. - Within the discussion, the resonance of the findings was deliberated for RPG facilitators, trainee CPs, and DClinPsy training programmes. Steps were also taken to situate the findings within the current social-cultural context.
Significant contribution	<p>Research makes a significant contribution to the field through building on knowledge, theoretical understanding, clinical practice. The research contributes conceptually/theoretically, practically, morally, methodologically, heuristically.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The study offers a significant contribution to the limited research base that currently exists within the field of RPG facilitation in a CP training context. It also includes suggestions for the direction of future research in the area. - The study’s contribution is valuable in that it broadens understandings of facilitators’ experiences and has the potential to improve practice and training.

Ethical	Ethical guidelines are adhered to and researcher responds to challenges which arise in the process in an ethical way. The research ethics also consider context, relationships and exiting ethics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethical approval was granted by the University of Hertfordshire Ethics Committee. This demonstrated procedural ethics along with steps taken to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and the right to withdraw. - Situational ethics were considered by judging whether the potential harm of the research process was outweighed by its moral goals. In the current study there was a low chance that any harm would come to participants in terms of distress. - Relational ethics were considered by the researcher asking questions in a sensitive manner and making sure to attend and give time for the participant to answer fully. - Exiting ethics were ensured through a debrief following each interview and by arranging to feedback the findings of the project after its completion. Dissemination of this research is also planned via journal publication.
Meaningful coherence	Whether the study achieves what it set out to achieve, and demonstrates meaningful coherence between methodology, epistemological position, and use of literature in line with the stated aims of the study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Considerations and steps taken to carry out the study in line with the epistemological position are detailed throughout. - The literature review establishes a context for the research questions of the study. Literature is also carefully connected with the findings of the research. The original aims of the study are readdressed in the discussion chapter, with detail offered about how the aims were met.

2.9 Self-Reflexive Position

It was important to recognise my own position as a third-year trainee CP and RPG attendee throughout the course of this research. As such, my relationship with the topic preceded this study. It felt particularly important to acknowledge my own experiences and how these may have impacted the assumptions I made and the position I took, given that within TA, the researcher is acknowledged as being active in the research process (Terry et al., 2017). I therefore reflected on my personal connection to the topic continually, using a reflective diary (see appendix P for excerpts) and reflexive conversations with supervisors and peers. Whilst it is recognised that I could not completely eradicate myself from the analysis, this process was helpful in ensuring that the analysis was grounded in the participants' ideas rather than my own. When asked by participants about my own experiences of RPGs and what had prompted me to undertake research in this area, I ensured that this was shared at the end of their interview, so as not to influence what was said in their interview. This prompted me to reflect on my position as a trainee CP, and what participants' thoughts on this might have been, given they were unaware of whether my views about RPGs were broadly positive or negative during the interview. I therefore wondered whether participants may potentially have felt the need to 'hold back' on some of their reflections, positions or experiences during the interview due to me being a current RPG attendee. I reflected it may have had led to differences in the data collection process and findings, should the interviews have been carried out by someone else such as a fellow RPG facilitator or a course team member from a DTP. During the data collection process, I sometimes felt strong resonances with the experiences that participants were discussing, for example when they spoke about RPGs offering trainees a very different space, opportunity, and pace in comparison to other aspects of training. At other times, I found myself feeling quite surprised in relation to some accounts offered. I noticed this surprise particularly when one participant

reported that topics of difference and diversity had not really been broached within the RPGs that they facilitate, due to my experience of this being a central theme throughout the RPG sessions that I have engaged in. On exploration in the interview, the participant felt that these topics had not come up because there had been a gap in RPGs which coincided with the time that there had been an increase in momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement. It was important for me to be aware of and consider my responses to the interviews, therefore I took some time following each interview to reflect on my experience, including how I felt prior to the interview and how this may have influenced the questions asked and how the interview progressed.

Chapter 3: Analysis

3.1 Overview

This chapter will outline the thematic analysis of the data. Key themes and sub-themes generated are described and illustrated with example quotes. For the purposes of anonymity and confidentiality, all identifying information has been altered or removed and pseudonyms will be used throughout. It has been necessary at times to omit extracts in the interview data for the purposes of being concise. Where words or sentences are omitted, this is demonstrated by three dots ‘...’. The three main themes are: ‘Creating boundaries and safety’, ‘A vehicle for growth and development’, and ‘RPGs don’t take place in a vacuum’. The thematic map is presented in Figure 3. Reflections on my own position in relation to the analysis are also explored.

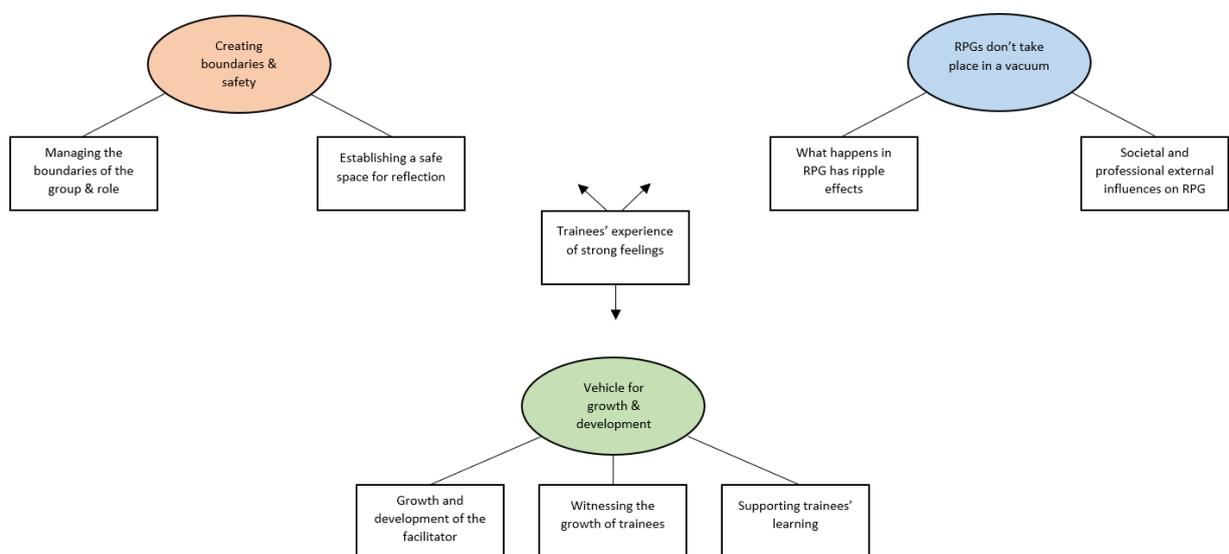


Figure 3: Final thematic map.

3.2 Theme 1: Creating Boundaries and Safety

The first theme captures two key roles which participants described in facilitating the groups: managing the boundaries of their role and of the group, and establishing a safe space for reflection. Each of these subthemes will now be explored.

3.2.1 Managing the boundaries of the role and group.

This subtheme illustrated that participants perceived a key part of their role as being to manage the boundaries; both in relation to their role as facilitator, and in relation to the group.

In relation to managing the boundaries of their role, the majority of participants described the importance of being very clearly separate to the DTP course team, so as to ensure there is no sense of trainees being assessed within the group. Participants perceived that this sense of overt distinction from the course team may contribute to a developing sense of safety, liberating trainees to be open in their reflections within the group.

One of the important features of the reflective practice groups...is to have the separateness from the course team. So that it feels more neutral, non-assessment based and much more freedom to speak. – Kelly

The potential for blurring of boundaries should the facilitator also be involved in other aspects of training was considered by some as something which could potentially impact on the dynamics of the group, but not something which should necessarily be avoided at all costs.

I certainly think were I to be teaching on the course where I was also offering the reflective practice it would result in a slight blurring of boundaries...and could potentially

impact on...how people would feel about subsequent meetings and possibly their ability to engage in the teaching...But that's not to say...I...don't think it's something that should always be avoided...I just think it's something to be aware of and it's a potential change in the dynamics that could occur. – Sam

In contrast, some participants expressed that the groups being facilitated by a course team member afforded a reassuring sense of familiarity for trainees. This continuity of relationships was perceived to offer a sense of safety, and provide the opportunity to experience managing professional relationships and boundaries across different settings.

Facilitators are someone that they will be familiar with from...day one and they have the opportunity to have some additional contact with outside of reflective practice groups...someone potentially that would be accessible in the building...I think for this group has been has been really helpful...because it's kind of supported that creating a kind of a safe relationship...Um and I suppose we've reflected on...that's how you would manage in a professional relationship anyway. – Zara

In addition to views about the boundaries of the role in respect of trainees' broader training experiences, participants spoke of the need to remain within the facilitator role, as opposed to stepping into other roles which they inhabit in their working lives. This suggests that self-monitoring is required in order to recognise when they may be drawn towards other roles within the RPG.

I think the challenge aspect for me...is that fine line between reflection and supervision. [laughter]. Um and almost trying to be careful as to where do we draw that line

um...they could potentially be talking about...their placement which could lead into a clinical case situation and then there's almost I guess, because I do quite a bit of supervision in my in my role, it just becomes very natural to want to step into that and then having to sort of hold back. – Anita

Participants also described needing to maintain the boundaries of the group to ensure it feels a place where everyone is respected; one aspect of which is ensuring everyone has the opportunity to contribute. This was perceived as being difficult to manage at times, however, with participants considering whether what an individual wishes to bring would fit with the interests and needs of the group as a whole.

In terms of turn taking and making sure that everybody's had a chance to contribute is something that can be useful because each week's gonna be different; sometimes people have had particularly tricky things and it's appropriate to allow them a space to explore those if they want and if that...fits with what the other group members are after. – Sam

Participants described a dilemma of wanting to ensure that all group members feel they are able to contribute, whilst ensuring that they feel comfortable and not under any obligation to do so. The analogy of a spotlight highlights participants' acknowledgement that being directly asked to contribute could potentially feel anxiety-provoking or exposing.

How do we ensure it's inclusive of everybody and everybody has the opportunity to bring...material and to feel involved um without sort of putting the spotlight on anybody. – Alison

Many participants also highlighted their role of challenging if they feel boundaries are crossed in relation to conversations around difference and diversity, for example if anyone felt uncomfortable or offended by comments made. This seems to relate to ensuring that the group remains a safe and respectful space.

To be challenging...as a facilitator in a gentle way if it feels like those boundaries are not respected. – Zara

Some participants highlighted that although in their experience boundaries had not been overstepped, they envisaged that if this did occur, it would be their role to consider how best to manage this, potentially on an individual basis or within the group setting.

If things started to feel that boundaries were being overstepped or...highly sensitive things were being mentioned, then it...might just be drawing the conversation back and trying to move forward with...working on reflections in relation to the course and themselves as... clinicians...But um I think...if we got to the...point of where it could potentially disrespect somebody else or someone could feel really put out by what's potentially said then we would have to address that whether it's individually with the person or whether it's within the group depending on the context of it. – Anita

3.2.2 Establishing a safe space for reflection.

This subtheme relates to participants' efforts to ensure that the group is a place where trainees feel sufficiently safe to reflect, as they view RPGs as being an important space, and offering unique opportunities.

Participants expressed that RPGs offer a rare opportunity for trainees to engage in a different type of thinking and dialogue which is not always available within other aspects of training. This was framed as being due to the space not being available to engage in relational work during training; thus suggesting that RPGs can offer the chance to pause and reflect without the other pressing demands of training.

Without...being stereotypical sometimes some of the courses the way they talk...can be very um practical, logical, matter of fact and unless they've got a supervisor that they can do that er relational type work with...they don't always have the space to do that. And in order to be able to do that via reflections can be quite nice. – Anita

Some participants expressed that due to personal therapy not being a mandatory requirement of CP training courses, RPGs offer a kind of alternative, whereby some of the potential benefits of personal therapy can be gained.

I do think its really really important...I think it puts us in a very weak position professionally if we haven't done something like this um you know when we're out there. And one group of people that we are you know often working alongside will be other people with therapeutic trainings who will have done more sort of personal therapies. – Patricia

There were varying accounts how much explanation or introductory work had been offered to trainees by the DTP prior to them starting the RPG. Some participants expressed that further work around this would have been beneficial to the group in reducing any sense of resistance or hesitation about engaging in the group.

At the university...they hosted...an hour or two long event, where they got all of the brand new first year trainees in, and they got all of the new facilitators in and they gave us all a...presentation on how the groups will be. – Tom

There hasn't been much communication and much...explanation about what the group's for...So I think that adds to the anxiety...I'm not sure how transparent they [DTP] are about who we are...obviously when I meet with the group I'll explain my background...I'm not sure how well it's introduced I suppose. – Michael

Participants described the inevitability of challenges for trainees throughout the course of training, hence the need for RPGs to offer them the opportunity to think about and work through these.

They need safe space to...work through things that are happening for them...there always are I guess with every cohort, there's issues going on that are...challenging for them. So...you know I'm very much of the view these are really important safe spaces to have. - Tom

Participants acknowledged that despite RPGs being an important aspect of training, and the efforts that are made for them to feel safe, trainees can feel unsafe in the group setting. It was described that at times, difficult group dynamics can negate the opportunities offered by RPGs altogether, as individuals may not feel comfortable to engage in reflective conversations with peers.

The dynamics between them...they were stating that they felt unsafe to take part in the reflective practice sessions and they didn't feel safe reflecting with each other. – Josie, a white British external facilitator using an integrative approach, described that RPGs had actually stopped at one point for one cohort due to difficult group dynamics. This had culminated in a lack of sense of safety for trainees, thus consultation took place with trainees to agree a way to return to RPG. Due to her external position, Josie was not aware of the exact incidents or reasons which had led to these group dynamics, as they had occurred outside of the RPG setting.

In response to this challenge, it was described that some preparatory work was carried out by the facilitator with the cohort by agreeing the themes that would be discussed in the RPG prior to the group, in order to enhance the sense of safety. Thus suggesting that additional structure and predictability may be perceived as stabilising in certain circumstances.

Rather than um being worried about what might be said on the day sort of agreeing what kind of themes we might touch upon before rather than it being as spontaneous as it might have otherwise been. So I think that's the way we've...managed it by doing some preparation before that we might not have necessarily done under normal circumstances. – Josie

In relation to a challenge of difficult interpersonal dynamics, one part of the facilitators' role was described as being to bring things which may be unsaid or feel difficult to talk about, safely into the open of the group for exploration.

If there's a sort of sense that there is something simmering under the surface whether that's anger, whether that's distress. Then it's my job to name it and try and bring it carefully and gently and safely into the open to be thought about so that it can...be worked with and... resolved. – Yasmin

This required careful judgement of how and when to do so, however, with some participants noting that if this were to happen at the wrong moment, it could have the unintended impact of trainees perceiving the facilitator as being too close, and thus feel unsafe.

I think I can be quite direct, I can push, I can you know, turn things on its head and I think I needed to be mindful of really stepping back... almost like I've kind of got one foot in the room and one foot out, because it felt if I was to get any closer it felt it was really unsafe for them. – Michael

Some participants described almost a hierarchy of topics which may be perceived as more or less difficult to broach; thus suggesting that if safer topics are explored first, and this experience is perceived as containing, this may enable future conversations about more complex topics.

I think people had to feel much more comfortable I suppose with their peers before they would bring that out. And it was important to try and make sure the group was as safe as possible and as containing as possible. Um so there was, there was sort of that chronology I think of different topics became easier for them to talk about at different times.

– Tom – a white British external integrative facilitator described that from his experience, in

terms of chronology, cultural backgrounds tended to be discussed prior to sexuality within the RPG setting.

Some participants spoke of their role in establishing a containing, safe space by regulating ‘the temperature’ of the group, to ensure that what happens within the group is of benefit and doesn’t feel too uncomfortable.

Part of my job is to try and regulate the temperature of the group. – Yasmin – a white, external psychodynamic facilitator gave an example that an inappropriate comment had been made by a trainee which had led to distress in other trainees, and in particular a black trainee. Yasmin acknowledged that despite this facilitator role of supporting the group to regulate, sometimes situations can erupt in an unexpected way.

Viewing my my role as...kind of...being a I guess a super co-regulator. – Kelly

Many participants described the task of balancing and judging when to allow conversations to unfold for the individual or the group to manage, and when to intervene or lead on these conversations.

I don’t necessarily see myself as a person that’s there to solve some of those challenges, although that would be a part of it. But it’s not the full...role. I think it’s to help people recognise some of those challenges and to maybe experience or have the space to just talk about some of those challenges...sometimes the role is about allowing those experiences to play out as well and either for the individual or for the group to see how those are

managed and resolved...Erm I think that comes back to that point about just knowing where the balance to strike is between leading and leaving be. – Sam

This also applied in relation to deciding how to respond to silence, with some participants viewing long periods of silence as being beneficial and valuable to trainees.

We had some really good very comfortable secure long silences while me and the co-facilitator um both sat through and let it linger for a long time and they were really at the end of the group very appreciative to have that silence and no one felt the need to er burst the bubble. – Dave

Some participants felt that how and when to respond to silence required careful judgement about what is happening for trainees at that time, and that different scenarios may require different responses from the facilitator.

Depending on where people are at and what's going on...silence could just continue, because if you get beyond a certain point it becomes increasingly hard to speak into it...So...there might be a point where I would shift from allowing the group the space to respond...in whatever way the group wants to...To thinking actually at this point I need to make a much more direct intervention to...break the silence um and I so I might then rather than observing you know you know the 'what is it that's happening in this silence' um or 'what does this silence represent'? But I might actually say something like 'so what's going through people's minds' so I'm giving them a much more...specific...question. – Yasmin

Participants therefore described that fluidity in facilitation style is required, as the requirements of the role change from moment to moment as the needs of individuals and the group shift.

I think you just as a facilitator have to be fluid and responsive to...reading the room.

– Kelly

Many participants spoke about the importance of offering modelling and containment in establishing a safe space for reflection. Participants spoke of the need to reflect during the group on a number of levels, including the impact on self as facilitator, individual group members, and the group as a whole.

I was er very aware of the need to provide containment and modelling and to stay um in a reflective frame of mind myself, a thoughtful frame of mind where I'm sort of also aware to take a step back, so noticing how I'm feeling and the impact on me and also being able to step away from that and think about it from the group perspective and individual perspectives. – Alison – a white British external, integrative facilitator explained that she perceived that trainees in one group felt angry towards her. The reason for this was perceived as being due to a lack of continuity in facilitation, due to reasons outside of Alison's control, which she felt unable to share with the group.

Participants spoke of modelling to trainees that they are not expected to be perfect and know everything within the RPG setting; something which may potentially feel unusual to trainees given the competitive nature of training and ongoing evaluation which they are subject to.

I think my role is modelling; its ok to make mistakes; it's ok to have difficult feelings, you know; it's ok not to know. – Patricia

3.3 Theme 2: A Vehicle for Growth and Development

This theme related to how participants viewed the RPG as a vehicle for growth and development; both for themselves as facilitators, and for trainees.

Equally there's been plenty of nice and good learning curves within that...Not just for...them as the trainees but for us as facilitators as well. - Anita

3.3.1 Growth and development of the facilitator.

This subtheme illustrates that the role of facilitator is perceived as stimulating and interesting, with RPGs presenting new perspectives to consider, which contributes to their own development.

Participants described facilitation of RPGs as a role they value and enjoy.

I've really enjoyed doing it...in that sense it's been as rewarding as I'd hoped it would be. - Patricia

I also want to say that...I actually...get a lot of value from facilitating the groups. – Paul

Um my first thought is how um how enriching I personally found it. It's very humbling um when people are...using that space. - Kelly

Many participants described the role as contributing to their own development, as trainees present their experiences from a multitude of settings, often different to those that facilitators work in clinically.

It's helpful for my ongoing...development because they're bringing cases...from a variety of different settings, older adults or inpatients, experiences that I don't have in my clinical role. So that's interesting as well...Um yeah, so yeah I feel like I've gained as...much as probably the trainees have also gained from those experiences. – Zara

Participants explained how their experiences within the group setting can lead to reflection for them outside of the group, which they perceived as beneficial to their development as facilitators.

I do pose a lot of my questions to myself from the groups which I then...keep in my head and work around in between groups...So it creates a bit of CPD for me...but hopefully that CPD fills into helping me work or find some wisdom to...work with the group in the most helpful way really. – Dave

Participants also spoke of how they developed in their facilitator role over time with experience; initially feeling the onus was all on them to make decisions about the group, and over time taking a more collaborative approach with trainees, negotiating decisions together.

As I gained in experience in running those groups I would say my role I viewed it quite differently. I think when I was less experienced in facilitating those groups I thought it was my responsibility somehow to to manage it...over the years I became much more

comfortable at just sharing the dilemma with the group and enabling us to think as a group around what the boundaries of appropriateness are for this conversation. So I think that I went from a role of thinking I had to figure it out, to actually sharing that with the group and I think that that felt far more comfortable as a facilitator, far more respectful. – Kelly

Many participants described valuing opportunities to connect with other RPG facilitators, and expressed that they would value being in an RPG themselves. For some, they seemed to question why trainees would have the expectation and opportunity to engage in RPGs, where as they as facilitators would not.

The type of opportunities or expectations you have of trainees engagement in this kind of group what are the opportunities or expectations that that you as a programme team also engage in this type of group...at the very least it's inconsistent to me that we don't do that...I would...love it to be that we did, that it almost came from the top down that this was something that we as a training community invest in as a method um but we're, yeah we're some distance off that at the moment. - Paul

Some participants reflected that checking in with other facilitators provides them the opportunity to gain a differing perspective on what is happening within the groups. This was viewed as particularly important if the other facilitator has different Social Graces (Burnham, 2012) to them, as it may help them with potential blind spots.

Do try and catch up after group discussions to just sort of check in with each other and acknowledge how groups are going, how we're leading things and I guess the fact that they are also not a...white British male is something that's gonna be good because it means

that we've got some difference in the conversations that we're having, the different perspectives that we're having about how those conversations are going. – Sam

Some participants explained how convening, even briefly, with other facilitators following a group can enable discussion and shared decision making around complex issues such as those relating to risk.

The trainee just became very frozen and you know slightly dissociative...in presentation. Um and I remember feeling very concerned about them. Um but as facilitators...we would always...congregate...just before...leaving so that if there were any of these issues we could think them through. – Yasmin

Other facilitators spoke of the parallels between RPGs and the occasions when facilitators come together formally to reflect on how the groups are going. Participants highlighted that they too need to have trusting relationships with peers and feel sufficiently held and supported, in order to openly and honestly reflect on their experiences. Meeting with other facilitators appeared to be helpful in offering the opportunity to be within a similar setting to an RPG themselves; thus allowing connection and empathy with the position of trainees in the groups they facilitate. Furthermore, this appears to allow participants to pause and consider how the groups are going from a more holistic, meta perspective.

We come together each year to review reflective practice and we spend a couple of hours together and then we'll have lunch together and I think that is also really important. We hear about other people's experiences and there's a bit of a parallel for me about we need to also feel safe enough um to be able to talk about our experiences as facilitators of

those spaces, er and to be able to think about the reflective practice...and take that meta position...you need to feel safe...with other people to feel able to do that... how that's set up is really important because if I was to feel unable to talk about difficulties or irritations or um if people were not able to voice differences of opinions. – Alison

3.3.2 Witnessing the growth of trainees.

This subtheme relates to the sense of privilege that participants described from witnessing the emotional, professional and clinical growth of trainees within the RPG setting over time. There was a sense that facilitators were really invested in the trainees, hence bearing witness to, and being part of the journey which trainees embark on, appears to lead to a sense of pride or satisfaction for some.

I can see the development of the trainees over the three years and it's been lovely to watch their emotional and clinical growth I think during that time. Um yeah it's been a real kind of pleasure to be able to do that with them. – Zara

I want to see them through because I want to see the journey. I quite like that element of it...And I'd like to see them sort of flourish at the end. – Tom

Other participants reflected on how the role allows them to be alongside trainees, which means they have the opportunity to see their resilience develop throughout the RPG across training.

Walking alongside people on that...journey...I probably just really enjoy just seeing how people develop resilience and keep going and...although I've been...working for nearly

thirty years, I still enjoy that kind of the hope and the keep going and how you do it... I can really see how it can help to foster a sort of resilience and...being able to weather personally the ups and downs without being...quite so self-critical, which I think is probably a trait that's pretty marked in the profession. – Patricia

3.3.3 Supporting trainees' learning.

This subtheme captures participants' views about supporting trainees' learning within the RPG.

Participants spoke about ensuring that they as facilitators think carefully about how trainees can get what they want from the RPG experience, tailoring the group to meet the needs of its members, and acknowledging the multiple pressures that they are facing.

What is it that they want from this; how can we meet their needs as best as possible with all that they've got going on. – Anita

Working out how they want to have their reflective practice work for them. - Alison

Some participants spoke about how they might support trainees' learning and reflection in relation to difference and diversity by prompting certain conversations within the group, for example by drawing attention to their own identity. There did appear to be some variation, however, regarding the degree of awareness of participants' own identities and confidence in talking to trainees about this.

Certainly I will speak to...I will name things about myself as a facilitator. You know what's it like to try and speak about these issues. Whatever the issue is at hand... With a

facilitator who's, you know, white middle-aged middle class. How would it be different if you had a black male facilitator? – Yasmin

And just being quite open about that [facilitator's own perceived difference], so possibly there's something about my own identity that just helps to facilitate er a bit more openness about um where people might have barriers and...yeah and you know being fallible and getting things wrong. – Josie

It might feel a bit shameful to say...I'm not always aware...one of the students asked me 'how do you feel [name]...how does it feel to be a male facilitator?' – Michael

Participants also spoke about their role in supporting and encouraging conversations with trainees which may bring about discussion of difference and diversity, as well as prompting further conversation and thinking.

To keep it alive. I guess....because I think whatever difference people are speaking about...whether it's family of origin; I'm an only child, you're a child from a family of six, you know that exploration of difference and how that might then relate to how you think about being in a in a kind of surrogate family as the group can feel sometimes. Um you know there's such interesting valuable conversations aren't there, so I...guess my role is often once we're through the very early stages of needing to connect and...get to know a little bit and notice what's similar. You know my...role is to try and highlight difference and open up conversation and thinking about that. – Yasmin

I think it's to support the fact that they're raised...to support the fact that they're raised and encourage it. – Dave

Some participants cautioned that there is a fine balance between supporting this development without forcing conversations about difference and diversity. There is potentially a danger that incorrect assumptions or conversations feeling forced could close down discussion.

One thing...to watch out for is...when you're mindful of potential impact of difference that you can swing too far the other way....Sometimes it's nothing to do with that and that actually I...remember in one session...I offered up...something gender related, and...it was almost a bit that that the male in the group was a bit like, 'no! nothing to do with that!'...Sometimes...it might be connected to issues of difference and diversity and offering up that as...areas to discuss, but also I think being mindful that it's not always. - Kelly

Many participants spoke about turning points in relation to group process, for example highlighting to the group when difficulties may be negating the opportunities which RPG can offer. This suggests that by bringing process issues to the fore, facilitators work collaboratively with the group, which can lead individuals and the group to consider more closely how they wish to use the space offered.

I felt that it was helpful for the group as a whole to think about what they were allowing to come into the group...was it time now to draw a line under the disappointment about the way that things had started and... start over and let go of that...not let it take away from any further reflective practice opportunities....And that I think was a key turning point. – Alison

Some described that despite ruptures within the group feeling very unsafe at the time, these situations often present the opportunity for learning and repair to take place; thus suggesting that RPGs feeling uncomfortable or unsafe at times can be of benefit and part of an important process.

So those ruptures can feel quite precarious but I guess as we know in all of our clinical work that you know the rupture creates the repair opportunity and in the repairing is the learning, often. – Yasmin

Many participants described how they attended to the process of the group and supported trainees' learning about this, by effectively bringing clearly into view what is happening within the group. This suggests that facilitators are potentially able to take more of a meta-position than trainees who are 'in' the group.

Um so my role was to hold up the mirror...and ok so this is what's going on, we can proceed this way...so noticing and then seeing what people wanted to do with that. – Kelly - a white British, external facilitator using a compassion-focused approach discussed how she supported the group to navigate the boundaries of conversations in relation to people who were not present, so that trainees were able to express and process their thoughts in a way that felt appropriate.

3.4 Theme 3: RPGs Don't Take Place in a Vacuum

This theme outlines the influences on the RPG including the DTP, the profession more broadly, and societal events. Furthermore, it highlights that what happens within the RPG can also have an impact outside of that setting.

3.4.1 External influences on RPG.

Within this subtheme, participants spoke about the various external influences which can impact on the content and process of the RPG.

Participants expressed that topics which come up within the RPG setting are influenced by what is talked about on the DTP more generally, for example in relation to difference and diversity. This therefore suggests that RPGs can be an important place for these valuable conversations to happen, however they are only one small part of what is required from DTPs, with some participants cautioning that the groups should not be viewed as a 'tick box'.

There's been a lot of work...inclusion and diversity...on the programme and I think those conversations are much more transparent from the beginning...it would be different facilitating reflective practice now because I think the course is promoting much more open dialogue, promoting different ideas...being increasingly mindful of power and all the different ways in which that might show up. Being much more question comfortable to question our own privilege and power and I think [name of course] has always been very good, their ethos has always been really strong around that, but it feels as though it's just stepped up a notch. – Kelly

Some people have been very keen that to see reflective practice groups as perhaps ticking that box and I've been rather cautious about that. - Paul

Participants spoke about how profession-wide events can spark conversations and strong responses in trainees, which are then brought to the group for discussion; for example the GTiCP conference which took place in 2019.

The conference...where the slave auction um took place, that ignited a real sense of fury and distress and um confusion and fear within I think the whole er trainee population. –

Yasmin

From a broader perspective, participants described that societal level events also influence the conversations that take place within RPGs. Some participants described how, over time, conversations within the RPG become deeper and more meaningful as attendees developed confidence. Furthermore, participants perceived that trainees became more comfortable with not identifying an immediate solution to the issues they were bringing, but they could view the thinking space afforded by the RPG as being part of a process, which they could revisit at a later stage.

The Black Lives Matter was something that really affected a few of the trainees in our cohort...when it was very fresh in people's experiences they weren't quite sure what to do with that and how to use that space to reflect on things...I think having the opportunity over time to gradually get a bit of sense of how other topics were discussed and reflected on it helped them being able to perhaps manage some of those slightly more difficult and tricky topics...also their ability to...leave things unfinished and not necessarily have an answer. –

Sam

Some participants reflected on how topics of difference, diversity, power and privilege are typically brought to the RPG setting, and that global events can reinvigorate such conversations.

So obviously...the Black Lives Matter...agenda...has been um rightly reinvigorated this year...because of everything that's happened...internationally. Um but it's interesting

that prior to that point our trainees were bringing up issues of diversity within the reflective practice groups. I can think of a number of occasions when that was kind of spontaneously...brought...in terms of kind of clinical cases, clinical experiences of working with difference and diversity...trainees...coming from a position of potential privilege or power...and sort of recognising that...within the work that they do. – Zara

Some reported a significant impact on the group due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst this may be a topic which is specific and relevant to the current context of 2021, it highlights the differences in experience which can arise as a result of RPGs taking place in a very different format; in this case, online meetings. The changes and challenges which have arisen have been on a practical level; such as internet connection difficulties, as well as impacting on dynamics, including body language, eye contact, and empathy. It appears that online conversations have therefore felt more stilted for some, and individuals may feel more vigilant, attempting to understand what others may be thinking or feeling whilst looking at them on screen.

The internet does slightly change the way people express themselves I think...People are perhaps a little more suspicious of the technology they maybe don't express themselves as freely as perhaps they would have done. Um and also turn taking within the room...it's much easier to feed off other people's body language to know when you're sort of able to step into that conversation whereas if you're all look at...each other on the screen constantly checking out ten pairs of...eyes or whatever it's a bit harder I think to know how to pace things. – Sam

In contrast, some participants reported that the impact of Covid-19 had minimal impact on the RGP experience, however, either from a content or engagement perspective.

This could potentially be due to how long the group had been together, or due to the particular group dynamics prior to moving to online groups.

Interesting there...really hasn't felt like there's been a significant shift in either the kind of the content that's brought to the reflective practice group or particularly um the trainees' um ability to engage. It's felt very very similar. – Zara

3.4.2 What happens in RPG has ripple effects.

Within this subtheme, participants described how the conversations which take place within the RPG can have ripple effects outside of that setting.

In relation to events such as the GTiCP conference, some participants described how the conversations which took place with the course team as a result of this were then brought to the RPG setting for further thought and discussion amongst trainees. The space offered within the RPG therefore appeared to open up the possibility for collective planning and action to take place in response to such events, as a result of these reflective discussions.

But where there...were some quite passionate strong um people in the trainee cohorts who kind of spearheaded a quite brutal discussion with the course team and of course that would then come into the reflective groups to think about. – Yasmin

Participants spoke about how conversations which happen within RPGs about difference and diversity can have ripple effects, with certain conversations having a powerful impact which continues to spread beyond the group, in both trainees' working and personal lives.

Allowed both [the trainee] and others to reflect on that topic [race] more which they then took in to...future conversations both at work and with erm other family members as well. So I think that it's had a...positive impact not just on the individual but also on the group. – Sam – a white British, external, integrative facilitator.

Using that as a reflective space to really make sense of what was the impact of that [client's use of racist language] for the clinical work; what was the impact of that for the trainee; and what responsibilities do we have as um as clinical psychologists...to really be transparent about um issues of diversity and difference and how we...bring those...to the forefront of any clinical or team working that we do. – Zara – a white British, external, integrative facilitator.

Some participants recalled how ongoing conversations with trainees within the RPG can positively impact their style of communication outside of that setting. In some cases, a more direct style of communication when engaging with systems was viewed as beneficial in trainees being able to express their views and advocate both for themselves and the people they work with clinically.

Talked with them about...being a bit clearer or stronger or more direct with their views which...reflects my style of engaging with systems...I'm not always a huge respecter of hierarchy...there was...an ongoing sense of empowering the trainees to think that they can do that and to try and support them in doing that. And they have tried to follow some of those ideas and approaches, and it seems to have worked. – Tom – a white British, external integrative facilitator described how regardless of who he is communicating with in terms of

job title or position, he will express his opinion, and he encouraged trainees to be assertive in doing this also.

3.5 Subtheme: Trainees' Experience of Strong Feelings

As depicted in figure 3, this subtheme is one which relates to each of the three main themes. This subtheme maps participants' perceptions that the experience of engaging in RPGs can be an emotive experience for trainees.

Participants described how from their perspective, the group of trainees can experience anxiety about the RPG process. This was described as building even prior to attending the groups, and the groups being perceived as a potentially very unpleasant, disabling experience, hence the need for facilitators to explore and address this within the group.

I think there's always a fear, there's an inherent fear and there's lots of erm kind of sort of chatter beforehand about how horrendous they are, that they're gonna make you cry.
– Michael

Participants discussed their experiences of how anger can often be expressed by trainees within RPGs, which can be directed towards different sources, such as the facilitator or the course team, which may serve as a way of uniting trainees within a setting which feels uncertain.

Often there's a lot of talk about you know the problems in the tutors, the teaching, the university, which I think to some degree there is you know some establishment some issue with the establishments and the way it's set up. – Michael

I think that often then translates into a real uncertainty about how do I use this space, I've no idea, it's not structured, there's no clear goal, there's a kind of invitation to sit with everything that is most uncomfortable in a way that feels unbelievably difficult. Um that that kind of anger and frustration about why aren't there any rules. Er and in equal measure a real anger and resentment of people suggesting rules. - Yasmin

Participants described how this anger can sometimes lead to a verbal attack on individuals, which seemed to present a challenging dilemma for facilitators as they considered the needs of the group and its members.

The group rounded on the [trainee] and really in a really attacking way. – Yasmin - an external, white British, psychodynamic facilitator described the group's response following a trainee having made a comment which was perceived as inappropriate.

It can feel quite attacking as a facilitator. – Michael – a white British, external, psychodynamic facilitator described how a less attractive aspect of the role is when there appears to be some resistance from the group about engaging in reflection, and that it is therefore important to bear in mind that this is part of the process rather than being a personal attack.

Participants also discussed an uncomfortable dilemma which can arise when facilitators consider how to respond when expression of frustration in RPG is directed towards a person who is not present at the time. There seemed to be a tension about whether that was appropriate for discussion in the group or whether it would be better addressed

interpersonally and directly, and furthermore, whether that is a decision for the facilitator to make.

Um probably challenging personally but also challenging in terms of the role of those groups um that um there is a fine line between allowing people to sort of meander through territory that felt a little bit um yeah just felt a bit uncomfortable talking about you know venting about someone that wasn't in the room. – Kelly

Participants also discussed the dilemmas that can arise when group divides arise. They described that often incidents which have occurred outside of the RPG impact on the dynamics and process of the group, meaning facilitators are not always privy to the details of what has happened.

It was really it was quite difficult as facilitators to quite understand what the dynamics were. – Alison

Some participants reflected that attendees can experience distress within RPGs, and that a challenge of facilitating is deciding how best to hold that distress. In some cases, a decision may need to be made as to how to respond, as what might feel safe and comfortable for the facilitator may be at odds with the best interests of the individual who is distressed.

I think...as a...facilitator one of the challenges is knowing how to help hold that distress...as in any sort of er situation where you're working with distress, it's trying to find a balance with what's useful for the person and not making it too much about what you're comfortable with as an individual as well. – Sam

3.6 Self-Reflexive Position

When constructing the themes and subthemes, I found myself feeling assured by how thoughtful participants were about trainees' experiences of the group, and how committed they were to making it a useful safe space for exploration and reflection. I found myself recalling particular incidents within the RPG I have attended, and viewing the response of the facilitator in a whole new light. When doing so, I noted my change in awareness over time, in that I recognised that I had perhaps at times been slightly critical or judgemental of some of the decisions and responses of my facilitator. Through discussions with my supervisors and use of the reflective diary throughout the research, however, I was able to form more of a meta understanding of many facets and demands of the role. I therefore developed a new and deeper appreciation of the factors which may have been driving this; for example when the needs of an individual trainee may be at odds with what the whole group is wanting or needing at that time. This experience of my relationship with the facilitator role developing during the research may therefore have influenced what I was attuned to within the data, and therefore the themes and subthemes which were constructed. For example, I personally felt some discomfort with silence within the RPG at times, and would have liked some prompts from the facilitator at times when this seemed to linger, however during the process of analysis, I developed an appreciation for the nuanced response to silence which is required, depending on the circumstances. Many of the participants' accounts led me to reflect on how vulnerable I felt at times during the RPG, which connected me with how thoughtful I needed to be when selecting the quotes, to ensure that anyone reading would not be able to identify themselves from the data offered.

I felt compelled to do justice to and accurately reflect the rich data which had been generously offered by participants. At times I found it difficult to select succinct quotes, as all of the data seemed important. I therefore used the reflective diary at these points and engaged

in reflective conversations, to consider how my experiences or biases may impact on which parts of the data were included or excluded. This process was invaluable in revising these decisions to ensure that they were balanced.

Chapter 4: Discussion

4.1 Overview

This chapter will provide an overview of the analysis through the lens of the research questions. It will then move on to consider the relevance of the findings in relation to current literature and theory. Clinical implications of the findings will be considered, and recommendations will be made for practice. Next, the methodological strengths and limitations of this study will be considered, and suggestions for future research will be discussed. Finally, personal reflections on the research process will be given, and conclusions will be drawn.

4.2 Overview of Analysis Through the Lens of the Research Questions

The findings in relation to each of the research questions will now be considered.

4.2.1 What are facilitators' experiences of facilitating RPGs?

Participants described their experiences of facilitating RPGs in a positive light; they talked about valuing and enjoying the role, which offers growth and development opportunities for them as well as trainees. Participants spoke about how facilitation stimulates further reflection for them, which they perceived as a way of further developing in their role as facilitator. Participants spoke about how their approach to facilitation evolved with experience and confidence, for example by feeling more assured with 'not knowing' and sharing dilemmas and negotiating with the group. Opportunities to reflect on the RPGs with other facilitators were valued, as this was perceived as an opportunity to think through challenges with others, and to consider alternative perspectives; particularly if the other facilitator(s) had a different identity or background to them. Participants made the parallel between the need for safety in themselves and trainees, as they required a sense of safety with

other facilitators in order to discuss challenges that have arisen within the groups and to offer alternative opinions.

4.2.2 What are facilitators' experiences of challenges which have arisen within RPGs?

Ruptures, group process issues and turning points in the group were described and were considered to contribute to trainees' learning within the group. As most participants were independent of the DTP course team, the difficulty in fully understanding cohort dynamics and what had impacted on them was described as a challenge for facilitators. Participants described how for some groups, establishing safety may require more work on the part of the facilitator; for example, they may undertake preparatory work with the group if there have been incidents outside of the group which have contributed to strained peer dynamics. Safety was viewed as something which can develop over time, which can enable discussion about more difficult or complex topics once other topics have been navigated. Participants described how modelling, containment, and helping the group regulate were important aspects of the facilitator role in maintaining safety. Careful judgement was highlighted as important when considering questions such as when to intervene, how to respond to silence, and when it might be helpful to name what the facilitator perceives as being 'unsaid'.

The analysis highlighted that external events can impact the both the process and content of the group. Participants described how the RPG can offer trainees a chance to explore and reflect on their responses to highly emotive events, and that over time, these challenging topics can be broached in deep, meaningful ways.

Covid-19 provided a shift in context for RPGs, moving from a face-to-face to video setting, which participants reported had varying degrees of impact on the group. This part of

the analysis clearly links to the time and context in which this study was carried out, which is considered inevitable in light of the critical realist stance of this project; the aim was not to provide a direct reflection of any underlying ‘true’ concepts (Willig, 2019) which apply in all contexts.

4.2.3 What are facilitators’ experiences of conversations in relation to diversity and difference within RPGs?

Participants reported that difference and diversity are topics which are generally brought to the RPG setting for discussion, and that often such conversations can be reignited by global events, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. Participants reported that it was an important part of their role to challenge individuals if they felt boundaries were not being respected in conversations in relation to difference and diversity, as boundaries were seen as contributing to a sense of safety within the RPG setting.

In addition to external events influencing the group, it was highlighted that the group can also influence external events; conversations which take place within the group can extend more widely beyond this setting, having an impact on trainees’ professional and personal lives. Whilst it was viewed as beneficial that conversations within the RPG can have far-reaching effects, some participants cautioned that training institutions should not view RPGs as the only means of addressing the challenges with difference and diversity within the profession of CP.

4.2.4 How do facilitators of these groups understand and make sense of their role, including in relation to conversations around diversity and difference and any challenges which arise within the group?

The analysis highlighted the complexity of the facilitator role, the requirements of which can vary from moment to moment during the group. Participants spoke about the ways in which they view the boundaries of the facilitator role, with some differing opinions about the potential pros and cons of the facilitator being completely independent to the course team. The desire to ensure that everyone attending the RPG had the opportunity to contribute, whilst not placing any pressure on individuals to do so, was a consideration highlighted by participants. The opportunity to engage in exploratory, reflective conversations was viewed as a valuable, unique aspect of the RPG, and not always available during training outside of that setting.

Whilst participants spoke positively about the potential benefits of RPGs for trainees, they were very aware of the potential for the groups to elicit strong emotional responses such as anxiety and anger for trainees. Participants reflected on the need to allow trainees to express frustrations, but to manage this by intervening if it feels as though this is being done in an inappropriate or harmful way. Responding to and holding distress which arises in the group was described as being a key aspect of the facilitator role, with a requirement to respond in a way which is most beneficial to the person in distress, rather than what the facilitator would feel most comfortable with.

Participants were committed to supporting trainees' learning by tailoring the group so it meets the needs of its members, and by offering prompts about difference and diversity by drawing attention to their own identity. There appeared to be varying degrees of confidence in relation to this, however. When conversations about difference and diversity took place, participants described their role in encouraging this and keeping conversations alive.

4.3 Relevance of the Findings to the Theoretical and Empirical Literature

Three themes were constructed; ‘Creating boundaries and safety’, ‘A vehicle for growth and development’ and ‘RPGs don’t take place in a vacuum’, in addition to a subtheme which related to all three main themes; ‘Trainees’ experience of strong feelings’. The analysis can be understood further through consideration of the links to a range of previous research, theories and models.

4.3.1 Creating boundaries and safety.

Kiff et al. (2010) outlined the two main roles of the facilitator as being to enable norms to develop within the group so that participants can feel sufficiently safe to ‘think aloud,’ and to ensure that discussions remain focused and in line with the purpose of the group (Kiff et al., 2010). These roles speak to topics of safety and boundaries of the group, which aligns with the content of this theme.

This theme demonstrates that, in line with Wong-Wylie’s (2007) assertion that feeling unsafe can impede reflection, facilitators were acutely aware of the importance of establishing safety within the group setting. Participants discussed how they might promote a developing sense of safety when it is lacking, for example by undertaking preparatory work with the cohort such as by adding additional structure by agreeing the themes to be discussed in the group beforehand. This desire for structure from trainees and a willingness of facilitators to be flexible and adapt their plans to meet the groups’ emergent needs was also highlighted in the Thompson et al. (2020) study outlined in the systematic literature review, which explored the perceptions of master’s level counselling students who took part in scaffolded group counselling experiences.

In relation to the boundaries of the group, the analysis in the present study highlighted that within some DTPs, facilitators are external to the course team, whereas on other

programmes, the facilitator may also be a course team member. The findings highlight interesting considerations about the strengths and limitations of each approach. Some participants viewed the facilitator having a clear distinction from the course team as being essential to safety and openness within the group, whereas others proposed that RPGs being facilitated by a course team member offers a reassuring sense of familiarity and safety, in addition to providing an opportunity to learn to manage professional boundaries across different relationships and settings. Lyons et al. (2019) found that from a trainee CP perspective, some found the lack of familiarity with the facilitator almost paralysing and expressed a preference for sharing with members of the course team who they had an ongoing relationship with. This therefore raises considerations about the pros and cons of RPG facilitators as being internal or external to the course team.

As discussed in the systematic literature review, Binks et al. (2013) also constructed a theme relating to the challenge of group boundaries when they interviewed RPG facilitators from one DTP. A sub theme within this related to participants' views that the boundary between reflective practice and therapy within the groups was indistinct. Within the present study, some participants spoke about the importance of establishing a safe space for reflection as RPGs can offer the opportunity to engage in reflective, relational work, thus almost offering an alternative to personal therapy. As Binks et al. (2013) highlight, however, this could potentially contribute to confusion for trainees regarding the boundary between RPG and therapy. This raises an important consideration for DTPs about how the aims of the group are defined and how this information is shared with trainees. There was significant disparity of perspectives in the current study regarding how well the groups were introduced and explained to trainees by DTPs. Some participants reported that specific sessions introducing RPGs were offered, whereas others felt the groups were not well defined or introduced, which they believed contributed to resistance and hesitation about engaging. There are

suggestions in the literature about how the process of RPGs may be made more transparent for trainees. For example, Knight et al. (2010) proposed that it may be useful to include a group task during the course selection process, so as to offer applicants the opportunity to get a sense of what RPGs may entail and to help them decide whether they would benefit from and cope with the challenges of such groups.

Within this theme, participants spoke about careful judgement being required regarding how and when to intervene in particular scenarios, for example in relation to silence. It was described that, at times, a more direct approach may be required such as asking a specific question rather than making an observation. This position is in line with Yalom and Leszcz's (2008) theory of group development, which proposes that a non-directive facilitator could potentially increase anxiety and foster regression, particularly in the early stages of the group. This is also in line with findings of studies which investigated trainee perspectives, whereby a preference for a more active, as opposed to minimalist, facilitation style was expressed (Knight et al., 2010; Lyons et al., 2019).

4.3.2 A vehicle for growth and development.

Knight et al. (2010) highlighted that RPGs offer one major method for both personal and professional development within a CP training context. This assertion is supported by the present theme, in which participants spoke of witnessing over the course of the RPG the development of resilience, and emotional, professional and clinical growth in trainees. As highlighted by the Lyons et al. (2019) study, the impact of broader training experiences, such as clinical placements and personal therapy, can be difficult to disentangle from the development afforded by the RPG. This theme also goes beyond findings of previous research, as it highlights that participants in this study believe the facilitator role creates learning and development opportunities for them as facilitators as well as for trainees.

This theme also aligns with the findings of the Binks et al. (2013) study, in which participants described feeling privileged and moved by witnessing trainees' growth and development. Similarly, within the present theme, participants talked about bearing witness to trainee development, and being alongside them on their training journey.

Furthermore, this theme described how participants valued the opportunity to meet with other facilitators to gain a different perspective on the group, to discuss complex issues such as concerns about individual trainees, and to reflect on how the group is going. This could be viewed in line with Schön's (1983, 1987) process of reflection on action; thinking about something retrospectively to develop understanding in light of the experience. This desire to have an opportunity to reflect on the RPG and discuss any issues arising echoes the findings from the Binks et al. (2013) study, which concluded that facilitators should be offered regular supervision to ensure that they have a space in which they can feel held in their role. This also mirrors trainees' preference to have a separate space to process the RPG experience as outlined by Lyons et al. (2019), which was termed 'meta reflection', or reflecting on the reflective process.

Within this theme, participants also discussed challenges such as when ruptures or difficult process issues arise, which they felt that ultimately, can lead to learning and development for trainees. These descriptions are reminiscent of Yalom and Leszcz's (2008) second stage of group development, and Tuckman's (1965, Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) 'storming' stage, which is often characterised by conflict, demonstrating that whilst such events may feel precarious, skilled facilitation through this can afford learning opportunities and group development. This was also in line with the trainee perspectives explored by Moller and Rance (2013), whereby participants predicted that difficult moments within the RPG setting may facilitate learning.

4.3.3 RPGs don't take place in a vacuum.

Within this theme, participants discussed how the RPG can be an important setting for conversations around difference and diversity to take place, the impact of which can then have broader ripple effects on trainees' work and personal lives. Participants highlighted, however, that offering RPGs is only one small part of what is required from the DTP in order to address the challenges in this area. Participants described how what is talked about on the programme more broadly influences the content of the conversations that come into the RPG; thus the more work that is done by the DTP with trainees outside of the RPG setting, the more rich and focused the conversations may be within the RPG. This is in line with Wood and Patel's (2017) description of the University of East London DTP offering workshops on the topics of 'Whiteness' and 'Decolonising Psychology,' which are deliberately timetabled prior to RPG, with the aim of offering a reflective, supportive space where conversations about such topics can continue.

Although no previous published research has specifically explored conversations in relation to diversity and difference within RPGs, Tobin et al. (2013) found that trainees aimed to become aware of and comfortable in addressing multicultural diversity within such groups, and Thompson et al. (2020) highlighted that exploring cultural similarities and differences was a topic of conversation in the group. The present theme therefore aligns with these findings, as it highlighted that topics of difference, diversity, power and privilege are typically brought to the RPG space, and that external events can reinvigorate such conversations. It also highlights the importance of the facilitator role within this, since facilitators in the present study discussed the importance of them actively bringing and encouraging conversations in relation to these areas.

This theme has parallels with the BPS (2020) statement on racial injustice which acknowledged that the society does not exist in a vacuum; the inequities in society are not

separate to the profession of CP, but rather they inevitably play out within the profession (BPS, 2020). The statement emphasises the importance of highlighting and addressing issues of inequity across all social characteristics, in order to actively tackle racism and other forms of oppression (BPS, 2020). It could therefore be argued that the role of the RPG facilitator could potentially go further than highlighting issues of diversity and difference and encouraging such conversations, by taking a more anti-racist stance.

4.3.4 Trainees' experience of strong feelings.

This subtheme is in line with Tuckman's (1965, Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) group development model which proposes that within the storming stage, group members may have an emotional response to the task of the group, particularly if it relates to self-understanding.

This subtheme depicted that, from a facilitator perspective, RPGs can be an incredibly emotive experience for trainees and can elicit negative emotional experiences such as anxiety, anger and distress. This relates to the assumption that a degree of pain or distress is inherent to the learning process of such groups (Smith et al., 2009; Youngson & Hughes, 2009). This also echoes the findings of Binks et al. (2013) in which RPG facilitators reported that discomfort and distress are intrinsic features of the group experience, and that they perceived that some trainees found the group an intimidating, scary space. Furthermore, Binks et al. (2013) also highlighted that a challenge for facilitators may arise when individuals are scapegoated, thus requiring the facilitator to step in to avoid a destructive situation for an individual or the group. Similarly, in the present study, participants spoke of the uncomfortable dilemma which can arise when facilitators consider how to respond when expression of frustration in RPG is directed towards a person who is not present at the time.

This subtheme is also in line with the research which has been carried out from a trainee perspective; for example within the Thompson et al. (2020) study, a theme of

discomfort was highlighted, with participants reporting that being a member of an RPG was scary, but also rewarding. Additionally, the theme constructed by Lyons et al. (2019) ‘Commitment: I hated it, but I still went’ captured the sense from trainees that despite the challenges which RPG presented, experiences could still be valued, such as going through a difficult experience together so that individuals had the chance to voice discontent. Knight et al. (2010) also highlighted the potential for RPGs to cause distress, however whilst some trainees within this study who experienced distress were able to view the challenges positively, some viewed the group as having low value. Within the Moller and Rance (2013) study, for some trainees, the group was a feared space. This echoes the findings of the present subtheme, in which participants acknowledged the inherent fear about such groups, which can build even prior to attending; thus highlighting the need for the facilitator to explore and address this with the group.

4.4 Relevance of the Findings to RPG Facilitators

It is hoped that the findings of the present study may be beneficial to RPG facilitators as the evidence base in relation to this role is currently very slim. This study may promote reflection on the similarities and differences to facilitators’ own experiences, or highlight new areas for consideration or exploration. For example, this study could open up debate regarding whether an internal or external facilitator is preferable. This fundamental difference may benefit from further sharing of perspectives between proponents of both approaches. Whilst it is unlikely that this would become standardised across courses, further discussions and sharing of best practice in relation to this may be beneficial. Furthermore, the findings may help prospective facilitators decide whether to take up a role facilitating such groups, as the present study highlights both the challenges which may be encountered, and the value afforded to those who facilitate and attend such groups.

4.5 Relevance of the Findings to Trainee CPs

It is envisaged that the present study may provide some insight into what to expect from these groups for new trainee CPs who are about to embark on their RPG journey. Furthermore, the findings may be of interest to trainees who are currently engaging with RPGs, and potentially provide more of a meta perspective of the group, and some understanding of the challenges which facilitators may be grappling with. Additionally, prospective trainees who are considering applying for training may find it helpful to consider the potential opportunities and challenges provided by RPGs, which may be a mandatory part of their training experience.

4.6 Relevance of the Findings to DCLinPsy Training Programmes

The findings raise important considerations for DTPs given that RPGs are used widely within the training of CPs, yet the evidence base remains small. The findings once again highlight ethical considerations for DTPs, given the propensity for RPGs to be very emotive settings in which facilitators perceived trainees to experience emotions such as anxiety, anger and distress. It is hoped that the findings will lead to reflection for DTPs about the way RPGs are run, for example how they are defined and introduced to trainees, whether they are facilitated by someone who is internal or external to the course team, and how to provide support structures such as supervision or the opportunity to ‘check in’ with other facilitators. The unique findings in relation to facilitation being perceived as a valued role which contributes to facilitator development may also be of relevance to DTPs who may be recruiting further facilitators in light of the recent 25% increase in CP training places (BPS, 2020). It is also envisaged that the unique findings in relation to difference and diversity conversations in an RPG setting may be of interest to DTPs as they consider decolonisation

of the curriculum, given that reflection has been highlighted as a key component of anti-racism and decolonising training (St Clair & Kishimoto, 2010).

4.7 Implications and Recommendations

The findings of the present study highlight that the RPG setting may provide a meaningful opportunity for trainee CPs to engage in reflection about the topics of difference and diversity. The findings suggest that facilitators see it as part of their role to initiate and encourage conversations and reflections from trainees about these topics. There did appear to be some variation, however, regarding the degree of awareness of participants' own identities and confidence in talking to trainees about this. It is noted that the conversations about difference and diversity described did not always have a particularly anti-racist flavour to them. Further training in equipping facilitators to have these conversations may therefore be of benefit, since it is not unusual for avoidance of such conversations to take place due to the uncomfortable responses and emotions which may arise as a result (DiAngelo, 2018). More directional conversations within the relative safety of the RPG setting may assist trainees in feeling better prepared to have such conversations outside of that space. Participants in the current study also cautioned that there is a fine balance between supporting reflection in relation to difference and diversity without forcing conversation, which again may suggest that training in navigating this may be of benefit. This may enable RPGs to incorporate a model similar to the social justice approach, Community Conversations, as previously described (Wilkins- Yel et al., 2020). Within this approach, small groups of trainees engage in facilitated interactive, experiential dialogues to promote self-reflection and explore topics relating to power, privilege and marginalisation (Wilkins- Yel et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that RPGs form only one part of what is required by courses in relation to difference and diversity, and should not be viewed as a 'tick

box exercise,' but rather part of a broader response to the challenges within the profession and society. This implication has links with writing about anti-racism pedagogy, which suggests that a multi-faceted approach is required, including incorporating the topics of race and inequality into teaching, teaching from an anti-racist stance, and more from a broader perspective, taking an anti-racist approach within the campus and surrounding community (Kishimoto, 2018). Whilst it is important for individuals to reflect on their social positions, which could take place in an RPG setting, these reflections need to be understood in the broader context of race and power, and therefore should be applied beyond the individual level, in order to make change at an institutional level (Kishimoto, 2018).

Due to the complex, multi-layered nature of RPGs, they can spark further thought and reflection and present possible dilemmas for facilitators. This study stressed the fluid nature of the facilitator role, as they are required to consider the individual needs of each person attending the group, as well of the needs of the group as a whole. The findings therefore highlight the need for DTPs to appoint facilitators who are suitably trained and experienced in a number of areas, namely: establishing safety and boundaries within an RPG context; responding to group process issues such as scapegoating and difficult group dynamics; tailoring their facilitation style to the needs of individuals and the group as a whole; and prompting and encouraging discussions in relation to difference and diversity. These skills may be developed via general clinical practice and experience, or via specific training, for example The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (2021) offer a course in facilitation of RPGs, which encompasses many of these areas. They also raise considerations about how facilitators can be provided with the opportunity to reflect on the RPGs; for example by offering formal supervision and / or more informal spaces in which facilitators can discuss any concerns or dilemmas which may arise. This is particularly important since there is an ethical and professional expectation to engage in supervision to support effective

practice (BPS, 2017). Supervision or discussions with peers may also reduce the impact of facilitators' 'blind spots,' particularly if the other facilitator(s) have different Social Graces (Burnham, 2012) to them.

It may also be beneficial for RPG facilitators to attend the annual GTiCP conference along with DTP course team members so as to offer the opportunity to think nationally about the topics that are being brought to RPGs. This would also enable facilitators to have a strong grasp of the issues facing the training profession nationally, and therefore the external issues which may impact the group discussion. Facilitator attendance at this conference may also enable sharing of best practice across DTPs in relation to RP development, for example in relation to the relative strengths and limitations of facilitators being internal or external to the course team.

Finally, the findings raise an important consideration about how the aims of the group are defined and how this information is shared with trainees, given that participants spoke about the RPG almost offering an alternative to personal therapy. There was also some disparity about how well participants felt the groups were introduced to trainees by DTPs. It may therefore be helpful for DTPs to provide trainees with further transparency and clarity about RPGs, so that they feel prepared for, and aware of the intended outcomes of the groups. In line with Yalom and Leszcz's (2008) theory of group development, this approach may also increase the utility of the groups, since it has been posited that if members are not well oriented to the aims of the group, this can lead to confusion and questioning of its relevance and rationale, which may last for several months, thus taking up valuable space in the group.

4.8 Strengths & Limitations

With regards to the strengths of this study, it was original in that it is only the second known study to explore RPG facilitator experiences within a CP training context.

Furthermore, it built on the previous study in the area (Binks et al., 2013) by exploring facilitator views from a variety of DTPs, and also included exploration of the topics of diversity and difference, as well as broadening the concept of distress to challenges within the RPG setting. Given the previously outlined current challenges both within the profession of CP and society more broadly, this may be viewed as a timely research aim. The research team included a consultant who has extensive experience in facilitating RPGs, which promoted the relevance of the study to the population being researched. The consultant's involvement is viewed as a strength, as they are associated with a different DTP to the other members of the research team; thus offering a broader perspective on the study. Ethical issues were a key consideration throughout, with careful steps being taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of facilitators and trainees who partake in RPGs. Transparency was achieved by ensuring that the researcher's position in relation to the topic and the epistemological position were clearly outlined throughout, which enabled the reader to take this into account and draw their own conclusions. It is acknowledged that the researcher's own position and experiences of RPGs will undoubtedly have influenced the data analysis, however crystallisation (Tracy, 2010) was utilised by synthesising multiple researchers' perspectives during the analysis in order to enhance the credibility of the findings. Reflexive conversations with supervisors and use of a reflective diary also took place throughout the research process, in order to carefully consider and minimise the impact of the researcher's views and perspectives. It is also recognised that as the researcher is a current participant in an RPG, this may have influenced how open participants felt able to be, therefore the findings may have been different should the interviews have been carried out by a fellow RPG facilitator, or a DTP team member, for example.

Given the qualitative nature and critical realist epistemological stance of this study, the aim was not to provide a definitive answer to the research questions posed, but rather to

add to the evidence base by illuminating the experiences of participants. Statistical types of generalisability that inform quantitative research are therefore not applicable to this study (Smith, 2018). Nevertheless, it is hoped that the analysis and recommendations are useful in offering new perspectives about the facilitation of RPGs, and are viewed in the provisional, subjective and contextual (Smith, 2018) way in which they are intended. It is acknowledged that the present research explored only facilitator views, therefore it is not known how trainees who attend such groups might interpret the perspectives in the present study. Future studies may therefore wish to explore both trainee and facilitator perspectives in order to cross-reference these.

The use of NVivo software is considered a strength of the study, since the software offered good data management and retrieval facilities, which supported the analysis and write-up (Maher et al., 2018). It also enabled development of themes using the visual ‘sets’ function, and provides a clear data trail of the process of moving from line by line coding, to overarching codes, to themes.

The decision to utilise TA as opposed to IPA was considered most appropriate for the present study since there was an aim to capture diversity from a relatively large sample of facilitators from a number of DTPs; thus meaning the sample was heterogenous (Braun & Clarke, 2021). It has been argued, however, that whereas TA offers breadth of analysis, IPA offers further depth (Spiers & Riley, 2018); thus future research may wish to extend the findings of the current study by carrying out an IPA study in the area.

It could be argued that it is difficult to draw conclusions when comparing data from heterogenous RPGs. Nevertheless, the fact that there were key themes identified across the data set, which resonate with findings from other studies, suggests that the findings are meaningful and likely to be of relevance to RPG facilitators, CP trainees, and DTPs. This is in line with O’Leary and Sheedy’s (2006) assertion that whilst the theoretical underpinnings

and precise aims of RPGs may vary, the key commonality of such groups is the belief that interpersonal feedback and exchange are as important as intrapersonal reflections in developing self-awareness (O'Leary & Sheedy, 2006).

It is recognised that the recruitment strategy led to an overrepresentation of participants from one DTP (five out of 12 participants), which makes it difficult to draw conclusions about whether the experiences reported are specific to that particular institution or representative more broadly. It is therefore acknowledged that it may have been beneficial to follow up with DTPs who did not respond to the initial study advertisement, in order to obtain a study sample from a broader range of DTPs.

Whilst the research was advertised to all DTPs in the UK, it is important to consider who did not participate and what their experiences might have been. It is possible that there was a self-selection bias, for example those who were particularly passionate about the role or those who had experienced significant challenges may have come forward as an opportunity to discuss their experiences. It is therefore important to recognise that there are likely to be much more diverse views across RPG facilitators more broadly.

Furthermore, the interview guide could potentially have been more exploratory regarding how competent facilitators felt about having conversations about difference and diversity with trainees, and what training they had already received in relation to this. This may have allowed for further scrutiny of the role that RPG facilitators have in this, therefore future studies may wish to explore this in further depth.

It is acknowledged that there some dilemmas which presented during the course of carrying out and writing up this study. Firstly, the level of detail to include about participants was considered carefully so as to strike the balance between preserving participants' confidentiality, whilst providing sufficient contextual information to inform the readers' understanding of the reported themes. Similarly, the level of detail to include within my

personal reflections was also given careful consideration so as to avoid compromising other people's anonymity, whilst offering an appropriate level of insight into my experiences which will have shaped my views of this topic. These deliberations were discussed with the supervisory team, and felt particularly pertinent within the relatively small profession of CP.

4.9 Self-Reflexive Position

My experiences of being part of an RPG have shaped my CP training journey enormously. I have found the group to be personally challenging at times, particularly during the early stages of thinking about how to use the space and understanding the role that the facilitator would take. I think the fact that it was such a different learning experience to any I have encountered previously contributed to this. Despite the times which I perceived as difficult, I have personally found the group to be very powerful in that it led to me question my responses and views about areas which previously I took for granted and gave little thought. It has therefore pushed my reflections into areas which I was potentially previously avoiding. Carrying out research in an area which has had a profound impact on me has therefore felt very personally significant and rewarding. When I initially started on this research journey, I was surprised that such widely used method for developing RP had such a small evidence base within the profession, particularly given the potential power of the facilitator role. Reading the research that had already been published inspired and encouraged me to build on this further, with the hope that this will contribute to the training of future CPs and offer valuable recommendations and considerations for facilitators and DTPs. My own position and experiences of RPGs will undoubtedly have influenced the analysis, however I have remained conscious of this and have implemented various processes including keeping a reflective diary and engaging in reflective conversations with the research team to ensure that the facilitators who took part in this study have been accurately represented. It felt

overwhelming at times to do justice to all the accounts shared, and I found it hard to select succinct quotes as there were so many rich, interesting, detailed examples to choose from. I feel extremely grateful for the opportunity of hearing the experiences of facilitators from different DTPs to the one I have undertaken my training at, and the process of carrying out this research has given me a new perspective on my own experiences, and further strengthened my belief in the importance of RPGs within a CP training context.

4.10 Suggestions for Further Research

The present study did not include peer facilitators, as an assumption was made that their experiences may be markedly different from qualified facilitators. Future research may wish to explore the experiences of peer facilitators, or the experiences of trainees who attend groups facilitated by peers, to ascertain whether there are indeed any differences between the RPG experience offered by such facilitators.

Since the present research included participants associated with seven of the 30 DClInPsy training programmes in the UK, future research may benefit from building on this to gain a broader understanding of how DClInPsy courses encourage RP.

Since the present research found that diversity and difference do tend to be topics which are discussed within the RPG setting, future studies may wish to explore trainee experiences of this, as currently there are no published studies which have directly investigated this. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that topics of discussion within RPGs are highly influenced by wider societal and profession level events. This suggests that cohorts may have different experiences depending on the context of what is happening in wider spheres, therefore research which explores how this is experienced would be beneficial.

4.11 Conclusions

RP is not just a matter relevant to trainees; CPs at all stages of their careers are expected to engage in RP, thus how it is introduced during training may have a profound impact across individuals' future careers. RPGs have been said to contribute to the training of competent reflective scientist-practitioners (Knight et al., 2010). Despite how widely they are used as a method for PPD, however, the evidence base remains slim. This study therefore aimed to explore the experiences of facilitators of RPG facilitators from a variety of DTPs in the UK. The analysis suggested that participants conceptualise one of their key roles as being to establish safety and manage boundaries within the group, which they view as providing a unique opportunity for growth and development for both themselves and trainees. For the majority of facilitators in this study, difference and diversity was described as a topic which is regularly brought to the RPG setting, and facilitators saw it as their role to prompt and encourage such conversations, as the discussions which take place within the RPG can have broader impacts on other settings. Since the role of facilitator is viewed as complex and multi-layered, requiring careful judgement about how to respond to best meet the needs of the group as a whole and its individual members, it is recommended that suitably experienced and trained facilitators are appointed. Additional training specifically in relation to equipping facilitators to have more directional, anti-racist conversations within the RPG setting may also be of benefit. It is also recommended that appropriate support structures such as supervision or more informal spaces are provided for facilitators to reflect on the RPG and to consider any dilemmas which arise. The analysis suggested that RPGs could form one small part of how DTPs respond to the challenges relating to difference and diversity within the profession and society more broadly, by providing trainees with a space to reflect on their own positions and responses to events. Finally, it is recommended that DTPs carefully define the aims of RPGs and communicate these with potential trainees so that from an ethical

perspective, trainees are fully informed about the purposes of a mandatory RPG, given that they have the potential to elicit difficult emotional experiences.

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Appendix A: Assessment of methodological criteria of articles employing qualitative methodology, using the Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research (Tracy, 2010).

Author, (date), title	Worthy topic	Rich rigour	Sincerity	Credibility	Resonance	Significant contribution	Ethical	Meaningful coherence
Lyons, A., Mason, B., Nutt, K. and Keville, S., 2019. Inside it was orange squash concentrate: Trainees’ experiences of reflective practice groups within clinical psychology training.	Worthy topic, first qualitative study to explore clinical psychology trainee experiences of RPGs.	Links to literature and appropriate theory. Appropriate sample size for IPA, and sufficient homogeneity within sample for this methodology. Interview practices and analysis appropriate to research question and methodology.	Researchers state their epistemological position. Write up of the process of analysis is quite succinct.	Triangulation was used in analysis to establish credibility and transferability, through convergences in themes and discussions within the research team. Detail is offered via direct quotes from interviews, which align with the interpretation of data.	Researchers acknowledge that participants are drawn from a specific training institution, and therefore the findings may simply reflect the experiences of those who trained within that context. Researchers encourage others to build the evidence base in the area by replicating	Significant contribution to the research in this area, made several recommendations in relation to practical elements of the group (size, location, time of day), in addition to recommendations about considering the match between facilitation style and purpose and aims of the group, and	Ethical approval obtained, description of how of relevant ethical considerations were addressed (confidentiality, anonymity, storage of data, management of potential distress). Good exiting ethics given that the study was published.	Design, data collection and analysis fit coherently together to address the identified research question. Literature is appropriately interconnected with the research focus and findings.

					the study and exploring trainee experiences on other programmes.	the importance of providing opportunities for meta reflection.		
Binks, C., Jones, F. W., & Knight, K. (2013). Facilitating reflective practice groups in clinical psychology training: A phenomenological study.	Worthy topic, this was the first study to explore the experience of facilitators of RPGs in a clinical psychology context.	Links to appropriate theories and previous studies. Appropriate small, homogenous sample for an IPA study. Sufficient detail provided in respect of data collection and analysis processes.	Appropriate transparency e.g. data from the pilot interview was included in the analysis. Re: self-reflexivity, supervision was used to examine and bracket the lead researcher's assumptions and personal experiences of the research topic.	Coherence of the lead researcher's interpretative process and theme development was checked in supervision. Quotes from different participants are used to illustrate themes.	Authors acknowledge the homogeneity of the sample, consisting of former facilitators from one UK clinical psychology training programme, which could potentially limit the theoretical transferability of the findings. However, many of the key themes resonate with findings from	Significant heuristic significance given that this study inspired the present research. Also provides a significant contribution conceptually given that it was the first study to explore facilitator experiences in a CP training context.	Ethical approval obtained. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was taken. Quotes were anonymised and pseudonyms used to ensure confidentiality.	Research achieves aims set out. Uses methods and procedures which are in line with the aims. Method, analysis and implications fit coherently together. Connects with relevant literature.

					other studies and/or perspectives present in the literature, which suggests they are likely to be of relevance to broader contexts.			
Moller, N. P., & Rance, N. (2013). The good, the bad and the uncertainty: Trainees' perceptions of the personal development group.	Worthy topic, exploring the beliefs of counsellor trainees in relation to personal development groups, which are a core component of the training. First study to explore the perceptions and assumptions of trainees before they	Sufficient sample size for methodology (thematic analysis), although no mention of whether saturation was achieved. Appropriate method of data collection (anonymous quantitative survey) given that the	Researchers reported that they engaged in self-reflexive discussions throughout the research. Their personal views / experiences of the groups are outlined. Philosophical assumptions are outlined briefly.	Robust measures in place to ensure credibility of findings: one researcher completed the data analysis and did the initial organisation of themes, which was then reviewed and re-worked by both researchers until final	Engaging qualitative narrative of themes presented. Findings appear transferrable to the context of the present study as there are overlaps with themes from the clinical psychology literature i.e. participants perceiving the groups	Significant contribution to the literature on PD groups in counselling training, offers practical implications for training programmes. Heuristic significance, authors invite other researchers to use interviews to obtain richer,	Ethical approval obtained. Due to dual roles of the authors – trainee/ researcher and trainer/ researcher, an anonymous qualitative survey design was used in order to reduce pressure to participate. To ensure anonymity,	Study achieved what it set out to, methodology fits with stated aims, and implications meaningfully interconnect with literature presented and findings.

<p>began the personal development group.</p>	<p>researchers were known to the participants.</p>	<p>agreement was reached. Analysis was also reviewed by a colleague who had not been involved in data analysis. Quality of analysis was also enhanced through an analytic audit trail, including hierarchical theme tables which allowed tracking of individual participant quotes through codes, to sub-themes and themes.</p>	<p>positively, but also noting the possibility for distress to arise.</p>	<p>more detailed data.</p>	<p>consent forms were separated from completed surveys immediately, and data was anonymised before analysis.</p>			
<p>Kit, P. L., Wong, S. S.,</p>	<p>Worthy topic, study set out</p>	<p>Relevant theory</p>	<p>Authors are transparent</p>	<p>The analysis was initially</p>	<p>Some limited perceived</p>	<p>Some brief, broad</p>	<p>No mention of ethical</p>	<p>Methods and procedures fit</p>

D’Rozario, V., & Bacsal, R. M. (2014). The language of resistance in a counselling group: Dynamics of authority and power.	to understand how participants co-constructed their experiences of critical incidents of resistance, which they had identified as significant in their written post-group reflections.	referred to throughout. Small sample appropriate given the aim to was study episodes or resistance within a specific support group for trainee counsellors. Authors use descriptive language such as ‘disempowering and offensive’ when talking about how interactional features were perceived by group members, it is unclear, however, whose	re: the methods and report that although consent was obtained from 16 participants, the study only focuses on the work produced by 8 students whose group maintained resistance throughout the group sessions. No discussion of authors’ self-reflexivity on the topic.	carried out by the primary researcher before being checked by the research team and two external auditors. Excerpts from the transcripts are provided within the results section. Authors report that measures were taken to triangulate the findings by using multiple sources of data (multiple recordings of group sessions).	resonance and transferability in relation to present study. The study focuses on specific interactions, and implications which follow are very general e.g. recommendation that counsellors need to understand their motivations for wanting to control group conversations and directions.	implications for counsellors are offered. Authors invite further quantitative and qualitative studies in the area.	approval having been obtained. Written informed consent was obtained from participants. Western pseudonyms were used to protect participants’ identities. Article states that participants’ ethnicities were not reported to preserve anonymity, however participant ethnicities are stated later in the paper.	with stated goals of the study. Research achieves what it purports to be about although generalisability may be limited given the very specific focus.
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		perception this was.						
Thompson, H., Frick, M., & Curtis, R. (2020). A Multipoint Qualitative Analysis of Group Training: Counseling Student Perspectives and Self-Efficacy.	Worthy topic, explored counselling students' perceptions of their self-efficacy and group leadership development across three scaffolded group counselling experiences: membership in a counselling group led by a licensed counsellor; membership, co-facilitation, and observation in a peer-led counselling group; and co-	Links to literature, appropriate theories. Sufficient data collected from 26 participants across 3 different time points. Rigour was enhanced by videotaping all sessions for quality assurance.	Authors report that they discussed their assumptions about group counselling, experiential learning strategies, what the results would reveal about participants' perspectives of their experiences with groups, what they would learn from those experiences, and their reported self-efficacy beliefs. Assumptions were noted and revisited	Research team members first worked independently and then together throughout the data analysis process to enhance credibility. Quotes align with interpretation of data.	Noticed how findings feel transferable and naturalistic generalisations to clinical psychology and the present research, particularly data point 2: in-class peer group experience as members, facilitators, and observers.	A number of detailed implications for counsellor educators follow from the results. Article offers a detailed description of a multi-layered group training experience and the impact this had on students' perceptions of their group facilitation skills and self-efficacy.	Researchers report that they adhered to the American Counselling Association's (2014) Code of Ethics. Approval was obtained from the university institutional review board. Appropriate ethical procedures in place i.e. informed consent, optional participation, anonymisation.	Article meaningfully interconnects literature, focus of research, findings, and interpretations with each other. A number of detailed implications follow from this. Article appears to achieve its aims (to illuminate counselling students' perceptions of their self-efficacy and group facilitation development across three group

	facilitation of a counselling service group in a school or other agency.		during the data analysis process.					counselling experiences).
			Transparency offered re: epistemology of methodology.					
Tobin, D. J., Brown, S. L., & Carney, K. E. (2013). Student goal statements for the experiential learning group.	Worthy topic; aimed to delineate teaching strategies for helping students develop goal statements designed to facilitate greater personal development and involvement in the experiential group process.	Study uses sufficient data – goal statements of 21 students at 2 different time points – pre- and post-group. Appropriate level of detail provided about the context of the group and how the goal statements were introduced.	It appears that data analysis was carried out by 2 students who had participated in the group, who acted as research assistants. Article states that research assistants engaged in reflexivity during the data analysis process, however no further detail / discussion is provided	Little detail provided re: data analysis process, type of qualitative analysis is not specified, however authors state that goal statements were collapsed, coded, and categorized based on emergent themes.	Findings have potential to be valuable in clinical psychology RPGs, authors make recommendations specifically in relation to facilitators of these groups e.g. importance of explicating expectations for appropriate self-disclosure, considering	The research does offer a significant contribution to the area, the level of detail provided about the method would enable other courses to repeat this process with their trainees. Implications offered are detailed and relevant to facilitators, trainees and training providers.	No mention of ethical approval having been obtained, or ethical consideration within the study.	Study is coherent and achieves its aims. Literature is meaningfully interconnected throughout the article.

so it is unclear what biases/values they may have held, which is particularly relevant as they had participated in the group.

modelling and setting explicit group norms for appropriate self-disclosure, and here-and-now focus rather than self-revelation, which may contribute to a safe learning environment.

Appendix B: Assessment of methodological criteria of articles employing Critical Incident Technique methodology, using Gremler's

(2004) guide for researchers conducting content analytic research and reporting the methods and results.

Author, (date), title	Problem definition	Study design	Data collection	Data interpretation	Report of the results
Kiweewa, J. M., Gilbride, D., Luke, M., & Clingerman, T. (2018). Tracking growth factors in experiential training groups through Tuckman's conceptual model.	<p>Problem definition appropriate to critical incident technique methodology; used in an exploratory way to understand growth factors from a group development perspective.</p> <p>Researchers identified growth factors via analysis of participants' critical incident reports, which described group participation experiences that they deemed as facilitating personal growth.</p>	<p>Appropriate operational definitions given for each of the identified 14 growth factors.</p> <p>Small sample (4) which lacked diversity in terms of race, gender, and group leadership experience.</p> <p>Authors acknowledge use of convenience sample and therefore limited generalisability.</p>	<p>Self-report data, therefore accuracy of was dependent social desirability factors, experience, and ability to conceptualise group process and dynamics.</p> <p>As no validated instrument existed to operationalize Tuckman's (1965) stages of group development, authors developed a tool: Group Development Checklist. Detailed description provided of how this was developed with 3 experts in the field of group work.</p>	<p>Detailed description of data analysis provided.</p> <p>Authors acknowledge that future research should aim to further explore the validity and reliability of the Group Development Checklist using more groups and robust statistical methods, as construct validity and factor analysis were not used in this study.</p>	<p>Study focus clearly defined. Data collection procedures, sample characteristics and data analysis all clearly described.</p> <p>Results are considered in relation to relevant theory, and link with a number of implications offered by the authors.</p>

Appendix C: Assessment of methodological criteria of an article employing survey methodology using Burns & Kho (2015) quality

appraisal tool.

Author, (date), title	Was a clear objective posed?	Was the target population defined, and was the sample representative of the population?	Was a systematic approach used to develop the questionnaire?	Was the questionnaire tested?	Were questionnaires administered in a manner than limited both response and nonresponse bias?	Was the response rate reported, and were strategies used to optimize the response rate?	Were the results clearly and transparently reported?
Knight, K., Sperlinger, D., & Maltby, M. (2010). Exploring the personal and professional impact of reflective practice groups: A survey of 18 cohorts from a UK clinical psychology training course.	Objective (not posed as a research question) clearly articulated.	Target population defined. Convenience sample. Sample demographics given. Gender of respondents was said to be representative of the original sample. Ethnic origin and age of respondents is also reported, however it is not clear whether these characteristics	Questions initially developed from literature reviews, semi-structured interviews with two senior training course staff and the first author's personal experience of an RPG.	Thirteen trainees and three course team members completed the initial version of the survey and comment on this. Feedback was used to remove ambiguous items, and items with a limited range of responses. Internal consistency was assessed	Participants were asked to complete the survey either online or via the post. To limit non-response bias, reminders were sent 2 weeks after initial contact, offering a further 2 weeks to complete and return the survey. A potential response bias	42% response rate clearly stated. 11% of the sample did not complete the whole survey; however, a reanalysis excluding missing cases did not affect the significance of the findings. 7 participants' data was excluded as they rated they had little confi	Results are clearly reported and directly address the objective of the study. Interpretation aligns with results. Implications of the findings are outlined. Accuracy of the thematic analysis on qualitative questions was checked by a second

<p>were representative of the original sample.</p>	<p>using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Test-retest reliability was assessed using Pearson correlation coefficients. Final version comprised of 98 items requiring rating on a Likert-scale and 15 qualitative questions. Accuracy of the thematic analysis for the qualitative questions was checked by a second independent researcher.</p>	<p>was recognised in that only those participants with particularly strong positive or negative experiences/views may have responded.</p>	<p>dence in the accuracy of their answers.</p>	<p>independent researcher (on 10% of responses).</p>
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Appendix D: Recruitment advert.

University of
Hertfordshire

UH

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE GROUP FACILITATORS ON CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING COURSES

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

The study is being carried out by Rachel Carter, third year DClInPsy trainee from the University of Hertfordshire.

It aims to explore the experiences of facilitators of reflective practice groups (also known as reflective mentoring groups) on Clinical Psychology Training Courses across the UK.

The study is being supervised by Dr Helen Ellis-Caird, Principal Lecturer and Joint Research Tutor, University of Hertfordshire, Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. It has been approved by the University of Hertfordshire Ethics Committee – protocol number LMS/PGT/UH/04289).

WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF I TOOK PART?

You would be invited to take part in an interview with the main researcher, Rachel Carter, about your experiences of facilitating reflective practice groups within Clinical Psychology training.

Interviews will take place via telephone or video call. They will be audio recorded so that they can be analysed.

You can decide to withdraw at any time during the interview and up to two weeks following the interview.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact Rachel for more information about what to expect.

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR TAKING PART?

Anyone who has facilitated a reflective practice group on a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology training programme in the UK for a period of at least 12 months within the past 5 years is invited to take part.

INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING OR WANT TO ASK A QUESTION?

Email Rachel Carter:
rb13aaz@herts.ac.uk



Appendix E: Participant information sheet.**UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE****ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR STUDIES INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
(‘ETHICS COMMITTEE’)****FORM EC6: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET****1 Title of study**

An Exploration of the Experiences of Facilitators of Reflective Practice Groups in Clinical Psychology Training

2 Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a study. Before you decide whether to do so, it is important that you understand the study that is being undertaken and what your involvement will include. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do not hesitate to ask us anything that is not clear or for any further information you would like to help you make your decision. Please do take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. The University’s regulation, UPR RE01, 'Studies Involving the Use of Human Participants' can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/governance/university-policies-and-regulations-uprs/uprs>

(after accessing this website, scroll down to Letter S where you will find the regulation)

Thank you for reading this.

3 What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of reflective practice group facilitators across different clinical psychology training courses. Specifically, it will focus on facilitator experiences of challenges which arise in reflective practice groups and conversations about difference and diversity within these groups. It also aims to explore how facilitators understand and make sense of their role in relation to these areas.

4 Do I have to take part?

It is completely up to you whether or not you decide to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. Agreeing to join the study does not mean that you have to complete it. You are free to withdraw at any stage of the interview without giving a reason. You can also withdraw up to 2 weeks after the interview.

5 Are there any age or other restrictions that may prevent me from participating?

Anyone who has facilitated a reflective practice group on a clinical psychology training course for 12 months or more within the last 5 years is eligible to take part in this study.

6 How long will my part in the study take?

If you decide to take part in this study, the interview will take between 1 – 1.5 hours.

7 What will happen to me if I take part?

The first thing to happen will be Rachel Carter, principal investigator, contacting you to arrange an interview at a date and time which is convenient you. It will be your choice as to whether the interview takes place via telephone or video call (e.g. Zoom / Webex).

8 What are the possible disadvantages, risks or side effects of taking part?

There are no anticipated disadvantages or risks to taking part in this study. There will be an opportunity to discuss how you are feeling following the interview.

9 What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Reflective practice groups in a clinical psychology training context is an under researched area. This study therefore aims to increase the knowledge base in this important area, which could potentially lead to recommendations for future practice on clinical psychology training courses.

10 How will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

A key ethical consideration in this study is confidentiality and anonymity; both of the facilitators and the trainees who attend reflective practice groups. Specific details about incidents which have happened within the group will not be included in the write up of the findings, in order to preserve the anonymity of all parties. Participants from a number of different universities will be interviewed, which will ensure the anonymity of the facilitators. All participants will be given pseudonyms for the write up.

Written information such as consent forms will be stored on a password protected encrypted device. Audio recordings and typed transcripts will also be stored on a password protected encrypted device. Encrypted devices will be stored in a locked cupboard in the researcher's home.

A transcription service with a GDPR policy in place will be used to ensure confidentiality. The service will also be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

11 Audio-visual material

Interviews will be audio recorded on an encrypted device. The audio recording will be transcribed by a transcription service with a GDPR policy in place to ensure confidentiality.

12 What will happen to the data collected within this study?

- Consent forms, demographic data and audio recordings will be deleted on completion of the study. Anonymised transcripts will be kept for 5 years following completion of the study.
- You will be given a pseudonym for the write up of the study.

13 Will the data be required for use in further studies?

- The data may be used for secondary analysis, so will be stored for 5 years before being destroyed under secure conditions.

14 Who has reviewed this study?

This study has been reviewed by:

- The University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering and Technology Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority

The UH protocol number is LMS/PGT/UH/04289

15 Factors that might put others at risk

Please note that if, during the study, any medical conditions or non-medical circumstances such as unlawful activity become apparent that might or had put others at risk, the University may refer the matter to the appropriate authorities and, under such circumstances, you will be withdrawn from the study.

16 Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you would like further information or would like to discuss any details personally, please get in touch with me by email: rb13aaz@herts.ac.uk

Alternatively, you can contact the project supervisor, Dr Helen Ellis-Caird, Principal Lecturer and Joint Research Tutor, University of Hertfordshire Doctorate in Clinical Psychology – h.ellis-caird@herts.ac.uk

Although we hope it is not the case, if you have any complaints or concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please write to the University's Secretary and Registrar at the following address:

Secretary and Registrar
University of Hertfordshire
College Lane
Hatfield
Herts
AL10 9AB

Thank you very much for reading this information and giving consideration to taking part in this study.

Appendix F: Demographic information sheet.

Age _____ / prefer not to say

Gender _____ / prefer not to say

Ethnicity _____ / prefer not to say

Appendix G: Ethics application.

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

FORM EC1A: APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL OF A STUDY INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS (Individual or Group Applications)

Please complete this form if you wish to undertake a study involving human participants.

Applicants are advised to refer to the Ethics Approval StudyNet Site and read the Guidance Notes (GN) before completing this form.

<http://www.studynet2.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/ethics.nsf/Homepage?ReadForm>

Applicants are also advised to read the FAQ General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) before completing this form.

<http://www.studynet2.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/ethics.nsf/Frequently+Asked+Questions/4AD88CD88D0F3F2D8025829800300621>

Use of this form is mandatory [see UPR RE01, 'Studies Involving Human Participants', Sections 7.1-7.3]

Approval must be sought **and granted** before any investigation involving human participants begins [UPR RE01, S 4.4 (iii)]

If you require any further guidance, please contact either hsetecda@herts.ac.uk or ssahecca@herts.ac.uk

Abbreviations: GN = Guidance Notes UPR = University Policies and Regulations

THE STUDY

Q1 Please give the title of the proposed study

An Exploration of the Experiences of Facilitators of Reflective Practice Groups in Clinical Psychology Training

THE APPLICANT

Q2 Name of applicant/(principal) investigator (person undertaking this study)

Rachel Carter

Student registration number/Staff number

13077497

Email address

Rb13aaz@herts.ac.uk

Status:

Undergraduate (Foundation)

Undergraduate (BSc, BA)

Postgraduate (taught)

Postgraduate (research)

Staff

Other

If other, please provide details here:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

School/Department:

Life and Medical Sciences (LMS)

If application is from a student NOT based at University of Hertfordshire, please give the name of the partner institution: N/A

Name of Programme (eg BSc (Hons) Computer Science): Doctorate in
Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy)

Module name and module code: DClinPsy Major Research Project (MRP)

Name of Supervisor: Dr Helen Ellis-Caird Supervisor's email: h.ellis-
caird@herts.ac.uk

Name of Module Leader if applicant is undertaking a taught programme/module:

Dr Helen Ellis-Caird & Dr Lizette Nolte

Names and student/staff numbers for any additional investigators involved in this study (students should read GN Sections 1.5 and 2.2.1 concerning responsibilities of all members of the group)

Dr Amy Lyons (External/Secondary Supervisor)

Dr Pf Joyce (Project Consultant)

Is this study being conducted in collaboration with another university or institution and/or does it involve working with colleagues from another institution?

Yes

No

If yes, provide details here:

Participants will be recruited from other UK DClInPsy training courses.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

- Q3 Please give a short synopsis of your proposed study, stating its aims and highlighting where these aims relate to the use of human participants (See GN 2.2.3)

Despite reflective practice being one of the key processes of a Clinical Psychologist's role, there remains limited research into the most popular way of developing reflective skills on clinical psychology training programmes; reflective practice groups.

To date, some research; both qualitative and quantitative, has been carried out to investigate trainee perspectives on their experiences of attending reflective practice groups. The main focus of the research in this area to date has centred on the personal and clinical outcomes of the reflective processes, however how these outcomes are facilitated, and what makes the achievements possible, is often overlooked (Biggins, 2019). Only one published study has explored the perspectives of reflective practice group facilitators from a single clinical psychology training programme (Binks, Jones & Knight, 2013). This lack of research is surprising given that facilitators play a key, multifaceted role as one part of the dyadic relationship between facilitators and attendees. This current project therefore aims to build on previous research by exploring facilitator perspectives across UK clinical psychology training programmes.

The Binks et al. (2013) study acknowledged that reflective practice groups appear to play a valuable role in the development of reflective skills during clinical psychology training, but have the potential to cause distress. The focus of their study was therefore facilitator perspectives on distress within the groups. Following discussion with the consultant of this proposed project, the decision has been made to broaden the focus from distress within groups, to challenges which arise (which may of course incorporate distress). This is because the consultant shared many anecdotal examples of managing challenging experiences within the groups, which would not fall within the definition as distress.

In addition to this, a new research angle will also be included in the current study. The need to find ways of challenging Whiteness, racism and Eurocentricity within clinical psychology models and practice has been highlighted by Wood and Patel (2017). This longstanding need to decolonise psychology has been highlighted once again recently following the Group of Trainers in Clinical Psychology (GTiCP) conference held in November 2019, following which, the BPS issued an apology regarding the distress caused by a performance involving a slave-trade re-enactment (BPS, 2019). The BPS statement highlighted that the worst outcome from the conference would be for people to avoid difficult conversations about race, ethnicity and the profession of clinical psychology. They offered an invitation to continue the conversation, and stated that they remain committed to challenging racism. This topic is therefore now very much at the forefront for clinical psychology training courses, as they consider how to best to decolonise their curriculum. Reflective practice groups could potentially be one way of continuing discussions about diversity and difference as it has been suggested that group work may improve trainees' tolerance of difference (Lyons, 1997). There has not been any research carried out to date which explores the perspectives of the facilitators in addressing issues of difference and diversity within reflective practice groups.

This project aims to understand facilitator perspectives on the challenges which arise within reflective practice groups, and perspectives on whether reflective practice groups can be a helpful way for trainee clinical psychologists to discuss difference and diversity.

It is hoped that the research will be of interest and benefit to both those who attend and facilitate reflective practice groups, as it will be the first published research to look at facilitator experiences across training courses. It is also anticipated that the findings may be of interest to those who deliver clinical psychology training courses as they consider how best to decolonise their curriculum.

Semi-structured interviews with reflective practice group facilitators will be conducted, which will be analysed using thematic analysis. The researcher will use a critical realist epistemological position, which is in line with thematic analysis. The aim is to recruit between 12 - 15 individuals to participate in interviews about their experiences of facilitating these groups (interviews will be conducted over telephone or video conferencing rather than face to face, in line with current research guidance in light of COVID-19). The interviews will aim to answer specific research aims, including:

- 1) What are facilitators' experiences of facilitating reflective practice groups?
- 2) What are facilitators' experiences of challenges which have arisen within reflective practice groups?
- 3) What are facilitators' experiences of conversations in relation to diversity and difference within reflective practice groups?
- 4) How do facilitators of these groups understand and make sense of their role, specifically in relation to conversations around diversity and difference and any challenges which arise within the group?

References

Biggins, A. (2019). *Does Group Reflective Practice Change how Trainee Clinical Psychologists Think about Their Clients?: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Leicester).

Binks, C., Jones, F. W., & Knight, K. (2013). Facilitating reflective practice groups in clinical psychology training: A phenomenological study. *Reflective Practice, 14*(3), 305-318.

Lyons, A. (1997). The role of groupwork in counselling training. *COUNSELLING-RUGBY, 8*, 211-215.

Wood, N., & Patel, N. (2017). On addressing 'Whiteness' during clinical psychology training. *South African Journal of Psychology, 47*(3), 280-291.

- Q4 Please give a brief explanation of the design of the study and the methods and procedures used. You should clearly state the nature of the involvement the human participants will have in your proposed study and the extent of their commitment. Ensure you provide sufficient detail for the Committee to, particularly in relation to the human participants. Refer to any Standard Operating Procedures SOPs under which you are operating here. (See GN 2.2.4).

The research design is qualitative; data will be collected via individual semi-structured interviews to explore participants' experiences of facilitating reflective practice groups. The data gathered will be transcribed, then analysed using thematic analysis (TA). Participation will be advertised via contacting all UK DClinPsy courses and asking them to forward the advertisement to the reflective practice group facilitators associated with their course. Social media platforms such as Instagram or Twitter may also be used for recruitment. The advert would be placed on closed clinical psychology groups. If this method of recruitment is used, separate accounts will be created specifically so as to maintain boundaries between research and personal life. It is anticipated that once interviews have begun, snowball sampling may occur as facilitators inform their peers about the study. Interviews are likely to last between 60-90 minutes. The interviews will take place via telephone or video conferencing (Webex, Zoom, MS Teams or similar platform), depending on participant preference. In line with UH ethics guidance, no face to face contact will take place with participants due to Covid-19. Following the interviews, participants will be offered the choice to be kept informed of research progress and any publication. There will be no follow-up interviews, and participants are free to withdraw from the study up to two weeks' post-interview (for data analysis purposes).

- Q5 Does the study involve the administration of substances?

Yes

No

PLEASE NOTE: If you have answered yes to this question you

must ensure that the study would not be considered a clinical trial of an investigational medical product. To help you, please refer to the link below from the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/317952/Algothrim.pdf

To help you determine whether NHS REC approval is required, you may wish to consult the Health Research Authority (HRA) decision tool: <http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics/>

If your study is considered a clinical trial and it is decided that ethical approval will be sought from the HRA, please stop completing this form and use Form EC1D, 'NHS Protocol Registration Request'; you should also seek guidance from Research Sponsorship.

I confirm that I have referred to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency information and confirm that that my study is not considered a clinical trial of a medicinal product.

Please type your name here: Rachel Carter

Date: 04/10/2020

Q6.1 Please give the starting date for your recruitment and data collection: 26/10/2020

Q6.2 Please give the finishing date for your data collection: 01/06/2021
(For meaning of 'starting date' and 'finishing date', see GN 2.2.6)

Q7.1 Where will the study take place?

Semi structured interviews will take place via telephone or video conferencing (Webex, Zoom, MS Teams or similar platform), which will most likely take place from the researcher and participants' respective homes. In line with UH ethics guidance, no face to face contact will take place with participants due to Covid-19. A resubmission to the Ethics Committee may be considered if necessary for recruitment in the event that guidance related to Covid-19 changes during the course of this study, in order to allow for face to face interviews to take place in a location of the participants' choice e.g. participants' homes.

Please refer to the Guidance Notes (GN 2.2.7) which set out clearly what permissions are required;

Please tick all the statements below which apply to this study

Q7.2 Permissions

This question is about two types of permission you may need to obtain.

Depending on the study you may need more than one of each of these:

- i Permission to access a particular group or groups of participants to respond to your study
- ii Permission to use a particular premises or location in which you wish to conduct your study

If your study involves minors/vulnerable participants, please refer to Q18 to ensure you comply with the University's requirement regarding Disclosure and Barring Service clearance.

TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOXES IN EACH COLUMN

(i) Permission to access participants (tick)		(ii) Permission to use premises/location (tick)	
	I confirm that I have obtained permission to access my intended group of participants and that the permission is attached to this application		Permission has been obtained to carry out the study on University premises in areas outside the Schools and the agreement is attached to this application.
	I have yet to obtain permission but I understand that this will be necessary before I commence my study. <u>For student applicants only</u> : I understand that the original copies of the permission letters must be verified by my supervisor before data collection commences		Permission has been obtained from an off-campus location to carry out the study on their premises and the agreement is attached to this application
	This study involves working with minors/vulnerable participants. I/we have obtained permission from the organisation (including UH/UH Partner Institutions when appropriate) in which the study is to take place and which is responsible for the minors/vulnerable participants. The permission states the DBS requirements of the organisation for this study and confirms I/we have satisfied their DBS requirements where necessary		I have yet to obtain permission but I understand that this will be necessary before I commence my study. <u>For student applicants only</u> : I understand that the original copies of the permission must be verified by my supervisor before data collection commences
	Permission is not required for my study. Please explain why: I will be contacting DClinPsy training courses within the UK asking		Permission is not required for my study. Please explain why: As data will be only collected via telephone or video conferencing, it is

	<p>them to pass on my study advertisement to the Reflective Practice Facilitators within their respective programme. As such, no permission is required.</p>		<p>expected that the researcher and participants will be within their own homes whilst the interviews are taking place. As such, no permissions to use premises or locations are required.</p>
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HARMS, HAZARDS AND RISKS

Q8.1 It might be appropriate to conduct a risk assessment (in respect of the hazards/risks affecting both the participants and/or investigators). **Please use form EC5, Harms, Hazards and Risks, if the answer to any of the questions below is 'yes'.**

If you are required to complete and submit a School-specific risk assessment (in accordance with the requirements of the originating School) it is acceptable to make a cross-reference from this document to Form EC5 in order not to have to repeat the information twice.

Will this study involve any of the following?

Invasive Procedures/administration of any substance/s? YES
 NO

IF 'YES' TO THE ABOVE PLEASE COMPLETE EC1 APPENDIX 1 AS WELL AND INCLUDE IT WITH YOUR APPLICATION

Are there potential hazards to participant/investigator(s) YES
 NO
from the proposed study? (Physical/Emotional or other non-physical harm)

Will or could aftercare and/or support be needed by participants? YES
 NO

Q8.2 Is the study being conducted off-campus (i.e. not at UH/UH Partner?) YES
 NO

It might be appropriate to conduct a risk assessment of the proposed location for your study (in respect of the hazards/risks affecting both the participants and/or investigators) (this might be relevant for on-campus locations as well). Please use Form EC5 and, if required, a School-specific risk assessment (See GN 2.2.8 of the Guidance Notes).

If you do not consider it necessary to submit a risk assessment, please give your reasons:

N/A

ABOUT YOUR PARTICIPANTS

- Q9 Please give a brief description of the kind of people you hope/intend to have as participants, for instance, a sample of the general population, University students, people affected by a particular medical condition, children within a given age group, employees of a particular firm, people who support a particular political party, and state whether there are any upper or lower age restrictions.

The research aims to recruit facilitators of reflective practice groups within UK Doctorate in Clinical Psychology training programmes. As such, participants will be qualified Psychologists or Psychotherapists. Only those who have facilitated reflective practice groups for more than 12 months will be included to ensure that participants have had sufficient experience in facilitating such groups to be able to reflect on their experience over time. Only those who have facilitated a reflective practice group within the past five years will be included, to ensure the relevance of their experience to current Clinical Psychology training. There will be no other exclusion criteria.

- Q10 Please state here the maximum number of participants you hope will participate in your study. Please indicate the maximum numbers of participants for *each* method of data collection.

A maximum of 15 participants will be interviewed.

Reaching a point of saturation is important in thematic analysis to ensure the validity of the findings, therefore it is difficult to say exactly how many participants will be interviewed, however some researchers have found that 12 interviews are sufficient to reach saturation (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006; Ando, Cousins & Young, 2014). It is therefore anticipated that between 12 – 15 participants will be sufficient to reach saturation point in this study.

- Q11 By completing this form, you are indicating that you are reasonably sure that you will be successful in obtaining the number of participants which you hope/intend to recruit. Please outline here your recruitment (sampling) method and how you will advertise your study. (See GN 2.2.9).

I will make email or telephone contact with all DClinPsy courses in the UK and request that my research advertisement is sent to all reflective practice group facilitators associated with their course. I will pro-actively follow up with the universities via email or telephone. My university email address will be on the advert so that anyone interested in participating can make contact with me directly. They will then be sent the participant information sheet and consent form, and have the opportunity to ask any questions.

It is anticipated that once interviews have begun, snowball sampling may occur as facilitators inform their peers about the study. Dr Pf Joyce, a reflective practice group facilitator from the DClinPsy University of Plymouth programme is a consultant on the project, and as such may have contact details of other reflective practice group facilitators who may be interested in participating.

Social media platforms such as Instagram or Twitter may also be used for recruitment. The advert would be placed on closed clinical psychology groups. If this method of recruitment is used, separate accounts will be created specifically so as to maintain boundaries between research and personal life.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONSENT

(For guidance on issues relating to consent, see GN 2.2.10, GN 3.1 and UPR RE01, SS 2.3 and 2.4 and the Ethics Approval StudyNet Site FAQs)

Q12 How will you obtain consent from the participants? Please explain the consent process for each method of data collection identified in Q4

Express/explicit consent using an EC3 Consent Form and an EC6 Participant Information Sheet (or equivalent documentation)

Implied consent (participant information will be provided, for example, at the start of the questionnaire/survey etc)

Consent by proxy (for example, given by parent/guardian)

Use this space to describe how consent is to be obtained and recorded for each method of data collection. The information you give must be sufficient to enable the Committee to understand exactly what it is that prospective participants are being asked to agree to.

Individuals who are interested in participating having seen the recruitment

advertisement will make contact with the primary researcher who will send them an electronic copy of the participant information sheet and consent form to be read and signed. Potential participants will be informed that they can make contact with the researcher again should they have any questions prior to signing the consent form.

Once the signed consent form has been received, the researcher will make contact and arrange a convenient time and date for the interview. Verbal consent will be obtained again prior to starting the interview.

Consent forms will contain identifying information (names and signatures) and will be stored securely on an encrypted mass storage device, which will be kept in a locked cupboard in the researcher's home. They will be password protected and stored separately from interview data (both recordings and transcriptions). They will be safely destroyed upon completion of the study.

If you do not intend to obtain consent from participants please explain why it is considered unnecessary or impossible or otherwise inappropriate to seek consent.

N/A

- Q13 If the participant is a minor (under 18 years of age) or is unable for any reason to give full consent on their own, state here whose consent will be obtained and how? (See especially GN 3.6 and 3.7)

N/A

- Q14.1 Will anyone other than yourself and the participants be present with you when conducting this study? (See GN 2.2.10)

YES

NO

If YES, please state the relationship between anyone else who is present other than the applicant and/or participants (eg health professional, parent/guardian of the participant).

- Q14.2 Will the proposed study be conducted in private?

YES

NO

If 'No', what steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality of the participants' information. (See GN 2.2.10):

- Q15.1 Are personal data of any sort (such as name, age, gender, occupation, contact

details or images) to be obtained from or in respect of any participant? (See GN 2.2.11) (You will be required to adhere to the arrangements declared in this application concerning confidentiality of data and its storage. The Participant Information Sheet (Form EC6 or equivalent) must explain the arrangements clearly.)

YES

NO

If YES, give details of personal data to be gathered and indicate how it will be stored.

Consent forms will contain identifying information (names and signatures) and will be stored securely on an encrypted mass storage device. They will be password protected and stored separately from interview data (both recordings and transcriptions). They will be safely destroyed upon completion of the study.

Demographic data including age, gender and ethnicity will be obtained from participants and reported on in the write up. This data will be anonymised, password protected and securely stored on an encrypted device.

Names of participants and potentially the names of others will be used verbally during the interviews and therefore on the audio recordings. Recordings will be password protected, stored securely on an encrypted mass storage device using anonymised file names, and stored separately from identifying information (consent forms and demographic data).

If transcription services are used, a service with a GDPR policy in place will be used to ensure confidentiality. The service will also be asked to sign confidentiality agreements. Audio files will be sent password protected, with the password contained in a separate email. Transcripts will be anonymised by removing any names or education institutions mentioned.

For the write up of the findings, pseudonyms will be used rather than participants' real names, and the names of the universities which the participants are associated with will not be disclosed.

Consent forms, demographic data and audio recordings will be deleted on completion of the study. Transcripts will be kept for 5 years following completion of the study.

All encrypted storage devices will be stored in a locked cupboard in the researcher's home.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are processing personal information you MUST consider whether you need to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA). Please read the DPIA guidance available from the FAQ section of the UH Ethics Approval StudyNet site:

<http://www.studynet2.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/ethics.nsf/Frequently+Asked+Questions/935D97CDBC546E69802583A9005213A6>

If you need to complete one, please find the DPIA template in the University's website at the following link:

https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/233619/IM08-apxI-Template-Data-Protection-Impact-Assessment.pdf

The DPIA must be completed in consultation with the University's Data Protection Officer and submitted with your application for ethics approval.

Will you be making audio-visual recordings?

YES

NO

If YES, give details of the types recording to be made and indicate how they will be stored.

Interviews will be audio recorded (not video recorded) on an encrypted device. A second encrypted device may be used simultaneously to avoid difficulties such as accidental deletion or low battery. All recordings will be treated in the same manner. Once each interview is complete, the audio will be saved onto the encrypted mass storage device. Files will be password protected and will be given a non-identifiable file name. Storage devices will be kept in a locked cupboard in the researcher's home.

Q15.2 If you have made a YES response to any part of Q15.1, please state what steps will be taken to prevent or regulate access to personal data and/or audio-visual recordings beyond the immediate investigative team, as indicated in the Participant Information Sheet.

Only the primary researcher, internal supervisor, external supervisor and transcription service will have access to the password protected audio recordings. The transcription service will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Audio files will be sent to the transcription service password protected, with the password contained in a separate email.

Indicate what assurances will be given to participants about the security of, and access to, personal data and/or audio-visual recordings, as indicated in the Participant Information Sheet.

The participant information sheet outlines the following information in respect of their personal data and audio recordings:

- Demographic data will be stored securely on an encrypted mass media

device

- Audio recordings will be recorded onto an encrypted device(s) and transferred onto a separate encrypted mass storage device (separate from their consent forms and demographic data).
- Storage devices will be kept in a locked cupboard in the researcher's home.
- All files containing personal and/or identifiable information (such as consent forms, demographic data and audio recordings) will be password protected. Only the research team will have access to the passwords.
- Pseudonyms will be assigned to their audio files for the purpose of the write-up, and may be used in the file names.
- The only people who will have access to their personal information (i.e. consent forms and demographic data) are the research team.
- The only people who will have access to their audio recordings are the research team and a transcription service. The transcription service will be asked to sign confidentiality agreements.

State as far as you are able to do so how long personal data and/or audio-visual recordings collected/made during the study will be retained and what arrangements have been made for its/their secure storage and destruction, as indicated in the Participant Information Sheet.

Consent forms, demographic data and audio recordings will be deleted on completion of the study. Transcripts will be kept for 5 years following completion of the study to allow for potential secondary analysis. Following this they will be destroyed securely.

Q15.3 Will data be anonymised prior to storage? YES

NO

Q16 Is it intended (or possible) that data might be used beyond the present study? (See GN 2.2.10) YES NO

If YES, please indicate the kind of further use that is intended (or which may be possible).

Secondary analysis of the data may be carried out; therefore data will be kept for 5 years prior to being destroyed under secure conditions.

If NO, will the data be kept for a set period and then destroyed under secure conditions? YES NO

If NO, please explain why not:

Q17 Consent Forms: what arrangements have been made for the storage of Consent Forms and for how long?

Consent forms will contain identifying information (names and signatures) and will be stored securely on an encrypted mass storage device. The storage device will be kept in a locked cupboard in the researcher's home. They will be password protected and stored separately from interview data (both recordings and transcriptions). They will be safely destroyed upon completion of the study.

Q18 If the activity/activities involve work with children and/or vulnerable adults satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance may be required by investigators. You are required to check with the organisation (including UH/UH Partners where appropriate) responsible for the minors/vulnerable participants whether or not they require DBS clearance.

Any permission from the organisation confirming their approval for you to undertake the activities with the children/vulnerable group for which they are responsible should make specific reference to any DBS requirements they impose and their permission letter/email must be included with your application.

More information is available via the DBS website - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

REWARDS

Q19.1 Are you receiving any financial or other reward connected with this study? (See GN 2.2.14 and UPR RE01, S 2.3)

YES NO

If YES, give details here:

Carrying out this study will not lead to direct financial gain, however it forms part of the requirements of the DClinPsy programme; on completion I will qualify as a Clinical Psychologist, which will lead to increased earning potential.

Q19.2 Are participants going to receive any financial or other reward connected with the study? (Please note that the University does not allow participants to be given a financial inducement.) (See UPR RE01, S 2.3)

YES NO

If YES, provide details here:

As the interviews are not taking place face to face, no travel reimbursements will

be required.

Q19.3 Will anybody else (including any other members of the investigative team) receive any financial or other reward connected with this study?

YES

NO

If YES, provide details here:

No direct financial gain, however should the study later be published, this could potentially lead to recognition in the field and career progression for members of the research team.

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS

Q20 Enter here anything else you want to say in support of your application, or which you believe may assist the Committee in reaching its decision.

[Click here to enter text.](#)

DOCUMENTS TO BE ATTACHED

Please indicate below which documents are attached to this application:

- Permission to access groups of participants
- Permission to use University premises beyond areas of School
- Permission from off-campus location(s) to be used to conduct this study
- Form EC5 (Harms, Hazards and Risks: assessment and mitigation)
- Consent Form (See Form EC3/EC4)
- Form EC6 (Participant Info Sheet)
- Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)
- A copy of the proposed questionnaire and/or interview schedule (if appropriate for this study). For unstructured methods, please provide details of the subject areas that will be covered and any boundaries that have been agreed with your Supervisor

Any other relevant documents, such as a debrief, meeting report. Please provide details here:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

-
- Recruitment advertisement
 - Participant debrief form
-

DECLARATIONS

1 DECLARATION BY APPLICANT

- 1.1 I undertake, to the best of my ability, to abide by UPR RE01, 'Studies Involving the Use of Human Participants', in carrying out the study.
- 1.2 I undertake to explain the nature of the study and all possible risks to potential participants,
- 1.3 Data relating to participants will be handled with great care. No data relating to named or identifiable participants will be passed on to others without the written consent of the participants concerned, unless they have already consented to such sharing of data when they agreed to take part in the study.
- 1.4 All participants will be informed **(a)** that they are not obliged to take part in the study, and **(b)** that they may withdraw at any time without disadvantage or having to give a reason.

(NOTE: Where the participant is a minor or is otherwise unable, for any reason, to give full consent on their own, references here to participants being given an explanation or information, or being asked to give their consent, are to be understood as referring to the person giving consent on their behalf. (See Q 12; also GN Pt. 3, and especially 3.6 & 3.7))

Enter your name here: Rachel Carter

Date 04/10/2020

2 GROUP APPLICATION

(If you are making this application on behalf of a group of students/staff, please complete this section as well)

I confirm that I have agreement of the other members of the group to sign this declaration on their behalf

Enter your name here: [Click here to enter text.](#)
a date.

Date [Click here to enter](#)

DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR (see GN 2.1.6)

I confirm that the proposed study has been appropriately vetted within the School in respect of its aims and methods; that I have discussed this application for Ethics Committee approval with the applicant and approve its submission; that I accept responsibility for guiding the applicant so as to ensure compliance with the terms of the protocol and with any applicable ethical code(s); and that if there are conditions of the approval, they have been met.

Enter your name here: [Click here to enter text.](#)
date.

Date [Click here to enter a](#)

Ref No	
Date	
Review Date	
OFFICE USE ONLY	

**SCHOOL OF LIFE AND MEDICAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE**

Life and Medical Sciences Risk Assessment

The completion of this is an integral part of the preparation for your work, it is not just a form to be completed, but is designed to alert you to potential hazards so you can identify the measures you will need to put into place to control them. You will need a copy on you when you carry out your work

General Information			
Name	Rachel Carter	Email address	Rb13aaz@herts.ac.uk
Contact number	07939722269		
Supervisor name (if student)	Dr Helen Ellis-Caird	Supervisor's e-mail address (if student)	h.ellis-caird@herts.ac.uk
Supervisor's contact number	01707286322		
Activity			
Title of activity	An Exploration of the Experiences of Facilitators of Reflective Practice Groups in Clinical Psychology Training		
Brief description of activity	Semi- structured interviews of a 60-90-minute duration will be conducted. Questions will relate to the following areas: background information about participant and reflective practice groups facilitated, experiences of facilitating groups, challenges faced in facilitating the groups, and experiences of topics of difference and diversity arising within the groups.		
Location of activity	Interviews will take place over the telephone/on video conferencing platforms.		
Who will be taking part in this activity	Participants will be Psychologists or Psychotherapists who facilitate reflective practice groups on DClinPsy programmes.		
Types of Hazards likely to be encountered			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Computers and other display screen	<input type="checkbox"/> Falling objects	<input type="checkbox"/> Farm machinery	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire
<input type="checkbox"/> Cuts	<input type="checkbox"/> Falls from heights	<input type="checkbox"/> Manual handling	<input type="checkbox"/> Hot or cold extremes
<input type="checkbox"/> Repetitive handling	<input type="checkbox"/> Severe weather	<input type="checkbox"/> Slips/trips/falls	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stress
<input type="checkbox"/> Travel	<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicles	<input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive response, physical or	<input type="checkbox"/> Workshop machinery

Other hazards not listed above		verbal		Is there anything else which is not listed above?		
Risk Control Measures						
List the activities in the order in which they occur, indicating your perception of the risks associated with each one and the probability of occurrence, together with the relevant safety measures. Describe the activities involved. Consider the risks to participants, research team, security, maintenance, members of the public – is there anyone else who could be harmed? In respect of any equipment to be used read manufacturer's instructions and note any hazards that arise, particularly from incorrect use.						
Identify hazards	Who could be harmed?	How could they be harmed?	Control Measures – what precautions are currently in place?	What is the residual level of risk after the control measures have been put into place?	Are there any risks that are not controlled or not adequately controlled?	Is more action needed to reduce/manage the risk? for example, provision of support/aftercare, precautions to be put in place to avoid or minimise risk or adverse effects
Eg questionnaires	Eg participants	Eg Aggressive response - physical or verbal	Eg LMS Health and Safety Policy, interviewer being accompanied, following local rules, advice or training in dealing with difficult situations.	Low Medium or High	Eg the risk to participants	Eg additional support following interview
Use of telephone / computer during interviews	Researcher and participants	Use of telephone / computer which could cause harm if they become damaged or broken during the interview. Risk of damage to property which could result in financial cost. Risk	Researcher and participants are responsible for their own equipment and safety when using this.	Low	No	No

LMS RA 2019

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		of minor injury to person, for example if the screen on a smartphone breaks and shatters.				
Use of video conferencing platforms e.g. Zoom / Webex / MS Teams.	Researcher and participants	Some platforms are more susceptible to hacking and have less privacy features which could potentially compromise confidentiality.	Advice regarding which platforms are safest varies across settings. Some NHS trusts recommend Zoom and Webex as being most secure. All appropriate measures will be taken to promote privacy and reduce the risk of hacking i.e. setting a password to allow entry into the interview meeting, and 'locking' the meeting once the researcher and participant are in; thus preventing anyone else from joining.	Low	No	Inform participants of the potential risks when using online platforms. Interviews will take place on the platform which each participant is most comfortable using.
Questions in interview could potentially elicit emotional distress.	Researcher and participants	Emotional distress/discomfort resulting from talking about challenging experiences.	The researcher will use their clinical skills to manage any distress which arises. Participants will be offered the option of a break should they become distressed and reminded of their right to withdraw. The researcher has access to supervision from the primary and secondary supervisor.	Low	No	Participants will be informed that they can withdraw at any point during the interview (this information is contained in the consent form). A debrief will also take place whereby participants will have the opportunity to discuss how they found the interview and whether it brought up any difficult emotions for them. The researcher will engage in self-care practices and seek supervision if they are emotionally impacted by

LMS RA 2019

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						the content of the interviews.
List any other documents relevant to this application		Include Standard Operating Procedures, local rules and so on.				
Signatures						
Assessor name	Rachel Carter	Assessor signature		Date	04/10/2020	
Supervisor, if Assessor is a student	Helen Ellis-Caird	Supervisor signature			06/10/20	
Local Health and Safety Advisor Lab Manager	JOHN BAIN	Local Health and Safety Advisor/ Lab Manager signature			6/10/2020	

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR STUDIES INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ('ETHICS COMMITTEE')

FORM EC5 – HARMS, HAZARDS AND RISKS:
ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION

Name of applicant: Rachel Carter

Date of assessment: 04/10/2020

Title of Study/Activity: An Exploration of the Experiences of Facilitators of Reflective Practice Groups in Clinical Psychology Training

If you are required to complete and submit a School-specific risk assessment (in accordance with the requirements of the originating School), it is acceptable to make a cross-reference from that document to form EC5 in order not to have to repeat the information twice. The purpose of Form EC5 is to consider how a participant might react to the activities in the study and to indicate how you will manage such reactions; the Form also addresses the safety of the investigator and how any risks to the investigator will be managed.

Activity Description					
1. IDENTIFY RISKS/HAZARDS	2. WHO COULD BE HARMED & HOW?		3. EVALUATE THE RISKS		4. ACTION NEEDED
<p>Activities/tasks and associated hazards Describe the activities involved in the study and any associated risks/ hazards, both physical and emotional, resulting from the study. Consider the risks to participants/the research team/members of the public.</p> <p>In respect of any equipment to be used read manufacturer's instructions and note any hazards that arise, particularly from incorrect use.)</p>	<p>Who is at risk? e.g. participants, investigators, other people at the location, the owner / manager / workers at the location etc.</p>	<p>How could they be harmed? What sort of accident could occur, eg trips, slips, falls, lifting equipment etc, handling chemical substances, use of invasive procedures and correct disposal of equipment etc. What type of injury is likely? Could the study cause discomfort or distress of a mental or emotional character to participants and/or investigators? What is the nature of any discomfort or distress of a mental or emotional character that you might anticipate?</p>	<p>Are there any precautions currently in place to prevent the hazard or minimise adverse effects? Are there standard operating procedures or rules for the premises? Have there been agreed levels of supervision of the study? Will trained medical staff be present? Etc/</p>	<p>Are there any risks that are not controlled or not adequately controlled?</p>	<p>List the action that needs to be taken to reduce/manage the risks arising from your study for example, provision of medical support/aftercare, precautions to be put in place to avoid or minimise risk or adverse effects NOTE: medical or other aftercare and/or support must be made available for participants and/or investigator(s) who require it.</p>
Use of telephone / computer during interviews	Researcher and participants	Use of telephone / computer which could cause harm if they become damaged or broken during the interview. Risk of damage to property which could result in financial cost. Risk of minor injury to person, for example if the screen on a smartphone breaks and shatters.	Researcher and participants are responsible for their own equipment and safety when using this.	No	None
Use of video conferencing platforms e.g. Zoom / Webex / MS Teams.	Researcher and participants	Some platforms are more susceptible to hacking and have less privacy features	Advice regarding which platforms are safest varies across settings.	No	Inform participants of the potential risks when using online platforms. Interviews will

		which could potentially compromise confidentiality.	Some NIS trusts recommend Zoom and Webex as being most secure. All appropriate measures will be taken to promote privacy and reduce the risk of hacking i.e. setting a password to allow entry into the interview meeting, and 'locking' the meeting once the researcher and participant are in; thus preventing anyone else from joining.		take place on the platform which each participant is most comfortable using.
Questions in interview could potentially elicit emotional distress.	Researcher and participants	Emotional distress/discomfort resulting from talking about challenging experiences.	<p>The researcher will use their clinical skills to manage any distress which arises. Participants will be offered the option of a break should they become distressed and reminded of their right to withdraw.</p> <p>The researcher has access to supervision from the primary and secondary supervisor.</p>	No	<p>Participants will be informed that they can withdraw at any point during the interview (this information is contained in the consent form). They will be informed that they can contact the primary supervisor for emotional support following the interview should they wish to (this information is contained in the debrief form).</p> <p>The researcher will engage in self-care practices and seek supervision if they are emotionally impacted by the content of the interviews.</p>

Signed by applicant: Rachel Carter	Dated: 04/10/2020
---------------------------------------	----------------------

Appendix H: Ethical approval.



HEALTH, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ECDA

ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO Rachel Carter
CC Dr Helen Ellis-Caird
FROM Dr Simon Trainis, Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA Chair
DATE 14/10/2020

Protocol number: **LMS/PGT/UH/04289**

Title of study: An Exploration of the Experiences of Facilitators of Reflective Practice Groups in Clinical Psychology Training

Your application for ethics approval has been accepted and approved with the following conditions by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

Dr Amy Lyons (External/Secondary Supervisor)
Dr Pf Joyce (Project Consultant)

General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

Permissions: Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

External communications: Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

Invasive procedures: If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

Submission: Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

Validity:

This approval is valid:

From: 26/10/2020

To: 01/06/2021

Please note:

Failure to comply with the conditions of approval will be considered a breach of protocol and may result in disciplinary action which could include academic penalties.

Additional documentation requested as a condition of this approval protocol may be submitted via your supervisor to the Ethics Clerks as it becomes available. All documentation relating to this study, including the information/documents noted in the conditions above, must be available for your supervisor at the time of submitting your work so that they are able to confirm that you have complied with this protocol.

Should you amend any aspect of your research or wish to apply for an extension to your study you will need your supervisor's approval (if you are a student) and must complete and submit form EC2.

Approval applies specifically to the research study/methodology and timings as detailed in your Form EC1A. In cases where the amendments to the original study are deemed to be substantial, a new Form EC1A may need to be completed prior to the study being undertaken.

Failure to report adverse circumstance/s may be considered misconduct.

Should adverse circumstances arise during this study such as physical reaction/harm, mental/emotional harm, intrusion of privacy or breach of confidentiality this must be reported to the approving Committee immediately.

Appendix I: Participant Debrief form.

Your interview is now complete. Thank you so much for taking part in this research, it is greatly appreciated.

It is hoped that this study will contribute to the important topic of reflective practice within the Clinical Psychology profession.

Please let Rachel know if you would like to be kept up to date with the progress of the study and any publications which may result.

Once again thank you for your time, energy and effort.

Appendix J: Transcription service GDPR policy.

GDPR Policy – Alltypes Secretarial Services

The client has:

- The right to access their data at any time, free of charge.
- The right to know why their data is being used.
- The right to remove their data and permanently delete it.
- The right to transfer their data to another provider.
- The right to be informed that their data is being collected.
- The right to amend/correct their personal data.
- The right to restrict what their data is used for.
- The right to be notified within 72 hours if a data breach occurs.

No phone apps or spreadsheets are used to store or process clients' details.

We will not send you marketing information without your prior consent.

What information we hold and why:

1. We hold client's names and office addresses and sometimes personal addresses on a folder on a pc. The purpose is for creating a monthly invoice for regular clients and ad-hoc invoices for non regular clients. The purpose is also to be able to follow up unpaid invoices. The data is stored securely on one pc which is password protected.
2. We hold clients' names and office addresses and sometimes personal addresses in a manual invoice book which is kept locked in a filing cabinet at 115 Norman Road, Barton-le-Clay Bedfordshire MK45 4PX. The data is stored securely and filed with the end of year accounts filing.
3. Every year, the accounts that are seven years old are destroyed via shredding.

We cleanse and delete old or unused data on an annual basis, unless the client wishes us not to destroy their data.

4. We receive data via encrypted links sent to us by the client, from GDPR approved sites such as Tresorit. The liability is on the part of the client (sender) to ensure their information is provided securely to us and complies with their own company/institution GDPR regulations/policy.
5. We have two websites: www.alltypes-secreterial.co.uk and www.alltypes-secretarial.com which collect visitor data in numbers only. No personal details are collected via the websites.
6. Data on clients is stored purely for communicating directly with same and for invoicing purposes.
 - Where a client requests a confidentiality agreement to be signed, we will sign it.
 - Where a client supplies work of a personal/sensitive nature, we will transcribe said work but withhold all personal information which might identify the third party person/people to comply with GDPR unless otherwise directed by the client.
 - Where a client requests we delete all copies of work supplied of a sensitive nature, we will comply.

Non compliance of GDPR:

We are aware that businesses that do not take GDPR seriously will be subject to significant penalties.

Appendix K: Confidentiality agreement.

Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
University of Hertfordshire

Transcription confidentiality/ non-disclosure agreement

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

Rachel Carter, Trainee Clinical Psychologist (discloser)

And

Lesley Beadsley, Alltypes Secretarial Services (transcriber)

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.

If the recipient is able to identify and knows the participant in the recording, the recipient agrees to cease transcription, inform the discloser, and destroy any copies of the recording.

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:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lesley".

Name: Lesley Beadsley trading as Alltypes Secretarial Services

Date: 22nd December 2020



Appendix L: Consent form.



**UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR STUDIES INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN
PARTICIPANTS
(‘ETHICS COMMITTEE’)**

**FORM EC3
CONSENT FORM FOR STUDIES INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS**

**Study: An Exploration of the Experiences of Facilitators of Reflective Practice Groups
in Clinical Psychology Training. Principal Investigator: Rachel Carter**

I, the undersigned [*please give your name here, in BLOCK CAPITALS*]

.....
.....
of [*please give contact details here, sufficient to enable the investigator to get in touch with
you, such as a postal or email address*]

.....
.....
hereby freely agree to take part in the study entitled

An Exploration of the Experiences of Facilitators of Reflective Practice Groups in Clinical
Psychology Training

(UH Protocol number LMS/PGT/UH/04289)

1 I confirm that I have been given a Participant Information Sheet (a copy of which is attached to this form) giving particulars of the study, including its aim(s), methods and design, the names and contact details of key people and, as appropriate, the risks and potential benefits, how the information collected will be stored and for how long, and any plans for follow-up studies that might involve further approaches to participants. I have also been informed of how my personal information on this form will be stored and for how long. I have been given details of my involvement in the study. I have been told that in the event of any significant change to the aim(s) or design of the study I will be informed, and asked to renew my consent to participate in it.

2 I have been assured that I may withdraw from the interview at any time without disadvantage or having to give a reason. I can also withdraw from the study up to 2 weeks following the interview.

3 In giving my consent to participate in this study, I understand that voice recording will take place and I have been informed of how/whether this recording will be transmitted/displayed.

4 I have been told how information relating to me (data obtained in the course of the study, and data provided by me about myself) will be handled: how it will be kept secure, who will have access to it, and how it will or may be used, including the possibility of anonymised data being deposited in a repository with open access (freely available).

5 I understand that if there is any revelation of unlawful activity or any indication of non-medical circumstances that would or has put others at risk, the University may refer the matter to the appropriate authorities.

6 I do / do not (please circle as appropriate) wish to be contacted regarding the findings of this study.

Signature of participant.....Date.....

Signature of (principal) investigator.....Date.....
 ...

Name of (principal) investigator [*in BLOCK CAPITALS please*]

.....

Appendix M: Interview guide.**Topic Area: Background information about participant and groups facilitated.**

- 1) Could you start by telling me how long you've been facilitating reflective practice groups on the programme?

Topic area: Experiences of facilitating.

- 2) Please could you tell me about your experiences of facilitating reflective practice groups?

Prompts include:

- Does anything stand out to you about the process which cohorts/individuals tend to go through during RPGs?
- How do you find facilitating these groups, is there anything in particular you enjoy / don't enjoy about facilitating the groups?
- How do you think the way the group is set up impacts the experience, for example, theoretical orientation, whether it is evaluated?
- How do you think your training/ expertise/ experience/ connection to the course impact the experience?

Topic area: Challenges.

- 3) Please could you tell me about any challenges which have arisen within the groups you've facilitated?

Prompts include: e.g. personal difficulties, group dynamics, group splits?

- 4) Follow up question: As a facilitator, how would you describe your role in relation to any challenges which arise?

Prompts include: observer, active participant, reflector, offering intervention, attending to process? Does this change at different points? What might prompt a change in role?

If relevant, can ask whether they receive any support/supervision in their role and whether there are any guidelines about what action should be taken if the facilitator had serious concerns e.g. about the group as a whole or individual members in the group?

Topic area: Difference and Diversity.

- 5) What have been your experiences of diversity and difference being navigated within reflective practice groups?
- 6) Follow up questions: What has gone well? What challenges have arisen with this? What factors are important here? As a facilitator, what has your role been in relation to these conversations about diversity and difference?
- 7) How does your own gender/ ethnicity/ sexuality impact on how you navigate these issues?

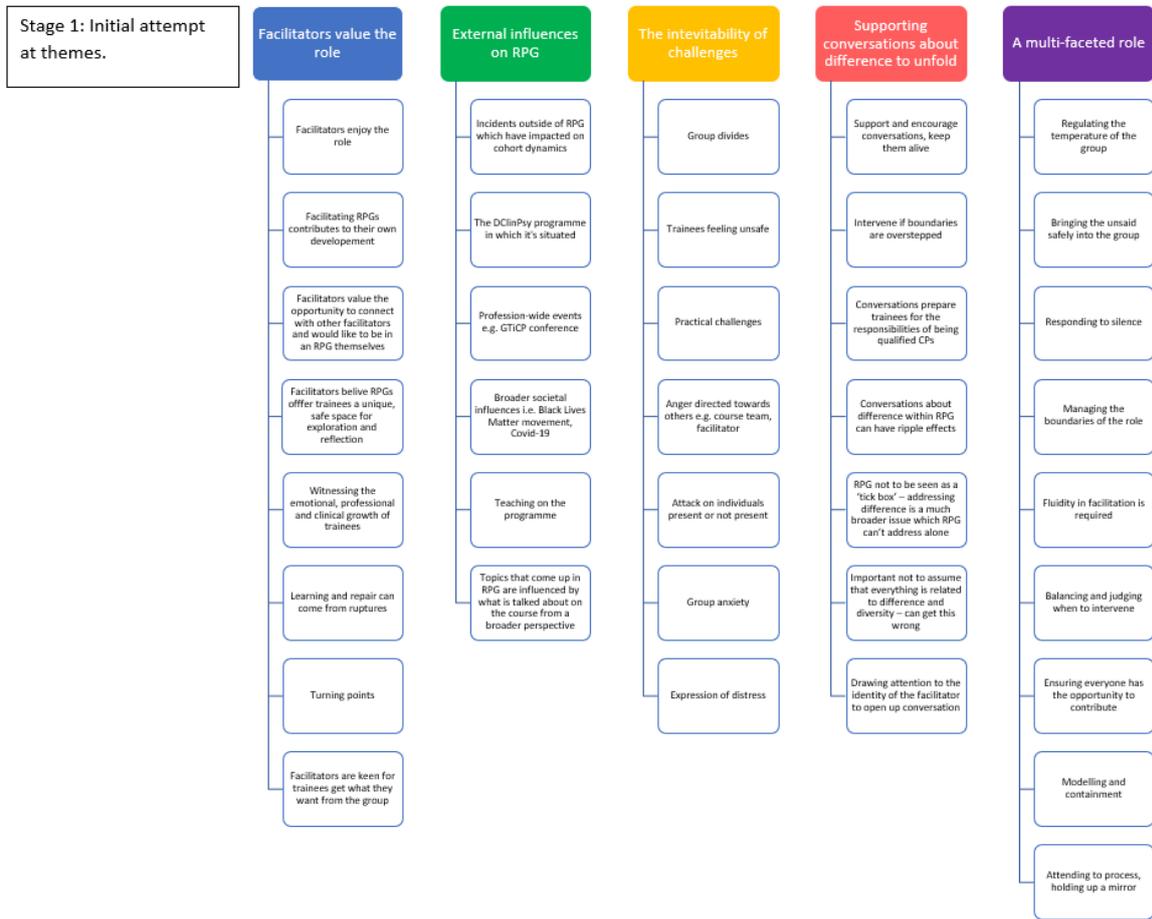
Prompts include: observer, active participant, reflector, offering intervention, attending to process? Does this change at different points? What might prompt a change in role?

- 8) Is there anything else you would like to add?

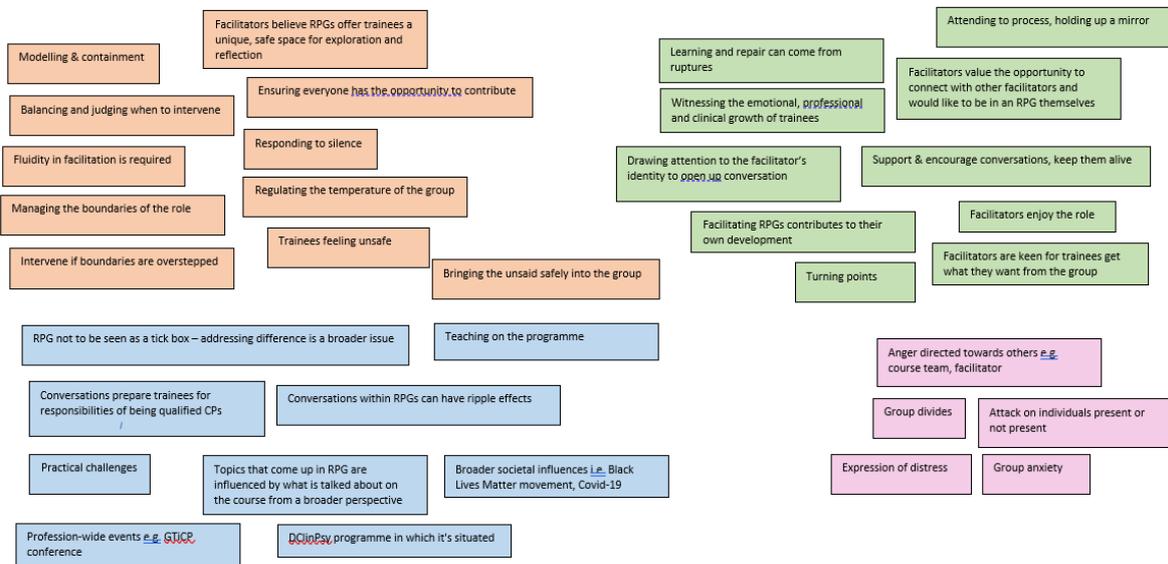
Appendix N: Excerpt of coded transcript.

Transcript	Codes
P 5: But that sort of arriving in the first year um having often worked extraordinarily hard to get a place on training. Um and that initial excitement and euphoria and sense of having made it and then the ground kind of opens up doesn't it and there's a kind of sense of what on earth have I done and what is this thing called clinical psychology and what am I now supposed to be, I don't have a sense of being good enough, that sort of sense of comparing to everybody else and that internal worry of I'm going I'm gonna be found to be the only person who's been offered a place that really ought not to be here. Um and I think that often then translates into a real uncertainty about how do I use this space, I've no idea, it's not structured, there's no clear goal, there's a kind of invitation to sit with everything that is most uncomfortable in a way that feels unbelievably difficult. Um that that kind of anger and frustration about why aren't there any rules.	Arriving at DTP having worked extremely hard. Initial euphoria, idealisation of course/profession. Ground opens up, lose footing, feel unstable. Questioning decision to train as a CP. Questioning profession. Not feeling good enough. Comparison to peers. Worry. Sense of being an imposter. Anxiety translates into uncertainty re: RPG. Questioning how to use RPG space. Unstructured space difficult. RPG as an invitation to sit with the uncomfortable. RPG feels unbelievably difficult. Dilemma: rules vs no rules.

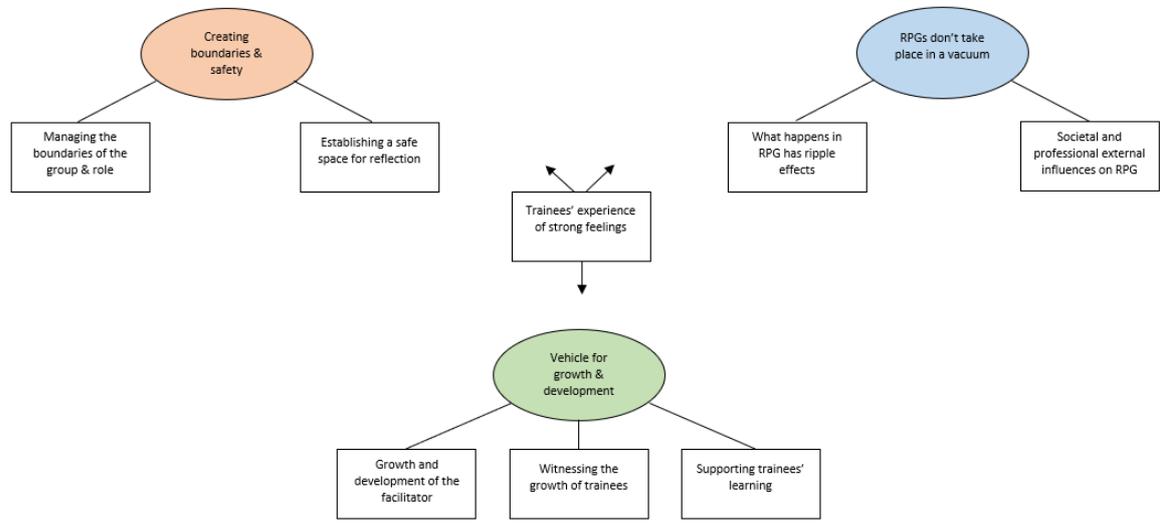
Appendix O: Development of themes.



Stage 2: Re-grouping of sub-themes, colours relate to those in final thematic map.



Stage 3: Development of final thematic map depicting 3 main themes and their subthemes, along with a further subtheme which relates to all 3 themes.



Appendix P: Reflective diary excerpts.

1 – Today I've been feeling a bit deflated as recruiting a facilitator to act as a project consultant is proving to be a difficult task. Potential consultants have been suggested by a member of the course team, however when I made contact with the people suggested, they either didn't have capacity to be involved in the study or I didn't receive a response. I've thought about my own RPG facilitator, however I don't feel it would be to approach them due to boundary considerations, given I'm still a member of the RPG. I did consider having a fellow trainee or ex-trainee as a consultant as they have experiences of attending RPGs and will have views about the facilitator role. I have wondered what this would add to the research, however, since both my supervisors and I already have the experience of attending an RPG. Also, I feel that adding someone to the team from a different doctoral training programme would be helpful in supporting me think more broadly about RPGs. I believe it would be helpful to have someone who's been a facilitator on the project team to ensure that my initial ideas would feel meaningful, helpful and relevant to facilitators. I've therefore found myself questioning the study all together and am wondering whether this is in indication that I might struggle to get sufficient numbers of participants.

I'm now feeling much more hopeful following a meeting with my supervisors, I recognised that I'd only contacted a handful of people so far regarding the consultant role, therefore I've made a decision to contact all universities on the Clearing House website advertising for a study consultant. This will hopefully lead to me identifying a consultant, and may also give me some indication about whether courses are willing/able to share information with facilitators associated with their courses.

2 - Within today's video interview, there were discussions about periods of silence within RPGs. I noticed a strong reaction within myself whilst the participant was talking about this and found myself smiling and nodding as I was resonating with what they were saying and recalling my responses to periods of silence within the groups. I noticed this almost immediately and consciously attempted to change my facial expression to a more neutral one, as I considered how these cues may have indicated to the participant that I was pleased with, or very interested in what they were saying. This may potentially have led to them talking more than they would have done about this topic. I considered that within the telephone interviews, participants would not receive these non-verbal cues from me. I've therefore made a decision to make a brief note during the interview if I was notice a strong reaction within myself about what a participant is saying, so that I can later consider how this may have impacted what the participant said or how I followed on from what they said. Following the interview, I thought in more depth about my own relationship with silence within an RPG setting, and how it has changed over time. In the initial stages I found it incredibly uncomfortable, and noticed myself feeling an urge to fill the silences. Over time, however, I appreciated these moments of silence within the group as they seemed to represent such a different pace to the other aspects of training such as ongoing deadlines, packed teaching days and being so busy on placement. I also thought about how silence can be interpreted differently by different people, however, and therefore is not always helpful to all; for example, if it's perceived as indifference.

3 – I completed an interview earlier today which only lasted 25 minutes. This led me to wonder whether I'd explored the participants responses thoroughly enough. On reflection, all areas of the interview guide had been covered, however, follow up questions had been asked and the participant had been given the opportunity to say anything else that they

wished to. I wondered whether the short length of the interview was related to the fact that this participant had been facilitating an RPG for a year, and therefore with only one group of trainees so far. Because they hadn't been facilitating for as long as other participants, they therefore may have had less material/experiences to reflect on. This has made me question whether the inclusion criteria of a minimum of 12 months facilitating was a sufficient time frame. I therefore decided to listen back to the interview recording. The phrase 'quality not quantity' sprang to mind, as when I was listening back there were some really rich moments in the interview, which directly related to the research questions, particularly the one around facilitators' experiences of challenges within the group, which was reassuring.

4 – I'm currently feeling quite overwhelmed with the analysis stage of the project and it's feeling difficult to 'see the wood for the trees.' I have so many codes and I'm feeling a great sense of responsibility to capture the complexity of what the participants have shared with me. I'm also worrying about whether I'll be able to portray what has been shared clearly enough, whilst ensuring that I'm not jeopardising the anonymity of the facilitators and trainees during the write up. I've attempted an initial thematic map, however having looked at it again in a meeting with my supervisors, there's too much overlap between the themes, and some of the themes simply reflect responses to what I asked in the interviews. We therefore decided that in terms of next steps, I will delete all the headings of the initial thematic map, instead writing out the individual content of these onto post it notes which I can then easily move around and regroup. The aim will be to try different configurations visually to ensure that the final thematic map captures something more complex about the whole data set. I've also decided to take one step at a time and will consider how best to capture the analysis in the write up whilst honouring anonymity once the thematic map is finalised. I'm hoping this will help with the sense of overwhelm!