Working Class Backgrounds in Clinical Psychology: Experiences of Trainee Clinical Psychologists

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ABSTRACT

Background: The experiences of trainee clinical psychologists from working class backgrounds is under documented in research. Undergoing doctoral level training represents a significant and complex journey. Despite the limited literature, social mobility, through education and entering "high-classed" professions, has a significant impact on working-class students.

Aim: To explore the experiences of working-class trainee clinical psychologists entering the profession, training on the course and the relationships to their class identity.

Method: Using a qualitative method, two focus groups were conducted and analysed using a reflective thematic analysis. Thirteen participants from 9 UK courses, who self-identified as being working-class were recruited.

Results: Four themes were identified. Theme 1) *Is there space?* describes how working-class trainees navigated entering the profession, and then how class is not spoken of on the training. Theme 2) *Fitting in,* described how WC trainees experienced pressures to adapt that conflict with their class identity. Theme 3) *The working-class connection,* displayed the class-based strengths such as; an ease in building therapeutic relationships, understanding the socio-political contexts of mental health, and a commitment to supporting communities. Theme 4) *What class am I now?* describes the trainees experiences of their class-identity whilst training as a clinical psychologist. Whilst perspectives varied on whether being a clinical psychologist detaches you from being working-class, trainees described that their working-class values systems remain engrained from their upbringings.

Conclusion: The study highlights the challenges that working-class identities may face in clinical psychology, but also the strengths that this identity can bring. Recommendations include incorporating class into training, reviewing the barriers to entry and continuing research on this topic.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP *Assistant Psychologist*

APA *American Psychological Association*

BPS *British Psychological Society*

CA *Class Assumptions*

CC *Class Consciousness*

CI *Class Identity*

CP *Clinical Psychologist*

CR *Critical Realist*

CS *Class System*

FG *Focus Group*

FIF *First In the Family*

GBCS *Great British Class Survey*

HE *Higher Education*

LCH *Leeds Clearing House*

MC *Middle Class*

MH *Mental Health*

NCSR *National Centre for Social Research*

PP *Psychological Professions*

PPD *Personal and Professional Development*

SC *Social Class*

SCT-SC *Social Cognitive Theory of Social Class*

SCWM-R *The Social Class Worldview Model- Revised*

SES *Socioeconomic Status*

SI *Social Inequality*

SJ *Social Justice*

SM *Social Mobility*

SU *Service User*

TA *Thematic Analysis*

TR *Therapeutic Relationship*

UEL *University of East London*

UK *United Kingdom*

WC *Working Class*

WP *Widen Participation*

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL CLASS

1.1. Overview

This study explores Working-Class (WC) trainee Clinical Psychologists (CPs) experiences of entering the profession, being on the training and their relationship with their Class Identity (CI). This chapter firstly introduces the concepts of Social Class (SC) and notes the complexities with class-related terminologies. Two prevalent psychological models on class identity are then outlined.

1.2. Social Class Introduction

Defining SC has its complexities, as it can cover a broad variety of concepts, definitions, and understandings. Some viewpoints consider SC as an issue of power (Skeggs, 2013), as an economic based measure (Goldthorpe, 2016), or that it describes social groups that share similar cultural and economic conditions (Bourdieu, 1987).

1.2.1 Key Historical Theories of Social Class

Drawing on the earlier theorists, like Marx and Weber, the origins of class are defined in terms of resources, workforce positioning and power. Although society's structure has shifted greatly since these earlier ideas, the definitions highlight underlying inequality that is embedded within class structures.

Marx (1848) viewed class in terms of capital and labour, whether you are part of the workforce production (proletariat or WC) or had control over a workforce (bourgeoisie or capitalists). Tying SC to personal resources, Marx, viewed this disparity as not only influencing the possibility of one's life chances, but as an action of exploitation that occurs between the classes of those who have resources and those without.

Weber (1968) identified that someone's class can describe a group of peoples "life chances", their opportunities in work and income. Arguing that the resources you have either limit or support you in opportunities for further resource acquisition, and with lower SCs therefore having less opportunities. This perspective connects class exclusively to economic resources. Weber argued a difference between class and status, the latter of which relates more to the communities that people socialise within.

These early theories, demonstrate an enduring relationship with social class, power and inequality between people in society.

1.2.2. Social Class Current Understandings

Social class can also be thought of a set of values, behaviours and shared experiences that encompass belonging to a social group. Whilst positions within the social hierarchy might describe someone's SC, it is also a multifaceted concept, incorporating a personal and subjective membership.

Bourdieu (1987) introduced SC as a multidimensional construct, based on economic, cultural, and social resources. Bourdieu's theory (1987) describes the subjective parts of class belonging, relating to the social and cultural experiences within class groups, in addition to economic background. Research on the Class System (CS) in the United Kingdom (UK) has drawn upon Bourdieu's theory, with the Great British Class Survey (GBCS) (Savage et al., 2013), which found that social networks and culture greatly influence SC group belonging.

Research on lower-class or WC students entering Higher Education (HE) has drawn upon Bourdieu's class theory (1987) in understanding class-related identity experiences within social contexts (Aries & Seider, 2005). Lower-class students within prestigious colleges face more class-based challenges and negative feelings, such as discomfort (Aries & Seider, 2005), despite acquiring more of what Bourdieu defines as "cultural capital". This has further been explored, as "identities in context" (Easterbrook et al., 2019), that members outside of a group, are aware of there being an "in-group", and the stereotypes of their own grouping within that context, e.g., negative academic performance in lower-class students.

There are some arguments against the existence of CS's, claiming within a meritocratic society there are equal opportunities for all to control their positions within society, particularly with the expansions in education and work. Leading to debates around the "death of social class" (Beck, 2007). Despite these arguments, SC is felt by communities in the UK and people report a strong sense of class belonging (Evans & Mellon, 2016; Savage et al., 2013). People also report an awareness that their SC impacts their life opportunities, with 32% of respondents of a UK survey, stating that upward class movement is "very difficult" to achieve (National Centre for Social Research [NCSR], 2023).

1.2.3. Social Class in Research

Social class research is lacking, particularly in psychological literature; this may be due to the complexities in reaching a unified definition (Diemer et al., 2013). Objective measures, such as Socioeconomic Status (SES) look at indicators of income, occupation, and educational attainment (Oakes & Rossi, 2003), and are often used as interchangeable terms with SC, in psychological research (Diemer et al., 2013). Objective measures indicate positions within societies hierarchy that relate to underlying power and resource control (Diemer & Rasheed Ali, 2009). Socioeconomic measures are currently used in student intake processes at UK universities, as part of an initiative to "Widen Participation" (WP). The "First In the Family" (FIF) measurement is used in WP programmes, which has been correlated with lower SES's (Henderson et al., 2020).

Subjective social status measures one's own personal identification with class belonging (Liu et al., 2004). This method of measurement can often use the categorical descriptors of "working, middle, and upper-class" terms for reference, and are less concerned with achieving accuracy in determining one's economic rankings (Diemer et al., 2013). Both methods of SC measurements are linked, our early economic situations, create experiences that are internalised, shaping our meaning-making and identities (Kraus et al., 2010; Manstead, 2018). Resulting in a shared group experience, a similar collective cultural class, and a group identity within similar socioeconomic standings (Kraus et al., 2011). However, this link is not exclusive or linear. The SES measure is an economic position in time, whereas social class categories, like the WC, is a sociocultural background, that remains intergenerationally stable (Jones & Vagle, 2013).

1.2.4. Social Inequality

Social Inequality (SI) is the uneven access to resources and or opportunities, among groups in society, based on social categories, like class. Class-based inequalities can significantly influence various life outcomes, for example, within educational achievement (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007), health outcomes (Marmot, 2020), the prevalence of Mental Health (MH) difficulties (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) and in occupation and incomes (Laurison & Friedman, 2016). Additionally, socio-political factors can perpetuate class inequalities, with the WC self-reporting a reduced sense of agency and power in producing circumstantial change (Hopps & Liu, 2006). The evidence on class-based SIs has supported the recent attention in considering class as a protected characteristic (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2022).

Whilst class-based inequalities have been highlighted by research, it is difficult to solely categorise these outcomes as an effect of SC. It may indicate that SC may be a factor contributing to these life-outcomes, however these findings are also impacted by the broader socio-economic context. Recognising that these outcomes are not deterministic but rather the result of a complex interplay of factors. For instance, while Cassen & Kingdon (2007) attribute disparities in educational achievement to socio-economic factors, they acknowledge the limitations of standardised testing as a measure of true academic potential, which may not fully account for the socio-cultural dimensions of learning that can disadvantage WC students. These critiques underscore the importance of contextualising class-based inequalities within a broader socio-economic framework, rather than presenting them as deterministic outcomes.

In addition to the proposed resource-based inequalities that impact those from lower classes, the beliefs people hold about the lower classes, is proposed to act as a form of SI too (Kraus et al., 2017). One theory on how this occurs describes that SC signals, such as appearance, behaviours and speech, activate class-based stereotypes that dehumanise lower-class individuals, creating further class division and limited resource sharing between higher and lower classes (Kraus et al., 2017). These experiences can cause individuals to engage in class concealment, particularly in social environments where there is a perceived advantage of class-group belonging and class-dominant power (Kraus & Mendes, 2014).

This describes experiences of classism, a form of discrimination, that incurs bias, prejudice and oppression to people or groups of people based on SC (Smith, 2005). Classism relates to power via the oppression of those with less in society, excluding those from lower classes and privileging higher class rankings (Lott, 2012). Examples classism include microaggressions, cultural invisibility and stereotypes (Smith et al., 2016). Microaggressions, are acts or behaviours that demean, invalidate, and threaten marginalised groups or individuals based on their out-group membership (Sue, 2010). These are verbal and non-verbal acts that undermine a person's group belonging and promote inferiority (Sue, 2010). Class microaggressions involve stereotyping or biases, that make assumptions that lower class individuals are less intelligent, less capable in education and less likely to achieve success (Sue et al., 2008).

1.2.5. What is Working Class?

The WC is a term used to describe those who are from the lower scale of a SC hierarchy. As described in early theory, the WC are a SC grouping that were in the production line, or essentially are workers (Marx, 1848).

In 2022, 46% of the UK the population identified as being WC (NCSR, 2023). A modernisation of the WC has expanded to include sub-categories such as "new affluent" and "emergent services" workers (Savage et al., 2013). Following the results of the GBCS, Savage et al. (2013) proposes an updated framework of the SC in the UK, expanding from a

3-tier to a 7-tier system, incorporating Bourdieu's cultural aspects of class belonging. Redefining the "traditional WC", it describes some of features of the social group to be, owning their own home, being "moderately poor", few having graduated university, an income of around £13,000 and in occupations associated with the WC (e.g lorry driver, electrician).

Mapping out class in the UK, the GBCS identified that traditional WC groups tend to belong in areas outside of the southeast of England, in historically industrial areas of the North and the Midlands (e.g. Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Birmingham and Leicester). With the newly introduced class grouping from the study, social classes with lower economic capital than the WC were identified, such as the "Precariat" and the "Emergent Service Sector", which are more likely to be in urban areas such as London. Geography therefore may be a determining factor in an individual's SC.

Despite similar economic incomes, the precariat and emergency service sectors, differs from the traditional WC in their means of social and cultural capital. These class categories engage in more cultural capital leisure activities and have vast social networks. The GBCS suggests that those who fall within the precariat and emergency service sectors, maybe the children of the traditional WC. The survey suggests that the emergence of these newer class categories may have come from the decline in WC culture, linked to de-industrialisation, changes in immigration and urbanisation. These class categories therefore highlight a change and expansion in the understanding of the WC in the UK.

The GBCS approaches class measurement multidimensionally, incorporating class cultures. There are some debates against the relevance of a class groups cultural activities. Employment approaches, consider the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification, to be a more accurate representation of class (Mills, 2013). This highlights that that there are different ways of approaching class analysis.

Despite alternative perspectives on the measurements of class, the GBCS overall displays that there is a large economic disparity between the elite and lower classes in the UK. Some of the key characteristics the GBCS defined with the "traditional" WC were lower incomes and likely to be within "blue collar" jobs. This brings up questions of how the WC experience work environments not seen as in keeping with their class category. For example, university environments are not seen as spaces designed for the WC (Reay et al., 2009). Describing what it means to being WC, from the perspectives of employees in Russell group universities, people reported the identity is closely linked to their family occupations, the experiences of financial difficulties and a lack of access to material resources and leisure experiences. In addition to the life experiences, participants reported the emotional and implicit impacts, such

as internalised narratives of "luck", and feelings of unrecognised potential and respect (Pilgrim-Brown, 2023).

1.2.6. Terminology

This study uses the term WC, to define a SC identity, that may also be described as "low-SES". I have chosen not to use SES, as it could minimise the experiences that encompass the social identity. The study approaches SES as a measure and WC as a multidimensional concept of an SES category or ranking. Furthermore, using WC as a descriptor, keeps alignment with the earlier theorists that first highlighted the power inequalities between social groups.

However, it is noted that CI will hold a different meaning for everyone. Similar to other identities such as ethnicity, race and gender, one experience will not encompass all members' relationship with the identity. Therefore, it is important to understand SC intersectionality. People hold a range of identity characteristics, and these exist interdependently (Crenshaw, 1991) Multiple identities, intersect holding a unique experience to the individual. It is particularly important to hold intersectionality in mind when thinking about CIs and when engaging with the presented outcomes in this study. The "White-Working Class", is a prevalent term used in describing the WC. Whilst this describes aspects of intersectionality, highlighting how the white WC people are likely to have different experiences to WC people from another ethnic background, it is also argued as a politically driven label (De Witte, 2022). The focus on "whiteness" as a culture within the WC, that is particularly displayed in the media, positions other identities, like ethnicity or religion, separate to the WC. This

separation, through the way WC identities are portrayed, risks ignoring the whole groups experiences of class systemic inequalities and disadvantages (Bottero, 2009).

Whilst broadening the intersectional voices and experiences is useful in understanding how SC operates, the "white-ness" of being WC is embedded within UK history, with a longstanding experience of inequality and an affective history (Walkerdine, 2016). Therefore, whilst encouraging the exploration of SC across multiple intersecting identities, this is not to weaken the white WC experiences, which holds a history of inequality for certain groups of UK populations. Those who have proximity to this history, have described feeling unheard, within political decisions makings (Walkerdine, 2020) and it is important not to dismiss "whiteness" altogether, with the emotive WC history in the UK (Walkerdine, 2016).

These arguments may speak to the research limitations and scarcity of the term WC in psychological literature. Possibly due to apprehensions of maintaining an integrity to the historical roots of the WC, whilst attempting to understand the concept across other lived experiences and identities. Although this research hasn't operationalised how it will both maintain the integrity of the white WC experiences whilst exploring how this SC may be experienced by other identities, the intricacy of this topic is displayed to support how the reader interacts with the output and conclusions that are drawn.

I acknowledge the term WC, won't fit as a descriptor everyone's identity who comes from a low SES background. How the WC is portrayed, may relate to how other identities feel they

do, or don't belong within this grouping, with regards to the "whiteness" WC culture described above.

1.3 Social Class and Identity

1.3.1. Introduction

As described in the GBCS, the WC are likely to be in certain occupations, live in particular areas and have unique shared social and cultural experiences (Savage et al., 2013).
The social groups in which we perceive ourselves to belong within, shape how we make sense of our identity and others (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

1.3.2. Models of Class and Identity

1.3.2.1. The Social Cognitive Theory of Social Class (SCT-SC)

Using the both objective and subjective determinants of SC, Kraus et al. (2012) proposed the SCT-SC, a theory suggesting that SC shapes how individuals perceive themselves and engage with the world. It also suggests that SC environments can result in distinct cognitive patterns among people from different social classes.

This model suggests that a lack of material resources, gives rise to situations and experiences, in a person's external environment, beyond individual control (e.g., poverty, homelessness). Those from lower-class backgrounds, are more likely to experience and live with these

ongoing external threats. Therefore, an internal psychological system that orientates individuals to cope develops, which is termed as a "contextualist" cognitive tendency. This contextualist cognition, is defined as a vigilance of one's external environment. The SCT-SC suggests that those from lower classes, have a collective contextualist cognitive style. Which is an orientation to one's external environment, driven by the need to manage external constraints, potential threats, and other individuals.

The SCT-SC (Kraus et al., 2012) suggests that those from higher classes, develop a "solipsistic" system, an orientation to the external world, that is driven by the individual's own internal needs and interests. Having access to resources, provides an environmental stability, in which higher classes are less likely to be impacted by external threats. This stability creates a view and way of navigating the world, that is driven by the individual's needs, whereas for lower class individuals, this system, created from low-environmental control, brings an alertness to environment when navigating the world. Contextualism is an adaptive response for those from low-class backgrounds, at time points orientating the world by perceiving the external threats, serves a protective function.

1.3.2.2. The Social Class Worldview Model- Revised (SCWM-R)

The SCWM-R (Liu, 2011) further explores how SC influences an individual's worldview, particularly in relation to their self-perception and interactions with others. This model emphasises the role of classism within SC identity formation, which acts as an oppression

that maintains the power hierarchy (Liu et al., 2004). The SCWM-R views CIs as an individual and subjective experience, developing through a socialisation process. The model was developed for use in counselling psychology, highlighting its relevance in both research and therapeutic settings, which may tend to align with the worldviews of the "middle-class educated" (Liu et al., 2004).

The model proposes that through socialisation, we continue to perpetuate class-group norms and values, which are embedded in classism. Implicit messages around the lower and upper class, are socialised into our own SC identity and understandings, which then interacts and shapes each individual's own "worldview". Our worldviews are a set of lenses that are developed through this socialisation and messages of classism, and our own Class Consciousness (CC), which also develops into the attitudes and beliefs we hold (Liu, 2011).

In the context of counselling, class consciousness (CC), can serve as a protective factor against the pre-conceived ideas of particular class-groups, that we all are exposed to through the socialisation process. Rather than reinforcing possible negative stereotypes, a CC approach in counselling seeks to challenge and dismantle these stereotypes, fostering a more inclusive and person-centrered therapeutic environment (Liu et al., 2007).

Lui (2010) suggests that in addition to active acts of classism, we as individuals are actively judging people's class, in relation to ours and to class hierarchies. This active judgement is also a form of classism. Classism serves to rationalise behaviour, in a way that supports us to function in an economic culture. This might look like forming "in" and "out" group

boundaries and employing strategies to maintain these. Classism can occur in different formats, downward, upward, lateral and internalised. Internalised classism can give rise to self-doubt and anxiety (Cavalhieri et al., 2023). Downward, upward and lateral classism occurs relationally, through assumptions of people's SC identities. Although classism can occur bi-directionally, lower classes lack the power and resources to actively shape systems, that allow classism to occur (Smith, 2005).

1.3.3. Summary

In summary, presented are two models that describe the ways in which class-based identities may develop and how they may impact individuals. The SCT-SC (Kraus et al., 2012) links SES to the development of the ways in which we think and navigate the world, through a class-based cognition. The SCWM-R details how CI forms through socialisation and internalising messages of classism. It displays the importance of Psychological Professionals (PPs) being aware of SC, and the daily judgements on class that occur between individuals, which can have emotional impacts.

The models outline how being from a WC background forms a social identity, how it may lend to unique cognitive style, and how society may hold biases on those who belong to this SC identity. Therefore, supporting the rationale to explore the experiences of WC identities.

1.4. Social Mobility

Social Mobility (SM) is the process whereby an individual experiences changes in their social hierarchy positioning, in comparison to where they began, or their parent's rankings. An intergenerational movement between class structures. Social mobility has been and is still a prevalent focus of governmental policies (Pearce, 2011;The Social Mobility Commission [SMC], 2022) and is often framed as a solution to reducing SI.

Education has a key role in SM, as it supports access to the "higher classed" professions (Blanden & Macmillan, 2016). For example, attending a highly selective university is linked to higher earnings (Walker & Zhu, 2018). First-generation, low SES students state upward SM as key reason for participating in HE (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). However, there are marked inequalities in HE, with advantaged students more likely to complete and attend university (Walker & Zhu, 2018).

This interaction of SC and education is supported by Bourdieu's class theory (1987), which proposed that social, cultural and economic capital resources generate social advantages within education systems, therefore reproducing socioeconomic inequality for the lower classes. Using the term 'lucky survivors' as a descriptor of WC students who achieve positions in HE (Bourdieu, 1988). Furthermore, research on WC students' experiences in HE has shown how a lack of cultural capital can impact on their sense of belonging (Aries & Schneider, 2005) and generate feelings of discomfort (Reay et al., 2009).

Initiatives are being employed by some UK universities, in acknowledgement of the inequal access to HE by those from lower-class backgrounds. The FIF measure is currently used as a WP measure, as it has been found as the largest influencing barrier in access (Henderson et al., 2020). Whilst WP encourages diversity, the mis-match between class cultures, still hold difficulties for WC students who then enter HE.

1.4.1. The Impacts of Social Mobility

Higher education establishments are arguably a Middle Class (MC) system, upholding MC norms and values (Reay, 2006). Therefore, SM though HE potentially comes with the need to adapt oneself to fit with this system of norms (Reay, 2006). This is understandable, firstly from the perspective that moulding to MC norms may support success in HE, but also with supporting with the feeling of group belonging. Belonging, a feeling of personal connectedness with a social grouping, system or environment (Hagerty et al., 1992), is a fundamental psychological need that humans seek (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

The experience of being a WC student in a MC system, like university, has been described as "border living" and like being "strangers in paradise", with navigating differing value systems between the personal and education contexts (Reay et al., 2009; Rendón, 1996). This experience can differ between WC students, Hurst (2010), described that some students act as "double agents", holding onto their original CIs and adapting in accordance with environments, while others feel unable to straddle both worlds. Similar to the "fit in or stand out" findings documented in Reay et al. study (2010). Examples of strategies that WC

students have used to adapt include “performing up”, to be perceived as a higher class (Keane, 2024). This includes imitating behaviours of those around them, changing their speech and appearance, also not disclosing information or experiences that may inadvertently suggest their class (Granfield, 1991).

In addition to the identity-based discomfort that can arise from being in HE, WC students also experience fears around “being found out” or feeling like a “fraud” (Sparkes, 2007; RyanFlood & Gill, 2010). Imposter syndrome, which describes the feeling of self-doubts in one’s intellectual competence (Clance & Imes, 1978) is reported by WC students, with feelings of not belonging, and underestimations of their capabilities (Jin & Ball, 2020). This imposter syndrome has been suggested due to the cultural class “inadequacy”, by WC academics (Maclean, 2022).

Social mobility is promoted as something that is desirable to achieve, but this process also has negative experiences attached for the WC.

1.5. Summary

Class identity belonging is a complex concept that relates to economic resources, but also the subjective experience and feeling of being within a SES grouping. This study understands SC as an identity that is shaped by the resources we had in our early years, the beliefs, and values we developed from this experience, being a collective one, and how this interacts with our sense of identity and belonging, throughout life. Drivers of SM, through education, are periods of time in which “upward” class movement is portrayed as a positive achievement,

yet for WC students this can be a difficult experience to navigate. This impact on WC identities has been explored in education, yet psychology has lacked prioritising SC in research. This may be compounded by the insufficient unified definition of SC in psychology literature (Liu, 2011). Social class holds importance in psychological professions which Lui et al. (2011) displays in the SCWM-R in the in the covert ways that class-based discriminations occur within all interactions, which ultimately impact on therapy.

2. INTRODUCTION TO CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL CLASS

2.1 Introduction

A Clinical Psychologist's (CP) role includes working with models of therapy to assess and provide interventions that alleviate distress (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2024). In the UK, to become a CP requires completing a three-year doctoral training programme, the DClinPsy. Training includes academic, research and clinical placements. Gaining a place onto training is competitive. Over the past 5 years of intake, the success rate of applications has been between 15-25% (Leeds Clearing House [LCH], 2023).

It is recognised that the CP profession lacks diversity in its workforce, resulting in a mismatch between the profile of psychologists and the demographics of the population (Turpin & Coleman, 2010). Although the Turpin and Coleman (2010) study is dated, more up to date research is lacking, which is essential in understanding and documenting the progression in diversifying CP. It may not capture the advancements in the WP initiatives

that have occurred over the past decade, however the paper has been influential in highlighting that CP has formerly had a saturated demographic profile in the workforce. Further and continued research into the demographics of CP's is needed.

2.2 Middle-Class Roots

Clinical Psychology practice is derived from western philosophies (Parker, 2007; Sampson, 1989) which hold an individualistic view of MH and can neglect the wider social-political contexts that surrounds people's lives. Holding an individualistic view of MH, perpetuates the idea that inequalities are located on an individual level, or within someone, rather than a systemic problem.

Current CP training is derived from these understandings of MH and psychological distress, that position difficulties within the individual, minimising the impacts of systemic inequality. The BPS (2024) describes how the theories underlying the evidence-base practices of CP, have been produced by a "a largely white, western, privileged, male population". Arguably CP practice today is still based on MC ideologies, that are reproduced by MC "trainers" onto future trainees (McEvoy et al., 2021).

2.3 Socioeconomic Backgrounds in Clinical Psychology Training

The training selection body (LCH) collects SES data, with the use of the "Participation of Local Areas" (POLAR) measure. Using the applicants' postcode at age 17, as a comparison variable, of the proportion of young people, from that area who go onto enter HE.

The most recent data available, for the 2023 entry, had the highest percentage of applications and acceptances onto the training, from people within the highest quintile (from areas most likely to go onto access HE). Looking at the acceptance rate of applications from those across the quintiles, applicants from the lowest quintile (1) had a 9% acceptance rate, whereas candidates from the highest quintile (5) had a 28% acceptance rate. However, when comparing this data to the POLAR measures of all the percentage of applicants who apply to the training, the acceptance rates are somewhat equal. For example, 9% of total applicants came from the lowest and 23% came from the highest POLAR category, in comparison to the accepted applications, again 9% came from the lowest and 28% came from the highest POLAR. Therefore, whilst those from the highest POLAR represent the highest percentage intake onto the training, they are also the highest percentage of overall applications. The data presented on the socio-economic backgrounds of all applicants and acceptances, for 2023, shows that the lowest number of applications come from those who were from the lowest POLAR areas.

2.4 Routes into Clinical Psychology Training

Prior to applying, candidates must demonstrate work experiences in clinical related settings, that involve work with Service Users (SU). Examples of job roles that are relevant to apply to training include Assistant Psychologist (AP), research assistant and other MH practitioner roles. Assistant psychologists' roles are highly sought after, with the competitiveness to, even unpaid positions are in demand.

Programmes such as the Aspiring Clinical Psychologists Access Scheme, have been created to improve the inequalities to accessing paid AP posts, that are influential in getting onto the clinical training. The scheme is part of plans to improve accessibility to clinical training from underrepresented groups of people, by Health Education England. Eligibility to this programme includes indices of low SES, such as low family household income or receiving benefits, having received grants or bursaries during education.

2.5 Applications to Clinical Psychology Training

There are 32 training courses within the UK and the LCH manage the application process for 30 of these courses. Each course differs on their application criteria, however the academic requirements across all include a first degree in a course that has a graduate basis for chartered membership to the BPS. Otherwise, additional master's study is required. Also required is evidence of the capacity to undertake doctoral level study.

Most courses require a 2:1 degree classification and some ask for overall percentages over 65%. A number of courses have additional tasks in the application process, such as essays, and a variety of tests (situational judgement and general mental ability tests). Some of the practical requirements include:

- An ability and willingness to travel across the training region
- A current driving licence and car/motorcycle owner

There are four courses which state car ownership as a requirement on the LCH website, these are Canterbury Christchurch, Surrey, Oxford and Bangor. However, the requirement is vague for some courses, with Bath citing on their website that it is essential, but not displaying this on the LCH. Other courses also have it as a recommended suggestion, but it's unclear how this interacts with the selection process.

Some of the intake criteria and the application process can be a barrier to those from WC or low SES backgrounds, which can limit access to the CP profession. This has been recognised by the BPS, which notes that this may be a factor in the under-representation of certain groups in the profession, suggesting that courses review intake processes to negate this impact (BPS, 2024).

2.6. Clinical Psychology Training and Identity

Professional identities are connected to one's personal identity (Gibson et al., 2010).

Awareness of personal identities and oneself is important within CP work (Hughes, 2009). Trainees participate in Personal and Professional Development (PPD), throughout training, that supports the relationship and integration between the personal and professional (Zhao O'Brien, 2011). Whilst training supports the reflection of one's personal identity, it is a time whereby trainees are developing professional identities and socialising to fit in within the CP profession. Difficulties can arise where there is a disconnect between personal values and the system or professional values, that trainees are socialising into. For WC trainees, the MC history and values that CP has, may impact on how their professional identities are developed. Adopting a professional identity that aligns with the professions historical and

perceived MC roots, may have impacts on the individual level, around questioning their own identity concept, but also it is argued to prevent the social changes that holding a WC identity can make in CP (Schubert et al., 2023).

2.7. Working-Class Strengths

Our SC identity interacts with how we engage in social environments and build relationships (Kraus et al., 2010, 2012). Those from lower-class backgrounds may hold beneficial therapeutic skills, that link to growing up within WC groups and environments. For example, contextualism, is linked to greater empathy skills, with lower-class individuals exhibiting a higher accuracy when judging a stranger's emotions (Kraus et al., 2010).

Lower class backgrounds are more likely to consider the causes of events to wider systemic factors like politics and discrimination, compared to individual factors, even when controlling for other identity characteristics such as ethnicity (Kraus et al., 2009). They show a greater verbal and non-verbal social engagement during interactions, such as head nodding and laughing (Kraus et al., 2009). They are more likely to hold a holistic cognition, which encompasses whole picture thinking and non-linear explanations (Grossmann & Varnum, 2011). They may have more compassionate responses, both self-reported and in physiological measures, to people in stressful situations (Kraus et al., 2012). There is evidence from neuroimaging studies, that has shown that lower-social class individuals have more neural activations in mentalisation tasks (Muscatell et al., 2012), which is linked to a greater ability at reading others' emotions (Zaki et al., 2009).

There are apparent parallels between these qualities and the skills used in PPs. Therapist mentalisation skills support psychotherapy outcomes and facilitates epistemic trust (Fonagy & Allison, 2014). Systemic thinking, which looks at broader contexts, patterns and relationships and on-linear causality, supports therapeutic alliance (Stanton & Welsh, 2012). With these strengths, the admission processes that disadvantages those from lower SES backgrounds, is limiting the potential skills and qualities that WC backgrounds can bring to the CP profession. These WC background strengths also pose questions for the impacts of SM and assimilation into a CP professional identity.

Kraus et al. (2012), argues the importance of future research to explore the experiences across SC boundaries. The situations where individuals may be in environments that differ from their class backgrounds or are in the movement between class boundaries, from WC, to MC professions. Which for WC trainees, the DClinPsy could be an experience of.

2.8. Class in Clinical Psychology

Class is under researched in psychological careers and when it is explored, it is often by WC individuals (Ballinger & Wright, 2007). Class-consciousness, an awareness of one's own and their client class related identities, is as a fundamental skill in PPs (Liu et al., 2007). This awareness is central in reflecting on potential acts of classism discrimination. The values underpinning psychological models used in therapy, have the potential for classist behaviours and views exhibited by therapists (Liu et al., 2007).

Social class is very much present and felt in therapy (Trott & Reeves, 2018; Walkerdine,

2007). This CC between therapists and clients can impact on the TR (Ballinger & Wright, 2007). Liu (2010) suggests that despite potential similarities in class backgrounds between therapists and clients, the nature of therapy work, and external influences e.g., what we wear, where we work, can facilitate a perceived class differences between therapists and clients. Thus, within the very nature of being a CP, irrespective of whether we personally identify as WC, we potentially and unconsciously bring up clients own social identity reflections and comparisons, that Lui (2001) describes occurring within classism.

Clinical psychologists hold power within the TR (Proctor, 2017). Therefore, it is important for those in PPs to work within Social Justice (SJ) frameworks (Liu, 2010). In psychology professions, a SJ approach acknowledges inequalities, recognises the need for, and actively aims to increase equality through challenging discrimination and addressing power imbalances (Winter, 2019). Arguably this would not only occur in the work we do with clients, but also within addressing inequality within the profession.

2.9. Literature Review

A narrative literature review that explored WC or lower-class identity experiences from the viewpoint of trainee/qualified CPs, was conducted to display what research on this topic already exists.

A narrative review was adopted because it supports an interpretative approach, which is particularly valuable for exploring under-researched areas. Furthermore, this method allows the researcher to draw upon a wide range of studies, which supports in creating new

understandings (Sukhera, 2022). This section summarises and critiques the available literature, then provides a rationale and the research aims for the current study.

2.9.1. Search Strategy

Literature was searched from the following databases, using the University of East London's (UEL) online library; Academic Search Ultimate, APA PsycInfo, and CINAHL via EBSCO HOST. Google scholar was used to search for grey literature. Due to the variety in definitions of WC, and with its interchangeability with SES terms in research, this search term was expanded.

The boolean search terms used were ("social class" OR "working class" OR "class" OR "SES" OR "socioeconomic background") AND ("clinical psychologist" OR "trainee clinical psychologist").

After screening the appropriateness of the study, one remained from the EBSCO search (Hui et al., 2023) and two from the grey literature searches (Place, 2023; Lovick, 2024) and a full text analysis was completed. A literature search flow chart is in Appendix A.

2.9.2. Overview of the Relevant Literature

Across the three studies (Hui et al., 2023; Lovick, 2024; Place, 2023), there are overlapping themes that WC CPs experienced; difficulties with getting onto the training, negative emotions and the WC strengths.

2.9.2.1. Entering the Profession

Hui et al. (2023) explored the experiences of aspiring and trainee CPs from low SES, on the barriers to joining the profession. Although the study uses the term SES, Hui et al. notes the complexities in defining and measuring SC and within the analysis there are direct quotes from participants referring to themselves as being WC. The findings displayed two categories of barriers when entering the CP profession, the practical and the perceptual.

Practical barriers included limited exposure to the profession, no network support, the entry requirements for training, being unavailable to take low paid AP jobs, the cost of a master's degree and car ownership. Perceptual barriers include feelings of self-doubt, feeling distant between pre-training CI and the MC workforce, a sense of otherness and an instability of whether they would continue on the CP route due finances. There were given examples of how the perceptual barriers link to the practical ones, for example, feelings of self-doubt, linked to having limited exposure to CP circles.

Similarly, Lovicks' study (2024), looking at WC qualified and training CPs experiences, found that this journey of getting on the training, felt "unplanned" for WC students, feeling uncertain with the paths required to enter the profession. This may link back to Hui et als.

(2023) findings, that a lack of CP networks can make getting on the CP training feel like an uncertain path. Lovick (2024) also found that WC CP professionals experienced a lack of resources in their journeys onto and on the training, including limited connections, "role models", and finances.

Overall, Hui et al. (2023) and Lovick (2024) demonstrate some of the ways in which having a WC background impacts the process of getting onto the doctorate. With resource-based barriers, such as finances, costs, access to CP professionals, that also relate to internal barriers like feeling uncertain or having self-doubts.

2.9.2.2. Feeling Different

Working-class trainees reported noticing feeling different, in terms of their CI. Within entering the profession, reporting feeling a sense of "otherness", and whilst on the training feeling distant between their pre-training CI and the MC workforce (Hui et al., 2023). Noticing this feeling of difference in terms of their class, in comparisons to peers, supervisors and the course staff (Place, 2023). Sharing that the doctorate training has been an experience whereby WC trainees have felt different and noticed their WC identity. Feeling a pressure to speak and say things differently, noticing differences in their accents, compared to CP staff (Place, 2023). Lovick (2024) also found that WC CP professionals were left feeling a sense of being different, when noticing the contrast between their personal and family experiences, and that of their peers on the doctorate.

The doctorate and the CP profession is discussed as an environment whereby the WC feel difficulties with fitting in. Overall, WC students feeling the CP profession is a MC cultural environment (Place, 2023).

2.9.2.3. WC Strengths

The WC strengths included the connection to clients in the TR, which was documented in all three studies. Working-class CP professionals felt their SES/class backgrounds gave them commonalities with clients (Hui et al., 2023; Lovick, 2024). That is supports them in having an awareness of SIs, and a drive to work within advocacy or SJ frameworks (Hui et al., 2023; Place, 2023). Lovick (2024) also noted wider WC strengths broader than the CP work, being an overall commitment to achieving goals.

2.9.2.4. CI Journey

The literature suggests that across the training and entering the profession, WC backgrounds undergo some changes with how they relate to their CI. Participants described feeling "classless", an unsureness of what class they belong too (Lovick, 2024). Place (2023) found that participants felt they may no longer be WC due to the increase in their economic, cultural, and social capital. Describing the feelings discussed in previous literature, feeling like a "double agent", between different class circles. This also being a difficult adjustment process (Place, 2023). Hui et al. (2023) also captured that low SES students on the doctorate, felt a disconnect to their pre-training CI.

2.9.2.5. Recommendations

The studies offered suggestions on how to support WC identities in CP. Hui et al. (2023) suggests that a review of course criteria, in relation to the barriers, would be supportive in

increasing the number of low SES students into the profession. On the course, recommendations included increasing meaningful conversations around class and creating more supportive environments for WC trainees (Place, 2023). Lovicks (2024) recommendations mirrors the other two studies, suggesting that CP needs to review and increase its diversity in its workforce, engage in conversations on SC, and shift to a skills and strengths focus on WC identities in CP.

2.9.3. Overview

In summary, the literature reviewed suggests that WC backgrounds face barriers entering the profession, feeling like they don't fit in within CP and experience awareness or changes in their CI across training. The studies also highlight the strengths of holding a WC identity in CP. There were very few studies from the literature review, with all the ones discussed being from the past couple of years. The lack of available literature across the years, make it difficult to compare experiences across previous years of intake and training, and therefore offer limited insight into the advancements that have been occurring in the profession.

Within the approaches to recruitment, all the studies employed a subjective measurement of SC identity. Therefore, the social class of the participants in the studies, and within this study, are not operationalised and dependent on the individuals understanding and relationship to their class-identity. An additional limitation of using a subjective measure, is how transferable the findings of the research are into the real-life application for education establishments, as many of the higher education systems use objective measures in their WP initiatives.

The studies used a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. Both Place (2023) and Lovick (2024) used semi-structured interviews, and Hui et al. (2023) a mix methods online survey. These methods display individual experiences, which then researchers' group into themes, via the qualitative analysis. However, 1-1 methods don't offer a collective space for exploring where WC identities may agree or differ in experiences, which this current study will utilise via a Focus Group (FG).

The presented studies may be limited in supporting course changes, as the training courses that participants have attended are not documented. Each course has an individual selection and training method, so there will be variations between each course. As displayed in Lovick's (2024) study, participants had varying experiences of how courses engaged with conversations around SC. It is also unclear whether participants were recruited from courses across different geographical regions, as these experiences may differ, holding in mind the differences described in the GBCS. Whilst this study will protect anonymity, and not share which course each participant is on, overall, the courses that participants have been recruited from are presented.

The lack of literature available, as displayed by the literature review, supports the need for further research into this topic, of an explorative nature, to generate rich data on the WC experience in CP. The limitations and gaps outlined, may support with directing future research into this topic. One area future research could expand on is on including objective measures of class within participant selection and demographic data collection. This will support with the reliability of the participant demographics; it could also add knowledge and data to the profile of CPs. Using the measures that the LCH use could support with the application of future studies findings, into actions or changes in intake and training processes.

2.10. Current study

2.10.1. Relevance to Clinical Psychology

Generally, there is limited research exploring SC within psychology (Diemer et al., 2013), which was also been demonstrated within the research literature review process outlined above. Clinical psychologists work with a diverse range of clients and nearly half of the UK identify themselves as being WC (NCSR, 2023), yet class diversity is not reflected in the CP workforce (Turpin & Coleman, 2010). The BPS 2024 accreditation standards has stated an aim is to address the barriers influencing access to the CP profession, from groups that are under-represented. This research aims to add to the limited literature base, generating an understanding of the experiences of WC backgrounds in CP.

This research aims to support at informing the WC experiences across the process of being a CP. Looking at pre-training experiences, this study explores how WC trainees found entering the profession, that may also add to an awareness to the barriers (Hui et al., 2023). It will add to the literature, informing how WC trainees experience their CI within the training, as explored by Lovick (2024) and Place (2023). Using FGs, this research will offer a different methodology to explore these experiences, that allow for conversations between participants, bring forth experiences that are agreed or disagreed upon.

The study's outcomes have relevance to the profession and could help inform WP initiatives, encourage the importance of class competency in training and develop potential support systems. Whilst adding to the literature, the study supports the movements towards working within SJ and liberation practices within psychological therapy professions (Brown et al., 2019; Winter, 2019). By exploring and understanding issues of power, privilege and inequalities that exist within class-hierarchies.

2.10.2. Research Aims and Question

This study aims to look at WC backgrounds in CP, by exploring trainees experiences. The research question is:

How do working-class trainees experience their class identities across their professional journeys of becoming a clinical psychologist?

3. METHOD

3.1. Chapter outline

This chapter outlines the theoretical approach adopted in this research, outlining the epistemological underpinnings in relation to the methods chosen. Before detailing the methods undertaken, my personal position to the topic will be stated.

3.2 Positionality

Positionality describes one's own position and views and the contextual factors that inform the research topic (Darwin Holmes, 2020), which influences research methodologies and the outcomes (Rowe, 2014). Therefore, I describe my personal relationship to the research topic, to support transparency and accountability of the rationale behind adopted processes throughout this study (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

3.2.1. Topic Choice

I came to choose this research, following a discussion with my thesis supervisor, who asked me about my experiences throughout the training. This led to a discussion around how before training, I had noticed my CI had made me question whether it was possible for me to train as a CP, and now through training I was noticing this earlier feeling come up in different ways. Whilst having this discussion, my supervisor offered a suggestion, that this could be the topic of my research. I did not believe this would be a viable topic to do a thesis on and hadn't considered it in anyway previously. I had thought, "What would this contribute and why would it be studied? This is just something that I have experienced". Furthermore, I experienced confusion as to why this would be something to overtly present and explore, as I had felt that concealing it was advantageous for me in terms of getting onto and fitting in on training. I had thoughts that the topic wasn't "scientific" enough, for a doctorate, or "proving" enough to contribute towards the CP profession.

On reflection, these feelings, and thoughts add to the motivation and rationale for why it is an important and relevant topic to investigate. I questioned why my strong feelings of my CI,

through-out my journey to and on training, would be received as irrelevant by the professional bodies that would award me. These may reflect my own experiences with imposter syndrome on the course. This added with my experience of SC not being widely spoken about in clinical psychology, led me to facilitate research into this topic, exploring the experiences of WC trainee CPs to generate descriptions of this experience, and ultimately awareness.

3.2.2. Position Statement

I am a 30-year-old, white-mixed heritage, second-generation immigrant, female, and I identify as coming from a WC background. I was born and raised in London, where I am also now training as a CP. I am of the first generation in my immediate family to attend HE. Therefore, I hold shared identities with those who have participated within the research. I am aware these positions I hold have influenced my motivation and choices throughout the research process. However, in relation to the reflections on how I came to choose the topic, I recognise that there is a diversity of experiences, even within a shared identity, which I have sought to represent within this study. I present this position to inform the reader, and to demonstrate the methods that I have adopted to remain aware of my biases and balance my proximity to the research process.

3.3. Research Philosophy

This study adopts a Critical Realist (CR) position, a "moderate" form of social constructionism (Harper, 2011). Sitting in between realism and relativism, CR reflects that there is a "reality" that can be measured, through research, but this measurement or

observation is open to interpretations, holding multiple realities, aiming not to claim an objective discoverable reality.

Critical realism is fitting with the research questions, supporting that the WC identity is an observable phenomenon, which exists in external reality, separate from internal worlds, and that this identity will be experienced with multiple versions. The multiple versions of one reality, acknowledges that there are other individual factors and wider contextual influences to a person's experience within being a WC trainee (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Positioning WC identities as something that does exist, also fits with the literature reviewed, that people in the UK have a strong sense of class belonging (Evans & Mellon, 2016), even when someone experiences "real" and "known" differences (e.g., high earning working class, social mobility). Experiencing SM, and objectively earning and being in a MC profession, (ontology), is separate from the personal experience with CI (epistemology). Both can exist together, in the example of being a WC trainee.

Critical realist approaches to research aim to understand social reality through developing knowledge of it, which is influential in understanding underlying concepts within social structures, social change and supports SJ movements (Bhaskar, 1989). Within Bhaskar's (1975), Domains of Social Reality, the "real" domain is unobservable and deepest within social structures (e.g., the mechanisms that create and maintain social hierarchies such as power and resources), these create the "actual" events (e.g., inequality, classism) and "empirical" observable experiences through these events (e.g., under-representation of social classes within a profession, feelings of not fitting in). Through generating information and knowledge on "empirical" experiences, we can make subjective interpretations on the other

domains and mechanisms underlying the experiences. From this perspective, the study and data will describe the reality of WC trainee experiences (empirical) and offer an interpretation of the underlying structures and mechanisms involved (real and actual) (Willig, 2012).

3.4. Methodology

3.4.1. Reflexivity

There is a difficulty with neutrality in research, as a researcher's own position, influences their approaches to research methodologies, and their interpretations of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Reflexivity is the process in which the researcher considers their own beliefs, values and experiences' influence on the research (Willig, 2013). It also informs the reader of the positions taken within the processes of creating and analysing data (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

This research is influenced by my personal and professional experiences. I am engaging in this research topic, from the position of a WC trainee CP, therefore I share characteristics with the participants, I also have a personal viewpoint, connection, and experiences with the topic, which may interact with the approaches that have been utilised within the study. Therefore, I engaged in reflexivity, keeping a diary, throughout the research process (Appendix B).

It is suggested that researchers should reflect on their "identification" with participants and insider/outsider positions with the group (Le Gallais, 2008), as it can create preconceived ideas of what the data will show. Although I was unable to control for participants ideas of the researchers CI and therefore closeness to their identity, I did make a conscious awareness to reflect on my position within the reflective diary. Documenting thoughts and feelings throughout the research process and reflecting on one's own personal knowledge is proposed to support epistemological awareness (Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizio, 2009). Using reflexivity, I continuously critically questioned my "insider" experiences and knowledge, whilst engaging in the data analysis, to support objectively viewing participants experiences, distancing my own assumptions from what was shared. Whilst adopting reflexivity, my proximity from the topic is hard to sperate and some argue that its unconscious effects on the research processes cannot be eliminated (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

3.4.2. Qualitative Method

A qualitative approach has been adopted to explore trainee CPs experiences, this method allows for the production of richer detailed accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and attempts to broaden the understandings of experiences of the social world. Thus, fitting with the studies aim.

Qualitative methodologies are adaptable to a range of epistemological positions (Willig, 2013). A qualitative method connects to CR ontology, as it supports exploring "how" things operate, rather than aiming to claim if they exist or not. With the limited literature available on WC experiences in PPs, a qualitative method supports producing in-depth data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3.4.3. Focus Groups

An FG methodology was used to generate discussion between WC trainee CPs. This approach was employed as it allows for focused research on a shared experience or "situation" and the generation of collective or differing views and experiences, through the moderation of social interactions within the group (D. Stewart et al., 2007). Focus Groups facilitate a rich discussion and exploration for unknown topics (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017). Therefore, FGs were chosen to support exploring the topic, which has limited available literature. They can create interactions between participants, and reveal commonly held group experiences and attitudes, values (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Bloor et al., 2001).

Furthermore, an FG methodology was selected to facilitate the research participants to develop ideas collectively, and to allow the moderator to collect data on the groups collective shared ideas. This was chosen over 1-1 collection methods, such as interviews, to create distance from myself as the researcher. Rather than being in an investigator role, in a 1-1 data collection setting, using FGs allowed me to facilitate discussion as a moderator, from the peripheral. This was employed due to my proximity to the research question and shared characteristics with the participants, overall to support with potential researcher bias, and to represent and uncover the shared group experiences within the data analysis.

3.5. Method

3.5.1. Participants

3.5.1.1 Inclusion criteria

Participants were required to be current trainee CPs in the UK and self-identify with being WC. Additionally, the participant inclusion criteria incorporated the measures used in HE, with participants self-identifying as being the FIF.

The participants recruited were not asked to comment or provide data on the inclusion criteria. Therefore, these were dependent on the participants own choice, and unregulated by the researcher. Being a current trainee CP was regulated by the participants academic email address. The training courses and year of training was collected for those who did participate in the FGs.

The study has chosen to look at trainee CPs rather than qualified, due to the training being a driver of potential SM. It is a unique time where we haven't entered the profession yet and are potentially closer to our identities that have been unshaped by being a qualified psychologist. During training professional identities are developed and encouraged to be reflected and critiqued upon. Therefore, training as a psychologist is a sensitive period for identity development and changes, both in the personal and professional. Also, the research aims to support how training courses think about and attend to class, in the selection processes, training approaches and support to students.

3.5.1.2. Sampling Strategy & Recruitment

A purposive sampling method was used as this supports recruiting participants from the predetermined inclusion criteria (Patton, 1990).

The study was advertised using a research poster (Appendix C). A range of recruitment methods were employed. Firstly, the research poster was advertised on social media platforms (Linkedin and Twitter). The study was shared with the ClassClinPsy collective, a group that discusses the impact of class on journeys through clinical psychology, who distributed the poster. Lastly, I emailed all of the courses that are stated on the LCH website, asking if they would distribute my recruitment poster.

Those who expressed interest and contacted me received the studies information sheet (Appendix D) and asked if they would like to be added to the list of possible participants. A total of 26 trainees, across 13 different courses, emailed participation interest. I then set up a google form, for those who were interested to select time and dates of their availability. I then choose to run the groups on two time slots that people had the most availability for. The final sample of 13 participants were selected due to their overlapping availability on the date and times with each other and with the researcher. The study originally planned to run one FG, however due to the number of participants that showed interest, this was increased to two. I consulted the director of studies on increasing the number of FGs, and this was approved without needing to revisit ethical approval.

3.5.1.3. Sample Considerations

With the importance of the interactions in FGs, its suggested that recruiting a diverse population of participants is beneficial (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The study aimed to recruit trainees from a range of courses to facilitate this. Also, to gather information on the experiences across different courses. After participants had indicated their availability on the google documents form, I created a spreadsheet with each participants availability and the course they were on, indicated by the academic email. Using these, I assembled the FGs, attempting to allocate participants from the range of courses.

3.5.4. The Sample

The final sample included 13 participants from 9 different courses. Recommendations for the optimal number of participants within an FG, range from between 6-12 participants (D. Stewart et al., 2007). I recruited between 6-8 participants for each FG. The sample size of 13 is also in accordance with the data analysis method, supporting the Thematic Analysis (TA). For a small project, using TA, its recommended that there are between 10-50 participants when using an FG methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The age range of participants was 24-38 years old and there were 5 males and 8 females. An individual profile for each participant is not provided, due to anonymity preservation. There were 8 participants who were in the first year of training, and 5 who were in the third year, no second-year trainees participated. Participants were from the following universities: Glasgow, Lancaster, Sheffield, Staffordshire, Bangor, Leicester, Liverpool, Newcastle and UEL. Ten

participants were from White British backgrounds, two from White-Other backgrounds and one from an Asian- any other background.

3.5.5. Ethics and Consent

The study received ethical approval from the University of East London research (Appendix E). All participants received the study's information sheet, which outlined the information needed to make an informed consent. An email was also sent to all the people who showed interest in the study, that they could contact myself, to discuss any questions they had about the study or participating. Interested participants were sent a consent form, which they were required to sign and complete, emailing it back to the researcher. When a signed consent form was received, and checked by the researcher, a link for the FG sent to the participant.

3.5.5.1 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Participants were informed about confidentiality and data anonymity within the information sheet and consent form. On the consent form, the data collection was outlined, that the meeting would be recorded and transcribed, and asked permission to use anonymised quotes within this report. I revisited the permission to record at the beginning of each FG. Within both groups, there were participants from the same course, therefore I revisited whether they wished to continue with the group. Within the FG, we created ground rules on confidentiality, for what is shared within the group to not be shared elsewhere outside and to only share their own experiences.

To protect anonymity, after the FGs had been transcribed, all participants names were anonymised. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts.
After anonymising the transcripts, the original transcripts were deleted. The anonymised transcript, the original recordings, consent forms and demographic forms were saved on the UEL one drive storage, which was password protected, with access only permissible to myself and the studies research supervisor. The data will be deleted by the studies supervisor at the identified time frames, in accordance with UEL data storage policies.

3.5.5.2. Distress

There is potential for distress when sharing personal experiences, that are relating to disadvantage, inequality, and personal identities. Within the introductions, I outlined that participants did not have to answer all questions. I reminded all participants that if they needed to take a break, turn their camera off, leave, or withdraw from the study, they had the right to do so. We had a rule that if someone was to leave, they would privately email the researcher, to indicate that they had done so and we could debrief 1-1 after, if the participant would find it useful.

I offered a space to all participants after the group, for 1-1 debrief. All participants were sent a debrief sheet (Appendix F).

3.5.6. Data Collection

3.5.6.1. Focus Groups

Two online FGs were run via Microsoft Teams software, using the recording and transcribe function. The groups were run online to allow trainees from different areas to partake, supporting the research in hearing from a range of courses across the UK.

The groups ran for 90 minutes each. It is suggested that FGs be between 1-2 hours in length (O.Nyumba et al., 2018). The first FG consisted of 7 participants, and the second consisted of 6. The FGs began with introductions, a small icebreaker question, revisiting the right to withdraw, confidentiality consent to record and items around mitigating distress. I informed the groups of my role as a mediator, I was there to facilitate the groups discussions, and therefore I would not participate within the interview questions.

A semi structured interview schedule was created at the process of ethical approval (Appendix G). I referred to the existing literature and Krueger's (2002) paper on focus group interviewing to help design the interview schedule. The guidance emphasizes the importance of open-ended questions, which I have incorporated. The interview schedule included some direct questions, such as “What challenges are there when entering the clinical psychology training, as someone from a working-class background?”, rather than exploratory questions such as “Haver there been any challenges”. Direct questions were used to probe deeper into the experiences that have already been documented in previous literature, such as the challenges of entering the CP profession. Direct questions were also useful due to the time constraint, of hearing 6-7 people’s experiences on a range of topics in 90 minutes.

The main areas that the interview schedule covered were:

- Participants interest in the study
- Experience of getting onto clinical psychology doctorate training

- Experiences on the doctorate
- Class identity in clinical psychology

The groups ended with a final open-ended question around, if there is anything else people wanted to share about, that we hadn't covered.

3.5.6.2 Demographic and Training Course Information Form

A participant demographic and a background questionnaire were emailed to those who had competed the consent form (Appendix H).

3.5.7. Transcription

The Microsoft Teams software recorded the groups and provided a transcription. I then used this transcription, as a guide to personally go through and transcribe the groups again, to ensure accuracy. I employed an orthographic approach, transcribing participants responses verbatim, without omitting pronunciation or corrections, supported by Braun and Clarke's notation framework (2013).

Once both the FGs had been transcribed, I then went through and anonymised the transcripts and deleting identifiable information.

3.5.8. Data Analysis

Data was analysed using a reflexive approach to TA, which has epistemological flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This acknowledges and incorporates the researcher's positionality as an inevitable part of the research process and knowledge production, this approach will be adopted to address the similar experience the researcher holds with the researched group (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2023) Theme coding allows the researcher to gather themes, through engaging and interpreting the data with thoughtful and reflective analytic processes, rather than only summarising themes that emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2023).

Adopting a reflexive TA approach allows the researcher to recognize their active role in the research analysis. I engaged with the data and applied meaning to it, with the themes constructed being shaped by my interpretation of the relevant literature, presented in the introduction and the literature review, and by my adopted theoretical position, outlined in the method section. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of this research, a reflexive TA is an effective method for exploring diverse perspectives, identifying both similarities and differences, and generating new insights (Clarke et al., 2015). Additionally, a TA methodology has flexibility, in that can be applied across various qualitative methods and epistemological frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2014).

3.5.8.1 Data Analysis and Epistemology

Using a CR approach within TA is beneficial (Wiltshire & Ronkainen, 2021). To support a CR ontology the research in some way should consider the causal mechanisms (Fryer, 2022) and identifying these casual processes ultimately support understanding structures of

inequality and injustice (Bhaskar, 2009). It is suggested that this could be through the questions that are asked that attempt to reveal underlying causes of events or experiences (Fryer, 2022). An example of a casual question within the interview schedule is “Can you tell me about the process of training, as someone from a working-class background?”.

3.6. Thematic Analysis

The TA undertaken used an inductive reflexive approach, allowing the themes to emerge from the data, supporting the exploratory nature of the research into the experiences of WC trainees. With my personal proximity to the research topic and the lack of literature looking at the experiences of WC trainee CPs, a reflexive approach was adopted to generate rich data, whilst reflecting on the researchers own position interacting with the data and data analysis processes. This subjectivity of the researcher in reflexive TA is acknowledged as a key driver in the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

3.6.1. Data Quality Procedures

Given the CR position this research adopts, the findings do not aim to represent a single version of reality. The analysis of the collected data set would vary between researchers. This variation may raise questions of the relatability and validity of the research, however, it is argued that these are constructs structured for quantitative research (Yardley, 2000). With the CR position, accepting that multiple realities exist, also lies true that multiple truths can be

created for the same research question (Yardley, 2000; Braun & Clarke, 2022a), and this is not considered as a lack of rigour (Braun et al., 2022).

However, TA methods may hold limitations with regards to rigour, if the researcher fails to detail and describe the processes undertaken in the analysis (Nowell et al.,2017). To ensure this research was conducted with rigor and trustworthiness, Yardley's evaluative criteria (2000) and Braun & Clarke's (2006) 15-point check list framework, was followed throughout the analysis.

3.6.2. Thematic Analysis Procedure

The 6-step process guide to TA was followed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process was non-linear, revisiting different stages of the processes throughout. I also went through the entire process and stages of the process multiple times. This supports addressing researcher bias and generating knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Presenting the steps undertaken in the TA, in addition to the reflexive approach I have taken to the research, support with achieving coherence and transparency (Yardley, 2000), across my research processes.

The 6 TA processes included;

1. Familiarisation with data

I began to familiarise myself with the data after each group, reflecting on what had been shared, how they related to my own perceptive, then reading through the written notes I had taken during the group. I noted these within the reflexive research journal.

The second stage of familiarisation occurred after revisiting the transcripts. The groups were automatically transcribed with the Microsoft's team's transcription function. I then rewatched both videos, and edited the generated transcripts, correcting any errors, anonymising, and creating pseudonyms for the participants. I re-transcribed the recordings myself, to ensure I had a thorough understanding of the data, with accordance to Braun & Clarke's (2006) framework of a good TA and the commitment and rigour criteria (Yardely, 2000).

Furthermore, the transcripts were combined for both FGs, to support with Braun & Clarke's (2006) framework, which suggests a good TA should give equal attention to each transcript, generating codes representative of both FGs.

2. Developing Initial Codes

The anonymised transcripts were uploaded to Nvivo12. I first generated initial codes by reading through the data, looking for recurring words, and codes within each of the groups, and then comparing the two, using Microsoft Word software. Then using Nvivo the transcripts were coded for meaning units on a semantic level. Initial coding involved systematically reviewing each response and identifying data that pertained to the research question. I took a descriptive approach to initial coding following the TA recommendations (Braun & Clarke, 2023), using longer descriptive codes, rather than single words.

Although the data was coded semantically, allowing the codes to emerge from the data, due to my own position, I had preconceived theoretical lenses towards the data. Researchers

engage with data whilst holding an understanding of the existing literature, and this inevitably interacts with coding processes, therefore whilst coding semantically and data driven, researchers can identify theoretical concepts within the data set, that remain descriptive (Fryer, 2022). Therefore, I held an awareness that my initial ideas and codes were influenced by my research questions, the adopted epistemology, and the literature I had read in the explored during this study. I have documented this to display transparency within the TA process of generating initial codes, supporting with Yardley's (2000) sensitivity to context data criteria. Appendix I displays examples of the initial coding's.

With this awareness, I noted the initial codes that were contradictory, for example this occurred with one initial code which emerged as an overall theme, "Am I Still Working-Class?" / "I am Still Working-Class". This encouraged me to reflect on the different perspectives that were demonstrated in the FGs and ensure this was represented in my data analysis. Which is supportive of the transparency and coherence quality criteria (Yardley, 2000).

3. Searching for Themes

Initial codes were revisited, grouped, and organised into broader themes and subthemes that were reoccurring throughout the transcripts. This process was repeated until key themes emerged. Nvivo allows codes to be rearranged into structures of possible themes, which supported this process.

Braun and Clarke note that themes do not emerge from data; instead, they are constructed by the researcher through active engagement (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Therefore, I engaged in

this step multiple times, after constructing initial themes, revisiting the transcripts and analysing the suitability of the theme against what the data showed and the whether the theme belongs within a grouping.

The emerging themes were reviewed, also revisiting the codes that supported the themes. Whilst reviewing the themes, some merged into overall larger themes or fit within subthemes. The themes were named, which were revisited at the end of analysis, as an ongoing process to authentically represent the quotes from participants. To achieve this, I wrote a brief description of each theme to determine if I could effectively capture their essence (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These developed into the names of each theme, which according to Braun & Clarke (2006) should give the reader "a sense of what the theme is about". I held this in mind when finalising the theme names, with them representing the interesting parts of the data and generating a story of the, whilst applying meaning through the known literature and theoretical position adopted (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the process of searching for themes, I examined the experiences of participants while also reflecting on my own, to understand how my experiences may have influenced the theme searching and groupings. Using a reflexive diary (Appendix B) during the analysis, I reflected on how and why I came to interpret the data in a particular way. Considering the potential impact of these interpretations, while also being mindful of the influence of my own perspective (Clark et al., 2021). The reflexive diary, by tracking my own reflections and thoughts towards the data, was a useful tool in objectively reviewing whether the themes were representative of the data, and holding awareness of where my own interactions with the data were occurring, as in qualitative research methods, eliminating the influence of the researcher is not realistic or beneficial (Braun et al., 2022). Therefore, the reflexive diary was

a resource that documented my own impacts on the data, it was utilised in the non-linear process of reviewing the generating and re-visiting the themes, and on guiding the decisions that were undertaken during the analysis.

6. Producing the Report

The final phase of the analysis is producing an overall report, writing up the themes to demonstrate the findings, considering the projects aims and research question. The results are detailed in the next chapter, with an discussion on the findings in the final chapter. The findings contribute towards the literature gap and are used to present recommendations, supporting Yardley's (2000) criteria for research to have impact and importance, that research should be useful in supporting change.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter will present the TA conducted on the two FG transcripts and the discussion. I will also orientate the reader to the processes and experience of the groups, to provide transparency in the research process, and to support with how the reader may perceive my interaction with the data, themes and analysis. A brief participant table is presented, with the

participant number and year of study, to display how the experiences may differ between stages of training. University course names have been omitted, to maintain anonymity of participants.

4.2. General Reflections and Participants in the Focus Groups

Within both of the FGs there were participants who were on the same course and within the same year group. Within FG1, this was acknowledged by the participants, letting the researcher know that they knew each other, it appeared that they were not aware that the other would be participating. I asked if it felt ok to continue and both agreed. Within the introduction, we had discussions around confidentiality, and it seemed appropriate to continue. Within the second FG, participants who were within the same cohort didn't voice that they knew each other, but as discussions began, they both engaged in conversations about their course. Again, within the beginning of the FG, we had a space to cover confidentiality and ground rules, and all participants agreed with these, and it felt fine to continue.

I had been aware, whilst setting up the groups, that there were people within the FG that were within the same cohort. However, it was difficult to arrange the FGs with participants all from different courses, as the participants within the same cohorts had the same availability due to study days, and I was also limited by my own study days. I had been apprehensive of having participants who potentially knew each other within the same group, however it allowed for a richer discussion around aspects of their courses.

Whilst there were participants who knew each other within the FGs, I also knew one of the participants. During the FG, I was conscious of whether the participants would become aware of this and think about how mine and these participants experiences or viewpoints are similar. I had some thoughts whether this would have any impacts through social desirability biases, and/ or participants openness to share in an unknown space, whilst knowing there may be people who have existing relationships. From my experience across both FGs, participants appeared open and comfortable in sharing their experiences and opinions, whether these agreed or differed from others that had been shared.

During both groups, participants were very engaged with the discussion points, and in discussion between each other on the points. All participants contributed within each discussion topic, and it felt like the groups were an interactive discussion, rather than individual turn taking.

Discussions varied across the groups, with some pertinent discussion points only occurring in one or the other. However, there were clear overlaps, which are detailed in the overall themes overview.

Table.1 *Participants in the Focus Groups*

FG1		
Participant Number	M/F	Year of Study
P1	F	3
P2	M	1
P3	M	1
P4	F	1
P5	M	1
P6	F	1
P7	F	3
FG2		
Participant Number	M/F	Year of Study
P8	F	3
P9	F	3
P10	M	3
P11	F	1
P12	M	1
P13	F	3

4.3. Overview of Themes

The data from both FGs were analysed simultaneously, analysing each question within order, for each group, then combining the codes into themes.

There were 4 themes generated in the TA of WC trainee CPs experiences, with a further 10 sub-themes, these are outlined in Table 2. The four themes overall summarise the WC trainees' experiences throughout entering and training in the CP profession. Overall, the analysis highlights how trainees perceive their class as a barrier when entering the profession, and that CI is not always spoken about in training, which formed the overall theme of "Is there Space for Working-Class Identities in Clinical Psychology?". Whilst on training, the

experiences from theme 1, noted above, relate to the WC trainees feeling pressures to conform to the majority that conflict with their class background, which is summarised in the second theme "Fitting in". Despite some of the challenges, the third theme; "WC connection to CP", revealed how being WC can serve as a strength within clinical work, and how this CI may have led them to pursuing this career choice. The fourth theme "What class am I now?" describes how the course and training impacts on how WC trainee's make sense of belonging in terms of their CI.

Table 2. *Themes and Sub-themes from the Thematic Analysis*

Theme	Sub theme
1. Is there Space for Working-Class Identities in Clinical Psychology?	1. Discussion spaces
	2. Navigating entry to training
2. Fitting in	1. Speaking differently
	2. Class Assumptions
	3. Changing or Performing?
3. The Working-Class Connection to Clinical Psychology	1. The Strengths
	2. Chances to Make Change
4. What Class am I now?	1. Class Identity Changes
	2. Discomfort
	3. Am I Still Working-Class? / I am Still Working-Class

4.3.1. Theme 1: Is there Space for Working-Class Identities in Clinical Psychology?

This theme captures how class is largely undiscussed in CP and the obstacles on accessing the training pertaining to having a WC identity, overall contribute to the lack of space for this identity in CP.

4.3.1.1 Discussion Spaces

The majority of trainees shared that CIs are not spoken about on the course and this was a motivation for them to participate in the study, to hear others' experiences and to contribute to bringing awareness to it. Trainees were keen to hear about whether other courses discussed class. Experiences varied around stages of training, those earlier in their training mentioning they haven't had opportunities to think about their CI yet, and third years describing their experiences of it being or not being spoken about.

Where thinking and discussion around CIs are not occurring on courses, trainees attempted to create those spaces themselves. Taking on the responsibility to highlight and think widely about the intricacies of class, on a more systemic level. Encouraging those from privileged class-groups, to explore ideas of class, hierarchies, and SM, that ultimately reproduce the dominance of the higher SCs.

P7: "*We don't talk about it a lot on training. It doesn't really come up, and if it does, I feel like I bring it up myself or I'm the one that's asking questions or asking people to think more systemically about class systems".*

Trainees also felt that when CI is brought up by courses, this is done in a superficial manner, that is lacking thought and meaningfulness, minimising the lived experiences that WC trainee CPs have. Trainees can bring CI conversations to the forefront, to share "real-life" experiences with fellow peers. With the predominantly MC peer group, many trainees maybe

unaware of the WC lived experiences that not only impact the people they may work with, but also individuals within the cohort. Furthermore, as course led discussions can feel tokenistic, WC trainees may feel a duty to inform those from class-privileges, from a place of lived experience.

P6: *"It feels like they're doing it almost in a tokenistic way".*

P8: *"I feel quite probably passionate about making sure that the trainees are hearing from a real-life person, like I came from this background".*

Openly bringing this to discussion, may also support representation for WC identities in CP. However other trainees shared that it did not always feel safe to engage in these conversations with the wider course.

P13: *" We've all sort of managed to find each other, the sort of working-class people within our cohort. So we have very good and interesting discussions. And I think it would be really valuable to share them with the cohort, but it just has never felt safe."*

Class isn't being addressed on courses in relation to trainee's identities, and for SUs. Furthermore, not only does it feel unspoken of, but trainees shared also having no available support for this part of their identity.

P2: *"It's not really been addressed at all in terms of both for ourselves and for service users."*

P4: *"I do feel like class systems aren't spoken about that much on the course and we don't have any kind of support. You know, for people coming from working-class backgrounds on the course."*

Trainees shared their ideas for the reasons as to why there is a lack of conversation around SC on the course. Trainees discussed how the act of not discussing class may relate to issues of power and as a way of the dominant representations in CP maintaining this power.

P1: *"I wonder as well if it's intentional that they don't think about power structures and social class structures, because I think historically and probably in current day as well, psychology has always had a role in play in maintaining like the status quo."*

They felt courses and psychology as a discipline should be very aware of the impacts of inequalities and therefore the ignorance of class, in training, felt as a surprise.

P3: *"It has very little space, it feels very brief, and it's not built into the training...it quite surprises me that as psychologists, it's not, it's not new as it we've known about this in the literature for a long time."*

P4: *"So like again, they recognize, you know, social oppression. They recognize that having come from working-class backgrounds can be difficult in clinical psychology."*

Additionally, the neglect of class on the training, brought up reflections of how psychology has related to issues surrounding other intersectional identities.

P1: *"I feel like courses really, do they understand the intricacies of social class in clinical psychology? And I think to a certain extent, they do understand like the wider, profound like nature of, like, intersectionality and the systems of oppression."*

With trainees sharing ideas of why class may not be discussed on the training. That WC professionals, after entering MC professional spaces, are disconnected from their class roots, and the act of not talking about class, is a defence within themselves.

P2: "*Perhaps there's a natural human tendency as well too, once you do make it out, to forget and maybe it's possible, like self-preservation to forget where you've come from. Mobilised change now, while you're out of the marginalized power structures".*

Whilst thinking about the space given to WC identities, trainees sharing wider reflections on whether other under-represented groups are thought about by courses.

P2: *"Like for some reason they have been a bit surprised by the by that element of diversity within the cohort".*

P10: *"It's not kind of like the hot topic. And you know, I think sometimes that is fine because I think. When I look at my cohort, it's very white. And maybe there are things that need to be spoken about around difference and you know social graces".*

Two trainees from one course shared that class and privilege does get discussed and thought about by the course they are on. The trainees from this course also shared that the course has support groups in place for WC identities in CP.

P11: *"I think we've been really quite lucky at X in that it is the forefront of a lot of conversations. And not just class, but race and lots of other privileges or not privileges."*

In general, even outside of the CP profession, SC conversations are challenging and associated with stigma (Sayer, 2002). Similar to Place (2023) and Lovick (2024), overall, WC trainees felt the CI is not spoken about on the CP training courses, and that conversations can feel tokenistic. From this studies participants, one course appears to be specifically thinking about class, and other aspects of identity, and this is appreciated by the trainees. Lovick (2024) also found that some trainees were experience class-discussions on their courses.

Despite overall discussions on CIs lacking on CP training, WC trainees are thinking about class, what it means for them in the profession and what it means for SU's. Some are bringing it up in discussions, to encourage MC professionals and systems to confront their beliefs, whereas for others, this doesn't feel like a safe environment to be doing so, and therefore are engaging in similar class background peer discussions.

4.3.1.2. Navigating entry to training

This sub-theme details the experiences the WC trainees navigated when entering the CP profession. Trainees described how they experienced obstacles which made entering the profession from a WC background difficult

There were four types experiences, WC trainees reported navigating; internal beliefs, the processes involved in entering the profession, the costs and the additional hurdles for WC applicants. Hui et al. (2023) found that trainees from low SES backgrounds documented similar barriers, both physical (costs), and perceptual.

Multiple trainees shared that they had thought becoming a CP was unattainable due to their class backgrounds. This may demonstrate feelings of imposter syndrome, with the WC underestimating their abilities (Jin & Ball, 2020). These psychological barriers are also linked to the covert signals that lower-class students aren't valued or likely to succeed in HE (Easterbrook et al., 2019). Interestingly, a few trainees shared those relatable and supportive supervisors, who may have had similar class backgrounds to themselves, supported them in applying and pursuing the training.

P10: *"I think growing up, I did not think I would ever get onto a doctorate course whatsoever. Like I did not think I would be good enough to ever do it. And it wasn't until, eventually getting one really good supervisor who kind of like, showed me the way a little bit. Who was also probably working-class themselves, I think. And yeah, just kind of having that kind of great supervision and support to be like, you know, you can do this. It's not out of your reach."*

P13: *"I think without the support of supervisors and other people that had a similar background to me doing it, I don't think I would have applied for it".*

Trainees in Lovicks study (2024), also noted the positive impacts of having WC representations in the profession. Role-models that display an "out-group" characteristic, can act as "social vaccines", that facilitate a sense of belonging in the profession and reduce the impact of in-group stereotypes for WC trainees (Dasgupta, 2011). Overall, seeing class similarities between themselves and qualified CPs, supports WC trainees in believing that the career is also accessible and achievable for them.

The processes involved with applying to training, were identified as a barrier to entering the profession. Trainees spoke about how selection tests and questions within the application, were a barrier as they had limited guidance and networks. Trainees felt that not having those professional networks and contacts to support, disadvantaged them.

P11: *"I think as a working-class person, there's a lot of having to navigate this on your own because there's not people around you".*

One trainee sharing how the costs of submitting the application and the early submission discount, puts those who are restricted financially at a disadvantage. Attempting to make the earlier submission date, to get the discount, compromised the quality of their application forms, as it left less time to receive feedback and input from supervisors.

P13: *"There was a pressure to apply early, so you got the early bird discount, um. I think it was only probably wasn't even that much of a difference, but I just remembering being like I need to save a bit of money".*

Additional costs impacted WC trainees, such as getting a driving license and car, masters study, interviews, paid mentors for applications, unpaid and low paid AP positions and moving and relocating for the course. Trainees shared the vast geographical ranges that courses outside of London cover on their placements, and this being a prerequisite as to why some courses ask applicants to have a driving license and the use of a car at the point of applying. Then the costs of having to relocate or stay overnight at placement locations. Trainees had these thoughts at the point of applying to the training, and these influencing the courses that they had applied for.

P6: "*I don't even need my car, so I think that's an unnecessary barrier for a lot of people. And*

I think if I actually added it all up in terms of two tests and a year of lessons, it was almost £3000."

P7: "*I basically kind of had to up my whole life and move to X and that was massive task, in a short space of time. Trying to kind of organize life and move to an area that I knew nothing about trying to find somewhere that's reasonably priced, it was chaos."*

The costs of additional master's studies felt like a barrier for multiple trainees. Trainees felt that they were at a disadvantage, to getting onto training, compared to those who had more financial resources. Not being able to afford a masters also adding to the feeling that getting onto training and becoming a CP is unattainable.

P2: "*I don't have a masters. I didn't feel like it was a financial decision that I could make, and they sort of tell you, you need to find a way to do a masters, or you're not gonna get on to the course."*

P4: "*I didn't do a masters and I felt that a lot of people kind of getting on to training had done a masters and had that in their back pocket as well. And I felt slightly at a disadvantage for not having that".*

These barriers describe the "class-ceiling" impacts that WC individuals face when attempting to access "higher-class" professions (Friedman et al., 2015), that can ultimately also describe

why particular classes are dominating high-status professional jobs. Those WC trainees who had done masters, shared financial struggles, with working alongside studying and doing applications, which overall had negative impacts on their wellbeing. Feeling burnt out before even starting the course, which in itself is demanding and stressful (Cushway, 1992; Jones, 2017). This strong work ethic, perseverance towards goals and "grafting" is correlated to WC values and upbringings (Gillaspy et al., 2023; Gunter & Watt, 2009) which Lovick (2024) documented in WC trainee CPs.

P12: *"I had to have a job at the same time.. so I think it's like 22.5 hours plus doing a fulltime masters at times it ended up being kind of 60 hour weeks. On top of that, having, yeah, application, interviews, all that….. You know, that that was really tough on my mental health. I was burnt out. I started the course in September, burnt out."*

With the competition for the course, trainees felt the pressures to accept the costs or impacts attached to making it onto a course, such as paying the price to relocate, working, and studying and sacrificing parts of their personal life and well-being.

P6: *"I'm quite happy not going out with the weekends to save for that, but people shouldn't have to give up their social lives"*

Once getting though some of the barriers within the application process, trainees spoke of the enormous costs of getting to the interviews. With expensive train tickets and the costs of overnight stays.

P6: "*The one that I went to that was in person, the overnight stay itself was, you know, nearly £100 and then trains were nearly another £100. And you know, if I had to do that for all four interviews, it would, it wouldn't have been possible."*

P1: *"I got interviews, one at X course, but the interview was in X town (different from course location) and I needed to book an overnight stay which was quite costly and then book a train there and a train back which is quite expensive as well. Like the financial challenges are quite stark."*

Working-class trainees shared parts of their life circumstances that made applying to the training feel like an additional hurdle. Personal life experiences, such as housing, financial and MH difficulties, bringing up feelings that they don't belong within the profession. Trainees discussed how these experiences make it more challenging for them to go through the application processes and how this also can feel like a disadvantage to getting on.

P8: *"And that financial stuff where you think, if I could only fix, if we had the money just to fix this, you know, I don't know. And so I suppose within the application process, you just can't help think that all of those things are coming into it. You know, they just made me feel like I'm not really supposed to be there. I'm fighting against the grain."*

P12: *"I do recognise that I took on a lot myself. But yeah, I think I found it frustrating when I compared myself to people from other financial backgrounds because they had it easier than me."*

Many of these barriers are also documented in other studies (Hui et al., 2023). Working-class trainees shared varied journeys onto training and different experiences with barriers. Whilst some felt disadvantaged by not having an additional master's qualifications, others spoke about the personal costs attached to having this. It appears that overcoming the barriers, have other personal consequences for WC trainees. The barriers described how internally, WC trainees felt that they wouldn't belong in the CP profession, and the real-life barriers they experience getting onto the course, contribute to making WC identities feel unwelcomed in the profession. Again, this alongside being on the course and noticing how CI are not addressed or thought about, additively distance WC identities from CP.

4.3.2. Theme 2: "Fitting in"

This theme describes the trainees' experiences of how they perceive and adapt to fit in with the CP profession. The three subthemes that described WC trainees' relationship to "Fitting In" were speaking differently, experiencing Class Assumptions (CA) and changing themselves.

4.3.2.1. Speaking Differently

Trainees discussed how they ways in which they speak contributed to the feeling like they did not fit in with the CP profession. This included their accents and the language and the words they use. This consciousness of the way they spoke, being a factor of not fitting in, came though noticing how others in the profession spoke and receiving direct comments on the ways they spoke.

Trainees shared that the way they spoke, felt like an indicator of not fitting in with CP, even before entering the course, from observing how others in the profession spoke. With similar findings represented in Place's study (2023).

P4: *"Especially during like the interview process, I was very aware that I'm not as well spoken and I can kind of struggle to, you know, get my point across, get my words across in like that professional manner that is seen. And I've seen in kind of supervisors, and I remember asking a supervisor before being like, how do you present these ideas in such a well spoken way?".*

Speaking differently from those in the profession, contributed to trainees being conscious of the way that they spoke. Adding to beliefs that they don't speak "well" enough, to be in the profession. Trainees were aware that their accents can indicate the area they are from and possibly the social environments they grew up within. Their accents influencing selection biases, unconscious (or conscious) judgements as to whether someone fits in and represents the profession.

P8: *"I mean, they can hear it right away that I'm, you know, the kind of area I'm from. And I always thought that that was a massive barrier."*

Regional accents can hold additional class biases, whilst region neutral accents can be beneficial for "fitting in" in HE (Addison et al., 2015). The application and interviews for the DClinPsy, being a process whereby WC trainees had even received direct comments on the way they spoke or wrote. These comments inferring that their ways of speaking were not congruent with the expectations of a trainee CP.

P3: *"Through the interview process where some feedback that I received was that I was too colloquial".*

P12: *"I remember like writing application, and you like a lot of the feedback I used to get was you need to use like psychology words. You need to use like that jargon, you need to be using xyz and I never spoke like that."*

And their ways of speaking being indirectly responded to through classist behaviours, such as microaggressions.

P11: *"I was going to pick up on what you're saying about accent as well. Because for me, I've gone on a journey with that in terms of, like, received quite a lot of microaggressions."*

Accents were an overt indicator of CI, that trainees experienced judgements about themselves on and on their fit for the profession. demonstrating classism based on this observable CI. Accents and ways of speaking are also reflective of one's cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1988), again relating to the mis-match between the cultures of WC and that of CP. Whilst a barrier at interviews and application, this feeling of speaking differently continued throughout training.

P7: *"I still feel that way. I still feel like I'm trying to mould myself into these professional spaces where I don't feel like I'm talking the same language, or I find like I criticize myself, quite a lot."*

Experiences of classism can manifest in internal feelings of discomfort (Cavalhieri et al., 2023). Not only did trainees experience their speech as a barrier to entry, but also as an ongoing external and internal conflict to their WC identity whilst on the course. This is linked to the subsequent sub theme "changing or performing" which is discussed later in this section.

4.3.2.2. Class Assumptions

Within this subtheme trainees spoke about their experiences of being assumed to be a MC, from being in the CP profession. These experiences occurred from people within the course, but also from trainees' circles outside of the training. This taking place within both a professional and personal setting, highlights the assumptions that are made about class belonging and social ranking, based on factors such as professional status or level of education.

Class assumptions is within the “fitting in” theme, as it describes how others perceive a trainee CPs CI, and how it feels for them to not fit in with this assumption. It also highlights what class is associated with CP professionals. Trainees particularly commented on these assumptions being made by course staff and supervisors, which was also a pertinent theme in another research study (Place, 2023).

P6: *“There has been assumptions that I am from, you know, more of a middle-class background and I think that's kind of a blanket assumption that some the teachers have”.*

P4: *“My supervisor saying to me, you know, how does it feel to be from kind of a white middle-class background, working with these people.”*

P13: “*Speakers come in pretty much every week, and they say, as a cohort of, you know, middle-class people, you need to be doing this. And it's like, hang on a minute.”*

Some of these CA’s being solely based off the level of education that the trainees are undertaking, and from both psychology and personal circles.

P10: “*If you are on the doctorate, you kind of are assumed to be middle-class.”*

P13: *"Getting onto the doctorate is social mobility, like when you're there it then becomes this like You're better than me. I don't understand you."*

Trainees reflected on how accents are particularly susceptible to CA's and judgements. A few trainees had different experiences with this, discussing the bias in the northern vs southern accents. Having a southern accent within certain parts of the UK, holding an assumption of being within a higher SC ranking.

P12: *"I think it's interesting what everyone's saying about accents um I almost have the opposite to you, P11, in that I've got a very southern accent that sounds quite middle-class sometimes and I went to X (course region) and then I was assumed to then be oh yeah you'll fit in, with the middle-class".*

Class assumptions are acts of classism (Liu, 2001). Working-class trainees described experiencing various levels of classism. Having a neutral accent, not pertaining to a particular region, further complicating this CA for WC trainees. This incongruence between being assumed MC, and their lived experiences with being WC, can make speaking up about their class even harder, which was also described as uncomfortable for those trainees.

4.3.3.3. Changing or Performing?

Within this subtheme, trainees spoke about the ways in which they have noticed that they change themselves to "fit" in with the CP profession. Similar pressures to adapt in WC

students has been discussed by Reay et al. (2009), whereby changing to fit in with the MC university culture is a balancing act with also preserving their CI.

P7: *"Clinical psychology is always seen as very kind of middle-class profession".*

Multiple trainees spoke about how they have made changes to the way they speak. Making these changes to meet others' expectations. One trainee shared how through making these changes, to fit in, it feels like this change has become a permanent.

P3: *"You get good enough at the performance to sort of say what you say from your authentic voice, while the expectations of professionalism. And I also feel a little bit now over the threshold of being on the training, and almost as if it's part of me now, and it will be hard to get rid of."*

P7: *"Like I will attempt to change it and I feel like I shouldn't have to do that, but I will try and slow it down or ohh phrase something in a slightly different way."*

One trainee shared that this pressure to fit in with ways of speaking in CP, negotiates between more than one intersecting part of their identity.

P1: *"This element of maybe like code switching and but I'm not sure if that comes from like my working-class identity or my like racialized identity or bit of both perhaps".*

Not only changing the way they speak, but also how much they voice their opinions and speak in psychology spaces.

P8: "*I always quiet myself, I don't want to come across like aggressive. I don't know how, but that's like, that's always in the back of my head. Like don't, don't speak too much."*

Trainees have even thought about how their appearance could be altered to fit in.

P11: *"I think sometimes I worry that someone's going to see through it. Like, I remember for my interview, I bought a suit off Vinted. And I remember wearing it thinking, like, people are going to know that this isn't mine. That, like, I'm not even wearing clothes that belong to me."*

The pressure to adapt, change, perform to align with the profession felt different across timepoints in training. With participants sharing this felt more of a pressure at the point of getting onto the course and going to interviews. Some third years shared that they have grown in confidence to be their authentic selves, feeling more confident in the strengths that their WC identity brings into the clinical work.

P8: *"I would say now, it's no one asset. Like I can now see it's an asset. Earlier in my training, I would try and hide it. I would try and speak a different way, but now I don't."*

P7: "*I do wonder if it's something in that almost like you get towards the end of training and you start getting more responsibility and you start being put in a position of more power"*.

Coming towards the end of the training, it felt more acceptable for trainees to be themselves and embrace their WC identity. Feeling more comfortable in being authentic to their WC identity at the end of training, may signify that after solidifying a relationship with course staff and supervisors across the 3-year training, there is more safety in demonstrating contradictions to class-based stereotyping and assumptions. Goodman (2011) describes this within the process of "confirmation", that through building a relationship with trust and commonality (in this case the trainees are close to be qualified), this creates a safety in risk taking to confront privilege and non-privileges, within promoting diversity and SJ.

4.3.4. Theme 3: The Working Class Connection to Clinical Psychology

Within this theme, trainees discussed the aspects of having a WC identity that connects them to the CP profession. This had two sub themes; the strengths and skills that they brought to the work and the chances to make changes to the community.

4.3.4.1. Working Class Strengths

The trainees shared that their WC identities hold strengths within CP work. Working-class strengths have been documented in the previous research, with Lovick (2024) proposing a strengths-based focus to understanding WC identities. Trainees within this study spoke about parts of their WC identity that has been an asset to forming TRs. In studies by Lovick (2024) and Place (2023), the WC strengths were also in how they can form connections and relationships with SUs. In this research, trainees expanded on why they felt they were able to foster these connections. With parts of their WC identity making them relatable, which can break down the power in a professional client dynamic, and support neutrality in the relationship.

P7: *"I feel like I'm better able to develop a therapeutic relationship and a lot quicker because I'm not seen as this professional that's coming in."*

P5: *"Relatability to clients and the people we work with, I feel like a bit more like down to earth or grounded just allows that sort of natural relationship to form."*

P4: *"I feel like it has really helped with building relationships with clients and I had one client who kind of said to me that they found it really hard to kind of relate to psychologists before when they've been in kind of therapy before and they found it much easier to relate to me."*

This comment above, demonstrating that WC SU's may find it beneficial to work with WC therapists. In contrast to the barriers that WC trainees experienced with their accents, in their

clinical work, this was a strength. Trainees noticed that their accent supports making SU's feel comfortable when talking to a professional.

P12: "*I can use my accent to build rapport really quickly to make someone feel comfortable to kind of break the ice like immediately and that yeah it's such a useful tool".*

The use of psychological terminology, which may have been useful for getting onto the training, is also less useful when working with SU's. Jargon can portray expertise, authority and could create power differentials in TRs (Johnstone, 1997). The trainees have experienced how they speak and the words they use as a facilitator in building TRs. Also recognising that psychological concepts and theories do not fit for all individuals understanding of distress, whether that being different across CS's, or across cultures.

P4: *"Not using as much kind of medical language and being more kind of human in the room because that's what I think I am like in the room, and it has really helped in kind of building that relationship."*

P1: *"I end up using less medical or psychological jargon and less like western concepts of psychology".*

Having similar lived experiences that can encompass a WC identity, connects trainees with understanding the difficulties of people in the community. Either from the perspectives of experiencing similar situations directly, or indirectly from their own social circles and

communities. Trainees also spoke about the barriers to accessing services, that can disadvantage certain populations or identities in accessing psychological therapies and using this within their work.

P10: *"I think a real kind of strength of coming from a working-class background is not necessarily that you've been through all of it, but you've probably seen, you know, other families that maybe have gone through similar things that come up in your work."*

P4: *"When you've had experience of some of the barriers yourselves and can kind of see them when others might not."*

Trainees also acknowledged here that people within MH systems are more likely to be from WC backgrounds, due to systemic problems.

P5: *"I guess the majority of people we do work with have come from similar backgrounds, just as the way the system is built."*

Having this systemic approach to why people maybe having MH difficulties or are being seen and treated within services, meant that WC trainees are asking those important questions around peoples housing and financial situations, and this being linked to having those similar backgrounds and experiences.

P6: "*Someone who might not have had a similar background, might kind of just miss those questions. And those might be really core and an important part of why somebody is struggling."*

Using this systemic approach and sharing this view with SU's, supports non-blaming narratives of the problems, which has been useful those who are experiencing systemic difficulties like living in poverty. Also, in Place's study (2023), WC trainees similarly spoke of oppression and the need for SJ approaches.

P1: "*I'm able to see how a lot of issues is related to, like systemic failure, rather than, like individual failure, and then expressing that to clients has been really helpful."*

The WC are less likely to access psychological therapies, with factors such as the language, and relationships to authority within medical systems or professionals, impacting on their engagement (Trott & Reeves, 2018). Trott & Reeves (2018) relate these barriers to Bourdieu's (1988) habitus, in that psychological therapy is a challenge to the WC culture. Working-class trainees, having a similar culture, support SU's with feeling comfortable within psychological services and TR. This was noted through WC trainees having relatability factors, making psychological terms and language accessible, using lived experiences to reduce the impact of barriers and incorporating socio-political understandings of MH into their work.

P2: *"If you come from more deprived background where you haven't had a lot of mental health or psychology input before and don't have the language to express that, if there's somebody who just kind of can feel it a bit more. I think that's a really valuable."*

Interestingly, some of the barriers that WC trainees experienced themselves with getting onto the DClinPsy, were then noted as a strength in the 1-1 therapeutic work. Similarly, Lovick (2024), noted the theme "help or hinderance", in that a WC identity in some ways whilst being a strength can hold its difficulties in being in the profession.

4.3.4.2. Chances to Make Change

Working-class trainees felt their CI has led them to a profession in which they can make a change to systems and for communities. Discussing how the CP title provides leadership roles, that other healthcare and psychology jobs did not have. This is under the theme of "Strengths," as trainees discussed how their WC backgrounds, has made them more aware of systemic issues, which was a strength in clinical work but also for their future aspirations to make changes for communities.

P11: *"I just got really frustrated a lot of the time about like systemic problems but in the roles that I was in, I couldn't have any impact on. Like, where do I need to be to be able to make this systemic change? And that was when I kind of found this career path."*

P8: *"There's an opportunity to make social change because of the leadership role."*

Leadership involves using power to achieve goals and make changes (Braynion, 2004). The trainees may be drawn to this element of CP, as the WC can experience a lack of agency and power in making change (Hopps & Liu, 2006). Being in the profession give them the opportunities to do so, that they may lack in other roles. Trainees reflected on using their own experiences of the impact of systemic problems as a way to support others and using this leadership power to make the change for them. One trainee commented on the intersectionality of race and class, as an additive impact on SIs and systemic violence.

P5: *"I can sort of give back to that system to other people who have experienced the same things".*

P1: *"I saw it as a pathway to contribute meaningfully to like racialized communities that are also coming from working-class backgrounds and to contribute to these communities where there is like a lot of systemic violence."*

Within FG1, trainees spoke about how whilst other job roles offered opportunities to work with communities, that the CP route had financial and job security advantages. Social class can influence peoples work choices, particularly in choosing roles that can support meeting basic needs, with career choices, solely based on one's interests and values being an option for the more privileged (Blustein et al., 2015). For WC individuals there may be an imbalance in career choices between needing to meet their basic survival requirements (money for housing, food etc) and engaging in meaningful work (Blustein et al., 2015). Multiple trainees

shared that their career aspirations were in other areas of psychology, but they decided to pursue clinical training due to stability.

Trainees discussed how the CP qualification provides more security in terms of the salary, being in high demand, the availability of jobs, and career progression opportunities. They also felt that the CP training route was faster and more direct. Some trainees spoke about how these benefits made entering CP a more practical decision, over other professions such as the forensic and educational psychology qualifications.

P6: *"I think the security of the profession and knowing that, you know, clinical psychologists are always going to be needed somewhere in some capacity was a really big pull for me... And I think that was really important for me in terms of that financial stability. So you don't have to worry about that a little bit more."*

P7: "*Clinical Psychology has more stability in it, and that was a big factor."*

P4: *"It did feel that the doctorate was probably one of the only routes that felt stable enough and financially viable for me to go down."*

Contributing to and making change in the community, drew WC trainees to pursue a career in CP. Their own lived experiences and an awareness of socio-political impacts on communities, being described as a key motivation for engaging in making changes. Holding a CP qualification, WC trainees felt gave them a chance to have power in leadership roles that facilitate making these changes. Trainees reflected upon their alternative career interests, and

that the choice to do the CP training was influenced by financial stability, which ultimately alleviated fears or worries around finances for WC trainees.

4.3.5. Theme 4:What Class am I Now?

The final theme summarises the discussions trainees had around how their CI has changed or may change, the feelings associated with this, and how they would describe their class now.

4.3.5.1. Class Identity Changes

Within this subtheme, trainees discussed how the nature of the training and the profession can bring up uncertainty in how they would class themselves currently. Similarly, in Lovick's (2024) study, WC trainees can experience a "class conundrum", and in Places research (2023), the training felt like a distancing process for trainees from their WC identities. This also more broadly agrees with the literature on WC students in HE, presented earlier (Reay et al., 2009).

In this research, WC trainees also reported these changes in how they thought about their CIs. With examples of how the CP profession directly impacts on their CI, such as the salary and having a doctor title. Describing their acquired cultural capital, as an influential factor in bringing forth these CI changes.

P9: "*I wouldn't call myself working-class now because of the salary and the salary that we'll qualify onto."*

P12: *"Its just the nature of being highly educated, being a doctor, being on a high wage, like, I can't sit and say I would still identify as the same person as before because I just don't think that's true".*

Trainees described the nuances on how they would describe their CI now. They felt that their earnings and their title, would impact on how they describe or talk about their CI with others. The changes in how they felt about their WC identities, appeared to occur over the process of training. Also thinking how this may continue after qualifying.

P5: *"I feel like I can see that it's gonna happen. When you think about the salary that we qualify onto."*

Trainees described that these changes are linked to the doctorate being a driver of SM, that has resulted in changes across generations in their family.

P1: *"We have kind of gained social capital and social mobility and are accessing middleclass spaces and salaries, like I earn more than both my parents."*

First year trainees reflected on what changes they may face across the training. Citing that their CI still feels authentic, as they are living within their WC social environments. But, how their WC identity may face conflict when working in a system, that doesn't align with their CI culture. Describing a struggle of holding onto WC values and being in a system.

P4: "*I've only just kind of got on to training and I do wonder how that's going to develop and how like in a sense of self and identity will change through that."*

P2: *"I'm still too early in the process to know as well and I'm still very much embedded in the environment where I grew up in. Trying to project forward a little bit thinking about the struggle, will I be holding on to the values that you know to be true from the lived experience while making decisions in the system?".*

Third year trainees commented on the changes that they have noticed in themselves. Noting a loss of identity, that they fear may be a long-term impact of the training.

P1: *"I'm like nearly at my end of the training, I feel like I have noticed like a slight loss of identity, and I think I worry as well if it's like permanent, I can fully relate like to the working-class identity".*

Overall, WC trainees described experiencing changes to their CI throughout training. This change was associated with aspects of entering the profession that signal being MC, such as the level of education, the doctor title, and the earnings. With these being different from their family experiences, experiencing "habitus clive", the isolation from both classes (Friedman, 2014), which was also reported in the CA theme earlier. Working-class trainees also described the experiences on the doctorate as a driver of SM. Experiences of SM or being in between two habitus can be a painful experience (Baxter & Britton, 2001).

4.3.5.2. Discomfort

Feelings of discomfort was associated with these CI changes, which was also found in Place (2023). The first-year trainees noticed this discomfort in their CI even being present on the first day of training, and third years describing the same feelings being present towards the end of the training.

P6: *"It's a really uncomfortable internal thing that's happening for me, and that was since day one on training."*

P7: "*Discomfort doesn't appear to move, if that helps, sorry. I like I still feel uncomfortable, and I feel almost as if there's two different identities and two different spaces."*

Throughout the training, gaining power was described as a new experience, that didn't fit with their WC reality before training, and this being a source of negative feelings.

P7: *"You start being put in a position of more power and there's still a small part of me that's really uncomfortable with that."*

In addition to the new positions of power, that come with being towards the end of training, the experiences of holding two CI's, a personal and a professional, was also a source of discomfort. This is similar to the experiences of "strangers in paradise" and "double agents"

that WC students experience in HE (Reay et al., 2009; Hurst, 2010). The challenges in experiencing two different CIs, brought up questions for trainees around their overall identity and sense of self.

P5: *"It's a strange feeling. You know, is that gonna change me as a person? Is that gonna change how I'm perceived and how I perceive myself?"*

Overall, the impact the training has had on trainees relationship to their CI was described with the terms; "Uncomfortable", "Strange", "Discomfort" and causing "Worry". This discussion of discomfort only occurred within FG 1.

4.3.5.3. Am I Still Working Class? / I am Still Working Class

As a continuation from experiencing changes in their relationship to being WC, this current theme summarises how the trainees conceptualised their current CI. This varied between trainees, some feeling undecided and others having a strong sense of being and remaining WC. The cultural capital gains were a main factor in the debate of whether WC trainees are still WC after experiencing SM on the doctorate. Feeling a sense on "unfairness" with still identifying as WC due to these new privileges. This captured debates on what defines one's class, the subjective belongs and core values, or economic and cultural capital resource access.

Trainees shared being uncertain of what class they feel they would now belong to, feeling in between class categories. This has been described as a "third" class, in between WCMC, with SM distancing students from their WC origins (Jin & Ball, 2020).

P9 "You don't really fit into one class, but you don't fit feel like you fit into the other anymore either".

P13: *"I think for me, like, similar to what other people have said, like, there's been this real difficulty about am I still working-class? Am I more middle-class now?"*

They discussed how they would want to stay connected to their WC identities, but that the privileges of being a CP, maybe disqualify them from belonging to this identity anymore. This relating to whether they still speak from a WC position.

P7: *"I think as you were mentioning there P2 I think you like you're gripping onto that identity with everything in your power."*

P6: *"Am I now still working-class enough to have a voice in those shared spaces anymore? Or has training kind of moved me away from that."*

They wondered if it was fair to still describe themselves as WC, if they were not living the same experiences as others.

P1: *"Can I fully relate like to a current working-class identity? Because I've, gained social capital."*

P2: "*I just wanna cling on to my working-class identity. Then I feel like, am I just appropriating that kind of culture if I'm not living in it every day?"*

P10: *"Maybe there's an unfairness on other people if I call myself working class rather than middle-class because of where I am."*

P12: *"I almost feel like it's a lie for me to call myself working class now like it just feels like a an untruth."*

Trainees shared those economic gains, such as the salary would not contribute to them feeling more MC, but it did distance them from feeling WC. Describing feeling further away from being WC, but not closer to being MC, like this notion of a "third class". Incomes did not dimmish their WC ways of thinking and their value systems, but instead it provided benefits such as access to leisure activities and living in different social environments. Even whilst engaging in these new opportunities and "MC" cultures, WC trainees felt a "juxtaposition", that describes being in between these class categories.

P10: *"I don't know maybe I am still working-class at heart but yeah just because of where I am financially and maybe some of my hobbies as well now… its very middle-class"*

P11: *"It's a weird juxtaposition I guess and when you talk about yourself to other people, I can imagine it's quite hard to navigate like who is this person that has piano lessons"*

P2: "*Am I going to be associated with different circles of people, have different hobbies, different interests?"*

Integrating with MC "cultures" is one of the ways WC students attempt to fit in HE (Loveday, 2016) to overcome the feelings of not belonging. This could relate to Reay et als. (2009) description of wanting to find a balance of fitting in but remaining WC. Participating in the cultural aspects of the MC feels a safe way of being in between, whilst retaining core WC values. Overall, trainees had many reflections and unanswered questions around what class they would call themselves now, and these feeling rather unanswered.

For three trainees, they felt a strong belonging and identification to being WC, that they felt would not change through becoming a CP. The social environments around them being a key factor to their CI, rather than salaries and profession.

P3: *"It's ingrained somewhere, I might have a little bit more money than other people in my family, but I still live amongst peers."*

P8: "*It doesn't matter how much I earn. The core of me is working-class…. I don't want to forget my roots. I want to make sure that as a core of who I am and how I go into the world."*

P7: "*I'm probably one of the most working-class people in this environment at the moment and I'm OK with that."*

Even where being WC, is experienced as a mismatch with the predominant class group in their profession, some trainees felt being WC was important to them. Describing that the environment and conditions that they grew up with in are always present within their identities.

They felt holding a WC identity within their professional work was important, to represent under-heard voices and to facilitate the strengths discussed.

P8: *"Making sure that I'm connecting with people in the right way, making sure I'm being welcoming to people. And also, that I'm speaking up for people."*

Even for some trainees who felt uncertain with still describing themselves as WC, spoke about the importance of using their WC values in CP.

P12: *"Taking responsibility like not getting kind of swept away by the change in my identity, but kind of using it for good, so whether that's for example doing like outreach stuff".*

4.4. Discussion of Key Findings

All the four themes displayed in the analysis describe WC trainees' experiences of their CIs whilst entering the CP profession. Overall, the analysis outlined how trainees experience their class as a barrier, an identity that is not represented or given space for, pressures to fit in that contradict being WC, as a strength in the 1-1 clinical work, and that training as a CP interacts with their overall sense of their CI belonging. Each theme will be further discussed and summarised with reference to the previous literature.

4.4.1. No Space for WC identities

From the trainees' experiences, they felt there wasn't a welcomed space to be WC in the CP profession. This came from the lack of discussion and awareness shown by the training courses and the barriers that they experienced getting onto the training.

The lack of discussion on training courses, echoes the limited literature on class in CP and findings from other studies (Place 2023; Lovick,2024). This study found that discussions on class did vary across courses, with some trainees detailing how it is addressed and spoken about and this being useful. Despite some courses addressing class, the participants from that course still shared difficult experiences with having a WC identity in CP and therefore whilst its being thought about, this may not be enough to support trainees.

The limited chances to discuss CI on training, meant that some trainees felt a pressure to bring it up themselves. The lack of discussion on courses, may suggestion alignment with narratives on the "death of working-class" (Beck, 2007). Denying the existence of CS's and its role in SI can be considered a downward classist act (Johnson, 2006). The lack of acknowledgement by training courses, therefore leaving WC trainees with a pressure to use their own lived experiences, as learning for peers. Trainees describing this as "real life" learning, might hint at giving evidence towards the existence of SC and inequalities, in response to the silence. This also brings up questions around the positions that WC trainees may be put in on the course, and how it feels for their examples to be used as learning. For other trainees, this didn't feel safe to do. The unsafeness in talking about class on the course, maybe an outcome of the operating "in-out" group pressures. Bringing up these conversations could leave WC trainees vulnerable to "out" group positioning. Not speaking about class can be a self-preservatory strategy, for making it through an already demanding and challenging course. This also may highlight why trainees within this study reported finding other WC trainees to have these discussions with, as it felt safer within this "in-group" setting. This is a novel finding, that has not been documented in the research found in the literature review. Previous research has described how WC trainees notice that discussions on class systems and class identity on the DClinPsy are limited. These current findings suggest that in response to that WC trainees may engage in this thinking and discussion with peers from a similar class background, or engage in self-disclosure, sharing their lived experience to facilitate discussions.

The barriers trainees experienced getting onto the course, also supported the feeling that there was no space for WC identities in the profession. The barriers to entering the CP profession, highlight experiences of SC inequality, that were also found by Hui et al. (2023). The barriers

that were cited across both studies were: a lack of professional networks for support; the costs of a masters and car ownership; and the doubts of being able to get onto the course due to class mismatch of personal CI and the identity represented in the profession. This study's findings further add to the existing literature on the cost based-barriers WC trainees experienced whilst applying to the DClinPsy. The findings highlight how train fares and overnight stays, to attend in person interviews could disadvantage those from low SES or WC backgrounds. This is a novel finding in terms of the available literature.

The obstacles discussed may suggest unconscious classism within intake procedures, that maintain the predominance of the middle-class profession. Lui (2001), suggests that classism can occur through processes that maintain the predominant class groups hierarchy, by employing "in" and "out" group classism strategies. The barriers such as the cost of a car, are more likely to impact those from lower classes, that demonstrate an economic unfairness in getting onto the course. However, there have been changes to reducing these barriers, as some of the courses that participants were on, that did require a car and driving license, did not have this as a requirement for current applicants. I also noticed that some of the courses I had applied for, that did require this, now do not.

Interestingly, multiple trainees spoke about how qualified CPs from WC backgrounds, supported them in recognising that the profession was achievable to them. Reducing the impact of the perceptual barriers. Displaying how role-models that hold similar characteristics, can be inspiring for under-represented groups. They also noted how supervisors from WC backgrounds, highlighted their WC strengths and supported with the application barriers. This supports that class is usually thought about by those who are from a

lower class, or that those who hold a WC identity are likely to have what Lui describes as "class-consciousness" (2011).

Overall, this feeling that there isn't space for the WC derived from multiple experiences that the trainees shared. This lack of space for WC identities fits with the scarce literature available on being WC in CP, the SES intake figures on demographics that enter the DClinPsy (LCH) and the overall felt and experienced MC culture within the profession. Displaying the impacts that this has on WC trainees, for example, feeling that CP is unachievable, feeling that the class silence maintains power and privileges between the professionals, encourages courses to consider their approaches to thinking about SC.

4.4.2. Fitting in

Working-class trainee CPs have experiences of not fitting in within the profession, through noticing differences in the way they speak and being assumed to be MC. As a result, some trainees are adapting their class-identity characteristics or mannerisms to assimilate into the profession. To "fit in or stand out", has been described as a pressure of WC students adapting to HE establishments (Reay et al., 2009).

The trainees reflected on the ways in which they spoke being a main indicator of feeling different from other psychological professionals. Speech can be an overt signal of class and one's social background. One trainee discussed how their regional accent can indicate the exact area in which they are from, and that they felt very aware of this when training on a course within their hometowns. Working-class trainees described the pressures they faced getting onto training, even experiencing comments by interview panellists. Accent biases

have been documented as barriers within accessing professional training roles, particularly the southern WC accent (Levon et al., 2021). Being conscious of the ways in which they spoke at the interviews, describes how WC trainees were aware that their overt-classed based attributes are subject to judgement in professional environments. This describes experiences of downward classism, based on their speech signalling that they come from a WC background. Unfortunately, an example of downward classism is a bias belief that lower-class individuals are less intelligent (Cavalhieri et al., 2023), and SC stereotypes of the WC being less "competent" (Durante & Fiske, 2017).

Whilst on the training, WC trainees continued to experience feelings of being different. This has been termed as "feelings of knowing" (Cromby, 2007), whereby WC people have been treated as different by MC people throughout their lives that they come to feel/know they are different even in the absence of overt treatment. This perpetual heightened awareness of difference can lead to feelings of self-criticism, even internalised classism, which is associated with feelings of discomfort (Cavalhieri et al., 2023).

Some trainees experienced microaggressions, an act of downward classism (Liu, 2011; Smith et al., 2016), and pressures to change the ways in which they spoke. Some of the pressures to make these changes again, arising from being in a predominantly MC profession, where class isn't spoken about, thus leading to CA, that all trainee CPs are from class privileged backgrounds.

Working-class trainees may also experience upward classism from their outside circles, and various lateral and upward classism on the training. For WC trainees, their social and family circles, can perceive them as no longer being WC due to the SM opportunities of the course. Many of the trainees, across the courses had experienced lateral classism from the cohort and academics on courses. Speaking to the homogeneous class group on the DClinPsy.

Experiences of lateral classism, leave WC trainees further feeling this struggle to fit in, as it's a reminder of the incongruence between their CI and the valued and dominant identity within the profession.

Working-class trainees also describe feeling pressures to adapt, to fit in with the system, similar to the general literature on WC pupils entering HE. Some trainees felt that the changes they have made to fit in, may be internalised and engrained into their ways of being, and others recognising that they only do this in CP environments, and therefore are performing. These adaptions included code switching, clothing choices and being quieter, as a way of attracting less attention to their class. One trainee spoke about how they might minimise their presence, or how much they speak, to not appear "aggressive", again suggesting this trainee has been subjected to the WC stereotyping.

In some ways this "changing or performing", is an analysis of the environment and adapting oneself, as a response to a potential external threat. Whereby WC trainees are scanning their professional spaces for potential threats to their identity and protecting themselves against these by adapting. Displaying similarities with the contextualist cognitive style hypothesised by Kraus et al. (2012). Possibly depicting the training course is experienced as an external environment which holds threats for WC identities, and whereby vigilance is directed

towards the extent to which they fit in with the predominant group. This evaluation of threat and vigilance can elicit emotions, attachment styles, and core self-beliefs (Kraus et al., 2012).

This shifted towards the end of training, third years noticing that the parts of their identity that were barriers were now assets and feeling more confident in displaying their WC identities. This may link to having more autonomy in responsibilities, gained throughout training, as trainees have demonstrated their competency by final year, allowing them to feel more comfortable in being their authentic self, depicting that having WC identity will be perceived as incompetency in earlier stages of CP training. Illegalising parts of the imposter syndrome.

There are benefits to feeling belonging within a group, or in this case profession (Kraus & Mendes, 2014) and a need that people seek (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). For WC trainees, this experience can be difficult and influence them to change parts of their identity to fit in.

4.4.3. The Working-Class Connection to Clinical Psychology

The findings also displayed many WC strengths. Within the clinical work, trainees shared their strengths in building TRs, viewing problems in socio-political contexts, and having a commitment to supporting change within communities.

Viewing difficulties systemically was a pertinent theme across the FGs. They drew upon using their lived experiences of systemic issues, as a way to make changes for others.

Supportive of the SCT-SC, that suggests lower class individuals are drawn to prosocial acts (Kraus et al., 2010). They reported understanding the importance of systemic issues, like housing and finances, as contributing factors to MH. The trainees holding a systemic view of MH difficulties is further supported by the argument of Krauss et al. (2009, 2012) that lower class backgrounds are more likely to attribute systemic or contextual factors to the experiences of inequalities.

Working-class trainees recognise that there is an over-representation of WC populations within MH services, due to system structures. As the literature cites, the CP workforce's lack of diversity, creates a disconnect between the demographics of psychologists and those of the population (Turpin & Coleman, 2010). Therefore, CP recognising the strengths and skills WC trainees can bring to the work, also addresses this "disconnect". Trainees described how they actively may name these system structures in their 1-1 work, to promote non-blaming narratives. Not only practicing a non-judgemental stance, a key psychotherapeutic skill (Rogers, 1962), but personify this way of thinking about MH.

Systemic thinking supports within building therapeutic alliance (Stanton & Welsh, 2012). Having this view of difficulties, that is non-blaming and non-judgmental, fundamentally supports how WC trainees build TRs with SU's, which trainees identified as their strength. Trainees shared ideas as to why their WC roots are supportive of building TRs including: being relatable, using non-jargon language and showing commonalities through aspects of visible class identity like language and accent. Paradoxically, WC accents were experienced as barriers into entering and fitting in within the profession, however as an asset in the clinical work. The experiences trainees shared of being able to facilitate TRs with ease may

also relate to a WC strength in the ability to read others' emotions, as lower-class individuals have been shown to display greater empathy skills (Kraus et al., 2010, 2012).

The research presented in the literature review also described how the WC strengths in CP are within how this aspect of their identity supports with building therapeutic relationships. The current research further describes how the WC identity may support in TRs, offering new findings that have not be presented thus far in the literature. This study described how being WC can support TRs with service users through similarities in accents, using less jargon and using simple explanations, helping to overcome of the therapist-client power dynamics that can occur int therapy. Trainees spoke about the various ways in which they acknowledge and work to reduce power differentials within their work. Noticing that this can naturally occur through relatability factors, such as having similar accents. Service-users value therapists from similar class backgrounds as themselves (Trott & Reeves, 2018). Working-class trainees also actively, work to reduce power differentials, by using less jargon language, and talking to SU's as "humans", this supports them to understand information. This allows SU's voices to be heard, giving them opportunities to correct or respond to what's presented to them. Using jargon filled and complex psychology language can be alienating to those accessing services. Responding to information that we don't understand, can be frightening, within a relationship where there are power differentials, like the CP-SU dynamic (Proctor, 2017). Not only are the common class characteristics between psychologist and SU's useful in reducing power imbalances, but trainees making this proactive within their approach is further influential to addressing this. Linking to Lui's (2010) suggestions of how CA operate within therapy relationships, with external factors automatically triggering SU's assumptions on the therapist's class. Therefore, being unable to enter the therapeutic relationship with neutrality, WC trainees spoke about actively working to make this more balanced in terms of

power. The WC trainees described aspects of working CC, a crucial skill in therapy (Liu et al., 2007).

The professions security has attracted WC trainees to pursue the CP training, as a career path to use their strengths and make changes to communities. A few trainees spoke about how becoming a CP wasn't their career aspiration, but having the stability was an important for them, in alleviating financial worries. The CP training is a driver of SM, which as noted in the introduction, is a key factor for low SES students choosing to engage in HE (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). The WC connection to the CP training, appears not only to be about the nature of the work, and the CI strengths, but also that it offers stability which may be attractive to individuals from WC backgrounds, who want to make community changes.

4.4.4. What Class am I Now?

Trainees across the year groups, described the DClinPsy process as a driver of SM. Being on the course and training as a CP bringing up changes in how they relate to their CI due to the increases in salary, power and entering a MC labelled profession. Many trainees described experiencing discomfort within this process.

Working-class trainees experienced changes or reflections on their CI, in relation to the being on the course. These changes were driven by access to new cultural and economic capital. For example, the salary was discussed as a gain in economic capital that trainees felt moved them away from being WC. Cultural capitals such as holding a doctor title, acquiring MC social and professional networks, and having increased funds to access leisure activities, also felt

distancing from relating to a WC identity. Due to gaining these privileges, WC trainees felt unsure whether they would still be classed as, and if they would still describe themselves as being WC.

However, whilst having these gains, that felt like a distancing factor from their WC identity, trainees felt it didn't move them closer to feeling like they belong to the MC. Describing this "third" class or in between class (Jin & Ball., 2020). Trainees shared that whilst they have acquired these economic and cultural capitals, their value systems remain, which are derived from growing up WC. This displayed two varying thoughts around how WC trainees would describe their CIs. Either that they felt their class belonging was linked to these value systems, and that the increases in capital, are just a method that supports them to work in a way that aligns meaningfully with these value systems. Or that they felt they are "in between" class systems, identifying their core values as WC, but feeling an unfairness in still identifying as WC, due to the resources they have gained.

Whilst upward SM is presumed to be beneficial and desired, it can have negative psychological impacts for the individual. For WC trainees, this process brought up feelings of discomfort. The SCWM-R suggests that psychological distress from SM, can arise from experiencing the discrepancy of underlying classist narratives around what is expected from someone based on their class background (Liu et al., 2004). Distress or tension being more likely to occur, when there are increases in economic culture and privileges (Liu, 2013). Interestingly, trainees that shared they are engaging in activities, that they wouldn't have had access to before training, reported feeling a discomfort in still identifying as WC. This feeling of being "in-between" CIs that many trainees expressed, is also described to potentially cause distress, as changes in how people perceive their class (MC assumptions from personal

circles), are inconsistent with their class grouping, losing a sense of belonging to that social group (SCWM-R; Liu, 2011).

The findings suggest that whilst trainees experience SM, do not cease from being WC. They may experience questions over the legitimacy of their CI, but they still experience MC spaces, from the position of a WC individual. Describing this WC "core" and value system that they wish to carry within their work. This is supportive of the SCT-SC (Kraus et al., 2012), which emphasizes the economic conditions and cultures that surround us, during our up-bringing's are the basis of our class-based identity.

4.4.5. Summary

The discussion and analysis overview the experiences of WC trainees, from entering the doctorate and whilst on the training, which is displayed in the thematic map (Appendix J). Despite variations across WC trainees' experiences, the overall findings show many similarities with previous research of WC trainees/CPs experiences, and with the psychological literature pertaining to SC identities.

This study provides new findings, that expand and add to the already present literate. Due to the limited previous literature, no significant contradictions or differences in experiences were found in this study, in comparison to the ones presented in the literature review. Novel findings include how WC trainees respond to the limited conversations and teaching on class on the DClinPsy by finding similar class-identity peers to have these discussions with, or by sharing parts of their lived experiences with peers for learning examples. The study also demonstrates more concrete examples of the cost-based barriers that WC or low SES

applicants might experience whilst entering the profession. This including the cost of train tickets and overnight stays when attending face to face interviews. These new findings give a rationale for some of the recommendations that are presented in the forthcoming section, including ideas for the spaces where discussions on class could occur and courses approaches to face-to-face interviews.

The present study expands on the WC strengths that are detailed in the existing literature, offering original perspectives as to why this identity supports clinical work. Within previous research, as outlined in the literature review, trainees and CP's have shared that holding a WC identity can support with building TRs with service users. The findings from this study have expanded on what aspects of a WC identity, do trainees feel support building TRs. This included having similar accents to those who may access the services and choosing to use less psychology or medical jargon. Which WC trainees feel can support with making psychological services accessible and actively reduce the power dynamics that can occur in therapist-client relationships.

The theoretical frameworks discussed in this study, particularly Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and the SCT-SC, provide insights into the systemic nature of these challenges. Bourdieu's theory underscores how social capital and cultural knowledge—or the lack thereof—can either facilitate or impede professional integration, a theme that is central to the participants' experiences of 'Fitting In'. The SCT-SC framework further elucidates how SC shapes cognitive processes, influencing how trainees perceive their professional identities and their place within CP. In terms of the findings and the psychological theories presented, the two outlined psychological models of class the SCWM-R (Liu, 2011) and the SCT-SC (Kraus et al., 2012), were applicable to many of the findings in this research. The themes portray

how being WC in the CP profession has its difficulties in navigating the training, and for how trainees relate to their own identity. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate how CI in general is important to bring into discussion and awareness, for all PP, not just the WC. Together, these frameworks offer a comprehensive lens through which to understand the theoretical connection to the themes identified in this study.

4.5. Intersectionality

Discussions of intersecting experiences were limited across this study, which is a recruitment based limitation that is discussed further later in this chapter. However, WC trainees shared their reflections on some of their social identities, that do offer privilege in CP settings. Notably, one trainee reflecting on their identity privileges of being a white man. Trainees commented on the lack of diversity of peers on training courses, noticing that whilst there are barriers for WC trainees, maybe they are making it into CP spaces, more than other identities, which needs to be thought about by training courses. Interestingly, WC trainees may be more likely to recognize issues of identity privilege and non-privileges, due to the ways in which they view social categories. Kraus et al. (2012) hypothesise that those from lower classes are less likely to hold essentialist beliefs, that is a mentality that there are inherent differences between identities, and thus employing "out-group" biases, to uphold hierarchies. They are more likely to view social groups as cultural constructs. Kraus et al. (2012), draw links to essentialist beliefs, mainly held by higher-classed individuals, and the belief that there is a superiority held by certain identity characteristics, such as race, class, gender, and even physical and intellectual abilities.

Class experiences is often researched as a single identity category. Having one trainee who openly discussed holding the duality of a racialised (trainees own language used) and WC identity, the analysis illustrated how parts of these identities overlapped in their experiences. They also made inferences to being unsure at points, whether their experiences were located from which identity, their class or ethnicity. To understand how multiple identities, intersect within the experiences of training and developing a professional CP identity, further research is recommended and required.

4.6. Limitations

4.6.1. Sample Size

The sample size of 13 trainee CPs carries limitations on how representative the findings are. Across the two FGs there were different discussions that came up. Increasing the number of groups would have allowed a larger range of discussions into the experiences of WC trainee CPs, possibly noticing where there were more overlaps. For example, the professional security subtheme, only occurred within FG1, but was a significant discussion point throughout, which was then included into theme 3. It's uncertain if this was an anomaly. This limitation also connects to the restrictions of a single researcher study and being under the constraint of the requirements of the DClinPsy, running a third FG was unfeasible in terms of time resources, despite having more interested participants. With this the extent in which the findings are representative of WC experiences and the experience on different training courses are also limited.

4.6.2. Generalisability

The trainees who participated were from a range of universities, however, I struggled to recruit from London and courses in the south of the UK. Whilst this may be indicative of the topic being researched and a comment towards the nature of disparities in the UK, it also poses questions to the breadth of generalisability the findings have.

Each experience will be individual and therefore there are bound to be difficulties in reaching a generalizable finding, that describes all WC experiences. Trainees shared having unique experiences and relationships to their CI, despite all self-identifying as WC. Whilst there are issues of generalisability, the project doesn't aim towards creating unitary knowledge, or claims of one reality. Particularly with the lack of research available within this area, the aims were to explore the experiences of those from WC backgrounds, whether these converge on agreement or have differing perspectives. Furthermore, a qualitative methodology does not focus on making generalisable claims (Willig, 2008). Also using a TA for analysis, the results do not define all WC experiences, but rather, I as the researcher have produced themes that are "transferable" in understanding the experience (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

4.6.3. Participant Recruitment and Selection

The class backgrounds of the participants were not objectively monitored, recruiting trainees who self-identified as being WC and FIF. Reflecting on the experience of the FGs I would assume the trainees represented the participant demographics outlined, all trainees shared experiences pertaining to their CI. However, again there is no control on the FIF measure, which I consider may have been a redundant exclusion criteria. Furthermore, utilising the FIF

measure opposes the epistemological position of the research, as is suggests that there is a measurement to SC, which determines its existence. Incorporating the FIF measure whilst designing the research, felt to align with HE approaches to conceptualising class identities. Therefore, my rationale of its inclusion was to make the findings congruent and applicable to wider HE intake policies.

A major critique of the study is within the homogeneity of the participant ethnicity demographics. Therefore, the recommendations made in this research, come with a caveat. For example, aiming not to replicate the acts, that WP initiatives unfortunately reproduce, that mainly benefit the already majority demographic in CP, white, middle-class, women (Bhopal & Pitkin, 2020).

Regarding the demographics, the study is limited in contributing to the literature describing the multiple intersectional experiences of class. Particularly the intersections of class and non-white ethnicities, which the one participant who held this duality, spoke about as an entwined experience, and research on the overlap of these identities is recommended (Moore-Berg & Karpinski, 2019). In relation to the political relationship of whiteness and WC, further research exploring class across identity intersections, could address in breaking this association and supporting with understanding whole groups experiences of inequalities (Bottero, 2009).

Although there are limitations within the participant selection processes. I must comment on participants reflections and awareness of the intersectionality of class within the study. Furthermore, I am very appreciative of the trainees who came and shared their experiences of

disadvantage and SI, and these limitations do not reduce the validity of their experiences. The nature of SC, the difficulties within its definitions, and the lack of research, possibly lends itself to the participant selection and demographics of those who have shown interest. Overall, openly discussing these limitations, helps to shape future approaches to WC identity research.

4.6.4. Methodology Limitations

Using an FG methodology supported the generation of varied experiences and views. The study could have used one-one interviews, which would have facilitated exploring each participant's experiences in greater detail. Possibly capturing a more coherent timeline of experiences, which would support in understanding the impacts of SM across the doctorate. Using FGs to explore experiences meant that the personal narratives are fragmented within the data collection. I have also reflected on whether individual interviews, may have supported recruiting trainees from a diversity of backgrounds, in that sharing within a group space, on a social identity that is associated with "whiteness" could be difficult.

There is no specific advised framework or approach for FG data analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Whilst TA has epistemological flexibility, and is suitable in analysing FGs, using this approach has its limitations. Utilising micro-interlocutor analysis techniques, would provide details of how many participants agreed across viewpoints, the levels of sharing and use non-verbal communication (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Some of these methods recommended assistant moderators to facilitate this extra level of analysis, which was not accessible in this study. Reflecting on the experience of moderating the FGs, these details are somewhat missing from the analysis and discussion. I attempted to incorporate some

participant quotes that display the acts of agreements or disagreements; however it doesn't quite represent the live discussions that occurred within the FGs. Conducting a further nonverbal analysis of the recorded FGs would enrich the analysis, as many trainees were communicating agreements with non-verbal signifiers, such as head nods. This further level of analysis would contribute to enrichening the shared viewpoints on the data presented.

4.7. Strengths

4.7.1. Contribution to an Under Researched Topic

A key strength of the study is its contributions to research into CIs in CP, of which is limited.

Therefore, the findings hopefully generate useful data and awareness of class experiences. The study also investigates a unique transition process for CIs, capturing the relationship between identity and SM. It's been recommended that research on this process is conducted (Krauss et al., 2012), as class-transition, or class-environment mismatches, can heighten experiences of threat in lower-class individuals (Johnson et al., 2011).

Furthermore, whilst the study describes trainee CPs experiences, and is aimed to support professional and clinical practices, the findings are also relevant to other areas of CI research. Not only contributing to CP, but in general as a comment on SC debates, the emotional impacts of SM and overall, the experience of being WC in MC spaces.

4.7.2. Methodology

Adopting an FG methodology, on an under researched topic area, allowed the research to explore a range of experiences across participants, from various courses and geographical regions. The FGs were conducted online, which can hold limitations, however, facilitates overcoming practical barriers (Janghorban et al., 2014). This method also felt most practically feasible when attempting to recruit participants across the UK.

4.7.3. Participants

There are strengths within the range of participants across gender, age and stage of training. Five out of the thirteen participants were male. There is an unequal representation of gender within the CP taskforce, with the majority of UK psychologists being female (Morison et al., 2014), and with 83% of the trainee intake for 2022, also being female (LCH, 2022). It is valuable to have the experiences and voices from demographics that are underrepresented within the profession. Whilst being underrepresented in CP, male WC students are also underrepresented in HE. The white WC male identity is often used in descriptors of inequalities across educational achievements, with the historical links to the coal mining communities (Simpson & Simmons, 2024). White WC males face multiple barriers in on entering HE, are largely underrepresented and often lack "role models" for support (Baars et al., 2016). This study presents some experiences of WC males in CP, an underrepresented group in the profession and one that may experience extra system barriers in accessing HE. Further research on the impact of gender and class in CP, could be useful for further recognising why there are limited male CPs, and perhaps limited WC male CPs.

4.7.4. Researcher Position

As detailed in the introduction, research on class, is predominantly conducted by WC individuals. This may demonstrate that class is something less thought about by those who are not impacted by SI. This project follows the trend of researchers' interest, however rather than a limitation, it can be considered as a strength.

Whilst my class position was not explicitly spoken about, undoubtedly, participants may have engaged in conscious or unconscious CAs of my class position (Liu, 2011). Researcher "insider" characteristics can support participants to feel comfortable in sharing (Berger, 2015).

Due to my proximity to the research, engaging with the process of reflexivity throughout this study is not only supportive in upkeeping rigour of the methods (Sciarra, 1999), but also has been utilised authentically and as a forethought within the qualitative method. Reflexivity poses the risk of superficiality if only done to describe the quality standard of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

4.8. Relevance to Clinical Work

The findings display valuable implications for the both the clinical and professional practices in CP. Whilst the implications for CP will be focused on, overall, the study replicates the available literature on the difficulties of being WC in HE (Reay et al., 2009), experiences of classism and "out" group boundaries (Liu, 2011) and the associated emotional impacts of this, such as discomfort (Cavalhieri et al., 2023). All of which have implications for

understanding WC identities across different environments, such as academia, whilst entering HE, and in other processes of SM.

4.8.1. Relevance to Clinical Work

The findings support the importance of understanding the impacts of social class within a therapeutic relationship and within the formulation of if presenting difficulties. For example, for CPs to have an awareness of the social determinants of MH, like poverty, housing, and financial difficulties. Aligning with the fundamentals of a CPs role, to alleviate distress (BPS, 2024), and holding a duty to address power imbalances (Health and Care Professions Council, 2016).

More broadly, the findings support drawing on liberation practices within CP work. Working-class trainees shared experiences of how illuminating the underlying socio-political systems roles in contributing to the causation of individual distress has been useful in destigmatising MH difficulties in their clinical work. Liberation practices involve recognising the role of marginalisation, stereotyping, pathologizing through the use of western psychology ideologies and practices, which relate to acts of underlying oppression, in the causation of MH (Martín-Baró, 1994).

4.8.2. Professional Implications

The study highlighting the strengths of WC identities is hopefully influential in reducing classism and promoting an acceptance of different identities in CP. Outlining these skills,

may encourage courses to appreciate what WC individuals can bring to the profession, reflecting on the class-based barriers to entry and lack of discussions on CIs. The findings implicate the course protocols and methods of assessing competencies, that may directly/indirectly pressure WC trainees to "mould" into the ideal, common qualities of CP, which are stated throughout this paper as predominantly white and middle-class. This pressure to change, evidently has an emotional impact on WC trainees. Which holds implications for courses to provide support to trainees from disadvantaged identities during the training. Particularly as the WC hold many strengths within the profession, it is important to harness these and support trainees to navigate the development of their professional identities, that incorporates their CI. As discussed in earlier chapters, this also has implications for the wider psychology profession, as changing to fit in with that of the predominant group, can prevent social change from occurring (Schubert et al., 2023).

This research encourages CI awareness across the psychology discipline. Trainees' discussions highlighted the inequalities to accessing psychological services and receiving appropriate support. Giving examples of advocating for home visits, asking questions about SU's housing and financial situations, sharing knowledge on local resources and services such as food banks. Advocating for people to access their fundamentals needs. Housing is long standing known social determinant of MH (Lund et al., 2018), with housing disadvantages being associated with the development of future MH difficulties (Singh et al., 2019). Food insecurity is also linked to poor MH (Giles, 2024), particularly impacting families with children (Melchior et al., 2009). Trainees reflected on why it's more crucial now than ever, to advocate the link between MH and basic needs. Discussing the recent global events, with UK entering a recession in 2023 and the impacts being in a cost-of-living crisis.

Clinical Psychologists have a role in alleviating distress (BPS, 2024). Which as discussed, difficulties with housing and finances can contribute to psychological distress, therefore highlighting an obligation for CPs to consider the impacts of SI and class in their work.

4.9. Recommendations

In response to the implications of this research, below are suggested recommendations that may support with WC identities in the CP profession. Each course has unique protocols for selection and course content, therefore there are variations. The recommendations presented may already be implemented by some courses.

4.9.1. Entering the Profession

4.9.1.1. Applications

As highlighted, there are financial difficulties that WC applicants face when applying to the doctorate. This speaks to a wider disadvantage of low SES applicants too. The main areas of financial disadvantage were around the ownership of a car and the costs of a masters. Courses should review their intake requirements, particularly of car ownership. Whilst a master's qualification is not an entry requirement, due to the competition of the doctorate, it may be advantageous to those who do hold one. Course intakes could consider the applicant's life contexts, when assessing or rating applications. The LCH collect data on POLAR, which could be used in conjunction with reviewing applications.

Diversifying the profile of CPs who review the applications could also be considered. This study has found that WC supervisors may be more aware of and acknowledge how the entry process can disadvantage WC applicants, and how it doesn't illustrate the strengths in their skillsets. With a lack of WC representation in CP, the demographic backgrounds of those assessing applications, maybe align with the dominant backgrounds already in the profession. Trott & Reeves (2018), suggest that actively training more WC therapists, can support with class divides.

4.9.1.2. Interviews

The costs surrounding interviews, should be considered by courses. Train fairs and overnight stays can be costly. Particularly with reserve list interview places, applicants may have to buy train tickets with very limited notice, which carries an extra cost. Courses could offer options for online interviews, or provide financial support, or flexibility, for those who may struggle to afford to get to in person interviews.

At interviews, including SUs in the choice of questions, including them on the panel and incorporating their feedback into the selection procedure, could support a fairer judgement of WC applicants. Again, this relates to the mismatches between CP-SU's backgrounds, but also allows WC trainees strengths such as relatability, WC values and viewpoints, to be valued at the interview processes, rather than act as a barrier. Having SUs on the panel may counterbalance the barrier issues that WC trainees face around language and accents.

Overall, these recommendations aim to support increasing the diversity profile of CP and create a fairer entry in the selection processes. For WC trainees, these adaptations could support in making them feel like they "fit in" or are welcomed in the profession, reduce the acts of classism and discrimination, and overall increase their confidence in their strengths and legitimacy in being within the profession.

4.9.2. On Training

4.9.2.1. Course Teaching

Incorporating teaching on CI and its implications on therapeutic work, using frameworks such as the SCWM-R (Liu, 2011), could be valuable on course curriculums. This would also fit with including more teachings of liberation psychology practices and having less of a focused on western-based theories and models of therapy techniques such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

4.9.2.2. Support and Spaces to Discuss Class

The CP training is a stressful period of time, with high work demands, continual evaluation and feelings of inadequacy for trainees (Cushway, 1992; Jones, 2017). For WC trainees, the lack of SC discussions, the perceived middle-classness of the course and the in-out group pressures that benefit association with the majority, can make asking for support around CI even harder. Within the analysis, trainees discussed how SC isn't thought about or supported and that the training can bring up discomfort and difficult emotions in terms of changes in

CIs. Seeking support outside of the course may be difficult too, as during the process of SM on the training, WC trainees shared how they are distanced from their WC social circles. With the limited spaces on the course, WC trainees are engaging in peer-based support. The analysis displayed how the WC trainees "find each other" and one course has a peer-support group set up. Courses could encourage and establish these peer-based support groups and open up the conversations around class. Those who were on courses where class is spoken about, had found it helpful. Courses could think about the ways in which they can facilitate conversations around class to feel safer.

One area that class conversations could be occurring is within PPD. Courses could safely have these conversations, as PPD occurs in smaller groups. This exploration could be made safer through facilitators modelling talking about unspoken topics, taking the risks to have different conversations, and possibly using self-disclosure and self-lived experiences too when relevant (Youngson & Hughes, 2009).

4.9.2.3. In Clinical Work

This research provides support for the recommendations of the SCWM-R (Liu, 2011), the findings support its recommendations for psychological professionals to practice CC in therapy. Suggestions of how to actively consider class within therapy professions include obtaining information on SUs class and experiences of classism, to consider the wider contexts of distress and difficulties, explain the role of psychology in layman's terms, therapists to actively self-reflect on their own backgrounds and to engage with research on class in therapy (Liu, 2010). The trainees' descriptions of their identity strengths in CP, contains parallels with Liu's (2010) suggestions on therapists approaches to CC working. It

demonstrates a benefit to be actively bringing class into awareness in CP. Liu (2010) also suggests that to work class consciously with SUs, there needs have chances to explore class in supervision. Therefore, encouraging supervisors to allow class to be explored in supervision.

Incorporating liberation psychology practices into CP work and teachings on the training is recommended. Solely acknowledging and re-telling stories of oppressive experiences, within psychological therapies risks replicating the 'magical voluntarism' (Harper & Spellman, 2006), that already surrounds class and SM debates. Clinical psychology practice can support the issues of power in class, by liberation practices of; openly linking experiences of distress to factors of social oppression, reducing distress through novel knowledge seeking and engaging in practices of social action (Holland, 1992).

Together with Liu's (2010) recommendations, bringing CC into therapies, would then be supportive of working within liberation frameworks. Social action is particularly important in CI work, as it's acknowledged that lower classes feel a lack of empowerment in shaping systems (Smith, 2005). Therefore, keeping liberation practice at the forefront of clinical work and professional development, would be supportive of WC identities across SUs and psychology professionals.

4.10. Future Research

As previously suggested, its recommended to continue the expansion of research on class in CP, as it is an overlooked aspect of competency within psychology (Spence, 2012).

Recommendations for future research to include:

- Understanding the experiences of other intersectional identities with class, by recruiting a range of participant demographics.
- Looking at experiences over a wider range of courses, to notice possible regional differences in the WC experience of training. Using region specific recruitment, e.g. London courses, to see where experiences converge or contrast.
- Continuing research across career paths to understand the experiences of qualified WC CPs
- To build on the understanding of WC strengths, developing research on SUs experiences of working with WC therapists.

Continuing with further research on this topic can support with developing frameworks to incorporate SC into the CP training framework and developing support systems for those from under-represented groups in the profession.

4.11. Conclusion and Final Reflections

Overall, this study has uncovered a wide range of experiences that encompass holding a WC background in CP. With the limited research and literature available on this topic, my thesis may somewhat only provide a summary and interpretation of what was shared across those two FGs. However, I aspire that with more interest and research into the topic, these research findings will begin to emerge to conceptualise these experiences, that WC trainees hold to be true. Whilst the body of evidence of class experiences in CP is lacking, the study does have implications and justifications for reviewing the processes across entry and training, and adds arguments for the review of wider policies and practices in CP.

The results brought forth shared experiences, that also algin with the previous studies that has looked at the WC CP experience (Hui et al., 2023; Lovick, 2024; Place 2023,). These being that WC identities lack space and discussion, they face barriers in entering the profession, being in the profession brings up difficult feelings with their CI, that they then attempt to change and that the process of becoming a CP alters their relationships with being WC. This study has also displayed the positives and strengths of having a WC background in CP, which will hopefully continue to be added on within discussions in future research and appreciated within practice.

I'm aware that I have been describing people's experiences pertaining to inequality and disadvantage, and that my suggested implications may have had direct influential impacts on those who attended this study. Therefore, I am conscious of what I have presented, may only be my interpretation of what is necessary in influencing change, and I hope it has done some justice to those who did come and share their experiences.

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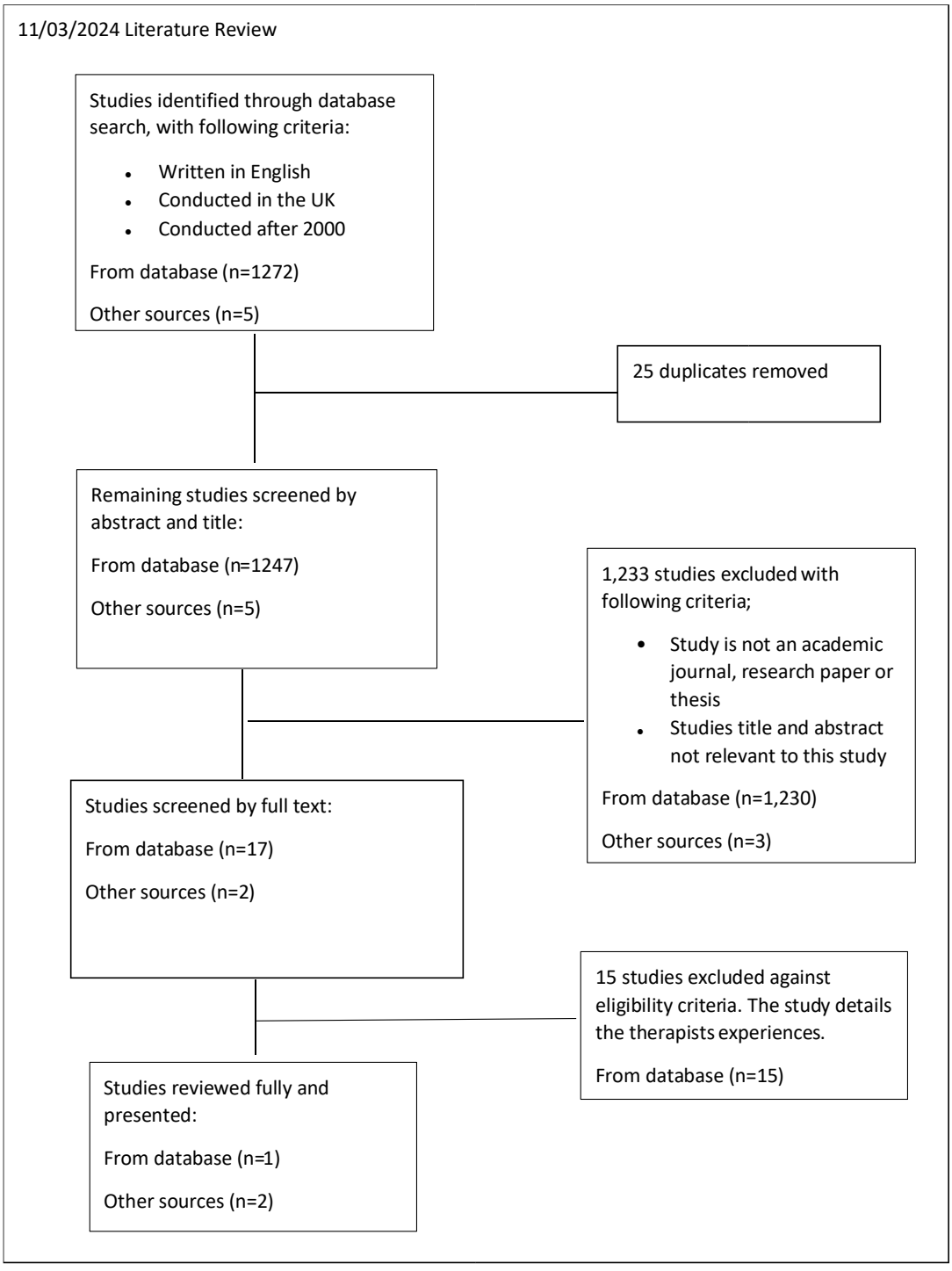
5. APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix A: Literature Review Flowchart



5.2. Appendix B: Reflective Diary Examples

Immediately after FGs

- I didn't know about the north-south accent divide, until it came up in the FG. I was surprised when people were saying that a southern accent is posh. As someone with a S.E London accent, I experience the opposite. How are how class identities felt across UK regions?. (Maybe it says something about the ppts I recruited. Also maybe if I had this awareness I would have worked harder to get more southern ppts to hear how they experience this too). Is this my own bias? Or unawareness? Does London buffer against some of the WC experiences? I feel many of my social circle do talk like me, and are WC, but are also in professional jobs and don't question their class identity. Am I only doing so being of the line of work I'm in. Am I over-identifying? Looking for patterns where there are none?

- With the comments on how trainees spoke. I found this discussion fascinating, as I have received direct comments on my accent, whilst I was an AP. I realised I found it harder to move on from these discussion points, with my connection to the experience. I just feel so shocked people are "allowed" to comment on the way someone speaks. Imagine what that feels like for someone to comment on an aspect of you that is part of your identity. Why is class acceptable to make these kinds of comments about. Like one of the participants shared how we speak actually signals the area we grew up in, not our skills, so to comment on this is to suggest that people from certain areas do not fit in CP.

- Self-doubts of being WC myself after the FGs. Discussions around poverty in the FGs have made me think about how I relate to being WC. Felt somewhat unsure if I am WC, as I didn't have some of the struggles others did. Where do the experiences of poverty and WC differ or combine? Am I documenting experiences of poverty, when thinking about the barriers.

- Feeling sad after the FGs, wanting to stay connected to the ppts. I found it really useful and validating, and others shared this too.

- Recognising that a lot of the things Im good at in this job, might be linked to my class/upbringing more than I thought

- Interestingly, I didn't feel nervous going into the groups. I would usefully feel very nervous about something like this. I don't speak up much in my own cohort. Something about the ppts that put me at ease. Just even from my email interactions with ppts before the FG, I felt sense of connection/familiarity/warmth.

During Analysis and Write Up

- Are we so connected to the community work to maintain that WC identity. From personal experiences on training, I have noticed how in my work, I have been more flexible in being totally myself and allowing my class identity to shine when I'm in more informal placements doing community based work. Is it actually about helping others or about helping ourselves to feel like we fit in.

- What is it about class, that CP misses out on? Why is it not thought about? I think as WC people we may feel a sense of shame bringing up class in relation to inequalities, when there are other pervasive inequalities existing in the UK. Why do we think so much about the "both /and", duality in therapy, but still struggles to encompass this openness when talking about difficult topics. The lack of discussions move leave class stagnant. I think this is why I have really attempted to bring some intersectional thinking into the discussion.

- Those who attended courses where class is spoken about- I wondered how this continues throughout there training, and whether this alleviates any of the stressors of the training course?. I feel somewhat lucky, that my course does think about these things and supported me with this project. I do think this has supported my well-being across the course and whilst doing my thesis.

- Finding out that some courses have changes their criteria is a bitter-sweet thing to hear. I thought back to so many of the barrier I felt I had against me when applying (2018, 2019). There were many more unis that wanted car access. Over 65% graduate grades. Additional tests- I remember one place had a maths test! It nice to find out that the criteria are changing, but I wonder why they had been in place originally?

5.3 Appendix C: Research Poster

5.4. Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Working Class Backgrounds in Clinical Psychology: Experiences of Trainee Clinical Psychologists

Contact person: Fionnuala Daly
Email: u2195510@uel.ac.uk

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part or not, please carefully read through the following information which outlines what your participation would involve. Feel free to talk with others about the study (e.g., friends, family, etc.) before making your decision. If anything is unclear or you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above email.

Who am I?

My name is Fionnuala Daly. I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London (UEL) and am studying for a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. As part of my studies, I am conducting the research that you are being invited to participate in.

What is the purpose of the research?

I am conducting research into working class trainee clinical psychologists. The study aims to explore the experiences of working class trainees becoming part of the clinical psychology profession. The doctoral training to enter the clinical psychology profession is a potential driver of social mobility. The experience of training, in relation to social-class, has significant relevance to our professional and personal identities. The study aims to further contribute to the professional practice, education, and policy in recruiting and training future clinical psychologists.

Why have I been invited to take part?

To address the study aims, I am inviting current trainee clinical psychologists, coming from a working class background, to take part in my research.

If you are currently training as a clinical psychologist in the UK, are of the first generation within your family to attend university and self-identify as being from a working class background, you are eligible to take part in the study. It is entirely up to you whether you take part or not, participation is voluntary.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to take part?
If you agree to take part, you will be asked to fill out a demographic and participant background form and attend a virtual focus group, lasting around an hour and a half, facilitated by myself.

The focus group will be held online, via MS teams, and you will be asked to have your camera and microphone on throughout and for you to be within a confidential space. The focus group will follow a structure, but there will be no requirement to answer specific questions, what you share is completely voluntary. The focus group will be recorded using MS teams, which will facilitate transcription. The data in the transcript will be anonymised, removing any identifiable information.

Can I change my mind?
Yes, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. If you would like to withdraw from the focus group, you can do so by leaving the group at any time or by contacting the researcher to withdraw from participation. If you withdraw, your data will not be used as part of the research.

Separately, you can also request to withdraw your data from being used even after you have taken part in the study, provided that this request is made within 3 weeks of the data being collected (after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible).

Are there any disadvantages to taking part?

The groups may touch upon topics and discussions that detail disadvantaged groups and difficult experiences. The group facilitator will monitor and facilitate discussion, to minimise potential distress. There will also be chance to debrief, after the group if necessary. Supporting services within the universities providing the clinical psychology training, will be signposted to those participating.

How will the information I provide be kept secure and confidential?
Confidential and identifiable information, from the questionnaire's will be collected via the researcher's email, as will consent forms for participation.
This information will be stored for the required length of time for the study, on two storage platforms; the UEL OneDrive and on Microsoft SharePoint, which will be password protected and accessible to myself and my research supervisor.
Data from the focus groups, including the video recording and the raw and anonymised transcription will also be stored in the same manner, on both storage platforms, password protected and access to the researcher and supervisor, only.

For the purposes of data protection, the University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University processes this information under the 'public task' condition contained in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Where the University processes particularly sensitive data (known as 'special category data' in the GDPR), it does so because the processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information about how the University processes personal data please see www.uel.ac.uk/about/about-uel/governance/information-assurance/dataprotection

What will happen to the results of the research?
The research will be written up as a thesis and submitted for assessment. The thesis will be publicly available on UEL's online Repository. Findings will also be disseminated to a range of audiences (e.g., academics, clinicians, public, etc.) through journal articles, conference presentations, talks, magazine articles, blogs. In all material produced, your identity will remain anonymous, in that, it will not be possible to identify you personally.

You will be given the option to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed for which relevant contact details will need to be provided.

Anonymised research data will be securely stored by Dr Martin Willis for a maximum of 3 years, following which all data will be deleted.

Who has reviewed the research?
My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Ethics Committee. This means that the Committee's evaluation of this ethics application has been guided by the standards of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?
If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Fionnuala Daly- u2195510@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr Martin Willis, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ, Email: m.willis@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of School Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. (Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

5.5. Appendix E: Ethical Approval

School of Psychology Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION LETTER

For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

Reviewer: Please complete sections in **blue** | **Student:** Please complete/read sections

Details	
Reviewer:	Please type your full name **Avantika Bhatia**
Supervisor:	Please type supervisor's full name **Martin Willis**
Student:	Please type student's full name **Fionnuala Daly**
Course:	Please type course name **Prof Doc in Clinical Psychology**
Title of proposed study:	Working Class Backgrounds in Clinical Psychology: Experiences of Trainee Clinical Psychologists

Checklist (Optional)			
	YES	**NO**	**N/A**
Concerns regarding study aims (e.g., ethically/morally questionable, unsuitable topic area for level of study, etc.)	☐	☒	☐
Detailed account of participants, including inclusion and exclusion criteria	☒	☐	☐
Concerns regarding participants/target sample	☐	☐	☐
Detailed account of recruitment strategy	☒	☐	☐
Concerns regarding recruitment strategy	☐	☐	☐
All relevant study materials attached (e.g., freely available questionnaires, interview schedules, tests, etc.)	☒	☐	☐
Study materials (e.g., questionnaires, tests, etc.) are appropriate for target sample	☐	☐	☐

Clear and detailed outline of data collection	☒	☐	☐
Data collection appropriate for target sample	☐	☐	☐
If deception being used, rationale provided, and appropriate steps followed to communicate study aims at a later point	☐	☐	☒
If data collection is not anonymous, appropriate steps taken at later stages to ensure participant anonymity (e.g., data analysis, dissemination, etc.) – anonymisation, pseudonymisation	☐	☒	☐
Concerns regarding data storage (e.g., location, type of data, etc.)	☐	☒	☐
Concerns regarding data sharing (e.g., who will have access and how)	☐	☒	☐
Concerns regarding data retention (e.g., unspecified length of time, unclear why data will be retained/who will have access/where stored)	☐	☒	☐
If required, General Risk Assessment form attached	☐	☐	☐
Any physical/psychological risks/burdens to participants have been sufficiently considered and appropriate attempts will be made to minimise	☐	☐	☐
Any physical/psychological risks to the researcher have been sufficiently considered and appropriate attempts will be made to minimise	☒	☐	☐
If required, Country-Specific Risk Assessment form attached	☐	☐	☒
If required, a DBS or equivalent certificate number/information provided	☐	☐	☒
If required, permissions from recruiting organisations attached (e.g., school, charity organisation, etc.)	☐	☐	☒
All relevant information included in the participant information sheet (PIS)	☒	☐	☐
Information in the PIS is study specific	☒	☐	☐
Language used in the PIS is appropriate for the target audience	☒	☐	☐
All issues specific to the study are covered in the consent form	☒	☐	☐
Language used in the consent form is appropriate for the target audience	☒	☐	☐
All necessary information included in the participant debrief sheet	☒	☐	☐
Language used in the debrief sheet is appropriate for the target audience	☒	☐	☐
Study advertisement included	☒	☐	☐
Content of study advertisement is appropriate (e.g., researcher's personal contact details are not shared, appropriate language/visual material used, etc.)	☒	☐	☐

Decision options

APPROVED	Ethics approval for the above-named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice), to the date it is submitted for assessment.
APPROVED - BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES	In this circumstance, the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made **before** the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box at the end of this form once all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to the supervisor. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records. **Minor amendments guidance:** typically involve clarifying/amending information presented to participants (e.g., in the PIS, instructions), further
	detailing of how data will be securely handled/stored, and/or ensuring consistency in information presented across materials.
NOT APPROVED - MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RESUBMISSION REQUIRED	In this circumstance, a revised ethics application **must** be submitted and approved **before** any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application. **Major amendments guidance:** typically insufficient information has been provided, insufficient consideration given to several key aspects, there are serious concerns regarding any aspect of the project, and/or serious concerns in the candidate's ability to ethically, safely and sensitively execute the study.

Decision on the above-named proposed research study	
Please indicate the decision:	APPROVED - MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES

Minor amendments
Please clearly detail the amendments the student is required to make

Well-prepared ethics application and well thought out plan for conducting this study.

1. **Would help to indicate more information about the facilitator – who will be the facilitator of the focus group, how will potential biases be dealt with, how will the facilitator assess distress levels during the focus group.**
2. **Would help to mention in more detail the social media platforms for recruitment of participants.**
3. **I know this is done in the participant debrief form already, but also include the resources indicated for participants to reach out to within the body of the ethics application.**
4. **If names are removed once data is collected, how will the participants be coded? Please include this information to maintain anonymity of participants.**

Major amendments
Please clearly detail the amendments the student is required to make

Assessment of risk to researcher		
Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?	**YES** ☒	**NO** ☐
	If no, please request resubmission with an **adequate risk assessment.**	
If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard, please rate the degree of risk:		
HIGH	Please **do not approve a high-risk** application. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not be approved on this basis. If unsure, please refer to the Chair of Ethics.	☐

MEDIUM	Approve but include appropriate recommendations in the below box.	☐
LOW	Approve and if necessary, include any recommendations in the below box.	☒
Reviewer recommendations in relation to risk (if any):	Please insert any recommendations	

Reviewer's signature	
Reviewer: (Typed name to act as signature)	**Avantika Bhatia**
Date:	**06/11/2023**
This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Ethics Committee	
RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE For the researcher and participants involved in the above-named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place. For a copy of UEL's Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard.	

Confirmation of minor amendments (Student to complete)	
I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data	
Student name: (Typed name to act as signature)	**Fionnuala Daly**

Student number:	**U2195510**
Date:	**04/12/2023**
Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed if minor amendments to your ethics application are required	

5.6. Appendix F: Debrief Sheet

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF SHEET

Working Class Backgrounds in Clinical Psychology: Experiences of Trainee Clinical Psychologists

Thank you for participating in my research study on the experiences of working class trainees becoming part of the clinical psychology profession. The experience of training, in relation to social-class, has significant relevance to our professional and personal identities. The study aims to further contribute to the professional practice, education, and policy in recruiting and training future clinical psychologists.

This document offers information that may be relevant in light of you having now taken part.

How will my data be managed?

The University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. More detailed information is available in the Participant Information Sheet, which you received when you agreed to take part in the research.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The research will be written up as a thesis and submitted for assessment. The thesis will be publicly available on UEL's online Repository. Findings will also be disseminated to a range of audiences (e.g., academics, clinicians, public, etc.) through journal articles, conference presentations, talks, magazine articles, blogs. In all material produced, your identity will remain anonymous, in that, it will not be possible to identify you personally, as identifying information will be omitted from the transcription that will be analysed and written up

You will be given the option to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed for which relevant contact details will need to be provided.

Anonymised research data will be securely stored by Dr Martin Willis for a maximum of 3 years, following which all data will be deleted.

What if I been adversely affected by taking part?

It is not anticipated that you will have been adversely affected by taking part in the research, and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise distress or harm of any kind.

Nevertheless, it is possible that your participation – or its after-effects – may have been challenging, distressing or uncomfortable in some way. If you have been affected in any of those ways, you may find support and resources helpful in relation to obtaining information and support:

Equality and Human Rights Commission; www.equalityhumanrights.com
Advice and guidance on the rights that you have to equality and what to do when you experience discrimination.

Time to Change
This shows national support services https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/mental-health-and-stigma/help-and-support

Your university may also have support resources that offer well-being and counselling services.

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?
If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Fionnuala Daly- U2195510@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr Martin Willis, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,
Email: m.willis@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of School Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking part in my study

5.7. Appendix G: Interview Schedule

Working Class Backgrounds in Clinical Psychology: Experiences of Trainee Clinical Psychologists

1. Participating in the research

- What was it about this study, looking at the experiences of trainee clinical psychologists from a working class background, that interested you in participating?

2. Experiences of entering the clinical psychology profession

- Why did you choose to do the clinical psychology training?

- What challenges are there when entering the clinical psychology training, as someone from a working class background?

3. Experience on the doctorate

- Can you tell me about the process of training as a clinical psychologist, as someone from a working class background?

- Can you tell me about experiences during training, where having a working class identity has been a strength or a resource? Prompts; *In what ways were these a strength or resource? How have these strengths made you feel about the profession and training as a clinical psychologist?*

- Can you tell me about any challenges or conflicts, relating to having a working class identity, during clinical psychology training? Prompts; *How have you managed such challenges? Did these challenges influence you in any way? What areas do you find challenges occurring?*

- Is class identity thought about by the doctorate courses?

- Do you feel the training courses give appropriate support to those from working class backgrounds?

4. Class Identity and Clinical Psychology

- How does training as a Clinical Psychologist impact on how you view your class identity? Prompts; *In what ways? What parts of a working class identity are impacted?*

- Do you think class identity changes, undergoing the doctoral training?

- In what areas of training as a Clinical Psychologist, do you notice your class identity has been something you have thought or noticed as an influence?

5. Final question

- Is there anything else that you feel would be important for me to know about your experience?

5.8. Appendix H: Participant Demographic Form

Please complete all questions and return to u2195510@uel.ac.uk 1)

What is your ethnic group?

Choose ONE section from A to E, then the appropriate box to indicate your ethnic group. **A** White

☐British

☐Any Other White Background please write in

_____

B Mixed

☐White and Black Caribbean

☐ White and Black African

☐ White and Asian

☐ Any Other Mixed background, please write please write in

_____

C Asian or Asian British

☐ Indian

☐ Pakistani

☐ Bangladeshi

☐ Any Other Asian background, please write:

_____

D Black or Black British

☐ Caribbean

☐ African

☐ Any Other Black background, please write: please write in

_____

E Chinese or other ethnic group

☐ Chinese

☐ Any Other, please write in

_____

What is your country of birth?

please write in the present name of the country

How would you describe your gender?

☐Male

☐Female

☐Non-Binary

☐Transgender

☐Prefer not to say

☐Not Listed please

write in

_____

Age: _____

University you are training at: _____

Year of training you are currently in:

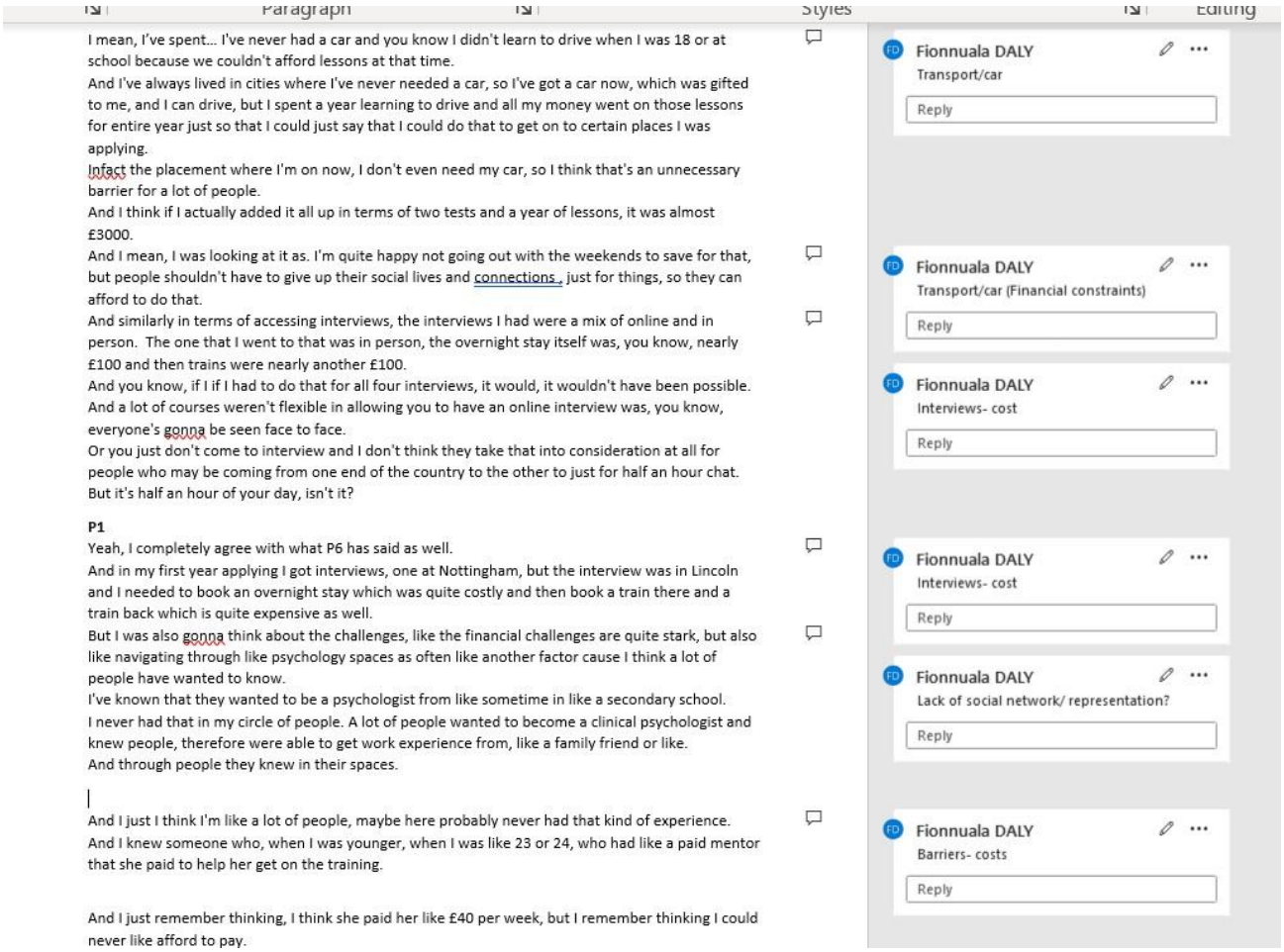
☐ Year 1

☐Year 2

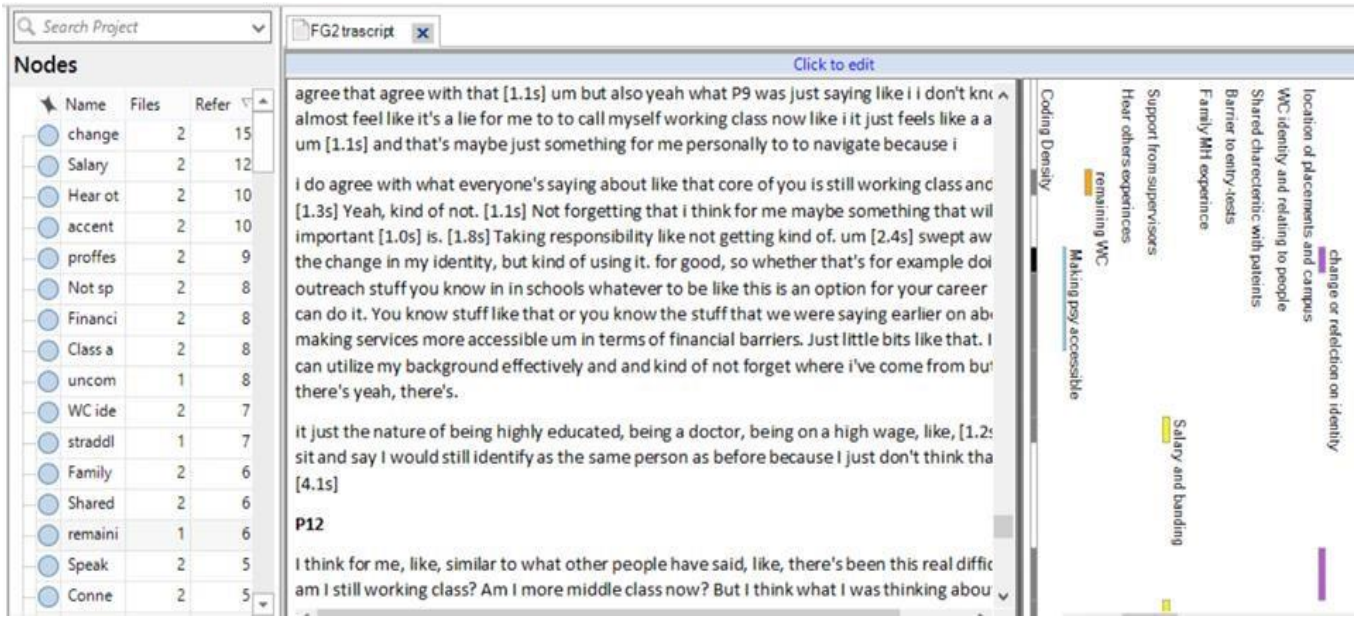
☐ Year 3

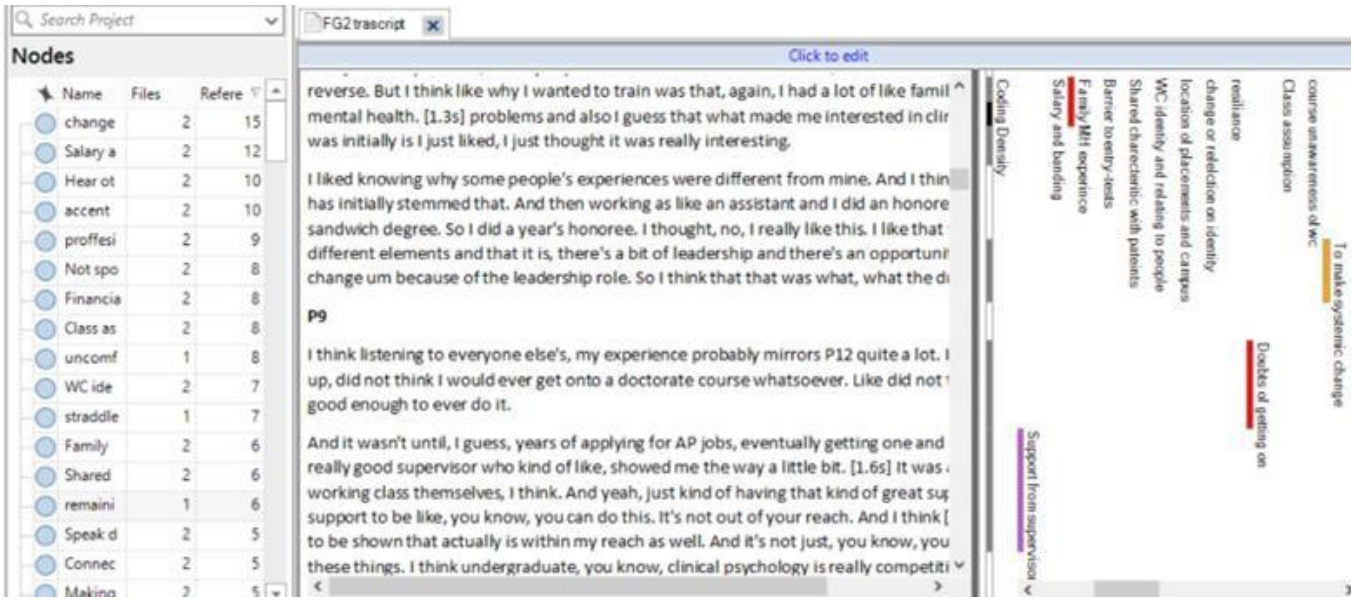
5.9. Appendix I: Coding Examples

Initial codes



Developing Codes into Themes





5.10. Appendix J: Thematic Maps