

"I want to be an Educational Psychologist": Aspiring Trainee Educational
Psychologists' Perceptions of the Course Application Process

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East
London for the Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

April 2020

Dedication

For Ezra, Eula, Lester and Mabel - my late grandparents - for whom the completion of this thesis and the doctoral programme represent that dreams do come true.

I love you with all that I have

x X x

Abstract

This thesis explored aspiring Trainee Educational Psychologists' (A-TEPs') experiences of the Association of Education Psychologists' (AEP) professional doctorate (ProfDoc) application process. The number of A-TEP applications to the Educational Psychology ProfDoc providers has increased steadily over time, however, the absence of literature about this process suggests there is limited knowledge about A-TEPs' experiences of applying to become Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs). Whilst position papers about the journey of aspiring Clinical Psychologists and empirical evidence from New Zealand suggest the process is stressful, nothing is known about how A-TEPs experience the AEP's application process.

Within this sequential Mixed methods research, 110 participants responded to an online 19-item questionnaire in the quantitative phase. Descriptive and inferential statistics captured information about the sources of support and highlighted aspirants experience the process pleasantly. In the qualitative phase, six informants shared their thoughts, feelings and events which occurred throughout the process via narrative interviews. Narrative analysis was used as a method to explore these stories. Discussion of the findings suggest that although the application process was deemed stressful and negative experience increased as it progressed, the overall application process was experienced positively. With regards to sources of support, interaction with Educational Psychologists (EPs) was most useful and exploration of the AEP and universities' websites were most common. Novel findings about the social support of family and online communities were found from the data. By contrast, the naïve enquiries of those who did not understand the process and 'group panic' found in forums were deemed unhelpful.

The researcher suggests further research exploration into the voices of minority groups of A-TEPs' is important. Possible implications for EPs, course providers and the AEP suggest there are systemic changes these bodies could make to further enhance the pleasant experiences of future A-TEPs.

Key words: aspiring trainee educational psychologists, professional doctorate application, experience



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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for blessing me with the skills, resources and support to complete this programme. Thank You for Your mercy and grace!

Thank you to all the participants who volunteered to take part in this research. I would also like to extend further gratitude to all the informants who gave their time and shared their stories with me. Through you, I learnt many different things, all of which I hope will go on to make a positive difference to future aspirants who engage with any EP ProfDoc application process – thank you.

I would like to thank my partner Julio for doing mock interviews with me in the beginning, supplying all the snacks I needed, holding my hand on the darkest days, being my cheerleader and reminding me how proud you are of me. My Parents and siblings, for believing I could achieve this and for supporting me, even in the moments when I didn't think I could.

Also, my dear friend Arjun and incredibly supportive placement supervisor Charlotte who were always willing and open to proofreading my many drafts, and someone with patience of a saint - Mary-Jane who helped me overcome my fear of numbers, statistics and the mammoth of data I collected.

In addition, I would like to thank the SCC EP team who introduced me to this beautiful arm of psychology, who saw something in me, invested in me and gave me the push and support I needed to have the courage to embark on this journey.

I'd like to express a massive thank you to all the academic staff at UEL for seeing something in me which enabled me to start the journey when I did. My fantastic cohort for answering my daft questions, having the long peer supervision sessions on the phone and going for the cheeky drinks we all deserved! Last but not least, Dr Miles Thomas, who has been all the things I needed him to be throughout this journey. When I said I wanted to engage in a piece of research I was passionate about, you gave me the space and scope to find it. Throughout it all, you were firm, fair, pragmatic and empowering. Thank you!

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List of Abbreviations

AEP	Association of Educational Psychologists
AP	Assistant Psychologist
AssCP	Assistant Clinical Psychologist
AssEP	Assistant Educational Psychologist
A-TEP	Aspiring Trainee Educational Psychologist
BPS	The British Psychological Society
CP	Clinical Psychologist
CYP	Children and young people
DfE	Department for education
DfEE	Department for education and employment
DoS	Director of Studies
EP	Educational Psychologist
HCPC	Health and Care Professionals Council
HEE	Health Education England
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
LA	Local Authority
MM	Mixed Methods
NA	Narrative Analysis
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership
NFN	Negatively Framed Narratives
NI	Narrative Interview
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologists
PFN	Positively Framed Narrative
ProfDoc	Professional Doctorate
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
TA	Thematic analysis
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologists

1 Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter sets out the focus and aims of the present research. It begins by Operationalizing and justifying the use of key terms within this body of research. From here, the competitive admissions process of the psychology Professional Doctorates (ProfDocs) in the UK is highlighted. This chapter then explores the current research's background by outlining the history of Educational Psychologist (EP) training and the national context of the profession. A summary of the current application process for the EP ProfDoc and the relevance and rationale for this research comes next and finally, an outline and a summary of the current research will be provided.

1.2 Operationalization of Key Terms

Key terms used during this research are Operationalized in this section to provide clarity and justification about the language used during literature searches and outline the terms used in the broader research. Each term is briefly defined below.

The term Professional Doctorate refers to University Level 8 qualifications which are subject to specific requirements. Examples include the Doctorate of Medicine, Doctor of Education and more specifically to the research, Doctor of Clinical Psychology or Educational and Child Psychology. The latter two include a work-based component and have an academic element where classroom-based learning and assignments are involved.

The EP ProfDoc timeline is referenced throughout the current research as the 'application process'. It has been synthesised into three time points of before, during and after. 'Before' refers to the preparation phase of the process up until when the application opened. 'During' refers to the phase of completing the application form inclusive of references and personal statement; and 'After' equates to the period following the submission of the application and including notification from universities about interviews and offers.

ASPIRANTS' APPLICATION EXPERIENCES

The term postgraduate training refers to any higher-level of academic training following the completion of a bachelor's degree excluding those at the doctoral level. This term was deemed relevant as the EP training has not always been a ProfDoc and other psychological careers do not always require individuals to possess a doctorate. In this research it included those who were in Clinical Psychologist (CP), postgraduate training, on CP or counselling internships and counsellor trainees.

Aspirant and Aspiring Trainee Educational Psychologist (A-TEP) are used throughout the research. They encompass any individual who applied for the EP ProfDoc.

In the related international literature, the term School Psychologist is referred to. Like EPs they belong to a field which applies principles of educational psychology, developmental psychology, community psychology, clinical psychology, and applied behaviour analysis to meet children's and young people's (CYP) learning, behavioural and health needs in a collaborative manner with educators and parents. Within the present research the term EP will be used.

CPs are also referred to in the literature as they are the most closely related profession to EPs. Although as a profession they do not focus on the educational context, they do integrate science, theory, and clinical knowledge to understand, prevent, and relieve psychological distress or need and promote subjective well-being and personal development of clients across the age range. It was used as a proxy for the EP application processes, as the route to qualification is similar and application through a central system are similar.

1.3 Current context of the EP Professional Doctorate

There are two government funded ProfDoc routes in the UK which train individuals to become CPs or EPs. Both application processes are highly competitive. In 2019, 4,054 individuals applied for places on the CP training with only 15% being able to achieve places (Clearing House, 2019) and in 2018, 1,286 individuals applied for EP ProfDoc, with only 12% being able to get a place (M. Dagnell, personal communication, 31 October 2018). Unlike the CP ProfDoc, the EP application process is under researched. With the above statistics in mind, it is not hard to

understand those who apply for the CP ProfDoc have described the process as frustrating (Morris & Thomas, 2006).

1.4 History of the Professional Doctorate in Educational Psychology

Psychologists have worked in education since the early 20th century. In 1923, becoming an EP required a one-year masters and teaching qualifications. This was changed to a two-year government funded programme in the 1960s (NCTL & HEE, 2016). Although there were later agreements to practise as an EP (six years of training should be completed - three years at the undergraduate level and an additional three years of postgraduate study and supervision), it was not until the range of roles EPs were increased that steps towards an EP ProfDoc were taken.

In 1998, The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) established a working party and published reports in 2000 (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 2000). From this point on, multiple working parties, research groups, and committees were formed (Frederickson, 2013). However, in March 2003, the national government gave EPs statutory responsibilities for assessments of special educational needs. With this, the new model of training needed to meet the requirements for statutory registration. In 2005, the BPS issued a statement reaffirming the need for a change in EP training and ultimately led to the introduction of the EP ProfDoc in September 2006 where being a teacher was no longer a requirement. Upon completion of the first cohort's training, newly qualified EPs were able to register with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) who generated a register for practitioner psychologists in 2008 (NCTL & HEE, 2016).

Currently, the DfE centrally commissions EP training via a tendering process. Following a review of the workforce data with the DfE's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) team, the number of funded places is regularly reviewed. Whilst the range of commissioners is becoming increasingly diverse, with privately run companies funding places, the primary commissioners for training EPs remain local authorities (LAs) in partnership with the DfE (NCTL & HEE, 2016).

1.5 National Context of the Profession

Since the establishment of doctoral training, 13 course providers under the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) have emerged. Collectively they offer 203 funded places for EP training in England - the most training places in the history of the training (AEP, 2019). Cardiff University also has a separate application process where they offer funded places and for this research, applicants and TEPs from this course will also be included.

Despite the government's drive to steadily increase the number of EPs in the workforce through training, a report published by National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and Health Education England (HEE) (2016) found there were three times more CPs compared to EPs and the rate of EPs reaching retirement age (65) by 2010 was due to trigger a further reduction of EPs by 13-14%. The report also showed that in 2014 there was a sharp increase in the number of vacancies for EPs with 85% of those being advertised to fill posts in the public sector (NCTL & HEE, 2016). More recent interviewing of Principal Educational Psychologists (PEPs) (Lyonette, Atfield, Baldauf, & Owen, 2019) suggested although the percentage of qualified EPs working within the LA remains at 85%, recruitment and supply of EPs versus demands on services due to an increase in need, appear the main drivers of EP shortages. PEPs shared there was an increasing population who split their time between the LA and private practice; almost half of LA PEPs reported this is how their EPs work. This could account for the reduction in the number for full time equivalents, therefore contributing to a lack of applicants to fill vacant posts. PEPs also attributed the supply and demand issues experienced to a lack of new EPs being trained (Lyonette et al., 2019).

In response to service pressures, PEPs increased the variety of work and relieved some statutory pressures by increasing workforce capacity via locum EPs. However, even with these efforts, they reported more needed to be done at the government level. PEPs and EPs shared an increase in the number of EPs being trained and a geographical broadening of training providers were needed (Lyonette et al., 2019). Whether driven by an increasing need for EP services, increased job opportunities or the shortage of EPs nationally, it appears the demand for EPs within LA remains high. In response to the supply and demand issues, the government increased the

number of TEP places from 160 in 2018 to 203 in 2020 (DfE & Zahawi, 2019). Therefore, it seems pertinent to explore the application process and A-TEPs' experiences of it. This research seeks to enhance the process as, now more than ever, more people will pass through the AEP's system.

1.6 The Application Process

The AEP set out a timeline for applicants, so they know what the application involves and the deadlines for its different components (See Appendix 1 for an example of the specific dates provided by the AEP in 2018). In 2019, the application process opened later than usual (30/10/2019) (AEP, 2019). Observed discussions on a Facebook forum for hopeful aspirants suggested they were confused, panicked, frustrated and concerned about how this might increase pressures in the "During" phase of the process.

The AEP also outlines candidate specifications (AEP, 2017). Should a candidate not meet these, their application will not progress to the universities for consideration.

Applicants should have:

- A minimum of a 2.1 or a conversion Masters in psychology and be eligible for the British Psychological Society Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership.
- Gained at least one year's full-time experience working with CYP within educational, social care, health, youth justice, childcare or community settings by the application deadline
- Eligible to work in England for the duration of the course and at least two years following course completion, and
- Met the requirements for nationality/residency.

Although the above information is made public by the AEP and the necessary selective nature of course providers is common knowledge, reflections from colleagues suggest applicants experience the process negatively. Therefore, the researcher felt it important for future aspirants to have an empirical basis to know what can be experienced in the process and for EPs, universities and the AEP to know how they could enhance processes.

1.7 Rationale for the Research

The number of individuals submitting applications to the AEP has increased over time. Most recent figures from M. Dagnell (personal communication, 31 October 2018) the Project Administrator Officer at the AEP showed that 1105 individuals submitted applications in 2018. With the increasing applicants year on year, the announced increase of training places and a relatively new course provider (The University of East Anglia since September 2018), there is an increased population whose voices can be captured and potentially add insight into the process of applying for a ProfDoc in educational psychology.

Research into clinical psychology aspirants (Malston & Logue, 2008) found individuals have described the experience as triggering apprehension (during the writing of the application), excitement (following invitation to interview) and apprehension (when preparing for interview). It could be argued these are normal responses to any high stakes transition and necessary emotions when working towards individual goals. Further research (Braham, Thomas, & De Boos, 2011) explored the Clearing House (the body responsible for coordinating all British clinical psychology training applications) application process however, the stance taken was to explore if course directors felt the earlier made changes to the application form were fit for purpose. The authors reflected that the process took a reductionist approach which was weak as it was not able to differentiate between applicants who provided formulaic responses and had internalised the statements they espoused. Through the dispersion of an electronic survey to course Directors, the researchers sought to explore whether the changes met course teams' needs and expectations. An 80% response rate shared that whilst the form did look different and broadly met needs, it did not in practice shorten the amount of time needed to review the form for more than 50% of respondents. Additionally, most respondents reflected that the changes in the form made little difference to how selectors reviewed individual applicant's forms. This outcome from the findings led to them increasing the word limit so applicants could provide a more detailed recount of what they had to offer (Braham et al., 2011).

Providing a broader platform for expression by extending the number of characters in the personal statement section of the application may have been helpful to some

limited degree as it reduced the reductionist approach of the application form. However, it is interesting that applicants were not consulted in evaluating the application form's fitness for purpose and even more so that nothing is known about how A-TEPs experience the AEP process.

1.8 Relevance of the Current Research

The researcher is currently a TEP within a London course provider and is aware that her journey throughout the ProfDoc application was smooth due to the support received from EPs whilst an Assistant EP (AssEP). In reflecting with other TEPs and course tutors, the researcher noticed that a range of experiences and perceptions about the process of applying for training were held and were attributed to different factors. For some aspirants, the process was anxiety-provoking (Pashak, Handal, & Ubinger, 2012). Others had a positive experience completing the application form because they were supported through it by the services they were APs in (Malston & Logue, 2008). The researcher assumes the calibre of those who make it to interview is high, but little is known about what aspirants feel makes the difference to their application experience.

This research, therefore, seeks to explore what the experiences of aspirants are with the view of creating an empirical basis for these views. Whilst attempts were made to gain a range of views, the focus of the study was centred around all those who made it to interview regardless of how they got there. As a theoretical basis for understanding aspirants' drive, the researcher applied theories of motivation, risk and reward, self-identity, control and memory to understand what is encountered when working towards getting onto EP ProfDoc training. In addition, through a literature review, the researcher explored what is known about the motivations for and experiences of applying for a psychology doctorate.

The current research sits within the wider context of the government injecting a multi-million-pound fund to now train 600 EPs (DfE & Zahawi, 2019). It acknowledges and provides insight into the gap in the research literature surrounding applicants' experiences when applying for a ProfDoc. Therefore, the current study seeks to contribute to the evidence base around the application process for professional psychology doctorates. More specifically it provides a unique contribution to the

literature as being the first UK study related to the educational psychology doctorate. The number of A-TEPs has increased year on year, therefore, the absence of empirical information about the application process suggests that information of this kind is for aspirants and appears increasingly pertinent. The aims of the research were to:

1. Explore A-TEPs' experiences, of the application process,
2. Inform future aspirants about previous A-TEPs' thoughts and feelings whilst applying for the EP ProfDoc,
3. Contribute to training providers' and professional bodies' knowledge and understanding about how they contribute to A-TEPs' experiences of the application process,
4. Provide TEPs the opportunity to share their perceptions about their experiences of applying for the ProfDoc in educational psychology.

1.9 Chapter Summary

Chapter one outlined the focus and aims of the present research. It Operationalized the key terms which will be used throughout the research and provided a justification for their presence. The competitive admission process onto the ProfDoc in England and Wales was also highlighted. This chapter then explored the background to the current research, outlined the history of EP training and set out the national context of the profession. This was followed by a summary of the current application process and set out the relevance and rationale for the research.

The following chapter will explore the literature related to aspirants' motivation to start a ProfDoc and aspirants' experiences of applying for professional training in psychology. In chapter three the purpose of the mixed methods (MM) research, its associated philosophy, methodology and design will be outlined. Chapter four will present the quantitative and qualitative findings. Finally, chapter five will integrate the quantitative and qualitative findings in relation to the research questions and hypothesis. They will be discussed in line with the identified literature and linked with psychological theory and frameworks. Limitations and potential areas for future research, as well as implications and the researcher's reflections will conclude the thesis.

2 Chapter Two - Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

In chapter two a systematic review of the literature is presented. It explores the results of two literature searches. For the first literature review the findings are presented in a synthesising table and provide an overview of the push and pull factors that motivate individuals to complete a ProfDoc in any field. The second highlights the journey, experiences and reflections of those who aspire or aspired to, complete professional training in psychology. The results of this systematic review of the literature will be critically discussed. Finally, the implications are drawn from the previous studies, these are then considered to inform the focus of the present research.

2.2 Integrative Literature Review

An integrative literature review was conducted to identify the current research into the earliest stages of the doctoral application process which consists of gaining relevant experience before one can even apply. Given the limited research into the EP ProfDoc application processes, two integrative literature reviews were conducted. The first sought to explore the motivational factors that drive people to apply for a ProfDoc. The second looked at the experiences of individuals who applied for a professional qualification in psychology and explored the areas within the application process. Integrative literature reviews have been credited for utilising the widest form of research review methods (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016). Within this chapter empirical and reflective position literature were included so that a maximum number of eligible primary sources could be identified.

2.3 Why People Apply for Professional Doctorates.

The purpose of reviewing this literature was to explore what had been written, researched and theorised about why individuals are motivated to complete a goal. To focus the literature and explore adult motivation towards postgraduate study, only literature that explored ProfDocs specifically was considered. The question used to focus the literature search was: Why do individuals pursue professional doctorates?

Studies included in this review were harvested through a systematic search of electronic databases. Using Ebscohost, the following academic databases were searched on 1st of February 2020: ERIC; Academic Search Complete; Education Research Complete; CINAHL Plus with Full Text; British Education Index and APA PsycINFO. The following search terms 'motivation' AND 'professional doctorate' were entered as a basic search. All studies acquired from the systematic literature search were screened and the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined in Table 2.1 were applied.

Table 2.1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Literature Search One

Study Item	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Levels of study	Studies exploring entrants of level 8 tertiary education	Studies exploring any other postgraduate study
Type of level 8 study	Prof Doc	PhD, post graduate diploma
Nature of research exploration	Studies exploring why individuals embark on ProfDoc	Studies exploring types of individual who embark on level 8 education
Location of research	UK based studies	

It was decided that a range of ProfDocs would be included in the literature search, as like the EP ProfDoc, they are primarily funded by an external body or employer, rather than by an individual. Additionally, unlike a PhD they are field specific, linked to a line and area of work and contain a substantive taught element. The individuals who apply for these courses have had to have a certain level of work-related experience and are often career professionals who wish to add to their existing knowledge, refine it or use their experiences to specialise ('Professional Doctorates', n.d.). Only papers which included direct analysis of students' experiences were considered as it was their motivation to engage in this level of study which related to the researcher's area of study. Further searching for literature was conducted using

soft searching techniques. Google Scholar and Scopus were searched on the 1st of February 2020 using the same search terms as previously mentioned. Additionally, theories mentioned in the identified papers were looked up. This method enabled the location of two additional theses. One of these (Leonard, D., Becker, R., & Coate, 2005 - 'To prove myself at the highest level': The benefits of doctoral study) could not be accessed from the university's resources and so was not included in the review.

From the searches conducted in electronic databases and through soft searching, a total of six papers were selected. The process by which these studies were filtered down to a final six has been presented in the form of a PRISMA diagram in Figure 2.1 below.

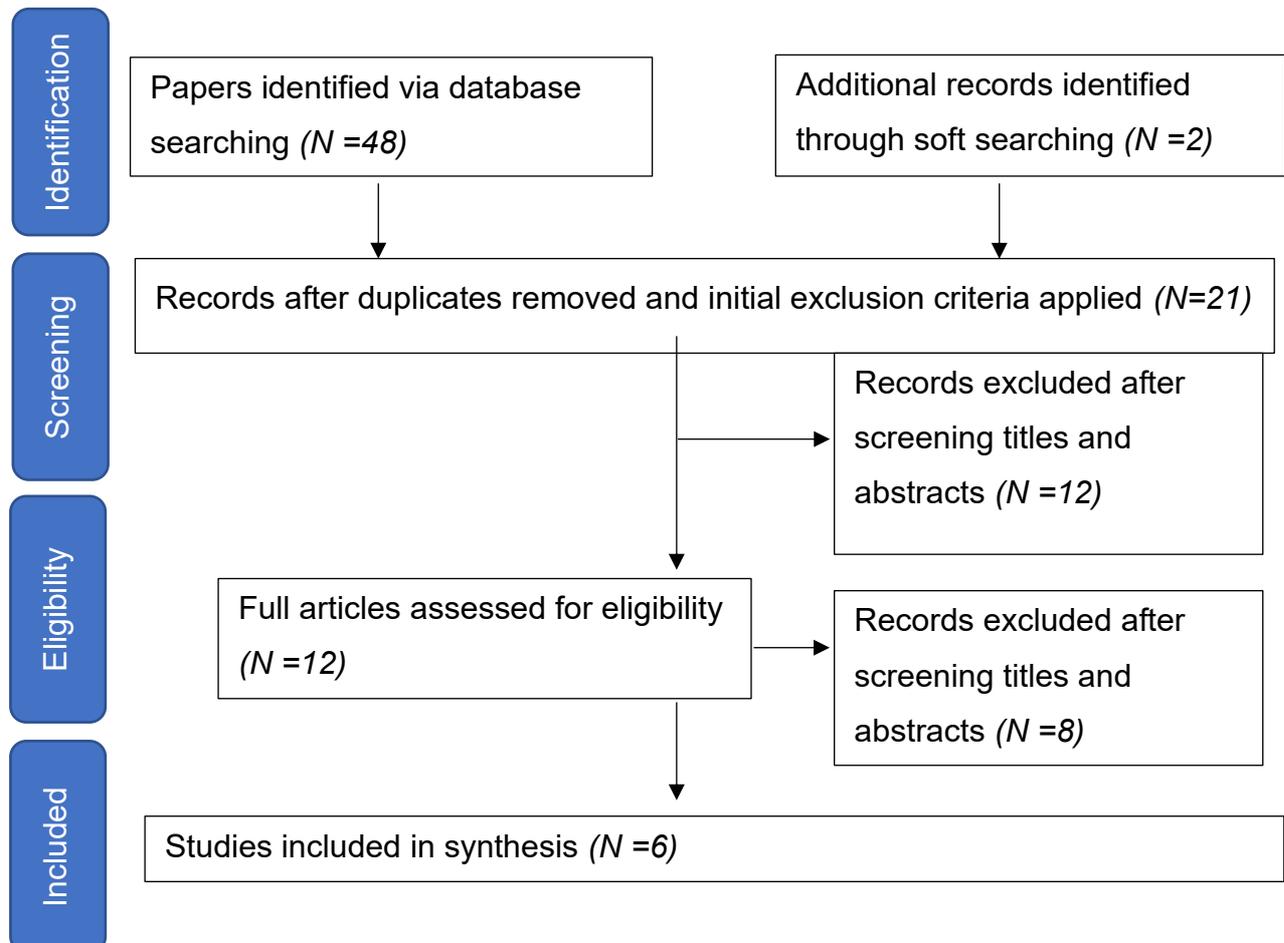


Figure 2.1: Summary of harvested literature around motivators for completing a ProfDoc

2.4 Synthesis of Papers from Literature Review One

Of the six papers selected, five have been summarised in Table 2.2 as they only met the first two inclusion criteria. The remaining study was reviewed in more detail as it was an English based piece of research and therefore deemed more contextually relevant and useful by the researcher as it directly related to the literature review research question.

Table 2.2

Summary of Literature surrounding Motivational Factors for Doing a ProfDoc

Study and Location	Focus/ Methodology	Results and Limitations
Binion (2017) America	In his thesis, Binion used semi structured interviews to find out what motivated N =8 aspirants to attain a doctorate in educational administration. Thematic analysis was used. The Self Determination Theory was used as a theoretical framework to understand motivating factors.	Participants were influenced by professional, personal, dual role and motivational factors. Participants came from one specific population therefore limiting generalisability.
Clark (2007) Australia	Through Multiple case studies, N =17 doctoral students reflected on the reasons they decided to pursue a	There were multiple extrinsic and intrinsic factors which motivated students. They included cognitive interest, enjoyment and love of learning, social

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	ProfDoc. Students were non-traditional, as they were close to the middle or end-phase of their careers.	stimulation at a professional level and professional development. The researcher had pre-existing relationships with participants and was a colleague of participants.
Grabowski and Miller (2015) USA	Business ProfDoc students' and alumni motivations, educational process and career outcomes were explored using a MM design (12-item questionnaire for students and 17-item questionnaire for alumni along with in-depth interviews). N =167 current students and N =130 alumni.	Students trained for personal or professional transformation. A ProfDoc was chosen over a PhD because it was free. The study is limited to the USA and potentially to business programs. Self -selection bias is a concern due to no participant randomisation. Therefore, results might not be representative of the population it seeks to represent. Hawthorne effects and co-construction could have led to misinterpretation of interview data.
Guerin, Jayatilaka, and Ranasinghe (2015)	Researchers used a 42-statement online questionnaire to explore why N = 405 individuals from a range of disciplines pursue doctoral studies. Factor analysis was used.	Participants had intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. These included family, friends, lecturer influence, research experience and career and professional development. Reflections were from a single university and therefore limited to the country and

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Australia		institution. The 42-item measure led to attrition as the response rate was 23%.
(Loxley & Seery, 2012)	The researchers explored N =27 ProfDoc students' perspectives of the role of this level of training within Ireland. Group and individual interviews were conducted to explore their motivations for pursuing study at this level and their conceptions of and purposes for academic and professional knowledge.	ProfDocs were not pursued to attain financial safety or prosperity but rather enrichment of practice, to contribute to knowledge, learn new skills, engage in and enhance a profession and a desire to learn, write and speak about their area with confidence. The researchers argued that Irish policy was underpinned by a restrictive and narrow understanding of doctoral education, as it marginalised those students who, in their professional practice, did not wish to view themselves or be positioned as knowledge entrepreneurs but rather engage in this level of study for altruistic purposes. The research is limited to Ireland and included a more mature population, therefore reducing its generalisability.
Ireland		

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Whilst the papers which have been synthesised above provide some insight into the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that drive individuals to pursue ProfDocs, they are not related to practitioner psychologists, within the broad discipline of psychology, nor based in the England or Wales, so automatically have limited generalisability to the present research or the population it seeks to provide information for. Aside from the above, each study is not without further limitations.

Binion's (2007) selected sample of 8 resulted in him only capturing 0.006 of the Student Affairs Administrator population, therefore, further limiting the generalisability of his findings to his target population and potentially impacting their reliability. Whilst this piece of research supported the understanding of why individuals in this particular profession pursue ProfDocs; the same motivators may not apply to A-TEPs. Although Binion sought to gain a phenomenological understanding of Student Affairs Administrators' experiences, there was limited description of the emotional encounters that drove participants to embark on doctorate levelled study. Furthermore, Binion recruited his participants through personal connections and utilised purposive sampling, which may have resulted in the recruitment of participants being subject to his individual bias. This limitation is one that also applies to Clark (2007), and Loxley and Seery (2012).

Clark (2007) interviewed colleagues, and Loxley and Seery (2012) as lecturers interviewed their students. Therefore it can be argued there was an existing relationship between themselves and their participants. This may have imposed demand characteristics on the samples and contributed to them feeling obliged to respond in a particular way, therefore potentially impacting the validity of the findings. It should also be noted that although Loxley and Seery state that their questionnaire was based on a piece of research conducted by an older and smaller-scaled piece of research conducted by other researchers, they did not expound on the direct link or relevance of this piece of research to their study.

Clark (2007) also utilised a qualitative case study methodology. Although credited for the rich data it can provide, the unstructured nature of the interviews may have resulted in the researcher leading participants' responses based on her own experience – given she was part of the cohort she was interviewing. The recruitment

of a sample belonging to the same cohort suggests that the findings are limited to the particular university. Although helpful for this particular institution, other universities and courses of study may not be able to apply the findings to themselves.

Grabowski and Miller (2015) self-identify self-selection bias as a considerable limitation of their research. Although distributed to over 500 participants via email, it could be argued that the 297 respondents represented a particular type of individual with a specific type of motivation. Despite adopting a mixed method approach, the use of a structured interview could have resulted in the Hawthorne effects, interviewers guiding the direction of knowledge construction, and artificiality.

2.4.1 Motivations to complete a Professional Doctorates in the UK.

The summary of the papers highlighted that there are intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivated aspiring doctoral students to pursue and persist with a ProfDoc. As the pieces of research were conducted outside of the English or Welsh context, they afford limited generalisability to the present research. As a result of this, Hawkes (2016) is reviewed in significantly more detail below due to it being executed in England.

In the UK, Hawkes (2016) asked a similar question as the other researchers – she wanted to explore why people do a ProfDoc. Hawkes acknowledged that previous researchers asked participants to reflect and recall why they had chosen to study at this level and in this format. This method of exploration was limited to recall bias and she acknowledged that their experiences might influence participants during training. To avoid these limitations, she used two years of interview data, which was collected from aspiring EdD students as part of the application process. This method also enabled the motivations of those who did not get onto training to be captured. In total N =113 applications were taken for secondary data for analysis. The most frequently reported reason for pursuing a ProfDoc in the field was because individuals had observed a long-term problem in practice and wanted new ways to make systems and practices work better for their workplaces and students. Overall, an individual's personal and professional development was the highest personal factor for applying

for a ProfDoc. 83% of participants report that a ProfDoc was more favourable because the study was explicitly linked to their line of work. Few interviewees were motivated by research related factors.

Although once again limited to a field outside of psychology and the potential of the data not being specifically related to the research question, Hawkes's (2016) research supported the idea that individuals embark on a ProfDoc to develop their skills further, contribute to a profession and better themselves and those around them. However, her use of secondary data meant that the questions posed to prospective candidates at their admissions interview were not generated in line with a particular research question in mind. When posed at the time, interviewees may have told interview panels what they wanted to hear and withheld other motivators in order to increase their chances of being admitted to the course

With some understanding about why people embark on a ProfDoc in mind, the next section of this integrative review of the literature explores the experiences of those who apply for professional training in psychology.

2.5 Literature Review Two - Experiences of Applying for Professional Training in Psychology

The purpose of reviewing this literature was to explore what had been written, researched, and reflected about preparing to apply and physically applying for a doctorate in educational psychology. To explore the literature, the following literature review question was posed: What is known about the experiences of A-TEPs and associated trainee psychologists in the application process?

The initial search of the literature was quite narrow. The researcher sought only to include empirical papers from England and Wales that were published since 2006 when EP training became at the doctorate level. The specificity of this search failed to yield more than two papers; as such, the search criteria were loosened to include experiences of those applying for any professional qualification in psychology from those around the world. It felt justifiable to include literature from around the world because the evidence gathered in the first literature review suggests that there are common themes and reasons for why people apply for ProfDocs. Additionally, a

mixture of empirical and position papers was included. It felt important to keep that range fixed.

2.5.1 Literature search methodology.

Literature included in this review was gathered through a systematic search of electronic databases on the 18th and 19th of August 2019. Academic Search Complete and PsycINFO were the databases searched by the researcher.

Where databases had a thesaurus, this enabled a subject term search. This method of searching was utilised to find the main and explosion terms for key terms within the literature search. In databases that did not have a thesaurus function, the same search string was also entered:

("Postgraduate Training" OR DE "Clinical Psychology Graduate Training") AND (DE "Educational Psychologists" OR DE "School Psychologists" OR DE "Clinical Psychologists" OR DE "Clinical Psychology Graduate Training" OR DE "Clinical Psychology Internship" OR DE "Counselling Psychology" OR DE "Counsellor Trainees").

An Additional search was completed where the terms - Aspiring psychologist and Trainee psychologist were entered as search strings into Scopus. Malston and Logue's (2008) paper was retrieved via this search.

2.5.1.1 Soft Search. Google Scholar and Scopus were searched on 21st August 2019 using the same search terms as previously mentioned. Additionally, papers related to Malston and Logue (2008) were looked at on Scopus. This particular paper was used as a point of reference because it was the only one that was based in a UK context.

2.5.1.2 Snowball referencing. All the selected papers' reference sections were searched to identify any papers that had not been picked up in the literature search. One paper (Morris & Thomas, 2006) was selected for inclusion in the review.

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The literature review question outlined methodologies and aforementioned considerations along with the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined in Table 2.3 supported the selection of relevant papers.

Table 2.3

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Literature Search Two

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Studies exploring the experiences of applicants throughout the application process	Studies exploring the application format or layout
Studies exploring reflections on the experiences of applicants throughout the process	Studies solely capturing the reflections of staff during the selection process
Studies focusing on applications made to psychology doctorates	Studies that look at the experiences of applicants from the interview phase and beyond
Studies that have taken place between 2006-2019	Studies that took place prior to 2006
Studies from around the world	Studies that included the application process for non-psychology related courses below the doctoral level

In broadening the search of the literature, a total of N =7 articles were selected for review (see Appendix 2 Summary of selected papers). The process of selecting the 7 chosen has been presented in the PRISMA diagram in Figure 2.2.

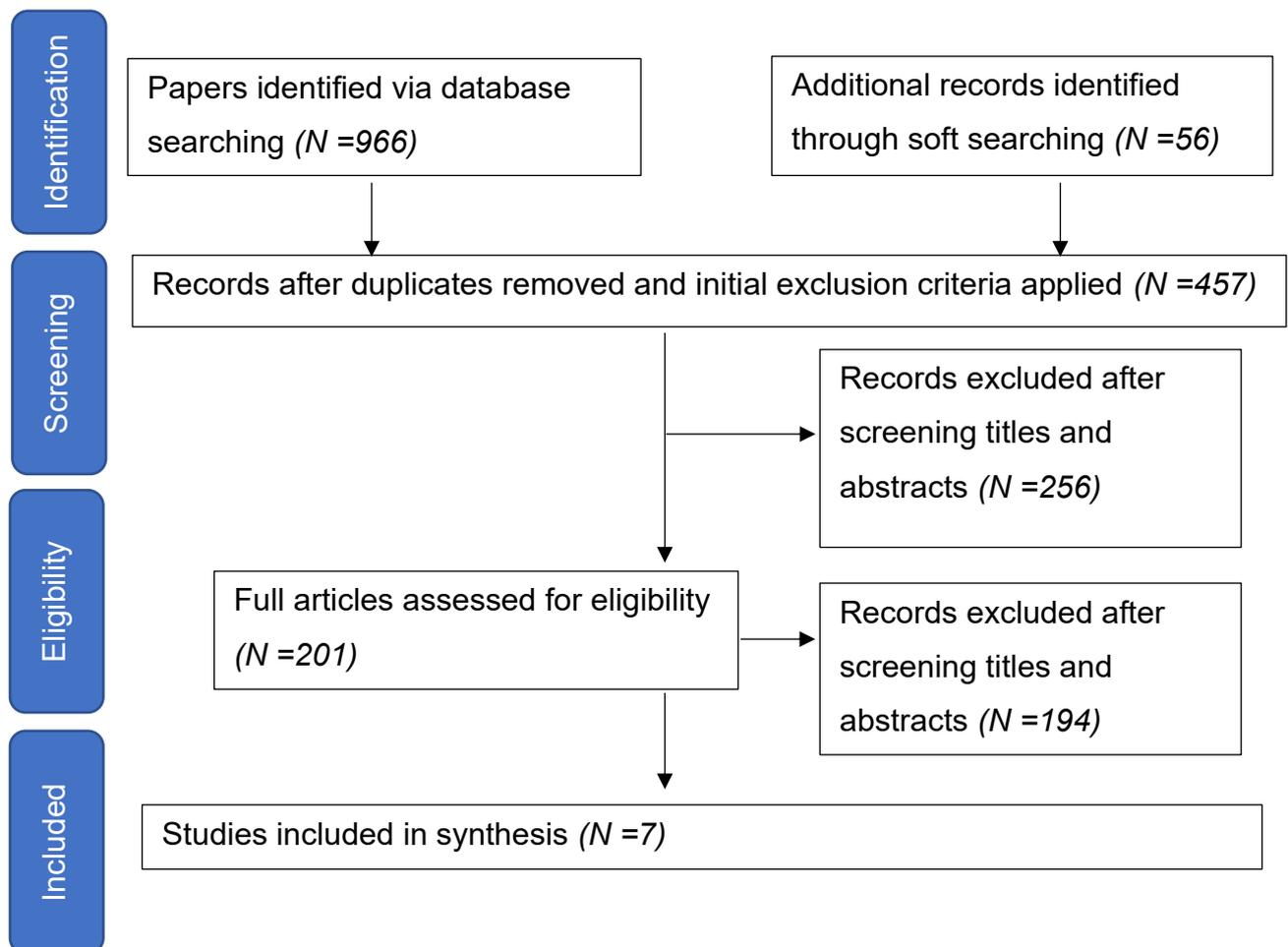


Figure 2.2: *Summary of literature selected for literature search two*

Two of the seven selected papers focused on retrospective accounts of qualified psychologists who pay attention to the experience of training. Where psychology specific papers were identified, these papers appeared to explore the journey from aspirant to trainee psychologist at discrete time periods. The periods included the time before aspirants apply, the emotions experienced during the course and feelings after completing their training. Other papers reflected on the journey back into education, looking at the motivating factors to pursue further study.

2.6 Critical Review of the Selected Papers from Literature Review Two

Malston and Logue's (2008) paper was arguably one of the most pertinent as although it has a clinical focus, it explored aspiring CP's experiences of the application process. As a piece of literature based on the English system, it was the one that sat with the most relevant parallels to the English and Welsh EP application process. In a reflection piece, two AssCPs presented a model for the emotions

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experienced throughout the application process. The authors reflected on the process of applying for a training place and likened their journey to a rollercoaster ride to the Holy Grail. In exploring the journey, they provided a framework to understand the challenges faced by mapping their experienced emotions against what they view as significant time points in the process (see Figure 2.3).

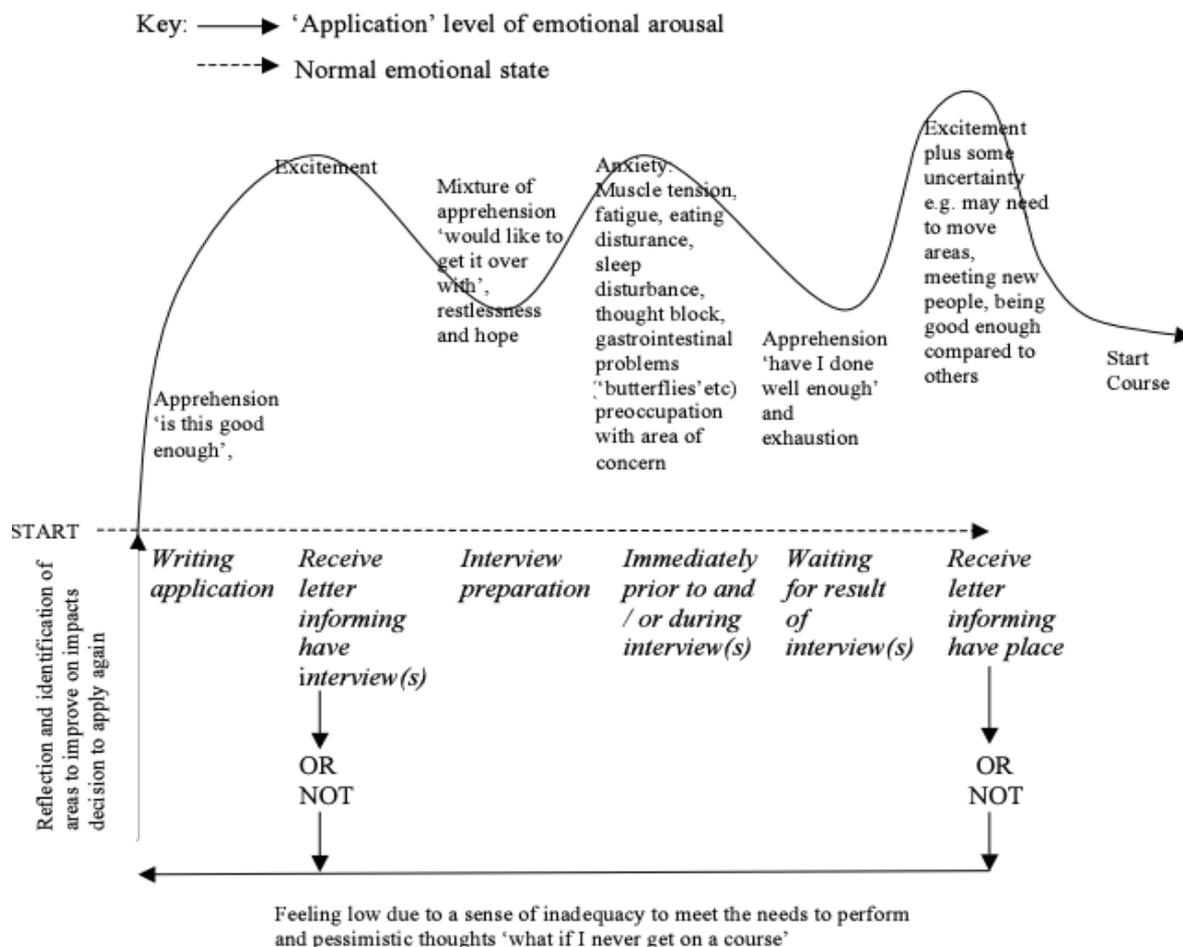


Figure 2.3 Malston and Logue's (2008) description of emotions, physiological responses, thought and behaviours during the application process

Within the model, the authors recounted their experienced emotions as including apprehension, excitement, restlessness, and relief. Through the mapping of these emotions, they reflected on the pros and cons of the process and it was felt their findings provided a clear narrative of a potentially life-changing event for applicants - even though they were a decade old and low in generalisability due to the nature of the source and size of the data pool. The model is built on two individuals'

reflections, which raises concerns around generalisability to the EP ProfDoc because of the small sample and there is no empirical research surrounding it. However, the level of similarities between the EP and CP application process meant that Malston and Logue's (2008) paper could help the researcher understand why a broad range of emotions may be experienced by aspirants and how they may vary or fluctuate at different stages of the application process.

Malston and Logue's (2008) model provided a loose basis for why the rest of the literature review was mapped into specific time points of the process. Each time point was grouped into a theme and for this literature review, the examined research looked at aspirants' preparation for applying and the physical application form.

2.6.1 Preparing to apply.

Malston and Logue (2008) associated the earliest stages of the application process with preparation. They reported that the process of gaining experience to be in a position to apply was a long trek. Following the completion of a psychology degree, hopefuls experienced concern as degrees in psychology afforded aspirants no relevant experience during training, no strategic job opportunities that were linked to their degree and a high level of competition for limited contracts to work with qualified psychologists. They reported that this stage of the process was full of apprehension which continued to rise until the point interviews were announced. In addition to apprehension, the authors in their position paper acknowledged that the preparation to apply was associated with frustration as aspirants had to allow other elements of their life to flourish and develop whilst their career aspirations were on hold. The difficult decision of where to live due to the dispersion of training courses around the country is one of many challenges the authors highlighted.

Other authors, in a reflective piece, discussed a range of challenges and emotions which presented themselves when gaining relevant experience in preparation for applying (Morris & Thomas, 2006). They explored feelings of excitement and uncertainty as AssCPs. The fear of the unknown was different for each author. Both authors reported being marvelled at leaving a job which required no qualifications and made them more money than one which was not permanent, paid less money

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and required them to have a good honours degree. However, this step was seen as a triumph because it increased clinical experience and signified being one step closer to qualifying. The decision to accept this role also had logistical implications, as it would be harder to sign a new rental lease. Regardless of these considerations, the excitement was the experienced emotion at this stage because of the role of delivering an intense skills development programme for a CYP with significant learning difficulties and social-emotional needs. The work experience provided a wide range of experience, the opportunity for collaborative work, and supervision from a qualified psychologist, all of which was enjoyed (Morris & Thomas, 2006).

Author two also experienced excitement at the prospect of being offered an AssCP role (Morris & Thomas, 2006). For her, excitement arose because it was an opportunity for paid work, which sat in contrast to the voluntary roles she held before. It also provided a different type of experience, therefore adding breadth for reflection in an application. Although this excitement existed, she was conflicted and concerned that working with a sole client may mean she was missing out on working with a diverse range of clients. Nervousness was another emotion highlighted by the second author. She was worried about working on a one-to-one basis with another AssCP as she was not sure how they would work together. The jump into the unknown was done with blind faith. The nervousness expressed was quickly identified as being normal by author two.

At the expense of the experienced positives and normalised worries, the authors shed light on the realities of the role. They were subjected to aggression from the client, and they often felt under-skilled to train other staff. The most daunting part of the role was the uncertainty of the contract, which may or may not be reviewed and was dependent on the responsiveness of the client and health and safety assessment of their involvement. This left them in limbo and experiencing intermittent panic. Whilst they sought to empower others through as AssCPs, the role had the exact opposite effect on them. They also shared the intense nature of the work meant they developed a protective relationship with the client and struggled with staff members' negative perceptions of the client.

The reflections provided by Malston and Logue (2008) and Morris and Thomas (2006) shed light on the sacrifices made by British aspirants and the rollercoaster of emotions experienced before even starting to the application form for a ProfDoc in psychology. However, these authors write their reflections as AssCPs and, therefore, their views, whilst they reflect the difficulties experienced with the competitive nature of getting onto psychological ProfDoc training, have limited generalisability due to them being outside of the EP ProfDoc. Additionally, as the papers encapsulate four individuals' personal experiences, forming a multiple case study, they have no empirical basis or empirical rigour. APs also reflect a very limited sample of the types of experience held prior to applying for a course in professional psychology, once again limiting the generalisability of their reflections.

In a position piece, Ekblad (2006) writes a letter to prospective applicants. He reflects on his journey to becoming a CP and frames the piece as some key messages for aspirants to consider. Although he mostly reflects on his training journey for his career, he ends his letter by sharing that the whole process is brutal. Before embarking on it, one should do some soul searching and have some frank discussions with a range of people within and associated with the field of education. For him, these actions were helpful to take before choosing to apply. He also calls upon applicants to be honest with themselves about what they want from the course and the job role. He implores aspirants to reflect on what they value both in and outside of the learning environment. He balances this advice by advising hopefuls to allow curiosity and passion to inform their academic and career decisions. Ekblad's advice should be taken with caution, as it is a retrospective personal reflection from one applicant to a clinical doctorate in America. Therefore his personal experience as a case study may not be valid when compared to UK experiences within the EP application process.

Building on the philosophical reflection of Ekblad (2006), Dornfeld, Green, Hennessy, Lating, and Kirkhart (2012) asked trainee psychologists and course directors to rank the elements within a psychology ProfDoc programme from most to least important. The authors used a 45-item, self-report survey comprising three subsections. 394 students and 17 course directors reported they felt a programme's structure, tone, and reputed quality of training were the most important factors in program selection.

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Although taken from current students, an implication from the research would suggest that when selecting a course, aspirants should consider how well they feel the university, its ethos, and its culture are a fit for them and the psychologist they aspire to be. As one of the empirical papers in the literature which looks at the preparation of applying for the course, this piece of research, even though relating to a different training system, provides some evidence that sits positively with the anecdotal information that circulates about the EP ProfDoc in England and Wales. Not only did this piece of research identify factors for applicants to consider when choosing a ProfDoc program, but it provided useful information for course directors to consider when thinking about the messages they may communicate about their course with aspirants. It can also raise awareness of the aspects of prospective students' value and could assist them in recruitment, curricular, and resource decisions.

Dornfeld et al., (2012) acknowledged the recruitment of their research participants was flawed as their primary source of accessing participants was through the course directors. They acknowledged they could not be sure all students across the nation had the opportunity to respond or be sure about the way those who did respond were encouraged to. The utilisation of snowball sampling may have resulted in a non-representative sample. They also reflected that once qualified; students may hold different views about which factors are important in a ProfDoc course provider – therefore making the findings less valid. A further limitation of the research was that the items selected for the survey. For particular questions, the response of “other” was provided and the absence of an opportunity to provide an open-ended response resulted in a loss of data. It also suggested the researchers' interpretation of findings may have limited reliability. A final limitation of this research is that the quality ranking system appeared reductionist. By simplifying participants' attitudes and views to averages, key data inclusive of the rationale for a particular ranking could have been lost and misinterpreted. Additionally, where some courses had a low response rate or small class sizes, mean values may have been impacted by regression towards the mean.

In a reflective article, Reynolds, Sargeant, Rooney, Tashiro, & Lejuez (2008) also explored factors aspirants should consider before applying. Through a multiple case

study design, the researchers outlined which aspects aspiring CPs should consider before they apply for training. Their article asks aspirants to critically consider how well a training course fits with their training goals and interests. This paper has limited parallels with the English and Welsh system as in America, where this research was conducted, professional psychologists complete a PhD program in order to practice. Therefore, their identification of selecting a mentor who conducts research and fieldwork, which is of interest to the student, is somewhat redundant when considering it against the UK context. In spite of this, they prompted aspirants to consider the close and intensive contact between a mentor and a trainee, therefore suggesting selecting a program is related to the fit between the individual and the culture of the training program, their research orientation, and the balance between research and clinical experience. Although within the UK these can be hard to assess, the authors' suggestions of gathering information by looking at a faculty's website, relying on word of mouth from current staff and students, looking up past scholarly activities of the program and asking questions should they make it to the interview phase, are all transferable. In the UK, aspirants could research course tutors for their published research, the AEPs minimum requirements of TEPs during training, and the split between university and placement days. These are all important factors to consider. This information can be found by searching university websites, attending open days, and contacting course tutors or current TEPs as "a successful graduate training experience begins with a well-researched and well-conceived application process" (Reynolds et al., 2008, p.60).

The literature which explores the preparation stage highlights the nature of preparation and experience needed before applicants even consider the application form. Although largely conducted outside the UK and centring round clinical programs, it collectively suggests preparation via research on the program and an institution are valuable. The need to understand the personal driving forces leading towards a profession in psychology is necessary as it is the understanding of these values and beliefs which enable applicants to endure throughout the competitive and "turbulent" journey (Malston & Logue, 2008, p. 27).

Other literature (Ekblad, 2006; Knoetze & Stroud, 2012; Malston & Logue, 2008; Reynolds et al., 2008; Sullivan, 2006) has identified a later stage which involves the

physical application form and the considerations aspirants made throughout this part of the process.

2.6.2 The application form.

In the introduction of a special issue for aspiring psychologists, (Reynolds et al., 2008) note the process of trying to get onto a course of choice is a daunting task, especially if unsure where to start. With these factors being considered, the following area for review also addresses the report applicants feel they have unanswered questions about the things they need to demonstrate in their personal statement. Malston and Logue (2008) described the opening of the application form as the part of the application process where the application form is released, and the process officially begins. The authors argue it is at this point, applicants reflect on what to include in their form. They think about the experience they have gained in the past 12 months and how applicants who are not applying for the first time consider how this most recent experience has enabled them to improve. They share whilst the application form is live, applicants spend a significant amount of time over each question and become increasingly pedantic about every word. A benefit of being an Assistant Psychologist (AP) is that a supervisor may review and make suggestions on the personal statement, therefore potentially adding value and benefit but also leading to amendments and alterations. Again, a unique perspective of an APs' journey highlights the potential benefits of support. It also demonstrates the position makes the competitive nature of the application process explicit to this group of aspirants. This awareness may contribute to the feelings of apprehension Malston and Logue (2008) describe during this stage.

In an American university Sullivan (2006) explored the emotions of graduate students on the clinical psychology doctorate. The geographical context of Sullivan's research means it has limited generalisability to the UK context. In the USA, there is an internship phase that is similar to the placement experience; however, students have to submit an application to an internship. The university or consortium does not organise it and therefore, there is an additional stage in their process. However, the concerns about the process are comparable. In his research, Sullivan acknowledged applicants' worry by attempting to normalise their it through the exploration of their

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issues and concerns and presenting them for answers to those in charge of placement sites, ProfDoc programs and qualified psychologists working in the field. Through an open-ended question which was distributed via email, applicants reported they were worried about the number and distribution of experience hours needed before applying. They wanted to know the magic quality to get them accepted. Questions were also asked about which theoretical orientation institutions favoured so they could reflect this in their application. The role of personal factors such as location, family considerations, financial issues and the ideal time to apply were also query points.

Faculty and practitioners commented that quality rather than quantity of experience was most important, however as the quality of applications increased year-on-year, the range of experience, which was linked to the quantity, became an ever-increasing factor for selection. Experts also reflected there is no single special factor an applicant can have, but being able to demonstrate a willingness to benefit from supervision and reflecting the ideas in their application at the interview was important. A criticism of Sullivan's research is the sampling method. By recruiting participants via email and using convenience sampling, those who responded may have resulted in a non-representative sample. Additionally, those who responded and posed questions did so via self-selection. This may have resulted in a particular type of person posing questions or resulted in a limited scope of questions being posed. Sullivan was also the only individual to collate the questions and make a decision about which ones were sent to directors of clinical training and faculty. By not having these questions peer-reviewed, there may have been a bias surrounding the questions which were deemed to be most useful or important. Furthermore, the absence of an opportunity for follow-up and clarifying questions to ensure the researcher understood the information participants had shared could have resulted in faculty not answering questions incompletely. Another criticism in relation to sampling is that Sullivan makes no mention of the number of potential participants he contacted, or how many responded – making the research difficult to replicate

Similarly to the letter from Ekblad (2006), applicants were encouraged to ensure they met requirements and were advised to 'follow their heart' throughout the process of

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completing the form as this was found to lead aspirants through their experience choices and made for the best applications.

So far, the literature in this section has looked at advice-giving to aspirants. Knoetze and Stroud (2012) however used NA to examine successful applicants' personal statements who applied to a South African professional psychology course. The researchers explored some of the work and life experiences applicants chose to share with the course providers through their personal statements. Framing the personal statements as autobiographies, nine statements from a possible 32 were analysed. Although the authors state that 'richness' was a basis for which of the 9 statements were selected, they do not outline or operationalise what distinguished a rich statement from a non-rich statement. Not only will this make replication of a similar study impossible, but it may also have resulted in selection bias where statements with a particular structure or with particular content were selected to fit with the researchers' research questions.

To analyse the autobiographies the researchers engaged in immersion by reading and re-reading the personal statements on different occasions. They then adopted what they called an eclectic narrative approach by utilising a range of narratologists' approaches to fit their purpose. This included moving back and forth between different sections of a narrative and the narrative as a whole. In doing this, they identified facts and attributes that were repeated in each narrative and used thematic analysis to identify recurring themes in the narratives.

Following analysis, a number of general aspects across the statements were identified. Although these similarities were hard to find, consistent factors included a heavy use of psychological jargon, followed by a temporal order often commencing with what drew them to the profession and ending with a note of self-evaluation. Although not in all, many statements made reference to an experience of trauma or a significant difficult life event which demonstrated an enriching experience acting as a turning point leading them to choose this profession. Applicants commonly reflected upon the role of psychology in their lives by applying it to their life experiences and positioned themselves as listeners or confidants to others. Unsurprisingly to the

authors, all applicants spoke about a rite-of-passage which empowered them to apply.

Knoetze and Stroud's (2012) findings, although limited to their particular population as applicants apply directly to course providers, indicate this feeling of apprehension may exist as a result of the demands aspirants place on themselves. In their applications, they seek to create an accurate representation of themselves pinned on a template of what they feel will make an ideal, and therefore successful applicant. This generation of a biography, based on the construct of an ideal, has required applicants to expose a level of vulnerability that if invited to interview, will be put forth for scrutiny.

2.6.3 Post application submission.

After applying psychology and summarising the relevant experience in the form of a personal statement (Knoetze & Stroud, 2012; Malston & Logue, 2008), Malston and Logue suggested that the course remains at the back of an aspirants' mind whilst course faculty select their candidates for interview. The suspense of not knowing reportedly provided comfort, which was followed by either a feeling of what they described as a 'low' due to a sense of inadequacy at not meeting the performance criteria or excitement if invited to interview. For those who made it to interview anxiety, fatigue, muscle tension, eating and sleeping disturbances, as well as thought block and gastrointestinal problems were linked with preparing for and attending the interview. For those who did not receive an invitation letter to interview or were not offered a place to train, a feeling of underperformance and pessimistic thoughts that sat along the lines of a mental narrative about never getting on a course were reportedly expressed. In an attempt to justify this negative sense of emotion and how it could vary across individuals, the authors apply a Diathesis-Stress model (Malston & Logue, 2008). This theoretical model posits that physical and mental disorders arise from a biological or genetic predisposition for that illness (diathesis) and when combined with environmental factors such as stressful situations, these predispositions are made more vulnerable and likely to present in a person's life (American Psychological Association, 2018). Therefore, Malston and Logue suggested that although the application process is experienced as stressful

for all applicants, the propensity to experience this stress was linked to individual differences.

2.7 Conclusion and Identified Gaps in the Literature

The examined literature provided insight into the intrinsic and extrinsic factors which motivate individuals to consider pursuing a ProfDoc. It also highlighted the considerations and concerns of aspiring professional psychologists prior to applying for their respective training courses. Researchers' reflections and findings aimed to normalise the feelings of worry that hopefuls experienced during the process. The literature also provided insight into the life and work experiences aspirants had and included in their personal statements. The presented literature, regardless of stage, also provided reflective recounts of those who were already qualified and utilised their personal reflections to impart knowledge of their individual journey, provide advice about considerations they should make when selecting courses or researcher reflections and analysis on candidates' personal statements.

The research by and large agrees that the process of applying and the preparation that comes along with it is associated with apprehension and stress. In addition, there are clear stages of the process that go from preparing to apply through gaining related experience to physically applying and completing the application form. Each stage has been associated with a different experienced emotion. However, a shared language and exploration of what underpins these emotions is absent in the literature.

The identified literature is subjective and dated. All papers bar two sit outside of the UK context, and none of the literature is related to the EP profession. Additionally, there are few empirical studies and a lack of robust methodology. The absence of perspectives and perceptions of A-TEPs in a time and context within which these potential feelings are being experienced, a lack of a standardised theoretic framework for a transition to explore experienced emotion and the strict collection of quantitative or qualitative data suggests that there are significant gaps within the literature.

2.8 Chapter Summary

ASPIRANTS' APPLICATION EXPERIENCES

This chapter presented the motivational factors that led people to engage in a Prof Doc. The chapter reviewed the literature around aspirants' experiences as they engaged in the process of applying for a professional qualification in psychology. It suggests that key emotions are experienced at different elements of the process. The chapter concluded by identifying the gaps within the found literature. In addition, the criteria applicants must meet (as outlined in section 1.6) suggest that applying for EP training requires some planning and motivation. In the next chapter, the design of the present study will be described.

3 Chapter 3 – Methodology and Data Collection

3.1 Chapter Overview

The information gathered from the literature review in chapter 2 identified reasons why individuals may apply for ProfDoc and the experiences of those who apply for professional training in clinical and counselling psychology. It also highlighted the absence of literature relating to the EP field. This suggests that there is a need for research into A-TEPs' experiences of the AEP's ProfDoc application process. It also highlighted that the exploration of the topic could help shed light on the unheard voices of this group and provide insight into the range of experiences, potentially normalising the thoughts and feelings of those who plan to apply to UK courses.

In this chapter, the purpose of the research will be confirmed. The philosophy of MM research, its associated ontology and epistemology and the research questions will be presented. Following the above, the research design, participants, data collection and data analysis will be explored. Finally, the reliability, validity, generalisability and ethical considerations will be addressed.

3.2 Purpose of the Research

The researcher's initial interest in exploring A-TEPs' experiences of the AEP's application process stemmed from the contrast between personal experience and the accounts of cohort colleagues. Although shared amongst individuals, the absence of existing literature which reports the British perspective of A-TEPs resulted in the purpose of the research being exploratory in nature.

Exploratory research is associated with real-world research and areas where there is limited knowledge. As a purpose, it seeks to establish an understanding of a phenomenon (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Whilst the limited literature suggests those who apply for professional training in psychology experience negative emotions, thoughts, and feelings, there is no published literature about how A-TEPs experience the process. Therefore, an exploratory purpose was deemed most appropriate for this research.

3.3 Philosophical Positions and Associated Methodologies

Associating a world view alongside MM research was a source of contention in the 1980s (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Although a split remains within the research community, there is some consensus that MM research can be grounded in a pragmatic philosophical position (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017) or a critical realist philosophical position (Hall, 2012). In research literature there are established paradigms which are based on differing beliefs and assumptions. These assumptions are associated with the nature of reality (ontology); the theory and rationalisation of knowledge and consequently, the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched (epistemology), and finally, how knowledge is gained through research (methodology) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The world views and philosophical positions that exist within ontology, epistemology and appropriate methodology are explored in this chapter. They will be considered as continuums, ranging from the scientific and objective to the socially constructed. The consideration of the range of positions was explored and considered by the researcher.

3.3.1 Ontology and epistemology.

Ontology refers to the reality the researcher utilises to understand the world around them (Plowright, 2011) and different ontologies are often referred to as world views (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Ontology concentrates on the nature of the world and is driven by the question; "what is there to know?" (Willig, 2013, p. 12). It is ontology which drives a researcher's assumptions and within research, the nature of a researcher's investigation can be positioned on a continuum that exists between the two poles of realism and relativism. Out of ontology, epistemology follows. Epistemology seeks to produce "answers to the questions, how, and what we can know?" (Willig, 2013, p. 4). It is also concerned with how the researcher arrives at their knowledge and where the knowledge originates from (Plowright, 2011). The paradigms, ontological position and epistemological stance of this research will now be explored.

3.3.2 Realism vs relativism.

Realist ontology, belonging to the positivist paradigm posits that the world is made of discretely measurable parts, cause and effect relationships, and tangible objects (Willig, 2013). Realists assume that reality exists independently from the researcher and is not mediated by an individual's perceptions. A realist researcher aims to be objective and make sense of the world objectively whilst keeping themselves and their work as separate entities (Scotland, 2012). Realism has been critiqued for being riddled with limitations in the field of social sciences (Scotland, 2012). Although it seeks to simplify complex phenomena, it has been critiqued for being reductionist and therefore ignoring the complexities of the social world. The methods associated with realism such as those employed in inferential statistics can be misused and misinterpreted. Furthermore, the tendency to make generalisations about populations fails to provide explanations relating to the individual participants research is conducted with (Scotland, 2012). Post-positivism seeks to address some of the limitations of a strict positivist stance.

The emergence of post-positivism, although of a similar ontological and epistemological underpinning to positivism, is different in multiple ways. Whilst it still acknowledges that there is a truth and seeks to establish causal relationships, post-positivists state that the truth is only truth if one believes it to be, therefore, they seek to not just establish causal relationships but to understand them. It posits that scientific theories can never be proven; therefore, all scientific statements should be tentative. What sets post-positivism most clearly apart from its predecessor is that it accepts that more than empirical data is needed (Scotland, 2012).

With these considerations in mind, the ontological position of interpretivism is invited into the paradigm continuum. Relativism is considered as an alternative to positivism and post-positivism. A relativist believes that the world and everything in it is not fixed, but rather fluid, free from the shackles of law and subjective – differing from one person to another. Unlike realism, relativism posits that reality is constructed via an individual's senses and the interaction between the independent world and language (Scotland, 2012). Relativists prioritise the diversity of interpretations which can be applied to real-world phenomena (Willig, 2013). Relativism's methodology seeks to understand phenomena not through numbers but from an individual's

personal position. It investigates the interaction between individuals and looks at the historical and cultural contexts of each person (Scotland 2012). Whilst the relativist position acknowledges individual differences, it is not without limitations. The knowledge produced within this paradigm has limited transferability and generalisability, this can make it difficult for beneficiaries and researchers to reach consensus, potentially causing a barrier to validity. There is also a risk of jeopardising participants' privacy as the research design and its associated methodology can be more invasive, intimate and revealing. The co-construction of knowledge will also mean the researcher has to adopt reflexive practices to ensure the data is not corrupt with interpretations which stem beyond what participants intended (Scotland, 2012).

The considerations of ontological positions and the novelty of this research supported its exploratory purpose. It would appear that neither a relativist, nor a realist ontological view, was appropriate. Whilst the individual experience of the application process was necessary to capture, the reflexive tenets of relativism were also important to consider given the researcher's journey through the application process. It was also important to acknowledge that the tangible system of the AEP and its application process were and are real entities which use measurable means to quantify A-TEPs and make decisions which shape their experiences. Additionally, the realist assumptions of objectivity and generalisability also appeared necessary for this research. The absence of useful information about the application process in the literature also meant the present research needed to be impactful, useful and not just interesting. Therefore, the experiences needed to be tangible, measurable and generalisable. With this in mind, the researcher felt that there was a benefit in adopting a MM approach where inferential statistics could be used to understand a group of applicants and qualitative methods could be adopted to provide richness to any quantitative findings. A critical realist ontological view was therefore adopted.

3.3.3 Critical realism.

Rooted in historical realism, critical realism adopts the realist position that reality and truth exist, however, it also accepts the relativist stance of multiple realities as truth is constructed by individuals' cultural, political, socio-economic, and gender-related

values. Critical realism can, therefore, be seen as a philosophical approach combining a realist ontological perspective with relativist epistemology (Issac, 1990). This approach is credited for acknowledging the complexity of “social phenomena by enabling a role for values and interpretive meaning whilst at the same time accepting an explanation as a legitimate goal for social research” (Hall, 2012, p8). Critical realism has been argued to be compatible with a wide range of research methods including both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Hall, 2012). Its adoption of the strength of realist and relativist paradigms meant that the researcher could extend the inferential understanding of A-TEPs' experiences of the application process by drilling down into their underlying thoughts, emotions and perceptions of individual applicants.

The above considerations led the researcher to adopt a critical realist position to gain a broad exploration of A-TEPs' experiences of the application process. Positioning the research in this perspective enabled a combination of objectivity and subjectivity to be adopted and facilitated an interconnected association between the research context, researcher and participants.

3.4 Research Questions

Robson and McCartan (2016), emphasize that research questions help the researcher to define their project by summarising it into a few sentences. It has also been argued that in MM research the research questions are even more crucial because they influence the type of design adopted by the researcher, the sample size and other elements of the methodology. Research questions and hypotheses focus the research purpose and the purpose statement into specific questions that are expected to be found in the study. What is different in MM research is that questions are generated for each phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Multiple factors such as providing a foundation for sub-questions, giving direction for the study design, data collection and analysis suggest that it is important to include an overarching question for the research (Agee, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). For this study, the MM questions sought to explicitly highlight and to an extent justify why both quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted and deemed useful for the study. Creswell & Plano Clark (2017) acknowledge the way a MM

research question differs from a quantitative or qualitative research question is hard to distinguish because it has not yet been identified or described in research methods articles or books. They do however identify components a MM research question should have. MM questions should relate to the design of the research and have sections which separate the qualitative, quantitative and MM research questions to differentiate them. The MM research question was established as follows.

How can aspirants' perceptions of the application experience help others understand the thoughts and feelings which can arise during the process of applying for the EP ProfDoc?

The remainder of this section will continue by setting out the quantitative and qualitative research questions for the study. Although quantitative data was collected to select the participants in the qualitative phase, the latter was deemed the more important arm of data collection as it provided more significant detail into the nuances and experiences to support the generalisation of the quantitative data (See Figure 3.1 in section 3.5 for the illustration of this).

3.4.1 Quantitative research questions.

Narrowing the purpose statement is the role of the quantitative research questions. Where the quantitative research question can relate variables, hypotheses seek to make predictions about the results of interrelating variables. Hypotheses are usually selected where there is past research or literature to provide some guidance about the predicted relationship between variables (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). On the basis of the literature identified chapter 2 it was hypothesised that:

A-TEPs would experience a stronger intensity of negative emotions with key transition points in the application process when applying for the EP ProfDoc.

The quantitative arm of the research also sought to explore:

RQ 1. Which sources do aspirants report as being most supportive throughout the application process?

3.4.2 Qualitative research question.

Qualitative research states research questions rather than hypotheses are used, and they usually have sub-questions. The main research question and its related sub-questions are advised to be open-ended and suggest exploration of the study's central ideas (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). For the present study, the qualitative research question of the study is:

RQ 2. What are A-TEPs' reported experiences of the application process?
(main question).

The experiences of the application process were primarily explored through the hypothesis set out in 3.4.1. above, whilst RQ2 focused on how participants told and framed their experiences. The study aimed to answer the preceding research questions and respond to the identified hypothesis using the following design.

3.5 Research Design

The adopted world view of critical realism suggested the study adopted a MM approach. This methodological approach was adopted as it enabled the strength of both qualitative and quantitative methods to be recruited without paradigm-related consequences (Robson & McCartan, 2016). This methodology also facilitated a rich and ecologically valid exploration of the EP ProfDoc application process.

An asset of the MM approach is that it allowed for the mixing of data and provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon when compared to a strictly qualitative or quantitative design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). In this research quantitative data was collected and went on to inform the direction of the qualitative data collection something Creswell and Plano Clark call a 'connecting of the data'. The use of this method, therefore, enabled the collection of quantitative data commonly associated with the positivist position without losing rich information. It supported the collection of qualitative data, often related to relativist positions without entirely sacrificing generalisability. The purpose of the research also influenced the utilisation of the MM approach. Given there is no UK data about A-TEPs' experiences of the application process, the quantitative data enabled the collection of a broad range of experiences from a larger volume of participants than could be achieved through qualitative

methods. Additionally, the unstructured interviewing of selected participants provided a more detailed exploration of the experiences of this group.

A sequential design was utilised. The first phase of the study used quantitative methods to explore if there were patterns across aspirants' responses. The next phase, being the qualitative phase, followed up on the quantitative phase and explored the details of individuals' experiences across the range of emotional and cognitive experiences. An illustration of this design is displayed in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1. Illustration of sequential exploratory Mixed Methods research design

To maintain the critical realist position, the collected quantitative data reflected the reality in terms of the application stages as set out by the AEP and the sources of support provided for aspirants, whilst the later collected qualitative data provided additional detail into the what the experiences of participants were by allowing them to construct and narrate their recollections as they saw fit.

3.5.1 Quantitative design.

In phase one – the quantitative stage, an exploratory research design was adopted. An established data collection measure that could meet the aims of the research was unknown to the researcher, therefore one was designed for the purpose of the research (see Appendix 3). The questionnaire contained 19 questions. The first half was influenced by Cardwell et al's (2017) data collection tool (see Appendix 4) and the second half incorporated the emotional stages from Fisher's (2012) Process of Personal Transition Model which is introduced in section 3.5.1.1.

3.5.1.1 Fisher's model of Personal Transition

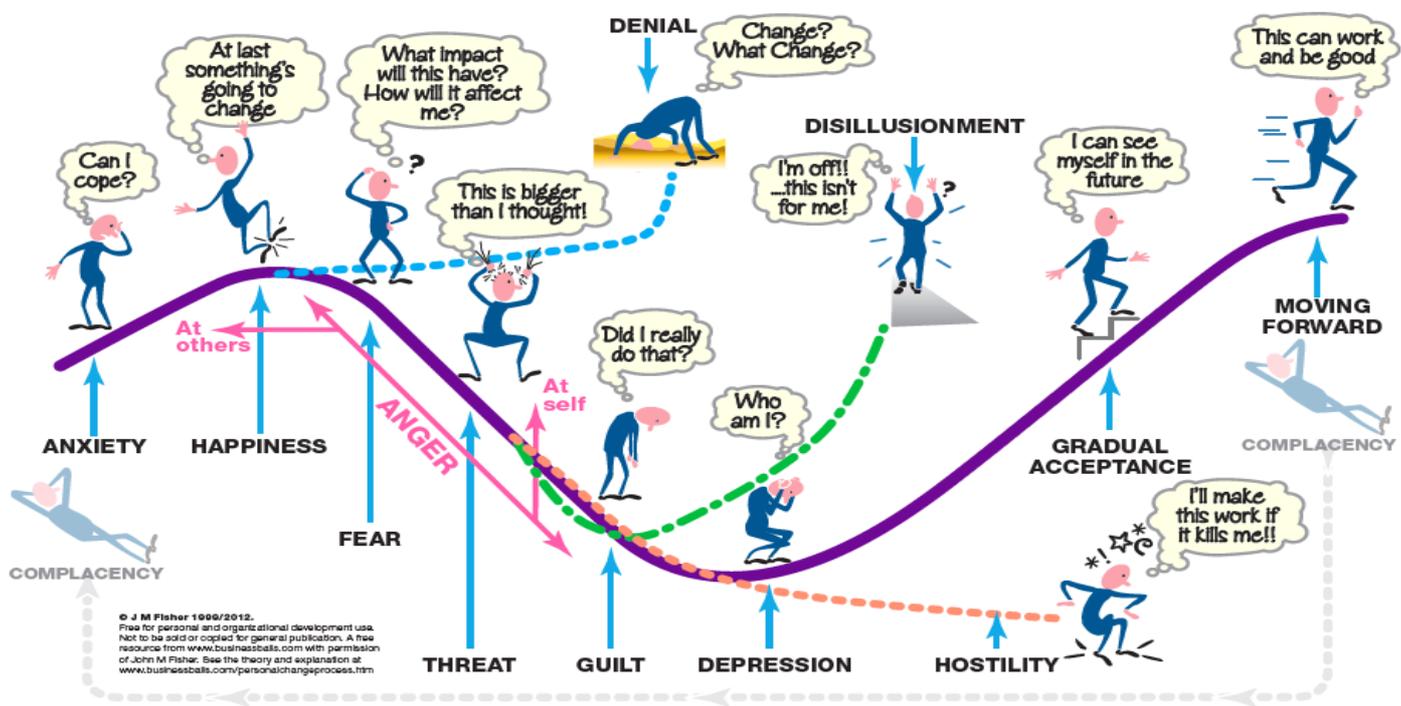


Figure 3.2. Fisher's Process of Personal Transition Model (2012).

Fisher's Personal Transition Model (2012) was originally generated through an organizational psychological perspective. The model relies on constructivist theory to form its basis. Fisher (2012) posited that a lot of the emotions people experience during transitions occur at different phases, and some could be subconscious. Whilst some people speed through the phases more readily than others, each individual will need different resources depending on which phase they are experiencing. Although he did not explain how a particular event impacts the experiences of the curve, Fisher acknowledged that factors such as individual differences, the environment, and perceived level of control accounted for the variation in experience.

The first step in the model is anxiety. At this point, individuals have no clear outlook about what will happen on their journey through change. They are not sure what change will formally look like. Assumably once they have researched elements needed to change, a stage of happiness is entered. Fisher explained that this is twofold. At the base level, there is a relief that change is possible and is going to happen. Secondary, the person is reassured that they were right about the faults

they detected, and that prompted the change in the first place. The individual feels good about the prospect of change as there is an opportunity to abandon systems and processes that do not currently work for them. Although happy that a journey towards change has been identified, the individual experiences fear. The imminent change could challenge their self-concept as they are unsure about the impact this desired change will have on them in reality. This fear leads to uncertainty as this change could force a new way of thinking, working, and behaving. It is fear and threat that acts as two major resistances to change. This fear can manifest as anger and frustration towards others, particularly the individuals and systems that the individual held accountable for forcing the change. The spiral of these negative emotions then can lead to guilt as the individual feels angry towards themselves for not having managed as well as they feel they could or should have. Here core beliefs and an evaluation of how close the individual sits in line with them are identified. Depression is next. Here the individual enters a state of confusion and apathy, potentially questioning who they are. The awareness that past actions and beliefs were incompatible with one another. Hostility can follow on from here; aggression is now directed towards the self, others, and the change process. The challenge is that they continue to work in their old ways rather than adopt the potential for change because the prospect of change can be daunting. Once this has settled, acceptance and an emotional detachment from the process occurs. Here, the individual begins to make sense of the change and accepts that at this point, there is little they can do about it. This gradual acceptance allows individuals to move forward; they start to make sense of the change, exert more control over the things that can influence and make more things happen with a positive frame.

Fisher (2012) also accounts for deviance within the emotional curve. He accepts that denial can be experienced. Denial happens where a person struggles to accept that change is occurring. Disillusionment is another deviant, and here the individual decides that the change does not fit with their value system. Therefore they want nothing more to do with it. These deviants, in light of the doctoral process, may be associated with dissonance.

With no empirical evidence to support the application of this model, Fisher's (2012) transitional curve sits as one that is grounded in practice-based evidence. The model

assumes that all people will transition through all stages in a linear and sequential motion and is ultimately a stage model. Although it does not accept the dynamic interaction between individuals and their environment (Pelaez, Gewirtz, & Wong, 2008) and adopts a reductionist stance of a stage model meaning that it does not entertain the idea that not all individuals will experience each stage in the same way or even at all. The model does, however, serve as a framework that highlights the emotions individuals may experience throughout a change process. It also attempts to consider some of the reasons behind the emotions.

The researcher hoped that using the emotions found in this model within the questionnaire would support the data collection process in that these emotions could be asked about explicitly in the questionnaire during the questioning phase of narrative interviews and go on to support the interpretation of the present research's findings. They would enable the researcher to see if participants experienced all the emotions and if there were key parts about the application process which evoked them.

3.5.1.2 Self-completion questionnaire

The tool of an online, self-questionnaire was selected due to its ability to gain responses from a large number of participants, across a broad geography in a relatively short time period.

The range of questions within the questionnaire gathered demographic information, generalised experiences of participants and specific experiences of these individuals whilst applying for the EP ProfDoc course. The option to participate in the follow-up interviews as part of the qualitative phase of the research was provided at the end of the survey.

3.5.1.3 Piloting the questionnaire.

To address concerns of reliability and validity the questionnaire was piloted twice with 14 TEPs who were in their first and second year of training. This pilot was developed and distributed to the group where they had individual opportunities to review the questions. The researcher then held an informal focus group where each question was looked at and reflected upon. This process aimed to assess the

relevance and face validity of the questions. Amendments were made to the questions based on feedback and the later draft was shared with the researcher's Director of Studies (DoS). Several drafts were exchanged between the researcher and the DoS before a penultimate draft was sent to a faculty staff member who specialises in quantitative data analysis.

Final revisions were made, and the questionnaire was transferred onto Qualtrics where a test copy was piloted for grammar, punctuation and pragmatic completion by one individual who had been accepted onto training but had not yet started their course and two TEPs who were going into their final year during the summer of 2019. These groups were selected as they were most closely related to the process and reflected the target sample. Individuals who were involved in the final piloting stage were exempt from participation in the research. Qualitative feedback was provided and the time to complete the survey was shared. No changes were required following this feedback. It was only after this that the questionnaire was published and distributed.

3.5.2 Qualitative design.

The second stage of the research –the qualitative phase - involved a Narrative Interview (NI) which followed a semi-structured form and was conducted on the telephone. Robson and McCartan (2016) identified that this method of data collection was advantageous as it is an adaptable and flexible means of gaining information. Language provides a unique window into lives, particularly where lack of resources hinders the ability to carry out a reasonable sample of face to face interviews. In addition to the advantages highlighted, this method facilitated further clarification of gaps arising in respondents' responses during phase one and guaranteed that there was a level of consistency from one participant to another. To safeguard participants' responses from the researcher's position and potential bias, all interviews were conducted using an unstructured interview schedule which had one overarching research question in the first half of the interview, this was read verbatim to all participants. This was followed up with questions from predetermined areas. Questions were selected depending on what was shared in the first half of the

interview. Table 3.1 in section 3.7.1 explains the interview schedule in more detail. In addition, all interviews were recorded prior to being transcribed.

Block and Erskine (2012) identified that there are many similarities between telephone and face-to-face interviews in that they facilitate the collection of detailed personal data which generates a high degree of response quality, the ability to probe deeply into unclear issues and generally have low levels of refusal rates. On a pragmatic level, the two most beneficial traits of a telephone interview included their resource-effective nature including time efficiency. Other benefits of telephone interviews were identified. Status differences, structural distance, and psychological distance are areas explored by Block and Erskine when investigating interviewer effects during telephone interviews. Status distance refers to position, socioeconomic status, and power. In face-to-face interviewing these differences can be more apparent and where there is a similarity between participants this can support the interview process. Disparities in status can do the opposite. Structural distance includes physical distance. Physical distance has been found to result in a reduction in the clarity of the communication due to the reduction in social presence. Methods to mitigate this have been identified and include attempting to compensate for the distance by ensuring things like time of call and environment of participants when they engage in the interview are conducive to them. With regards to interview effects, the physical distance created by the telephone as a medium has been found to mask demographic differences and therefore increase support of the interview process. Finally, they reported that the psychological distance which is created via interviewing over the telephone can make building rapport more challenging, therefore, establishing a trusting relationship between the interviewer and interviewee more difficult. It was therefore important that status, physical and psychological distance were considered by the researcher.

Other research has highlighted that telephone interviews can be particularly advantageous due to the possible reduction of bias from the researcher's characteristics on responses that can influence the participants' responses (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Other advantages include perceived anonymity, reduced distraction, privacy for the interviewee and a limit to self-consciousness when taking notes for the interviewer (Drabble, Trocki, Salcedo, Walker, & Korcha, 2016).

However, the need for the interviews to be relatively short, the absence of visual cues and contextual information can potentially hamper the data that is collected (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

The inclusion of open-ended questions in the present research's interview schedule allowed participants to provide detailed and open-ended responses and conducting the interviews via telephone arguably increased the likelihood that the responses participants provided were more honest (Block and Erskine, 2012). Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou (2013) highlighted that responses were observed as being sequential, meaningful, definitively human and representative of experience that has been reconstructed. However, this quintessential nature of the qualitative data does mean that the interview responses and findings are likely to have limited generalisability and is further exacerbated by the disadvantage of the time required to interview and transcribe the results.

3.6 Quantitative data collection

The quantitative phase of the study involved an online questionnaire which contained closed ended questions and was hosted on Qualtrics. An abbreviated and informal invitation letter and the questionnaire's URL were posted on the "Educational Psychology - Doctoral Applicants" Facebook group page and EPNet between August and October 2019 (See Appendix 5 for abbreviated participant invitation letter). The questionnaire was open for completion between August 5th, 2019 and October 10th, 2019.

3.7 Qualitative data collection

The type of NI adopted was created by Sch tze (1977, as cited in Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000) (explained further in section 3.9.2). This method was chosen because it enabled the collection of oral histories, which is credited with being most closely related to the natural human experience of sharing and storytelling. Oral histories seek to focus the researcher. Whilst the researcher selected a particular historical moment; the participant determined how the story was told. Through the collection of oral histories, collective memories were shared. This was considered a powerful tool for exploring the historical memory of participants (Kim, 2015). This method is also seen as being one that supports participants to recall what has happened, put

experiences into a sequence and therefore enable them to express and familiarise feelings and events which confront everyday life (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). In line with the assumptions of critical realism, Bruner (1991) suggests that narratives are a version of reality and the interpretation is shaped by those who receive it rather than by empirical validation.

Alternative methods of data collection during phase two, such as focus groups, were considered but rejected due to the lack of practicality they afforded given that participants were spread across the UK. Additionally, the individual nature and therefore the variety of experiences would have made the discussion challenging and the group nature of this method may have contributed to individuals modifying or withholding responses. Similarly, a structured interview, although arguably more reliable, would have limited the flexibility, taken away from the rapport building phase, and removed participants' ability to share what was pertinent to them.

3.7.1 Narrative interviewing.

"Narratives are an organised interpretation of sequences of events. They involve attributing agency to the characters in the narratives and inferring casual links between events" (Murray as cited in Willig, 2013 p. 144). It has been argued that constructing narratives is an essential part of meaning-making as they bring order to a world that can be ever-changing, uncertain and chaotic. The application process for other psychology ProfDocs has been shown to have peaks and troughs of emotion. Given that narratives materialise when an incongruence exists between people's experiences of the real and ideal, narratives are used during these times to take control, create order and restore calm (Silver, 2013).

Whilst narrative methods such as those developed by Bruner focused on the analytic nature of the method, reflecting on the philosophical significance and structural characteristics, Fernandes, Heidemann, Costa, Becker, and Boehs (2017) and Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) outline and modified Sch tze's (1977) systematic method of narratology and positioned it as being best suited for social research. Jovchelovitch and Bauer's review suggested that narratives have a *Self-Generating Scheme* with universal laws which include providing *Detailed Texture* to generate

plausibility between the transition of one event to another. It takes the listener into account, therefore the less the audience knows, the more detail participants (in narratology, the informants) provide. The informant also adds *Relevance Fixation*. This is the providing of details which are important to their perspective. Finally, the informant includes what the authors called the *Closing of the Gestalt*. This is the climax or most significant event in an informant's story. They reflected that the informants reported their story in detail with a clear beginning, middle and end. With these considerations in mind, the NI adopted a style which went beyond the question-answer structure and enabled the informant to impose their own detail, structure, and relevance (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

The questions in the present research's NI were guided by Jovchelovitch and Bauer's (2000) steps and narrative principles which state that the interviewer must have an understanding of the main event being explored and the interview topic must be explained in broad terms to the participant before they engage in their free narration. Jovchelovitch and Bauer recommend that gold standard NIs should be unstructured to prevent the imposition of structure, theme, topics covered, and words used in an informant's narrative. They propose 'The Elicitation Technique' (outlined in Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

The Elicitation Technique

Phase	Rules
Preparation	Exploring the field Formulating questions about the topic which interest the researcher
1. Initiation	Formulating initial topic for narration Using visual aids
2. Main Narration	No interruptions Only non-verbal or paralinguistic encouragement to continue storytelling

	Wait for the pause of the informant as a signal of the end of their story
3. Question Phase	Only 'What happened then?' No opinion and attitude questions No arguing on contradictions No "why" questions Questions generated in the preparation phase are re-worded to include the informant's language and are asked
4. Concluding Talk	"Why" questions allowed Memory protocol immediately after interview

The unstructured stages of the technique in phases 1 and 2 were adopted and to facilitate uninterrupted narration. The questioning phase was not entered until a clear *Coda* (pausing by the informant to indicate the ending of their narration). From here the researcher stopped actively listening and began seeking clarification of the informant's natural end by the researcher. Once established, probing questions via a semi-structured interview was adopted. The method was implemented to ensure all elements of the AEPs' application process were covered. Imposition of questions from the semi-structured interview was only relied upon if there was a saturation in the re-telling of their story and at the end of their free-flowing narrative.

3.7.1.1 Semi-structured interview.

Semi-structured interviews are credited with being flexible and are widely used in multi-strategy design (Robson & McCartan, 2016). As suggested by its name, general areas for exploration within phase 3 of the NI Elicitation Technique were pre-determined (See Appendix 6). This method of interview was only adopted at the end of the participants' self-organised narrative and although the types of questions were predetermined, the language used within them was guided by the language used by each participant. This part of the interview sought to elicit new and supplementary material above and beyond the self-generated narrative (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). The employment of it enabled flexibility for the researcher to be factored in,

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supported the asking of clarifying questions and allowed additional detail to be sought depending upon the answers a participant provided. In an effort to support the building of rapport between the researcher and the participant, the interview schedule centred around a core question. The question aimed to generate conversation with the participant in a way that promoted their views, perspective, and experiences of meaning-making concerning the researcher's attention to their experiences of the application process. To support this the interview commenced with an introductory point that ensured the participant knew they could share as little or as much as they wanted to (Emerson & Frosh, 2004).

When questions were posed in the questioning phase, Morrissey's (1987) two sentence technique was adopted. This format of questioning in the conversational stage of the NI involved a repetition or paraphrasing of a statement from informants' main narration and sought to highlight to the interviewer and the informant that this was an observed reality in the story. The statement was then followed by a second sentence which was phrased as a single question and enabled further exploration of a particular area. This method of co-creation is credited for re-affirming the informant's attentiveness, building rapport between the interviewer and the informant and it transformed the informant's silence into a narrative opportunity (Kim, 2015). Jovchelovitch and Bauer also considered that the setting of the interview should support the validity of the recount. Therefore, not only was the conducting of telephone interviews pragmatic in section 3.5.2, but by enabling the participant to be in an environment which was familiar to them and more likely to be linked to their experience of engaging in the application process, it may have enabled a more valid recount of their narrative.

Although credited for being informant led and therefore having strong validity, Jovchelovitch and Bauer p.7 (2000) acknowledged that researchers who employ their method have identified two main weaknesses of the technique: "(a) the uncontrollable expectations of the informant, which raise doubts about the strong claim of non-directivity of the NI, and (b) the often unrealistic role and rule requirements of its procedures".

Uncontrollable expectations in the interview are concerned with the participant potentially making hypotheses about what the interviewer wants to hear and what they feel they already know. This may therefore mean that the informant leaves detail out of their story. The informant will also know that they are one of a series of participants and that the interest in their story has a strategic component which is related to completing a research project. These factors could also lead to omissions in a story.

Unrealistic rules were identified as the second weakness in this narrative approach. Whilst the rules outlined in the phases exist, they are outlined as a guide for the interviewer. They aim to protect a participant's willingness to re-tell sensitive or controversial events. Jovchelovitch and Bauer suggest the guidelines may not be as helpful as they hope to be. In the researcher presenting themselves as a novice, informants may have perceived the researcher as being deceptive or cold in their responses to their story and again may lead to omission.

To avoid informant omission, the researcher tried to be sensitive to the above facts by naming them at the beginning of the interview (see opening statement in Appendix 6). It is also for this reason that the researcher only included participants who made it to interview to prevent the NI from being a space to offload frustrations with the system. Even with these considerations in mind, the researcher accepted that each participant's story may have been a limited recount of their truth or experience. The researcher also used her discretion and when necessary struck a compromise between a strict NI and questioning which led to the generation of a semi-structured questionnaire.

3.8 Sampling and Selection Procedure

Aspiring EPs who were not yet qualified and had been invited to interview for a September 2017, September 2018 or September 2019 start and could be current TEPs were invited to participate in this research. This cohort of individuals was chosen as it was felt they were best placed to provide a recent recount of their application experiences. It was felt that they would not be too far removed from the experience and could, therefore, more readily recall the process and their personal experience. The estimated population size for the sample was up to 650 (given that

most course providers offer up to between 40 and 60 interview slots). It was acknowledged that there would be individuals who were invited to more than one university, therefore reducing the population size. From the estimated population size, it was also acknowledged that not every potential participant would utilise online forums for aspiring EPs.

Convenience sampling was adopted by the researcher for the initial selection of participants. This approach was utilised due to the exploratory nature of the research and the value placed on collecting a breadth and depth of views from as many individuals as possible. Convenience sampling is considered to be a non-probability method of sampling and has been criticised for being a “cheap and dirty way” of gaining participants (Robson & McCartan, 2016) because it is associated with randomness that can lead to unspecifiable biases. However, as inclusion and exclusion criteria, as displayed in Table 3.2, were applied at the data collection stage, it is felt this increased the validity of the information gathered. This was further enhanced by phase two of the data collection as the qualitative exploration resulted in gathering relevant and in-depth data. This method was also believed to be best suited to the exploratory purpose of the research.

Table 3.2

<i>Participant Inclusion Criteria</i>
Individuals who applied to a course provider in England or Wales
Individuals who applied in September 2017, 2018 and 2019
Individuals who were invited to interview

An invitation letter was made accessible to all individuals who utilised EPNet and the “Educational Psychology - Doctoral Applicants” Facebook group. A public invitation to participate in the research was posted by the researcher to ascertain people who were eligible to participate in the research (see Appendix 5). The posting of a call to participate outlined the inclusion criteria, however, a secondary screening process was included in the online survey to ensure only the responses of those who met inclusion criteria could be included. Participants for the quantitative phase of the research were a mixture of individuals who had applied but not been successful at

the interview stage and individuals who were either in the first, second or third year of training.

To select participants who took part in the qualitative phase of the research, the emotions from Fisher's (2012) Transitional Curve (explained in 2.2.6) were categorised into positive and negative emotions. Positive emotions included happiness, moving forward and gradual acceptance. Negative emotions included anxiety, fear, anger, threat, vulnerability, guilt, depression, hostility, disillusionment, complacency and denial. Once categorised, participants' mean scores in each category were ranked. The individuals who came in the top three for each category were then selected for a follow-up interview. The interviews sought to gather in-depth information about aspirants' experiences of the application process (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). The researcher chose these individuals as they could possibly provide insight into the elements which made for a positive or negative experience, and therefore suggest things about the experience that could be learnt from.

3.9 Data Analysis

3.9.1 Quantitative data analysis.

The data collected during the quantitative phase of the research was analysed and generated descriptive and inferential data (see 'Chapter 4: Findings' for this information). From this data a picture of the range of responses was gained and the testing of the researcher's hypothesis was explored.

3.9.2 Qualitative data analysis.

The data collected in phase two from the NIs was analysed using NA. NA has been credited for going beyond the story being told and giving "prominence to human agency and imagination" (Bruner 1990 as cited in Emerson & Frosh, 2004, p. 9). In particular, it is argued that personal narratives often emerge around people's experiences in their lives...". NA does not have a prescriptive methodology nor is it associated with one world-view's position. It does, however, lend itself more to the relativist and constructionist positions as it involves the exchanging of language between people. Therefore, as a method of analysis, it sat well within the research

as although the reality of the application process as outlined by the AEP is acknowledged, it also accepted that there could be multiple realities that went beyond this superficial 'truth'. Through NA, realities that respected participants' cultural, political, social-economic, and gender-related values could be acknowledged.

With the absence of a single NA methodology, Sch tze's method as explained by Jovchelovitch and Bauer's (2000) and Fernandes et al., (2017) were adopted because it incorporated the four typical narrative forms (structural, functional, thematic, and dialogic/performance) to be considered (Sahlstein Parcell & Baker, 2018). This ensured a thorough analysis of individual narratives could take place, whilst still identifying conjoining themes across the narratives.

Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) and Fernandes et al., (2017) described Sch tze's method as a technique for generating stories. The adopted steps are outlined below.

Step 1: The researcher recorded each interview and then transcribed them for the words and paralinguistic features (tone of voice and pauses) used by each informant. The researcher listened to each interview at least three times (See Appendix 7 for Transcript sample with paralinguistic additions).

Step 2: Segments of each participant's transcripts were selected. Segments were identified via an informant's formal indicators e.g. "so yeah", "yeah so", "And so" (See Appendix 8 for a sample of segmentation)

Step 3: Structural description of the content was completed. This involved thorough analysis of each segment where indexical and non-indexical material in the segments was identified in each transcript (See Appendix 9 for the separation of a transcript into indexical and non-indexical features)

- Indexical statements = explicit reference to who did what, where, when and why they did it
- Non-indexical = look at values, judgement, augmentative or descriptive personal position.

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- Arguments = justification of the things that appeared to not be taken for granted in a story and personally generated theories and concepts when attempting to rationalise an event.
- Descriptions = how an event felt, the opinions they were paired with and any value statements.

Step 4: Analytical abstraction. Using the indexical elements, each narrative was re-ordered against the AEP application time points and made into stories by the researcher. Next non-indexical components were used to investigate the opinions and general theories and reflection used by the informant to interpret their self-understanding (See Appendix 10 for a re-storied narrative).

Step 5: Here the non-indexical features of the narrative are re-visited. The researcher looked at the argumentative segments and self-generated theoretical explanations informants narrated about their identity and life history in their interviews. Reflections about narrating their story with the researcher and identified psychological theories were also encapsulated. It was here that distinctions between the lived experiences and their understanding of what the experience should have been were highlighted (See Appendix 11 for analysis of self-generated theoretical explanations).

Step 6: Finally, all informants' narratives were clustered and individual trajectories compared. Any similarities between the non-indexical features of narratives were grouped and stark differences identified.

This analysis method was chosen over others such as Thematic Analysis (TA) or Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) for several reasons. TA is credited for being one of the most frequently used methods of qualitative data analysis (Howitt & Cramer, 2008). The structure of the method and it not being associated with any theory provides researchers with guidance and flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To the authors' own admission, what constitutes a theme is subjective and it can be a common flaw for a researcher to use their interview questions as themes. TA can also lead to an overlap in themes or the information used to create themes is not consistent. The researcher also felt that the reduction of data into themes would

take away from novel experiences and contribute to an imposition of meaning on participants' stories. Similarly, IPA can be perceived as reductionist. The emphasis placed on commonality of experiences can cause individual differences to be lost. Additionally IPA has been criticised for ignoring the significance of language used by participants in their recounts and is seen as a method associated with description rather than explanation (Willig, 2013).

3.10 Research Procedures

Ethical approval was granted for this research on the 4th of March 2019 (see Appendix 12). Before recruiting participants, the questionnaire was developed by the researcher and piloted (see section 3.5.1.3 for details).

3.10.1 Quantitative procedures.

Initial contact was made with prospective participants via Facebook and EPNNet (see Appendix 5). The written contact briefly explained the basis of the research and set out the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Individuals were able to express an interest by clicking a URL placed in the post. They were presented with informed consent and some additional screeners which reinforced the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Appendix 13). If participants did not meet the inclusion criteria, they were unable to continue with the research and were therefore redirected to a debrief and thank you letter (see Appendix 14). A contact email was also within the post to support participants who had any questions before or during the engagement with the research. At the end of the survey, participants were able to opt-in for the qualitative data collection. Those who did were asked to leave a telephone number or email address which would support the researcher to make contact with them if appropriate following the analysis of the quantitative data.

3.10.2 Qualitative procedures.

Quantitative data from participants who completed both parts of the questionnaire, were entered for further analysis in January 2020. Results were computed and then ranked to find out who reported having the most positive or most negative experiences of the application process. Based on these rankings, a subsample of

eight was selected and invited to participate in phase two of the research. Six individuals responded.

Contact with the six members who made up the sub-sample was made to re-establish informed consent and arrange a date and time for semi-structured interviews between themselves and the researcher in February 2020.

The NIs took place via telephone and varied in length with each participant. At the end of each interview, the participant was verbally debriefed and thanked for their participation. All interviews were recorded on a dictaphone. Every conducted interview was transcribed verbatim. To check for accuracy, recordings of each interview were listened to against the transcript by the researcher a minimum of three times before any qualitative analysis commenced. In line with Andrews's chapter in Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou (2013), the researcher revisited the data on multiple occasions to submerge herself and be in a position that afforded a depth of engagement with the participant's views and a more complex understanding of what they had shared. In the early stages of engagement with the transcripts, the researcher hand wrote notes in a research journal where initial points of interest were identified.

In line with the ethics application, all data will only be kept until for two years following the submission of the research project, however, an individual's contact information will be discarded following the completion of research once it has been submitted, assessed at VIVA and any amendments made.

3.11 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics refers to the notion that all human understanding is mediated through history, sociocultural circumstances and language (Brockmeier & Meretoja, 2014). The nature of gathering oral stories, selecting questions in the interview and engaging in analytic abstraction to transform the stories into narratives implicitly and consistency involves hermeneutics (Moen, 2006). In narrative inquiry both the researcher and the informant participate in the hermeneutical process.

To ensure the essence of the informant's story was not lost, the interviewer ensured clarifying questions were asked in the third phase of the interview. As interviews were re-storied, member checks were enforced where narratives were sent to a random third of participants to ensure they agreed with the researcher's interpretation. The researcher had to acknowledge that she experienced her own version of the application process which gave her a subjective lens that could have led to a misinterpretation of each participant's use of language. Given the acknowledgment of the interaction between the researcher, participants and the contexts in which they both sit, the researcher made additional hermeneutical considerations.

The researcher acknowledged the involvement of double hermeneutics where the interpretations of both the participant and the researcher could influence each other in an ongoing cyclical process to co-construct knowledge. This justified the need for only paralinguistic cues being provided during the initiation phase of the interviews.

With hermeneutics in mind, reliability and validity considerations were made for the quantitative arm of the study. Issues of trustworthiness were also considered for the qualitative component.

3.12 Reliability, Validity and Generalisability

The MM design meant that reliability and validity issues for quantitative and qualitative data had to be considered. Reliability is concerned with measures producing the same findings from the same people across time. To ensure this, the researcher used the same data collection procedures and circumstances with all participants in the quantitative and qualitative phases. All participants were gathered via the forums and NIs conducted via telephone. To ensure inter-rater reliability of the findings, that is NA provided consistent results regardless of who analysed it, the researcher asked a peer to read through a sample of the transcripts and the later themes generated from those narratives.

A measure is valid if its findings demonstrate what the researcher intended it to. Within the study, there were some potential threats to validity. One threat to internal validity was the online forums from which participants were recruited. The nature of

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sharing and posting on a social media site could have impacted on the responses provided by participants simply because the researcher was active and present on the forum. To mitigate this impact, the researcher refrained from being active on these forums for seven months prior to the posting of the research. Another consideration was construct validity. This is the extent to which the tool used to measure a construct truly measures it. Researcher expectations can impact this. To prevent a threat to construct validity, the researcher strove to accurately record, recall and make sense of participants' narratives as they intended for them to be received. Matching audio recordings to transcripts ensured information was accurately recorded.

The qualitative phase of the research was the principal method of data collection within the research. Therefore, the adoption of a semi-structured method of data collection also meant that the researcher did not impose her own structure and language on participants' stories. Additionally, the researcher kept a research journal to record her own thoughts and feelings about the findings. This prevented her experiences being used to make inferences and increased the validity of the interpretations. Piloting the research also ensured the designed questionnaire appropriately measured the constructs it was designed to, therefore ensuring face validity. Participant expectancy also presented as a possible threat to validity. As a current TEP, the researcher was aware considerations had to be made about the power dynamics between herself and participants. This was addressed in the informed consent by outlining clear research aims and withdrawal terms. In addition, no incentives were offered in exchange for participation. For the qualitative data collection, the researcher ensured an opening statement precluded the core interview question to build rapport and increase the level of comfort between the researcher and the participant. The psychological distance and physical distance as outlined earlier in the chapter also should have supported participants to feel they could share the most accurate narrative possible.

The specific nature of the sample and the context mean that there are limitations to the generalisability of the research. To account for this, maximising the number of participants during the quantitative data collection phase was important. To facilitate this, several attempts were made to engage prospective participants by re-posting

the invitations to participate fortnightly across both online forums. Participants were also encouraged to share the questionnaire with anyone they knew who may have met the inclusion criteria. With regards to qualitative responses, the data collected in this phase are a representation of individual experiences of the journey through the application process and are consequently less likely to be broadly generalisable to the wider population.

Standards for evidence quality in qualitative research include credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. Each of these will be considered (Mertens, 2010). Transferability: It is the researcher's responsibility within the collection of qualitative data to ensure a significant amount of detail which should support the readers' ability to make an informed judgement about the quantity of similarity between the study and the real world. To enable this the researcher collected demographic data about the participants during the data collection phase and also referred to the AEP's procedures within the introduction of the research to make the pragmatics of the application process transparent.

The researcher sought to ensure dependability by providing step by step information about data collection and data analysis within this chapter and providing appropriate appendices as points of reference (Appendices 7-11). In addition, confirmability was promoted by the researcher as she ensured all collected qualitative data was linked directly to the source from which it came through member checking. Data interpretation was also evidenced and explicit through the input of samples within the research project.

Dependability in the data collection phase was ensured through the use of guided questions in the qualitative data collection phase along with piloting in the quantitative phase.

3.13 Reflexivity

Finlay (2002) likens the action of being reflexive with negotiating a muddy swamp of self-analysis and self-disclosure. It seeks to act as a tool of confession for the researcher to explore their personal and possible unconscious reactions. Although difficult, it is an important meta-analytical process a researcher must engage with to

actively and critically examine how their position can impact or influence research procedures. It can be engaged through introspection, discursive deconstruction, intersubjective reflection and mutual collaboration (Finlay, 2002). The researcher adopted introspection.

Introspection involves “examining one’s own experience and personal meanings for their own sake...” (Finlay, 2002, p. 214). The “Relevance of the Current Research” (section 1.8) outlines the researcher’s professional and personal background. Chapter one also outlines the theoretical assumptions made for the research and in chapter two, the identified literature orients the researcher in a particular position. The ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research made in this chapter also provide some insight into the researcher’s thought processes, role and research position. The explicit inclusion of these elements should support the reader to have some understanding of the researcher’s position throughout the research process. The researcher also considered power relations between herself and participants. Acknowledgements of these facts were addressed in the validity section of this chapter (3.12). To an extent the researcher held a dual position in the context of the research, being both a researcher and an individual who had a personal experience of the application process. It was therefore imperative for the researcher to acknowledge and separate, as much as possible, previous experiences and the awareness of the process away from the research. Steps to keep these positions separate were taken through piloting, quality-assuring data and keeping a research journal. Regardless of these attempts, keeping these positions separate is impossible to achieve, therefore there is a possibility that the position of researcher impacted the interpretation and creating of the narratives.

Keeping a research journal facilitated the researcher’s reflections during data analysis phases. In recording thoughts and feelings, the researcher was able to make potential biases and personal opinions of the process explicit, meaning that the impact of them could be minimised.

3.14 Ethical Considerations

The methods of participant recruitment resulted in the researcher having to make additional ethical considerations (BPS, 2014, 2017). Respect for the autonomy,

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privacy, and dignity of participants was upheld by creating a distinction between the online forum and how the two parties communicated. This ensured that data derived from online sources was not in the public domain. Additionally, the researcher maintained the privacy of participants' data by using a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Department for Digital Culture Media & Sport, 2018) compliant online data collection tool – Qualtrics.

To ensure anonymity was preserved, participants' names, dates of birth were kept in a separate spreadsheet from the data. Within the write up of the research, participants were only referred to via a unique participant code which consisted of their rank category and an anonymised name. This enabled the display of basic information about each participant who took part in the qualitative arm of research.

Confidentiality was considered by ensuring that participants were only identifiable in writing via their unique identification code. Where information was downloaded from the Qualtrics server, the researcher handled her own and participants' personal information responsibly by ensuring that information taken from the server was saved in a password-protected document that was saved on a password-protected laptop or external server that only the researcher has access to (See Data Management Plan in Appendix 15). Letters of invitation (see Appendix 16) and consent statements (see Appendix 17) and a full debrief were included within the quantitative data collection phase (see Appendix 14). To support participants' engagement with these units of information they had to highlight the individual boxes which corresponded with the relative statements before being able to proceed with the online questionnaire. To facilitate access to these documents further, the researcher generated a unique email address specifically for the purpose of the research. Through this, participants readily had access to the researcher. The email account was checked daily. The researcher did not engage in online communications that would allow anyone to infer sensitive information about herself or potential participants, even if that information had already been made publicly available in a different context (Wildemuth, 1993).

The researcher had an obligation to give careful consideration to the values, morals, and potential vulnerabilities of participants who were approached on social media

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(Gyure et al., 2014). The privacy of participants was respected and communications within the different online groups were done in a way that was not emotive or offensive. An effort was also taken to hold the sensitivity of the application process in mind. As such, data collected during a period when the AEP applications were not open.

Another ethical consideration in the context of social media recruitment is transparency. Transparency is grounded in the respect for individuals, which outside of exceptional circumstances, demands researcher truthfulness and honesty when interacting with participants. This also promotes trust in the research venture, thus allowing the research to flourish (Gelinis et al., 2017). Transparency was ensured by making every effort to be truthful and honest when describing the aims, details, risks, and benefits of the proposed research. This consideration also coincides with the BPS's (2017) aims of maximising benefits and minimising harm.

Levels of control during the data collection phase were ensured by including the estimated time the questionnaire would take and by advising them that it was best completed on a personal computer for their convenience. With regards to the qualitative phase, a time and date were organised with the participant to ensure that they felt they had the time and space to actively and meaningfully engage in this part of the research.

Supplementary ethical considerations were noted through the outlining of the researcher's reflexivity. The dual role of the researcher as a researcher and former applicant meant that it was important that individuals who attended the same university as the researcher were not selected for the qualitative phase of the research. Through this, the researcher was able to avoid being placed in a difficult position and prevented concerns around demand characteristics and interviewer bias. It was also considered that some participants who were applying for a 2020 entry may be considering the University of East London. Therefore, the researcher needed to assure participants that their responses during the interview would remain anonymous, confidential and only be used for the research.

3.15 Chapter Summary

Chapter three explored the philosophical position and associated methodologies within the research. The researcher identified that a critical realist approach would be adopted and selected research methods that appear to sit in line with the assumptions of the position. The chapter also presented the MM research design utilised in the present research and provided information about the sample, and the means by which they were selected. The purpose of the research, research design and data analysis were outlined along with their associated strengths and limitations. Ethical considerations for the research were also outlined.

In the next chapter, the quantitative and qualitative findings of this research will be presented and analysed. Descriptive statistics from quantitative data are presented to outline the demographics of the participants and their emotional experiences of the application process. Following this, inferential statistics are used to respond to the research hypothesis. Finally, the findings from each NI is outlined and presented in the form of stories.

4 Chapter 4 – Results and Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter is broken into two sections. Firstly, the analysis and findings from the quantitative phase of the current research will be presented. Questionnaire responses have first been analysed using descriptive statistics. They outline participants' demographic information, their summative experiences of the application process and provide a general understanding of participants' experiences of the process to answer RQ 1. Following this, analysis of the second half of the questionnaire provides a more detailed insight into the data by looking at the participants' experiences of the process. This section of the data provides information that is related to the research hypothesis and is outlined in a section titled - Experienced Experiences of Aspirants.

In the second section of the chapter the qualitative findings from the six narratives are reported in the form of their re-storied narratives. The key ideas relating to sources of help, hindrance and pleasant and unpleasant experience are what form the basis of these stories. Following the stories, further analysis of the narratives will be outlined. The section will look at informants' use of structure, voice and reflection. Finally, self-theory will be presented here. Negatively framed narratives (NFNs) and positively framed narratives (PFNs) trajectories will be clustered respectively to serve as a summary of the findings.

The findings in both sections of the chapter are presented with interpretative analysis and without theoretical discussions or reference to the relevant literature. These components will be discussed in the final chapter.

4.2 Sample Size and Demographics

In total, N =124 individuals started the questionnaire. However, due to incomplete data or not meeting the inclusion criteria, N =110 individuals' responses were included in the analysis for the first half of the questionnaire (Q1-Q4). The number of participants who completed the first half of the questionnaire reflects an 89% response rate. The following frequency tables reflect the demographics within the sample.

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Table 4.1

Sex distribution within the sample

Sex	Frequency (N)	Percent
Male	11	10
Female	99	90
Total	110	100

Within the sample, the mode gender was female. Age was also looked at within the sample. Table 4.2 provides a breakdown.

Table 4.2

Age distribution within sample

Age	Frequency (N)	Percent
21-25	18	16.4
26-30	51	46.4
31-35	15	13.6
36-40	11	10
41-45	11	10
46-50	3	2.7
50+	1	0.9
Total	110	100

Within the sample, the mode age range was 26-30. Ethnicity was also looked at within the sample. Table 4.3 provides the sample's ethnicity breakdown.

Table 4.3

Ethnicity distribution within the sample

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
White British	84	76.4
White other	10	9.1
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	6	5.5
Asian/ Asian British	3	2.7
Black African/Caribbean/ Black British	6	5.5
Arab	1	0.9
Total	110	100

Within the sample, the mode ethnicity was white British and overall, 85.6% of the sample were white or white British.

For the second half of the questionnaire, the response rate declined. This occurred because of the number of incomplete questionnaires. Of the 124 people who started the questionnaire, 84 completed both parts of the survey and were therefore considered in the analysis. This resulted in a 68% response rate. Of the 84 participants:

- N =41 were in the 26-30 age range,
- N =75 were females and N = 9 male; and
- 89.4% were white or white British.

The decision to do some analysis with the N =124 sample to explore sources of support and then further analysis with the N =84 to explore participants experiences was made because a completed data set for the second half of the questionnaire would be needed to make generalisations about how the experiences experienced at each stage of the application were experienced. Doing this did not jeopardise the data analysis.

4.3 Research Question for the Quantitative Phase Sources of Support

The quantitative data were collected in part to explore the research question below.

RQ 1: *Which sources did aspirants report as being most supportive throughout the application process?*

Responses relating to the sources that participants explored have been summarised in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4
Utilised Sources of Support

Explored Sources	Frequency
AEP website	107
University Websites	90
University Open Days	71
Direct Contact with EPs	76
Online Forums	75
TEPs	57
LA Open Days	22
Conversion Course	20
Course Staff	19

Table 4.4 shows the frequencies by which different sources were explored. The AEP website was the most frequently reported source for information during the application process and was utilised by 97.2% of participants. This was closely followed by the university websites (81.8%). Although these were the most utilised sources for information, they were not ranked as the most useful. Table 4.5 shows a matrix table of rankings for the top 3 sources according to participants.

Table 4.5

Ranking of Used Sources

Rank	Usefulness of Source (n)		
1 st	EPs (28)	AEP (21)	TEPs (20)
2 nd	EPs (26)	AEP (23)	University Open Days (15)
3 rd	University Open Days (27)	University Websites (20)	AEP (18)

Table 4.5 demonstrates that of the nine sources explored, direct contact with EPs was ranked to be most useful for aspirants. 38% of participants reported being an AP and therefore seemingly had direct contact with Psychologists before becoming a TEP. This suggests that although it was not the source that aspirants accessed most, it was the most valuable during the application process.

4.4 Aspirants Experiences of the Application Process

Questionnaire responses relating to aspirants' experiences of preparing to apply and their overall experiences of the application process are outlined in this section.

4.4.1 Experiences of preparing to apply.

At the end of part one of the questionnaire, participants were asked to score their experiences of preparing to apply for training on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from strongly disagree (represented by one), to strongly agree (represented by five) to indicate how stressful, challenging, enjoyable, manageable and insightful the overall process was. Given the Likert style of questioning, participants' responses were recorded as measures of central tendency in Table 4.6. Although a question was asked about enjoyment associated with the process at this stage of the questionnaire, it was related to a generalised experience rather than the preparation phase and has as such been summarised in section 4.5.

Table 4.6

Participants' Experience of Preparing to Apply for the ProfDoc

Experience	Stressful	Challenging	Manageable	New Insight
Mean (S.D)	3.87 (1.04)	3.77 (0.99)	3.88 (0.83)	3.85 (1.01)

The results shown in Table 4.6 suggests the participants agreed that preparing for the application process was stressful and challenging. However, they also described it as manageable and something which provided new insight.

To gain an idea of the proportion of the sample who reported these views, the points on the Likert scale were categorised to group the strongly agree and agree responses together. This created an 'overall agree' category. The same was done to group the strongly disagree and disagree categories to create a new category called 'overall disagree'. These categories are reported below and were selected based on the modal values.

- Stressful – The modal response for this experience was 'agree'; therefore, the overall Likert 'agree' percentage has been reported. 73.6% (n =81) participants reported the application experience as being stressful overall.
- Challenging – Participants' most common response on this question was 'agree'. 74.5% (n =82) of participants agreed that the process of applying for the ProfDoc was challenging.
- Manageable – When asked to what extent they agreed that the application process was manageable, most participants selected 'agree' as their response. When the 'agree' and 'strongly agree' categories on the scale were combined, 79.1% (n =87) of the sample agreed that the experience of applying was manageable.
- New Insight – The most common response from participants when asked to what extent they experienced the process of applying as providing new insight, fell in the 'agree' category. 74.6% (n =82) of participants reflected this experience.

4.5 Generalised Experiences of The Application Process

Participants were also asked about their overall experience of the application process. They were asked to rank their experience on Likert scales relating to their

level of enjoyment and to what extent it was experienced as a positive experience. Participants reported a mean score of 2.68 (S.D =1.07) suggesting that there was somewhat of a neutral experience when the enjoyability of the application process was reflected upon. In addition, a mean of 3.85 (S.D =1.01) as reported when ranking the positivity of the experience. This figure suggests that there was somewhat of a positive experience held by the participants.

To make inferences, further data from the second part of the questionnaire was analysed using repeated measures ANOVA to enable inferences to be made beyond the descriptive analysis above.

4.6 Inferential Statistical Analysis

To analyse participants' experiences across the application, process a two-way repeated measures ANOVA was carried out. The independent variables or condition factor in the analysis was time. This was broken down into before (the preparation phase of the process up until when the application opened); during (the phase of completing the application form inclusive of references and personal statement) and after (following the submission of the application and including notification from universities about interviews and offers). The dependent variable in the analysis arose from the transformation of the 14 experiences found in Fisher's (2012) transitional curve into a positive experience and a negative experience category. These categories were made so participants' scores could be analysed. The following experiences were categorised into the positive experiences group: happiness, gradual acceptance and moving forward. The remaining experiences: group: anxiety, fear, anger towards others, anger towards self, threat, vulnerability, guilt, depression, hostility, disillusionment, complacency and denial; were categorised into the negative experiences.

4.6.1 Assumptions of Repeated Measures ANOVA.

Tests for normality and homogeneity of variance were carried out on the data across the time points. Repeated measures ANOVAs are susceptible to violating the assumption of sphericity i.e. where variance of differences between all combinations of related groups are equal. When sphericity is violated the differences between all related groups are not equal, this suggests that the F-ratios could be inflated and not

valid. Therefore, for this research a Mauchly's Test of Sphericity was completed. For time and time and experience the following was found:

- Time: $\chi^2 (2) = 12.43, P = .002$
- Time and Experience: $\chi^2 (2) = 35.91, p < .01$

The Mauchly's test was significant, therefore it was concluded there were significant differences between the variance of differences: the condition of sphericity was not met, and the associated *F*-ratios could not be trusted. In addition, the data was not at an interval level, so the Greenhouse-Geiser adjustment was observed.

The level of significance for the analysis was set at $p < .05$ as this is considered an acceptable threshold in psychological research to infer that the results obtained are not down to chance. Along with this statistic, effect size will be reported. The reported effect size for a repeated measures ANOVA is partial eta squared (η^2). This statistic can be interpreted in the following way: .01 represents a small effect size; .09 is a medium effect size and .25 represents a large effect size. The purpose of this analysis is to explore whether the experimental hypothesis is supported.

4.6.2 Research hypothesis.

A-TEPs would experience a stronger intensity of negative experiences with key transition points in the application process when applying for the EP ProfDoc.

To test this hypothesis, a three by two, repeated measures ANOVA was completed. Table 4.7 provides a summary of the main effects and interaction effects found.

Table 4.7

Summary of two-way repeated measures ANOVA, main effects and interaction effects

Effect	F (df)	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2
Main Effect of Time	39.71 (1.76, 147.48)	.00*	.32
Main Effect of Experience	250.76 (1.00, 84.00)	.00*	.75
Time x Experience Interaction	5.36 (1.48, 124.34)	.01*	.06

Significant at <.05

The main effects yielded from the ANOVAs for time, experience and the interaction of time and experience were found to be significant. This means there was a significant difference between the experienced positive and negative experiences. It also meant that the overall experience experienced between time points between each phase of the application process was significantly different. Finally, the interaction between time and experience suggests that there was a statistically significant difference in experiences across the time points. To see where the differences lay, pairwise comparisons were completed.

4.6.3 Impact of time on aspirants' experiences of the application.

Over time, participants' experiences of experience, whether positive or negative increased throughout the process. Table 4.8 outlines the means of experience across time.

Table 4.8
Overall experienced experience over time

Time	Mean	Std Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Before	2.09	.05	2.00	2.19
During	2.14	.04	2.05	2.23
After	2.50	.05	2.40	2.59

Table 4.8 illustrates that there was a statistically significant difference in experiences (regardless of positive or negative). Therefore, because of the main effect of time being significant (as reported in Table 4.9), the difference of experience between times before and after and between times during and after, there was a statistically significant increase in level of experience as time passed reported by participants.

Table 4.9
Pairwise comparisons across time points

Time (i)	Time (j)	Mean Difference**	Std. error	Sig	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Before	During	-.05	.05	.83	-.16	.06
	After	-.40*	.06	.00	-.55	-.26
During	Before	.05	.05	.83	-.06	.16
	After	-.36*	.05	.00	-.47	-.25
After	Before	.40*	.06	.00	.26	.55
	During	.36*	.05	.00	.25	.47

* = Significant at <.05, ** (i-j)

4.6.4 Difference between participants' experience.

The difference between experience was also looked at via pairwise comparisons (See Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

Pairwise comparisons across experiences

Experience (i)	Experience (j)	Mean Difference (i-j)	Std. error	Sig	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Positive	Negative	.92*	.06	<.001	.81	1.04
Negative	Positive	-.92*	.06	<.001	- 1 .04	-.81

Significant at <.05

The above information illustrates that there was a statistically significant difference between positive and negative experience. Because of the statistical significance of the main effect of experience (as reported in table 4.6) the difference in mean between positive experience (M = 2.70, SEM \pm .05) and negative experience (M =1.78, SEM \pm .04) suggests that overall, participants experienced more positive than negative experiences throughout the application process.

4.6.5 Interaction between experience and time.

Due to the main effect found in the interaction between time and experience (as reported in table 4.7) data suggests that there may be some statistical significance between the differences in the means of positive experiences. Table 4.11 and figure 4.1 shows that when the AEP opened the application process, participants experienced a reduction in positive experience. Following this, a rise can be observed after they submitted the application. The main effects also suggest there was some statistical difference in negative experience. The means in table 4.11 and figure 4.1 suggest that negative experience continued to rise throughout the application process.

ASPIRANTS' APPLICATION EXPERIENCES

Table 4.11

Means for the interaction of time and experiences

Time	Experience	Mean	Std Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Before	Positive	2.65	.08	2.50	2.80
	Negative	1.53	.04	1.45	1.61
During	Positive	2.59	.06	2.46	2.71
	Negative	1.69	.05	1.60	1.79
After	Positive	2.87	.09	2.70	3.05
	Negative	2.12	.06	2.00	2.24

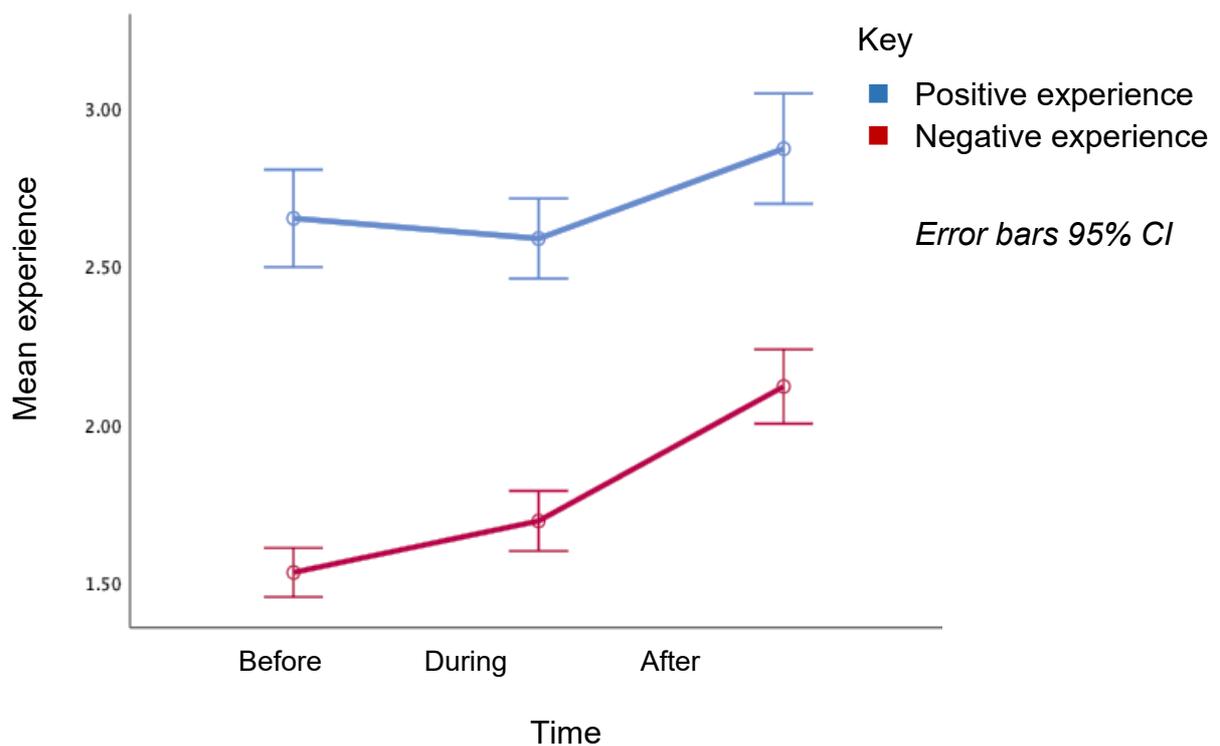


Figure 4.1

Estimated means for the interaction of time and experience

To see if the difference between the means was statistically significant, multiple T-tests were completed to explore the interaction of experience and time. Manual Bonferroni adjustments were made by the researcher to avoid Type 1 errors at the 5% level of significance. This was accomplished by calculating the number of tests

and dividing it into the alpha value. In this case three tests yielded an error rate of $.05/3 = .02$ ct2dp. The results of the inferential statistical analysis are now presented according to the research hypothesis.

The change in positive experience over time was explored using multiple t-tests.

- The T-tests suggested that the reduction in positive experience between time point one (before: $M = 2.65$, $SD = .71$) and time point two (during: $M = 2.59$, $SD = .59$) was not statistically significant, $t_{84} = .84$, $p = > .05/3$.
- The T-tests suggested that the increase in positive experience between time point two (during: $M = 2.59$, $SD = .59$) and time point three (after: $M = 2.87$, $SD = .81$) was statistically significant, $t_{84} = -3.19$, $p = < .001$.
- The T-tests suggested that the overall increase in positive experience between time point one (before: $M = 2.65$, $SD = .71$) and time point three (during: $M = 2.87$, $SD = .81$) was not statistically significant, $t_{84} = -1.86$, $p = > .05/3$.

The change in negative experience over time was also explored using multiple t-tests.

- The T-tests suggested that the initial increase in negative experience between time point one (before: $M = 1.53$, $SD = .36$) and time point two (during: $M = 1.69$, $SD = .44$) was statistically significant, $t_{84} = -4.37$, $p = < .001$.
- The T-tests suggested that the second increase in negative experience between time point two (during: $M = 1.69$, $SD = .44$) and time point three (after: $M = 2.12$, $SD = .55$) was statistically significant, $t_{84} = -7.71$, $p = < .001$.
- The T-tests suggested that the overall increase in negative experience between time point one (before: $M = 1.53$, $SD = .36$) and time point three (after: $M = 2.12$, $SD = .55$) was statistically significant, $t_{84} = -11.48$, $p = < .001$.

4.7 Summary of Findings for the Quantitative Phase

RSQ 1 sought to gain insight into where aspirants went to gain information during the application process. Information gathered from the questionnaire suggested that aspirants explored a range of sources to support them during the application process. Although the AEP was the most utilised source, direct contact with EPs was deemed the most useful source for aspirants throughout the application process.

Information gained from the analysis of the first half of the questionnaire where descriptive statistics were used provided initial insight to participants' experiences of the application process. They highlighted a less negative trend when compared to what has been found in the related literature. In all areas which explored participants' experiences of preparing to apply, more than 70% reported encountering stress and facing challenges. However, a similar proportion also gained new insight and found it manageable. The general process of labelling the experience of the ProfDoc application as one thing or another appeared insufficient. This was supported when participants' responses about the overall process were described. Trends from participants' responses when the process was perceived as a whole indicated that their experiences were neither positive or negative, enjoyable nor unenjoyable. This hovering in the middle ground indicated that the experience may be more complex or that hindsight has enabled participants to rationalise their experience.

Analysis of the second half of the questionnaire using inferential statistics to explore the research hypothesis led the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. Although a difference was observed in the experience experienced by participants, over time, participants self-reported experiencing a higher level of positive experiences when compared to negative experiences throughout the application process. More positive experience (acceptance, moving forward and happiness) was reported overall. However, the only statistically significant increase in positive experience was found between the during-phase (completing the application form, applying for and gaining references and submitting the application form) and the after-phase of the application process (during the interview period and between the offer release date and offer acceptance deadline). At all points of the application process, there was statistical significance found in the increase of negative experience.

4.8 Research Question for The Qualitative Phase

The qualitative data were collected to answer the following exploratory research question:

RQ 2: What are A-TEPs' reported experiences of the application process?

4.9 Qualitative Participant Information

The informants included in the qualitative phase were selected as they represented those who reported the most pleasant or unpleasant experiences of the ProfDoc application process. These groups were selected from the wider sample as it was felt their insight would help the researcher understand elements which contribute to aspirants having a more pleasant or unpleasant experience.

Pseudonyms were created for each participant. They were generated by acknowledging informants' reported sex and the first initial of their names. The pseudonyms and the perceived overall experience from the data are presented in Table 4.12 along with their basic demographic information.

Table 4.12

Qualitative Phase -Informant Details

Narrative type	Informant pseudonym	Sex	Age range (years)
PFN	Malachi	M	26-30
	Millia	F	26-30
	Sally	F	31-35
NFN	Robyn	F	26-30
	Analie	F	36-40
	Sasha	F	26-30

Throughout the narratives, some informants make reference to particular universities. For the sake of anonymity, institutions have been labelled using pseudonyms e.g. University A. These labels have been attributed to show the diversity between them. In total six universities were referred to.

4.10 Qualitative Data Analysis

Data were analysed using NA as outlined in chapter three – section 3.9.2. The narratives were re-storied by the researcher in line with informants' indexical and non-indexical features. Where possible, they were also ordered against the AEP's timeline. The researcher checked the validity of participants' re-storied narratives by

member checking one third of them with the respective informant. Aside from grammatical errors, stories were not amended by participants.

4.11 Positively Framed Narratives

In this section the PFNs are presented. They have been ordered in line with participant's ranking. Malachi ranked most positive followed by Millia and then Sally.

4.11.1 Malachi's story.

Malachi's journey was nerve-racking. He was convinced his story was similar to others'. Malachi was a trained teacher ... for the past 10 years but was at the point where it was rote. He would go in and use materials that he'd made or adapted over four years ago. It had become depressing and he was so bored...One day, when Malachi's students had their heads down doing a test, he took out his phone and googled careers in education -EP came up. It was the first time he'd heard about the role; it had really caught his attention. Malachi thought to himself, "Oh okay, that's a sexy title".

4.11.1.1 *Preparing to apply.*

On the first day of the one-year conversion course at UEL Malachi was nervous... 90% of the room planned to apply for a doctoral programme in psychology... As Malachi looked around the room, he noticed he was not only one of the few males but also one of the only black males. ... That evening, Malachi walked away feeling he had something unique to offer. He thought to himself " Where there's a want, there's a need".

4.11.1.2 *Applying for the first time.*

Malachi graduated in October and applied that November. He didn't get a single interview. This really put things into perspective for Malachi. He had over-relied on his experiences and the fact he would be a minority to get him through and made no reference to what an EP actually does.

4.11.1.3 *Second round of prep.*

Malachi changed jobs... and went to work in Local Authority Social care as part of their Virtual School. There, he got to rub shoulders with the EPs and most

importantly to Malachi, he was able to find out about the work they did and what and how they made the decisions they did. These experiences enabled Malachi to re-do his application and specifically talk about what he could contribute to the profession, demonstrate his understanding of the EP role and reflect on how he had experiences which were parallel.

4.11.1.4 *One interview.*

After two rejections, a response from University A filled Malachi with disbelief. Had they made a mistake and invited him? ...Getting this far was a God send and he was not going to waste it. For the whole month before the interview, it was go time! The birth of his daughter although a blessing, splitting the time between preparing for interview and helping his partner out was hell.

4.11.1.5 *The Interview process.*

University A held an information day for all their applicants. Malachi estimated there were over 300 people present. It stood out to him how many other black men were in the room. "S**t" thought Malachi – "there goes my trump card". The information about the university... made Malachi's eyes widen. "Oh my God – please let's just get on with it!" Unfortunately, his interview wouldn't be until the next day. That evening Malachi contacted someone he'd made general chit chat with earlier on as she'd had her interview that day. He asked how it had gone. She shared it wasn't too bad and broke down what the session would look like. Not knowing there was a written component, Malachi started brainstorming some ideas of topics and answers. The following day during the written component all candidates were asked to write about how children and their families can be actively involved in the work of EPs. "Lo and behold!" thought Malachi to himself. This was what he had prepared for and was the most recent thing he'd looked at. Divine intervention had seen him through.

After the written task came the group task. Malachi became aware of the 12-15 other bodies fighting for and stealing the spotlight... So, every time Malachi spoke, he tried to bring it back to the question and offer opportunities to those who didn't speak much.

Finally, was the interview. Malachi was nervous. To keep himself calm he recited his mantra – “speed and weight” repeatedly, looked at a picture of his daughter and listening to his wife’s favourite song from the Moana soundtrack helped him regulate his experiences as he waited to be called in. By the time he was called in, Malachi could access his memories clearly, hear the questions they were asking and gave clear and relevant examples. When Malachi walked out, he felt so proud of himself!

4.11.1.6 Results day.

Some time passed and Malachi received an email. He could feel his heart pounding... His heart sank when he saw he was on the reserve list. He was disappointed. But then he thought to himself “wait. This doesn’t mean I’ve been rejected. It means I still have a chance! Malachi did all he could to hold it together throughout the two-week acceptance period. On the 14th day Malachi received an email from the course administrator. It read “I’m really sorry, but – No. You didn’t get shortlisted but if you want, you can take the self-funded route... “okay I’ll take that” he thought, not realising it would cost him ‘14-grand’!

4.11.1.7 Can I afford this?

Malachi googled how to fund a PhD and was pleasantly surprised to find there were options available which would enable him to pay for his course fees. But when he did the calculations, it meant he’d only have £70-£150 per month to live off... Malachi and his wife investigated a range of ways to get money. He looked at University A’s financial assistance, explored professional charities, even the dole. He considered a job as an Amazon delivery driver and they even considered using their spare room for fostering... One day Malachi decided to share his plight with his mum. “How much do you need?” she asked. Malachi hesitantly replied “errrr – just shy of 14 and half thou”. “Okay” she said. “I’ll lend it to you”. Malachi was astounded.

4.11.1.8 Summary and reflection.

The journey had been such a rollercoaster. But Malachi is now studying to do what he wants. Eventually, he will tell his daughter this tale of how her dad became a doctor. He will remind her it wasn’t an easy journey and as a family they do not have silver spoons in their mouths. He had to work hard, just like his mum did before him and her mum before her.

4.11.2 Millia's story.

Millia wanted to be an EP for as long as she could remember and made two attempts at the application. Each application was very up and down and stop-starting for her. There was a lot of focus on very small yet very significant points. The active gaps within each stage of the process built up a lot of worry, anxiety and trepidation, then it would die down and a waiting period would begin before it stirred up all over again. And then again, they die down.

4.11.2.1 *Millia's experience before applying.*

When Millia was completing her initial degree, the requirements to be an EP still involved compulsory teaching experience and the Masters training. However, the year she started her PGCE, they took this away. Regardless of this, Millia continued to pursue her career as a teacher as she firmly believed if she was going to advise or support schools, she would need to live the experience herself first to really provide sound advice... After teaching for some years, Millia became unsure if being an EP was the right profession for her. She explored careers such as counselling and psychotherapy.... But it was far too intense, too hard to get into and very draining. Plus, it would have been a shame for her to disregard the educational experience she'd acquired.

4.11.2.2 *The first round of applications.*

Millia wrote her initial application. And her feelings died down once she submitted it. Whilst waiting to find out whether or not she'd been invited to interview feelings ebbed and flowed at points as she tried to get on with her daily life. Until someone asked "ooo have you heard back yet" or time was getting closer to a deadline therefore making the feelings creep back up again.

4.11.2.3 *Interview releases.*

Millia felt relieved to get one interview and as they neared closer, she had a rough idea about what to expect. Once she'd completed it there was nothing she could do. Instead, she felt a sense of foreboding as she waited to hear the outcome. Millia had no idea what she'd do if she didn't get on. Offers were released via email. On this date Millia was teaching and from work had to go to a course. "What a pain" she thought. All the email said was "There's been a change to your application"... With

bated breath, she logged in and the email said – “pending”. How anticlimactic!” Millia was frustrated. She really needed a definitive answer.

...Those around her kept asking and having to eventually tell those closest to her she didn't get on this time was hard. Although she'd promised herself, she wouldn't tell lots of people she was applying – this was easier in theory rather than practice.

4.11.2.4 *Interviewing a second time, the following year.*

... She took the interviews in her stride... Having gone through this once before there was no fear of the unknown. When offers were released this time Millia was caught up in meetings all day and didn't have time to think about it. It was definitely better not having to clock watch the whole time... This time she'd been offered a place. But was a reserve. Millia chuckled to herself in disbelief. And the countdown began again!

This time Millia had a stronger contingency plan. She felt a lot more prepared... and knew it wasn't actually going to be the end of the world if she didn't get on.

As they started updating the waiting list, Millia saw she was this number, then that number. Until she eventually moved from the top of the reserve list to the actual list. She was in! “What a massive sense of relief”...As she walked around with her phone in disbelief, panic began to trickle in. What happened if her leg touched it or something? What if she accidentally clicked decline and rejected the offer!

4.11.2.5 *The forum- a source of hindrance.*

... for Millia it was a hotbed of anxiety and she decided to steer clear of them – they only exacerbated things.

4.11.2.6 *Sources of support.*

Across each year Millia was grateful for her family, friends and husband being in her life. No matter how things went, they were always thinking of the best side of her and were never disappointed in her– even when she was a bit more doubtful... They shared in her highs and lows and shared in her disappointment. For Millia it was nice to always have them rooting for her.

4.11.2.7 Summary and reflection.

Overall Millia preferred having people who weren't going through the application process alongside her. The submission points where she submitted the application or presented herself for interview provided pressure points which died away a little bit but kept her in a holding pattern because she was not actively doing anything. Having the chance to exhibit a little bit more control where she could flourish or fail raised the trepidation because it could mean she was leaving the path or carrying on with it was hard. However, having those she knew who all wanted positive things for her made the difference.

4.11.3 Sally's story.

Sally applied three times to get onto the ProfDoc. The journey was stressful for her and across the three attempts she experienced more pleasant feelings, but the intensity of stress was definitely the same. However, these significant feelings were quickly superseded by doing the interview and then actually starting the course. On her third attempt Sally was confident she had all the experience and had made good contacts in her Assistant EP role to know she would be a good EP. "Not only was I an Assistant EP! But I've also worked REALLY hard!" Sally thought to herself.

4.11.3.1 The third attempt.

When the time came and the application process was open, Sally was excited. "This is good. Now I can apply." Bearing in mind some courses preferred some things when compared to others, she thought about the institutions she wanted to apply to and the differences between them so she could tailor her personal statement accordingly. "This will increase my chances," she thought. It was tricky to narrow them down, but in her personal statement she drew on her experience and reflected on why she wanted to be an EP. She picked the BEST examples she could!

4.11.3.2 The application form.

Sally had to think about who to choose as references. She got in touch with her tutor from her masters. It had been two years since she completed that course. Sally was excited to network with her tutor as she could share what she had been up to. The tutor was happy to supply a reference. This part was much better than writing the application. As the deadline for references approached, Sally's tutor was yet to

supply a reference. Sally began to get really stressed. The day of the deadline arrived. And Sally's tutor supplied the reference just in time. With excitement and mixed feelings, Sally clicked the submit button. It was in. Everything was out of her hands. Interview invitations came around, and Sally got an interview with University B, her number one choice!

4.11.3.3 Summary and reflection.

Overall, Sally knew she had the skills and experience to offer the profession and she was happy to find a career she loved and was passionate about. Although she experienced a mixed bag of feelings such as imposter syndrome, stress and doubt, she made the contacts she needed, believed after having the previous two setbacks she was good enough and remained excited about the possible opportunities throughout her application process.

4.12 Negatively Framed Narratives

In this section the NFNs are presented. They have been ordered in line with participants' ranking. Robyn ranked most negative followed by Analie and then Sasha.

4.12.1 Robyn's story.

Robyn applied twice for the doctorate. The first-time, she interviewed it was only at University C. Unfortunately, Robyn was unsuccessful, and this left her feeling despondent. She knew she'd worked hard on her application!

4.12.1.1 Build up to attempt number two.

After her first submission Robyn reflected perhaps it was all for the best, she walked away from it calmly. As the year between the first and second try developed, the thought of the applications was bubbling at the back of Robyn's mind. The closer they got the more heightened her thoughts became and the more her experiences ramped up...

4.12.1.2 Writing the applications.

In spite of these pressures this time seemed slightly easier as she had written an application before. Keeping these rational thoughts at the forefront of her mind was

hard... "I've only got one opportunity to showcase my skills but how will I justify why they should pick me for an interview?" ... Robyn remembered a lot of universities had specifications as guidance to write an application against. This gave her some idea about what she should include. Each uni wanted something different. How would she tailor what she included and demonstrate her skills with such a word restriction for those English unis?" questioned Robyn. It was so hard and stressful she wondered if she'd do enough to get it spot on? And even if she did, could she rely on her referees to submit their supporting statements on time? It was hard placing so much trust in other people. At least University C wasn't as strict. Exhaled Robyn.

4.12.1.3 *Hindrances.*

Robyn REALLY wanted this! ... trying to balance the whole thing with working fulltime and completing a masters made it hard for Robyn to give her application the attention it really needed. She put increasing levels of pressure on herself as it was her second attempt.

4.12.1.4 *Systems of support.*

Robyn spent a lot of time battling with her thoughts and feelings, but during that second attempt, she wasn't alone. One of her very good friends was helpful during the process. Every time she edited her application her friend took a look at it and told her what she thought... She also made contact with a first year TEP at University C who was willing to send a copy of her successful application from the previous year.

Robyn found support in the Facebook group. She found it a reassuring place that provided her with knowledge... It also provided a weird support network because everyone was competing against each other but were also going through the same sort of emotions and understood how stressful it all was.

4.12.1.5 *It's been submitted!*

Robyn was relieved. The Application had been worked and re-worked and was done and gone. After sending it, she flitted between thoughts of acceptance... and then would enter sudden moments of panic where she was concerned if she'd tweaked it enough or added the right things.

Robyn decided the hardest thing to achieve was to be selected for an interview. If she could get an interview, the odds of her getting on a course would be a lot better.

4.12.1.6 *I got one!*

Up until this point, Robyn had experienced the steps of the process before. She'd written an application and done the bits of waiting before, during and after. But she'd never had an interview with a course provider. So, she'd never prepared for one. She wondered, how on earth was she going to this?

When the interview day came around, Robyn was quite nervous and wanted to show off the best of her abilities. She also looked forward to meeting different people who had lots of different experiences. It was her time to show off what she'd learnt but learn from other people as well.

4.12.1.7 *Summary and reflection.*

Overall, it was a tough process that was filled with consistent stress. The pinch points were where the stress was highlighted for her. Although it took her more than one try, she acknowledged if this is what she wanted, she would have to pick herself up and brush herself off. It was stressful and pressured because it was so important to her and she placed a lot of value on getting onto the course and was passionate about joining the profession. It's not something you put yourself through unless you really want.

4.12.2 Analie's story.

Analie's journey as an A-TEP was stressful and anxiety provoking. The level of competition and her lack of experience in England filled her with uncertainty. Unlike others, Analie started her journey towards the ProfDoc as a practising EP. Analie moved to the UK the summer before she applied and only had a few months to prepare her application. Analie's main goal was to get a place with a bursary. However, she was determined, and finances would not hamper her. With the support of her partner, she would fund the training - if necessary. She really, really wanted this; it was the reason she moved.

4.12.2.1 *Preparing to apply.*

It was very difficult and Analie had a lot to learn! With only three and a half months to do this Analie struggled with the cultural differences. She found herself asking the few people she knew “how do I do things. What do I put in a CV? How should I structure it? How do I dress for an interview?” Things were so different where she’d come from. As an EU applicant, Analie also had to prove her English was good enough. She attended an English course to prepare for the English exam she had to take. Thinking about getting the grades ... stirred up a lot of anxiety. ...If she couldn’t do this, she wouldn’t be able to apply at all!

Analie finally managed to get the grade she needed and was relieved. She allowed herself a couple of days of happiness - everything seemed possible! “Maybe I can do this,” she thought. So, she began working on her application. Immediately the doubt crept back in. “No, I can’t do it!” She panicked. She had never done a personal statement in her WHOLE LIFE! let alone in another language... There was no information online about how to do these things. The AEP and university websites provided broad instructions but no advice or information. Although feeling helpless, Analie accepted this was fair.

Analie was aware she didn’t know anyone in the profession... she sent random emails to associations and private EPs... She couldn’t understand how she could have her degree, have BPS accreditation, her title be recognised, be qualified in her own country and have relevant experience, but still not be getting anywhere. “This is so frustrating”... in the end Analie managed to get some volunteering experience in a special school and nursery setting.

4.12.2.2 *Sources of support during the application.*

... She was on her own. Analie’s sister in law, who worked in marketing, helped structure her CV a bit by telling her how things were done in England and supporting her with her language grammar and proofreading... Analie was stressed and frustrated. She wanted to give her best and make sure her experiences were captured, and her motivation shone through. “If only I could have some help, I would have a fair chance”... By the time she’d completed the application Analie was convinced her attempt was rubbish and was never going to be good enough.

After Analie submitted, the waiting came. When she got an invitation to interview, her hope was reignited, and she thought “oh maybe this is possible after all” her partner also cheered her on with “I knew – I knew it. I had no doubts”. Analie started to prepare and quickly went back to being very stressed and insecure.

4.12.2.3 *Preparing for interview.*

Analie's conscious incompetence once again drove her to act. To prepare for interview she gained permission to put a message on her local university's noticeboard. It stated: “I'm a foreigner aspiring psychologist and I would like to find a postgraduate student to have some conversations around psychological topics to improve my technical English”. Analie felt lucky when a very nice guy replied and afforded her the opportunity to practise... Although she still felt alone in this, Analie was grateful and felt supported.

4.12.2.4 *The interview.*

The interviews were tough! But from the moment she met the interview panel, they made her feel calmer... They came across as down to earth. For the first time in the process, Analie felt like a human being rather than an application number. She felt she was finally worth some contact and reassurance. This helped.

Analie was nervous... Analie tried to drink some water, but her hand was shaking too much – she couldn't even reach her mouth. When the interview commenced, Analie found a particular question unclear. She felt the language used was somewhat culturally biased. They asked, “Tell me how you have applied psychology?”. She didn't understand the question and did not know how to answer but gave it a go. She quickly understood her answer wasn't going anywhere. At this point, a member of the panel rephrased the question enough for her to understand but not so much to stop things being fair. Even with the adjustments, Analie was convinced she didn't get her response right.

Analie's written task was the last one... In her head, she just wanted to get up and leave. Analie thought to herself “I can't do it, I'm too tired. I'm overwhelmed. This is too much for me”. Being the determined person she is, she persevered with the

task... At the end of the day Analie knew she had not made it... It was so much that she struggled to find her way back to the train station.

4.12.2.5 *Post interview and offer releases.*

This period was less stressful because Analie didn't have to perform. There was nothing more she could do to change the outcome of the process. The wait from February to May was difficult and she held no expectations... She consoled herself by saying the voluntary work she was continuing with was still relevant in the pursuit of her path.

And then the results were released - Analie looked online and saw she hadn't made it. She felt defeated and like she had failed.

Sometime later, Analie received a call from a course director who shared that as an EU applicant she should have applied through a different route. Analie had been misled by the AEP. The course director went on to say Analie had done well, but they couldn't offer her a funded place because of her EU status. However, because they liked her, they could offer her a self-funded place.

4.12.2.6 *Summary and reflection.*

Overall, Analie didn't feel any pleasant experiences as she embarked on the application process. On an experiential side, there was excitement at the end but mostly she felt like she was not good enough and that the process was bigger than her. Although she put it down to her own insecurities and her low self-esteem, the whole thing brought the worst out in her. Not knowing what to expect, what to do or how to give her best left her feeling like she didn't have much control. Although she tried her best and was determined, it was simply down to her trying random things and hoping one of them would help.

4.12.3 *Sasha's Story.*

Sasha's journey was stressful. Her professional background varied. Since completing her undergraduate degree in psychology, she had done a bit of nursing

and mental health work with adolescents, adults and the elderly, had some experience in research and the 10 years prior to applying she had been teaching.

4.12.3.1 *Preparation for the first application.*

When Sasha started to explore the new career route, she discovered she had some friends who were EPs. They enabled her to get some shadowing experience. Even with this, she still felt she did not have a clear idea about the EP role... She just knew she really liked the idea of working with children who primarily had additional needs and bringing psychology and education together.

4.12.3.2 *The first application form.*

The first time Sasha applied, she submitted applications to three universities (D, E and F). After submitting them, Sasha felt a lull of relief. "All I can do is wait till January when I'll hear back. Either way, it's going to be okay". Sasha secured an interview at one of the universities she applied to and decided this was an exploratory round. She would just go along and do her best.

4.12.3.3 *The first interview.*

At interview Sasha was asked questions about when educational psychology came into being. "I don't have a clue!" she panicked. The woolliness in her head had proven to be a problem and she knew she was not getting a place. Luckily, she received helpful feedback which suggested she should get some more experience working one-to-one and a clearer understanding of the history of the profession.

4.12.3.4 *Second round prep.*

Sasha decided she needed more one-to-one work. Knowing this was not going to come about as a class teacher – She took a significant pay cut and left teaching. This was a risk for Sasha as she was a single mother, but it felt worth it. The pressure was on, the knock back had increased how much she wanted to be an EP!

Knowing she needed to do something different and having to find it whilst teaching ramped up the pressure for Sasha... Finally, she got a job... [which] involved one-to-one assessment with children and families and talking to teachers. Although relevant and enjoyable, it was only a one-year contract. Once Sasha got used to having less

money, she experienced a lull in her research role. She did more research around the EP profession and did shadowing in her spare time.

4.12.3.5 *Application number two.*

...The pressured situation Sasha found herself in became more intense and the panic and doubt set in. She wondered "if I don't get in this time, should I write it off?". Pushing this aside she applied to the same universities as they were closest to where she lived and with a family she could not afford to move. This time she noticed how small and very concise the application form was and as a waffler, wondered how she would fit it in. She really had to hone in and think about what mattered. Having a single application and writing generally for three different institutions was stressful!... On this occasion, Sasha decided to use University E's really specific criteria, which they give to everyone to guide her personal statement and then added a few little bits in for the other ones. This structure was helpful. She'd submitted. Sasha was stressed!

4.12.3.6 *Interview announcements.*

Sasha found out she got three interviews! All her friends and family knew what she had sacrificed and were delighted for her. They exclaimed things like "you're definitely going to get on". Understanding how competitive the process was, Sasha knew this was not statistically true. Failure was still a possibility! With this familial expectation and conversations at work about when her contract would end, Sasha felt an added layer of pressure.

4.12.3.7 *The interviews.*

A few days before Sarah's first interview at university F – her car broke down. Consequently, she had to get her mum to drive her up the night before and stay in a hotel. As if a precursor- the interview was awful! ... There were five people on the panel and each member was very cold! ... Sasha left feeling upset." I've got no chance!"...

Interviews at Universities D and E were three weeks later, and they were one day after another. University F was first. Because Sasha had interviewed there the year before, she noticed she was more relaxed than other attendees... Immediately after that interview, Sasha drove to City E where her next interview was, went to a hotel

and sorted out her presentation for the following 8:30am start. This was all too intense for Sasha and she was shattered.

4.12.3.8 Offer releases.

Pleasantly surprised, Sasha was offered places at University D and F. She was also third on the reserve list for University E. For pragmatic reasons University E, was Sasha's first choice... She wanted to know if she should hang on or accept one of her other offers. "Oh, it always moves quite a bit. Definitely hang on" reassured the admissions team. With this information, Sasha rejected University D as it was furthest from her. Sasha hung on and hung on for the week, hoping her place would shift on the reserve list. She constantly checked and did all she could to resist ringing up University E. Over the week, she moved just one place.

4.12.3.9 Summary and reflection.

Overall from the application going into when the offers were released on the horrendous website, Sasha's stress remained constant. The stress level subsided slightly once she knew she definitely had a place. But even with choices, that final week of waiting was stressful.

4.13 Overview of the Stories

Each participant utilised their own approach when narrating their experiences of the application process. Where Sasha, Millia, Analie and Malachi broke down each component of their experience in detail, Sally and Robyn applied a more summative approach. Regardless of this, all informants made reference to things and people who helped, hindered and acknowledged both pleasant and unpleasant encounters, thoughts or experiences.

4.13.1 Structure of the narratives.

Most informants used *Self-generating Schemas*, this is a technique which is associated with an informant getting a listener invested in their story and typical within narratives (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Sally and Robyn did not offer *Detailed Texture* or *Relevance Fixation*. Instead they set the context by talking about

the number of times they applied for training and highlighted salient events to them rather than providing an overview of their experience of the application process.

4.13.2 Detailed texture and relevance fixation.

Table 4.13 shows the indexical content from the other four informants' paralinguistic transcripts. The quotes show the *Detailed Texture* informants provided at the start of stories to provide context.

Table 4.13

Informants' Detailed Texture

Informant	Indexical quotes from transcripts
Malachi	I was an English teacher before and an EFL teacher for over 10 years both here in England and in Japan... I'm a qualified primary school teacher, but it got to the point where it was just rote . I was going in; I was using materials that were at least four years old
Millia	I wanted to be an EP for a ~really~ long time (p). So, I applied twice... did a psychology degree initially and knew I always wanted to work with children...
Analie	I had no previous experience of applying for anything in England really... I already knew that I wanted to be an EP when I started my undergraduate degree in psychology, In my own country. Then (p) after that, I started working in the field.
Sasha	...in the run up to my application, I'd been a teacher or teacher training for nearly 10 years. Before that I worked and did a bit of nursing and mental health, including with adolescents, but also with adults and elderly ...I've also done some research work

Note. Key: **bold** = stressed word, ~ =slow articulation, (p) = pause less than 3 seconds

It was assumed by the researcher that the above informants gave this detail to make their stories plausible (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

Following the indexical quotes, informants then positioned these statements with non-indexical statements in the form of *Relevance Fixation* to give insight into their position. Malachi's *Detailed Texture* sought to highlight boredom. Millia's framing of a long journey created a blurb to the incremental experiences of turbulence on her journey. Analie's was framed as an unusual journey as a non-English speaker and EU national. Sasha positioned her statement from a standpoint of strength to frame the diverse range of experiences she had before applying. The level of detail shared helped the researcher understand the desire for change (Malachi), passion (Millia), investment (Analie and Sasha) and fear (Analie) for each informant. It also heightened the researcher's investment in their later presented obstacles and triumph in their better outcomes.

These informants took the researcher's lack of knowledge about them into account and provided detail about time, place, motives, plans, abilities, points of orientations all of which represented their self-constructed abilities to be worthy TEPs. Informants continued to do this throughout their stories and even on occasion inquired if they were sharing too much (Analie, Malachi and Millia). Sally often asked if she had shared enough, however the researcher maintained she should share whatever felt relevant for her.

4.13.3 Closing of the Gestalt.

Complicating action via the *Closing of the Gestalt* was another structural feature utilised by five of the informants and supported the researcher in her re-storying of the narratives. The complicating action was presented in the opening part of the core of the story, following any introductions. It provided the context and plot that the researcher would get a resolution to. It is what gives a story its clear beginning, middle and end (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

Bar Sally, four informants included multiple examples of the 'Closing of the Gestalt'. These informants used it to show the multiple peaks and troughs at different stages of their experience and led the researcher to take each peak and trough as a

chapter. Each chapter (event in the application process) had its own introduction, climax and resolution. Sally's was present when she recalled her experience of requesting, waiting and receiving her reference. Malachi utilised this structural feature to highlight the journey to the peak being offered a self-funded place, the low when battling with how he would pay for training and then a newfound high when his mother offered him a loan. For Millia this was quite early in the process when the route to training changed from a masters to a ProfDoc and when she initially strayed from wanting to join the profession. For Analie, the dip in experience when she felt she failed, and then the newfound high when she was contacted by the course director following incorrect information from a source (the AEP) she thought would help. Sasha's was introduced when she almost got jobs as an assistant EP (high frequency of turbulence), when her car broke down (low), and when the wait list at her preferred university (E) only moved one space (tussle of highs and lows).

4.13.4 The use of voice in the narratives.

Some informants used multiple voices to help tell their stories. They often did this to share what their inner thoughts were, what supportive significant others said to spur them on or to highlight the sources of hindrance.

4.13.4.1 *The use of inner voice.*

Inner dialogue was used by some informants to share their reframes, rationalisation and self-motivation. Analie used it to reframe her thoughts by telling herself "maybe this is possible after all", whereas Malachi used it to share his mantra of "speed and weight". Robyn used it to psych herself up and told herself "ok, this is something you need to do now". Conversely, Sasha used her inner voice to demonstrate her own self-doubt when she could not answer the question about the EP role during the interview and when she questioned what she would do if she didn't get onto training following her second application.

4.13.4.2 *The voice of others.*

For Malachi his mother and his partner's external voices were introduced as supportive characters who encouraged his career change and provided financial support. Malachi also used an external voice to demonstrate how the Facebook

group was not always helpful where everyone was sharing how nervous they were after the interview. Analie used the voice of her sister in law and partner as they provided structural support with her personal statement or cheered her on throughout the process. Millia used voices however to demonstrate how those who know little about the process made naïve inquiries about how things were going e.g. “ooo have you heard anything yet?” or to show the support from her loved ones “I'm sure you do this; you do this anyway”.

4.13.5 Reflections from the narratives.

Phase four of the NI process induced reflective talk from all informants. Here two of the participants (Sasha and Analie) maintained the position that the process was broadly stressful and exhausting, in their summary. Whilst Analie went one step further by adding her reflections on the process didn't bring out “any positive kind of memory”. The other informants moved from the generic statement of the process being stressful overall to being described as including a mixed bag of feelings (Sally), having pressure points (Millia) or “pinch points” with “peaks and troughs” (Robyn) and a “rollercoaster” (Malachi), having highs and lows or being very up and down. Across the narratives each transition point brought about its own curve of experiences which was followed by a lull where informants could not effect change over the process, e.g. following the submission of the application form or after an interview.

Reflection also enabled evaluations to be made. Analie reflected the process was by and large fair. From the PFNs Malachi reflected God's timing was perfect, that the first time he was not ready and somewhat complacent with a level of unconscious incompetence. He also reflected his experience had inspired him to save and provide his daughter the same opportunities his mother afforded him. Millia reflected it was an experience “nothing can really prepare you for”, however she also learnt to be okay with not knowing, throughout the process. Sally reflected she learnt who she knew was just as important as what she knew.

All the stories ended with a clear resolution by summing up what they experienced. As these came after informants provided their summary and reflection of their experience, they were not considered for the narrative, nor were they analysed for

their indexical and non-indexical features. However, they were still recorded as part of the interview. Table 4.14 provides a summary of closing messages aspirants left for the AEP, universities and future aspirants.

Table 4.14

Areas for improvement in the application process and additional post interview reflections

Message to...	Reflection
AEP	<p>Make all aspirants aware of the financial aid opportunities open to self-funded applicants.</p> <p>Give applicants the opportunity to write three different statements so tailoring the form would not be necessary.</p>
Universities	<p>Put on more open days or co-ordinate open days to avoid clashes</p> <p>Provide more guidance about the application form e.g. marking criteria or supporting statement.</p> <p>Generate a list of suggested readings.</p> <p>Distance themselves from a "cold" interviewing style.</p>
Aspirants	<p>The application process is hard but worth it.</p> <p>The process is clearly working and appears to be a well-oiled machine.</p> <p>Life skills such as patience and synthesis whilst writing the personal statement will be acquired.</p>

4.13.6 Self-theory.

Relevance Fixation led to the generation of self-theory. Non-indexical segments from narratives saw informants justify their thoughts, feelings or actions which appeared related to their self-construct and helped them rationalise their experience and share their story with the researcher. The self-generated theories were either identified by the researcher or explicitly generated during reflection and meta-theorisation by participant's whilst meaning making from telling their story

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In the PFNs, both Sally and Millia considered themselves as being born to be EPs. Sally's connection with EPs made her feel privileged to have existing or have made personal relationships with EPs. For Sally, being a hard worker, having "a lot to offer the profession" and a "good enough" to apply for training with the belief she would be accepted by a course provider, supported her to rationalise applying three times and eventual success. In the final PFN, Millia adopted somewhat of an expert position; she chose not to apply for training and instead become a teacher first because she felt "if you're going to be advising or supporting schools and stuff you always have to live the experience yourself" – these experiences gave her a "natural" inclination to become an EP. For her the supportive nature of family and those you know presented as something she valued and was an essential component for getting through the process. Malachi's positioning of being a spiritual individual enabled him to reflect in action and consider there was no need for "greed" and adopt a proactive approach as he subscribed to the idea that faith without work is pointless.

Although ranked highest in the PFN group, Malachi like Analie delivered a strong personal construct relating to being a minority. Malachi's was grounded in him being a black. However, he saw this as his superpower. Contrastingly Analie's construct of being a foreigner and having English as a second language left her feeling alone, disadvantaged, possessing a lack of control, lack of "agency" and holding the view her journey was different from everyone else's.

In the NFNs Robyn reframed experience by attributing the hardships to being things her resilience and hard work helped her overcome. Although Sasha acknowledged she was privileged for having access to EPs, her personal construct of being a single mother was stronger. She made multiple references to taking the risk and taking a significant pay cut which positioned her journey as one which was not easy being a single mother. Analie's positioning of herself as a person who was already an EP raised her own conscious incompetence and disbelief about how hard gaining experience was. In spite of her self-acclaimed struggles she also positioned herself as determined. Finally, Analie made reference to her not being "good enough" with her language, and with her application. Also, she meta-theorised about not "hav[ing] a lot of self-esteem", therefore when the panel were "super lovely" she relished in the human contact.

4.14 Summary of Findings for the Qualitative Phase

This section began by providing a summary of the qualitative data analysis method. It then provided a detailed analysis of each individual re-storied PFNs and NFNs which outlined, at the very least, their most recent experiences of applying. This was followed by an overview of the stories where particular focus was paid to the structure, utilised voice, personal reflections and self-generated theories.

It was found that richer narratives were employed by two out of three informants who perceived themselves as having an unpleasant experience (Analie and Sasha) compared to one informant (Malachi) from the PFN group. Narratives were considered rich by the researcher when they contained specific and detailed reference to more than one stage of the process. They were often longer in duration and required minimal probing and questioning during Phase 2: Main narration of the elicitation (interviewing) process.

Most stories began with *Detailed Texture* to provide context and the richer narratives employed this throughout. The use of inner voice and the voice of others were employed to highlight sources of support and hindrance and *Closing of the Gestalt* was used to share the highs and lows in journeys. Reflection included possible areas which could be addressed by course providers and the AEP. It also sought to normalise what is encountered throughout the application process, by moving away from an overgeneralised summary - where the process was reported as stressful - to presenting a range of experience, thought and experience.

5 Chapter 5 – Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter will integrate the quantitative and qualitative findings from the previous chapter in relation to the research questions and hypothesis. The findings are discussed in line with the literature outlined in chapter two and will be linked with psychological theory and frameworks. Following this, the limitations of the research will be considered and will inform a discussion about potential areas for future research. The chapter will also outline the implications of the study with a specific focus on EP practice. Finally, the chapter concludes with the researcher's reflections about the research process.

5.2 Sources of Help and Hindrance

The present research identified sources of help and hindrance for A-TEPs. Further information gained from NIs and literature review helped explain what made these sources helpful or not. In this section, information from psychological and theoretical models will be used to explain why individuals sought support when working towards a goal.

5.2.1 The most frequently used sources.

The AEP website followed by university websites were the two most frequently accessed sources for information during the application process. This novel finding was expounded on by informants who highlighted that the AEP website was accessed for guidance about the application timelines, to learn about the entry requirements and for generic guidance about how to complete the application process. Although labelled generic and brief, it was deemed to be clear.

University websites were explored to gain a sense of their course ethos, for information about their open days and to access their application marking criteria. These helped aspirants to select which courses to apply to and helped them shape their personal statements and the wider application form. Reynolds et al. (2008) similarly reported aspirants search a university's website to critically consider how the providers' culture sits with their goals and interests. Whilst this remains true,

decisions about training providers were also found to be related to pragmatism such as location. Although most utilised, the AEP and university websites were not deemed to be the most useful.

5.2.2 The most useful sources.

Findings suggested direct contact with EPs was deemed to be most useful. It was observed that two of the three informants whose experiences were ranked as pleasant had direct contact with EPs and the final 'pleasant experience' aspirant had 10 years of active preparation towards the process. Additional information from informants provided elaboration about the benefit of contact with EPs. Learning about the role of EPs, understanding the history of the profession, and working directly with them generated the relationships and connections which enabled aspirants to feel confident in making their application, tailoring their application or answering questions at interview. Morris and Thomas (2006) who were APs reflected on the benefit of direct contact with a qualified psychologist. The opportunity to develop psychological skills and work with clients in a psychological way facilitated their ability to provide relevant and in-depth reflections in their application form. Malston and Logue (2008) further added that direct contact with a qualified psychologist also afforded the benefit of potentially having a supporting statement read and suggestions for alterations made.

The recruitment of sources of support can be explained by Schlossberg's (1981) Transitional Framework. The framework suggests transitions often require new patterns of behaviour. Part one in the framework is the 'Approaching Transition Phase'. Here an individual identifies their upcoming transition and embarks on the process of transition – this is synonymous with the applications' "before phase" and is located in informants' introduction to their story. Part two of the framework is the 'Taking Stock of Coping Resources' where aspirants outlined the push factors for change and the self-factors, social support and strategies they possess to get them through the transition. This was found in the sources of support individuals located. Part three of Transition Framework is the 'Taking Charge Phase' where an individual strengthens their resources. This is where individuals changed jobs, moved country, read more, attended open days and sought contact with EPs or university websites

to ensure they would be ready to embark on the transition (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006).

The significant value placed on direct contact with EPs was also seen in those who tried but could not access it. Informants shared ideas such as the following:

“...people who managed to have a job as an assistant might have an advantage in the sense that if you are inside the system you start to think as an EP, or least see where you're thinking should be heading towards. But that's the only way you can have an advantage“. These individuals felt disadvantaged at not being an AP or not having contact with EPs and some attributed their later success to direct support from EPs and TEP on later applications. This perception of being disadvantaged amongst the NFNs can be explained by the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, Turner, Austin, and Worchel, 1979). The theory states people categorise themselves and others to groups. Dividing the world into “them” and “us” can be important in providing a sense of social identity. This categorisation occurs as part of normal cognitive processes and can lead one to exaggerate the differences between groups and the similarities of things in the same group. The findings suggest informants unknowingly made themselves part of an ingroup whose identity was linked to limited access to EPs therefore they othered those who did have this access and therefore perceived them as having a potentially unfair advantage.

Although the AP role was perceived as having endless benefits, the present research highlighted the majority of those who got on to training held jobs which did not involve regular or direct work with an EP before they applied or got on to training. Morris and Thomas (2006) highlighted the limitations of being an AP, ideas which did not come out of the present research. The authors reflected that not all AP roles provided the breadth of experience needed to make a successful application. In their experience, they only worked with one individual and the role within itself, although helpful, may not have been sufficient to make a successful application.

5.2.3 Role of significant others: help and hindrance.

Information from the qualitative phase also provided insight into some important sources of support - those who provided emotional and social support throughout the

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process. Friends and family were credited for providing motivation and words of encouragement, verbal reframes, financial aid and logistical help such as a drive to interviews.

The virtual community was also acknowledged for providing logistical support when clashes for interviews arose. Questions about particular universities and how to complete aspects of the application form created an in-group. Here, all aspirants could identify and empathise with the peaks and troughs of thought and emotion.

As useful as the familial and virtual sources of support were, at times, they were also deemed by some to be unhelpful. Family and friends were identified as being naïvely positive and made statements such as "you've got the three interviews; you're bound to get in" throughout the process, often providing blanket statements which were aimed at being supportive but possibly reminded and exacerbated the competitive nature of the process. This sometimes left informants feeling frustrated and lonely. There were critical periods when the Facebook community was perceived as being less useful. Before the application process opened, until the submission of the application form and during the period of interview announcements, the Facebook community was deemed most helpful. However, when used as a space to reflect on interview experiences or when group members speculated about unpublished AEP timelines, some aspirants found this to create a 'hotbed of anxiety'. Malston and Logue (2008) reflected that having others alongside you who are going through the process can contribute to these anxious feelings as the shared awareness of the process makes the competition explicit

Brailsford (2010) who researched aspirants' motives to start doctoral study, found although the prospect of engaging in doctoral research was risky, engaging in desktop research on universities' websites and discussions with friends and other professionals mitigated some of the feelings of risk. These individuals also provided social support structures during the completion of the doctorate.

5.2.4 Summary of aspirants' perceived sources of help and hindrance.

Overall, participants appeared to find domains which afforded them an increase in psychological knowledge and confidence to apply psychology most supportive. Sources which provided adequate containment when working towards their goal i.e., getting on the ProfDoc were also identified.

The AEP was the most utilised source because it provided a general overview about the ProfDoc application process. University websites were used to learn about training providers' cultures; this is something Reynolds et al. (2008) also found. Direct contact with EPs was deemed most useful in the research. Those with PFNs highlighted the benefit of having access to EPs, as this helped them understand the EP role. However, those with NFNs identified that at some stage of their journey, they felt disadvantaged by not having direct access to one. Like Malston and Logue (2008) they only identified the benefits of the AP role. Tajfel, et al's (1979) theory of Social Identity provided further insight into why informants with NFNs reported this. Information from the quantitative phase however uncovered this role was not necessary or most commonly held by those who applied for the ProfDoc. Additionally, Morris and Thomas (2006) shed light on the limitations of the role. The research also provided additional insight about the unsung heroes of support found in friends and family and Brailsford's (2010) findings explained the benefits of these modes of support.

The research identified further differences amongst participants' identified sources of help and hindrance. Where some found the online forum supportive, others did not. Similarly, for some, family was a pleasant positive source of support but for others, their naïve inquiries were also somewhat of a hindrance.

5.3 Aspirants' Summative Experience of the Application Process

Another question the present research sought to answer was:

What were A-TEPs' reported experiences of the application process?

Before the section can proceed, it is important the journey towards the ProfDoc is constructed as a goal which individuals work towards (Binion, 2017; Clark, 2007; Grabowski & Miller, 2015; Guerin et al., 2015; Loxley & Seery, 2012). It involves the

balance of risk and reward, tests individuals' ability and requires them to perceive they must master this element in their life (Trimpop, 1994). Where academic risks are concerned, people tend to seek out challenging and risky situations (Trimpop, 1994). The risk within the context of this research is related to the possibility of not being accepted on to training due to the competitive nature of admission. In this section, informants' reports of encountering stress when engaging in this risk will be discussed in line with the findings, associated literature and psychological theory.

5.3.1 Experienced stress and challenge throughout the application process.

Within the narratives, stress and indications of challenge were presented as themes and used to introduce and summarise their overall application experience. Aspirants used a high level of emotive language and a range of adjectives e.g. nerve-racking, ominous, tricky, anticlimactic, to characterise their experience which mostly came together to indicate influencers of stress (See Appendix 18) for - word cloud of language used to describe experience). The APA defines stress as the physiological or psychological response to internal or external pressures. Stress involves changes which affect nearly every system of the body, and influences how people feel and behave (APA, 2020). All A-TEPs identified increased stress as deadlines approached. Additionally, a challenge is an obstacle which is assessed as an opportunity rather than a threat. A threat becomes a challenge when an individual concludes they have sufficient coping resources not only to overcome the stress associated with the obstacle but also to better their situation in a measurable way (APA, 2020).

Malston and Logue (2008) used The Diathesis Stress Model to explore these feelings. The model is a medicalised one which assumes individuals feel stress as a result of individual difference (APA, 2020). Instead, Frijda's (1988) Laws of Emotion will be used as they have been evaluated and identified as universal, necessary truths for emotional responses in situational contexts (Smedslund, 1992). They highlight that complex emotions require more cognitive and evaluative processing and apply to all individuals. Emotion is an entity which exists constantly but is readily brought to our consciousness when a change in its intensity or type occurs (Frijda, 1988). All individuals obey these laws of emotion in an automatic way and they are

experienced universally. The two laws which appear most relevant to the reports of aspirants are '*The Law of Concern*' and '*The Law of Change Habituation and Comparative Feeling*'.

The law of Concern expresses that emotions occur in response to events important to the individual's motives, goals and concerns. Frijda (1988) argued these emotions occur due to the interaction of situation meaning and concerns. Personal values, motives and concerns determine the target level of risk and therefore risk-taking behaviour. Within the context of the present research, aspirants felt the role of an EP was one where they could make a difference, fill a need, would be good at and had prepared sufficiently for, and although the chance of not getting onto training was relatively high, engaging in risk-taking behaviour (applying for the training) was deemed necessary, making the experience of stress in the face of this inevitable.

The Law of Change, Habituation and Comparative Feeling was the second of Frijda's laws used to understand the experience of stress within the present research. This law makes reference to the experiencing of emotions due to changes in external conditions and to the comparison of a frame of reference. The law argues a change in perceived riskiness can result in one experiencing a corresponding emotion. The research found stress was encountered throughout the process, however application of this law suggests the imposition of different deadlines set out by the AEP caused A-TEPs to experience a change in emotional state. It is assumed they assessed this change based on how they would have felt before the process began or compared it to a time where the process was not on their mind.

5.3.2 Synthesis of aspirant's summative experience.

Universally it would appear the application process induces stress and involves risk which is experienced as challenging. Taking a summative approach where the process is spoken about in generic terms gives way to a high frequency of negative language being used. As each deadline approaches and the pressure for aspirants to act increases, the perception of stress increases too. Although difficult year on year, A-TEPs make it through the process suggesting that for aspirants, this stress must serve a facilitative purpose even if only intermittently.

5.4 Difference in Experiences Throughout the Application Process

Within this research the journey was considered as a transition from aspiring applicant to A-TEP. To do this a change in relationships, routines, assumptions, roles and patterns of behaviour were required (Trimpop, 1994). The goal to get on to training required action within a specified time limit and required attention, effort toward goal-relevant activities and the recruitment of task-relevant knowledge and strategies (Locke & Latham, 2002).

This research's hypothesis posited A-TEPs would experience a stronger intensity of unpleasant experience with key transition points in the application process when applying for the ProfDoc.

Although the majority of the participants from the current research reported the overall application process as stressful, statistical analysis, which looked at the change in experience, identified a statistical significance in participants' higher level of pleasant experience when compared to unpleasant experience at all stages of the application process. This finding should be interpreted carefully. Whilst pleasant experience was found to be ranked higher with statistical significance, the psychological interpretation (as represented by the mean values) suggests they only occurred with slightly more intensity throughout the process when compared to unpleasant which fell more closely to the 'not at all' Likert levels. With this in mind, this section will discuss the relevance of both and utilise psychological theory to explore why participants reported the experience as being more pleasant than unpleasant.

5.4.1 A statistically higher level of pleasant experience overall.

At all points of the application process, there was statistical significance found in participants' pleasant experience. Atkinson and Birch (1978 as cited in Trimpop, 1994) developed a Dynamics of Action Model. It accounts for how achievement motivation develops over time towards more difficult goals, regardless of the probability of the result being held constant. In working towards a goal, an individual turns intention to action based on results from past reward experiences and equates

these with success. Conversely, inhibition is associated with past failure experiences and is associated with fear. As mastery increases, the degree of uncertainty and therefore, optimum levels of arousal decrease. To stop this from happening, individuals choose a more difficult task or more difficult items.

In the context of the present research, aspirants must meet all the entry requirements which include applying for and completing a degree to the level of a 2:1, some will go on to complete a masters and further study and they must apply for and obtain a range of relevant experience which can sometimes be hard to acquire (Malston & Logue, 2008; Morris & Thomas, 2006). This increased experience of reward from achieving these goals puts aspirants in a position to work towards a new one of the ProfDoc application. The theory argues that the combination of the desire for mastery and risk-seeking makes aspirants engage in the application process. This combination of risk-seeking and the prospect of further mastery (to help others, do what they had a natural inclination to) brings about cognitive, emotional and physiological rewards (Trimpop, 1994). Therefore, suggesting these rewards outweigh the unpleasant experience in a mode of deferred gratification as previous experiences have taught them enduring the challenge is worth it.

5.4.2 A psychologically higher level of pleasant experience overall.

In the present research, a myriad of experiences with troughs and peaks were referred to. To share their experience, participants were required to utilise their memories and share their recollections of reflection in action (Schön, 1983) at the time. With this in mind, the theory around episodic memory and emotion has been used to explain why unpleasant experience, although frequently reflected upon, was outweighed by the intensity of pleasant experience (Holland & Kensinger, 2013).

“Episodic memory is the ability to remember personally experienced events associated with a particular time and place” (APA, 2020). Emotion can interact with episodic memory as the emotional content of an experience influences how subjectively rich one’s memory for an event seems or how readily the details of the experience come to mind (Holland & Kensinger, 2013). To understand memory retrieval, encoding must first be addressed. Information can be encoded and become

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salient for recollection via two methods. Attention is either captured by emotionally relevant information (automatic) or individuals rehearse repeated lived emotional events (controlled). Emotions, whether encoded in an automatic or controlled fashion, are often described on a continuum that runs from pleasant to unpleasant and on a continuum of arousal. Where an emotional reaction falls on these continuums can influence an individual's readiness to encode and later retrieve them. Experiences that are linked to high arousal are recorded relatively automatically as they are noticed quickly and require less attention when compared to experiences with lower arousal. Experiences that induce low emotional arousal are conversely better encoded using controlled processes such as rehearsal and chunking (Holland & Kensinger, 2013). Holland and Kensinger's outline suggests that within the present research, individuals cluster the broad range of unpleasant experiences as they occur frequently between each deadline. Because these feelings exist consistently - although to varying degrees - throughout the process, they are, in essence rehearsed and chunked potentially into the term of "stress". Conversely, the less frequent but more extreme perception of pleasant experience e.g. "excitement" or "happiness" of making it past each stage, may be encoded automatically.

Emotion influences the retrieval of emotional experiences (Holland & Kensinger, 2013). During questionnaire completion, aspirants reflected on the past events of completing the application form (reflection on-action). Now separated from the process, they were able to see the experience as a whole. Through this, the range of emotional experiences was not re-lived or reconstructed and instead, the data collected was a semantic recount which reflected the balanced reflection of the experience. Each stage was potentially seen as a discrete phase where storied re-living and expounding were not required. Instead, the challenges experienced between the phases and celebrations that came after each one could be encapsulated.

Conversely, during the NIs, most informants engaged in structural description and reconstruction of the content where they made explicit reference to who did what, where, when and why. They justified the elements they shared using value statements and provided insight into their personal experience (Jovchelovitch &

Bauer, 2000). This subjective and perceptual recount took them back to their in-action reflections (Schön, 1983) from that time and triggered enhanced sensory detail within which emotional experience was initially encoded (Holland & Kensinger, 2013). In providing these details where nothing was taken for granted, informants appeared to relive their experience to narrate it. They appeared to feel the need to justify the “hard work”, “determination” and the “obstacles” they overcame to get to their goal - all things they did not want to be overlooked when sharing their story. Through this, they provided subjective detail about the internal representations of their past experience (Holland & Kensinger, 2013). For some, the experience was cathartic (PFN), whilst others expressed the unpleasant feelings experienced in the process brought back the nerves they associated with parts of the process (NFN).

5.4.3 Summary of difference in experiences throughout the application process.

Theory and research around risk, reward and motivation explained that, although stressful, previous experiences of reward throughout the application process enabled participants to recall the process as pleasant. In addition, the theory around emotion in episodic memory and reflection in and on-action explained individuals encoded the pleasant experience automatically because of their intensity. Unpleasant experiences were encoded as a result of the consistent exposure, repetition and rehearsal. On-action reflection led aspirants to report a higher intensity of pleasant experience. With inferential statistics as a basis for follow up in NIs, the researcher concluded that aspirants accessed their in-action reflections, therefore re-living the experience. A-TEPs used high levels of emotional language to characterise the unpleasant parts of the process but also identified the periods of excitement. The fluctuation in emotion unveiled the multiple troughs and peaks aspirants experienced as they worked towards their hard-achieved goal. This suggests the absence of an audience and no requirement to re-live the process, aided through a self-completion questionnaire, helped uncover the range and depth of aspirants' experiences of the process – a finding which has been absent in previous literature.

5.5 Interaction of Experience and Time

The final research question sought to explore *What A-TEPs' reported experiences of the application process were?* Although participants perceived a more pleasant experience overall, there was an increase in unpleasant experience as the application process progressed. The findings obtained from the statistical analysis suggested that pleasant experience went from moderate, to low and then onto high (See figure 4.1). In section 4.13.6, aspirants' utilisation of meta-theorisation and psychological theory to rationalise their individual experiences were highlighted. Concepts relating to self-esteem, conscious and unconscious competence, control and self-construct gave the researcher insight into the impact of individual differences on how aspirants experienced the process. These theories will be used to bring the quantitative and qualitative findings together where relevant.

5.5.1 Experiences in the before phase.

The 'before' stage encompassed the preparation phase of the process up until when the application opened. Descriptive findings characterised this stage as one where unpleasant experience was at its lowest and pleasant experience was at its middle value of the three.

5.5.1.1 Preparation before the application opened.

During this stage aspirants were acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to feel confident and make an application. They spent between four and 20 years preparing to apply for the ProfDoc. The duration of preparation in some cases appears to be linked to the data about the number of applicants highlighted in chapter one (M. Dagnell, personal communication, 31 October 2018). In response to this knowledge, aspirants ensure they have the range and depth of experience - more than the AEP suggests- to increase their chances of securing an interview. These findings sit in line with Ekblad (2006) who identified the earliest steps in the application process occur before the application form even opens. This stage is a long trek (Malston & Logue, 2008) and requires calculated risk. It requires aspirants to not only have met the entry requirements but also feel confident they have had the quantity and quality of relevant experience before they feel ready to apply.

For some, preparation was a passive process as joining the profession was perceived to be part of a long-term plan. For others, it was active, required the setting of a short-term target (conversion course, relocation, new job) and increased the pressure informants put on themselves. Unlike others, an informant who applied three times characterised this stage with excitement as she was confident about the skills she had acquired. These findings extend the understanding of those who identified this stage as one where excitement can occur (Malston and Logue, 2008). The theory around motivational goals suggests the way individuals approach a task leads to an overestimation of what they recall about the experience (Holland & Kensinger, 2013). Therefore, if their preparation was more passive, deemed relevant to the profession, or involved high levels of desirable support, they may have felt more pleasantly about the application experience, and therefore, more likely to recall the pleasant elements about it and *vice versa*. This may help explain why some individuals' narratives were framed more positively than others.

5.5.1.2 Discussion of pleasant and unpleasant experience levels in the before phase.

The differences in pleasant and unpleasant experiences in the before phase appeared to be associated with autonomy and control. Information from the NIs led the researcher to infer the lowest level of unpleasant experience in the before phase existed as aspirants had the autonomy over their current situation (e.g., ability to change job), were able to act on their own timeline and acquire knowledge to suit their current context. This was seen most in the PFNs. Fiske and Dépret (1996) in their theory of Control, Interdependence and Power explain when one feels in control, this can reduce stress and help him deal with unavoidable or unpleasant events.

Although in possession of more control when compared to other stages of the process, any unpleasant experience or reports of stress encountered at this phase were linked to perceptions of needing most relevant experience, taking the risk of one-year contracts, juggling life with the aspiration, family expectation and the financial constraints new jobs put on individuals. Locke and Latham's (2002) ideas around goals and human behaviour suggest goal attainment is most likely to occur

where a task is perceived as moderately difficult. This optimum level of difficulty promotes considerable effort towards a goal. Therefore, the stress encountered as aspirants decided to embark on this journey potentially served a facilitative function once they felt they had the necessary resources. This drove them through the process.

Another factor that may account for the lowest value of unpleasant experience can be located in unconscious incompetence and conscious competence (Burch, 1974). Participants who explicitly made reference to their multiple applications reflected that when they did not progress through all of the stages, they were unconsciously incompetent. They also reflected on their conscious competence once they acquired new skills and knowledge. This model may also account for the nerve-racking experience of those who actively prepared to apply. For the individual who was new to the UK, a level of conscious incompetence was identified at his stage. The feeling of conscious or unconscious incompetence and conscious competence was often linked to the understanding of the EP role.

5.5.2 Experience in the during phase.

Participants indicated that once the application form opened, perception of pleasant experience decreased, and unpleasant experience decreased. The existence of a negative correlation during this phase will simply be referred to as a change in emotion in this section.

5.5.2.1 *The opening of the application form.*

The change in perceived experience for participants was associated with being overwhelmed with tailoring their personal statement to each university. Sometimes without guidance, aspirants had to market themselves within the limits of the word count. All informants who made explicit reference to the application form reported the drafting and re-drafting of their personal statements was a delicate process. The present findings are similar to those of Malston and Logan (2008) who reflected on the challenge of what to include in their application form. They described CP applicants' pedantry as they spent considerable time on the personal statement. The stress of striving for perfection when reducing themselves to a page and making

themselves vulnerable is also something Knoetze and Stroud (2012) identified when analysing applicants' supporting statements. Fisher (2012) associates these early steps in transition with the worry about not being able to cope with what is ahead.

The emphasis placed on the personal statement can be linked to Self-Presentation Theory (Baumeister & Hutton, 1987). Human behaviour is an attempt to present information about oneself to others, and these presentations are influenced by situational factors. They identify two types of self-presentation motivation, the first - pleasing the audience and the second - self-construction, where individuals attempt to match their own self-presentation to their ideal self. In writing personal statements, aspirants must showcase their skills and link them to themselves as individuals to stand out. These aspects must appear internalised to convince course providers they are ready to work towards joining the profession. The requirement for both aspects of self-presentation puts pressure on individuals who are aware of the conscious competence they must display within the word limit. Where some universities prioritise different theoretical positions or emphasise cultural aspects, being all things to all courses and still appearing authentic triggers stress.

5.5.2.2 Reference requests and a further loss of control.

In the present research, informants also linked the associations of unpleasant feelings with loss of control. The first taste of this arose when informants waited for referee submissions and is something previous literature has not identified or addressed.

Although she encountered similar difficulties in the application drafting, one informant reported feeling excited about making contact with a referee and sharing her newly acquired knowledge since she finished her postgraduate study – something Fisher (2012) links to being happy about the prospect of change. It would appear the number of times Sally experienced this stage equipped her with the ability to reflect growth in her application, and to maintain annual contact with a previous course tutor. This would suggest an academic reference was a source of support rather than one of hindrance for Sally. In spite of this nuanced finding, the need for two references before being able to continue on their application journey was associated

with a loss of control and contributed to the changed perception about the experience. Some informants felt they were at the mercy of employers, felt worried about not being able to get in contact with old academic staff and felt uncomfortable about putting pressure on non-psychologist supervisors because they did not understand the rigidity of the application deadline. Informants suggested the AEP could send automatic reminders to referees on their behalf, therefore taking some pressure off them and giving them ammunition to prompt referees themselves.

Recruiting others for support and knowledge is explained by Fiske and Dépret (1996). When social structures deprive a person of control, they seek diagnostic information. At this stage, aspirants are motivated to think about the course they will apply to and make sense of what the universities want. The loss of control triggers cognitive activity. Hence aspirants seek reassurance they were on the right track, validation that they were not alone in their state of not knowing or feedback about what they need to change from those who they feel know more than them (EPs, TEPs, forums, proof-readers). It also explains why they wanted to chase referees but due to power imbalances did not always feel they could apply the pressure necessary to progress.

5.6 Experience in the After Phase

The highest level of unpleasant and pleasant experience was reported in the 'after' phase. Between the 'during' and 'after' phase was the only point where changes in pleasant experience were statistically significant. Here aspirants waited to hear if they were invited to interview.

Informants who spoke about this phase made reference to the "waiting" or checking their emails with "dread". The suspense of not knowing provided some comfort but bubbled in the background and could come to the forefront of their minds for a myriad of reasons (significant others' inquires, the Facebook group notifications, impending deadlines for universities offering interviews). Malston and Logue (2008) also reflected on the waiting and described the application remains at the back of aspirants' minds.

The findings highlight a brief period of excitement or pleasant experience once aspirants were invited to interview. Informants spoke about temporary celebrations which were followed by a re-entry into the unknown and a further loss of control from being at the mercy of a panel. This idea transcended pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Negative self-talk such as: "I can't do this" entered the mind of an informant and reports of fatigue were shared by those with NFNs. These findings are similar to the reflections reported by Malston and Logue (2008) who highlight those who make it to interview experience anxiety, fatigue, muscle tension, eating and sleeping disturbances, thought block and gastrointestinal problems. These physiological, emotional and cognitive difficulties are all things informants attempted to manage at interview and can be understood by the freeze response commonly associated with the flight – fight paradox (Schmidt, Richey, Zvolensky, & Maner, 2008). Whilst some were able to control this with positive mantras and reframes, others experienced shaking, fatigue and difficulty with formulating their thoughts and sentences.

Initially, those who were offered self-funded places characterised not being offered a funded place as a perceived failure. However, after further thought, Malachi saw the offer as an opportunity to look at financial resources, whereas Analie perceived this as her first failure and attributed these feelings to having a low-self-esteem. Feelings of inadequacy, "failure" and "disappointment" which were associated with rejection in the 'after' phase are also seen in the literature (Malston & Logue, 2008). Theory around motivation and risk help explain why these feelings arose, as even if only for a brief period, the calculated risk did not yield the expected or previously experienced cognitive, emotional or physiological rewards (Trimpop, 1994).

5.6.1 Summary of the interaction between experience and time.

When broken down into experiences across the phases, unpleasant experiences increased over time. Theory has unpicked that it arose at the beginning because individuals sought relevant experience and connections with others to feel they could start the process. However, it remained at its lowest because this was something aspirants could do in their own time as they had not entered a competitive realm. The increased difference between pleasant and unpleasant experience existed as

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individuals had the highest level of control over their experience in this phase but knew they would have to venture into one with imposed time frames which came with a perceived loss of control.

Entering the during phase, a negative correlation between pleasant and unpleasant experience was observed. As perceptions of pleasant experience decreased, perceptions of unpleasant experience increased. This change in pleasant experience occurred as aspirants struggled with self-presentation and felt they were at the mercy of others. The support others provided helped mitigate these unpleasant feelings.

Finally, in the after phase, a positive correlation between pleasant and unpleasant experience presented itself and as the perceptions of pleasant experience increased so did the perceptions of unpleasant experience. Unpleasant experience was at its peak as the process was now completely out of aspirants' hands and instead, they had to wait. Whilst they could keep these feelings at bay, their previous sources of support often brought their lack of control back to consciousness. Additional information from the qualitative phase highlighted negative self-talk and freeze responses were encountered at the interview stage. Aspirants felt a sense of pride about their achievements up until this point. Being invited to interview was a requirement for inclusion in the study so the data reflected the high proportion of those who got on to training, and for them, the peaks and troughs of the journey were worthwhile.

5.7 Individual Difference

This section highlights the demographics within the profession and identifies some of the individual differences from the informants who positioned themselves as minorities. The researcher considered that informants' self-positioning may have accounted for their experiences of the process. Positioning theory provided a potential explanation.

The demographic findings outlined in tables 4.1 – 4.3 showed that the majority of the sample were white females within the 26-30 years age range. Although there is no official data about the demographic makeup of TEPs, demographic similarities were

found between the present research and the EP profession; where 82.6 % of the profession were female in the 35-39 age group (Lyonette et al., 2019). There continues to be no data about the breakdown of ethnicity or race within the EP or TEP community, however it is known that practising psychologists are predominantly white female (Bullen & Hacker Hughes, 2016). The known polarisation in race and age within the EP profession may have contributed to aspirants identifying how they deviated from these norms and therefore they may have considered their individual differences as an additional obstacle for them in the application process.

Analie positioned herself as a foreigner with an unusual journey. Sasha positioned herself as a mother who made a significant financial sacrifice to start her journey. Due to her parental responsibilities she felt it was impossible to relocate and therefore limited to applying to the universities closest to her. Finally, Malachi positioned himself as a minority in the profession both in terms of race and gender. However, he saw this as his unique selling point which along with his faith in God offered a "secret magic".

Positioning theory suggested that in acting and speaking from a position, individuals bring their history as a subjective being to any situation (Davies & Harré, 1990). Aspirants choice of metaphors and imagery evoked an understanding of the way they construct themselves. Any of these informants' positions could have been constructed as a position of strength or weakness. For example, Sasha's role as a mother could have been re-framed and likened to someone with direct experience of working with children, making reasonable adjustments to suit their needs. Her geographical location which narrowed her options enabled a relatively short commute and made research into them time efficient. The ways individuals construct their self-image may therefore have impacted their perception of the experience and accounted for the identified individual differences in experience. It will therefore be important for A-TEPs to engage in regular self-reflection throughout their journey so opportunities can be identified during times of stress and challenge.

5.8 Limitations

The discussion of limitations in this research should be considered in relation to its adopted paradigm and purpose. With the aim of exploring A-TEPs' experiences of

the application process from a critical realist perspective, the researcher acknowledged the stages of the ProfDoc application process existed in an objective reality however individuals' interaction with them and reports of them would vary. The MM design facilitated the collection of a broad range of perceived experiences of the objective deadlines which make the process via questionnaires and the subjective truths of the process via NIs. Methods by which the researcher attempted to avoid limiting factors will be considered in this section.

5.8.1 Inclusion criteria.

The first limitation of the study refers to the range of participants included in the research. The inclusion and exclusion criteria resulted in individuals who made it to interview being considered for inclusion in the present research, thus the findings about more pleasant experiences being encountered throughout the process may be limited to this cohort. In addition, while the recruited participants were from across the country, they were limited to those who accessed online forums therefore it is possible these experiences are only generalisable to those who interacted with these realms. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution for those who sat outside the inclusion criteria. With this being said, it is important to highlight the qualitative data sought to provide insight into what was found in the quantitative phase rather than enable generalisability to the population of those who engaged with the application process. The researcher argues initial insight into the experiences of applicants has been provided. Although the qualitative findings suggest some aspects of the application process are experienced differently due to unique circumstances, the researcher accepts these should be cautiously applied to aspirants in other contexts.

Future research could build on these findings by including all A-TEPs who apply for the EP ProfDoc. It would also be important to explore the views of those who do not access online forums. This could be achieved by recruiting via the AEP website or distributing invitations to participants through course providers' administrative processes.

5.8.2 Data collection tool.

The second limitation of the research is located in the second half of the data collection tool. Due to the absence of a known established measure, the researcher developed one specifically for the research using the points on Fisher's Transitional Curve (2012). This curve and therefore the questionnaire included more negative emotions than positive ones. In addition, the positive emotions were related to progressing between the stages rather than emotionally related experiences within them. Whilst it helped the researcher understand that applicants experience a sense of pride from their accomplishments occurs at the end of each phase, it did not highlight any potential pleasant emotions that were encountered within the stages.

Future research should consider models of emotion (Plutchik, 1980) to further develop the data collection tool and capture a full range of emotions against key transition points within the application process. It would also benefit future research to adopt a semi-structured schedule which was based on a participant's responses in the quantitative phase, thus enabling informants to have a tailored interview. Moreover, future research should seek to reduce the time between quantitative and qualitative data collection. This may have enabled participants to reflect on their own responses from the questionnaire during the interview. Within the present research, these considerations may have resulted in less interpretation being required from the researcher, therefore reducing any interpretation bias.

5.8.3 Timing of the research.

Like those which came before it (Dornfeld et al., 2012; Malston & Logue, 2008; Morris & Thomas, 2006; Reynolds et al., 2008), the present research required participants to access their episodic memories and reflect on-action. Depending on the year of study they were in, individuals may have reflected on a process which took place nearly three years ago. Since this time, they would have encountered new peaks and troughs in their training journey which may have superseded those experienced in the application process. An aspirant spoke about 'imposter syndrome' and how this superseded many of the emotions and thoughts experienced when applying. The sense of achievement gained from making it to the holy grail may have

sugar coated some aspirants' experiences therefore separating them from the realities of their journey.

Future research should therefore seek to conduct longitudinal research which takes place when the application process is open. Here participants could recount their experience as they live it and provide reflection in-action, potentially increasing the research findings' validity.

5.9 Addressing Bias

Although the researcher utilised reflexive means in the current study to ensure her personal expectations and beliefs did not influence the participants responses, it can be argued further considerations could have been made. Bias can be defined as an influence which distorts research findings (Galdas, 2017). The inclusion of three NFNs and three PFNs made it likely the researcher over-relied on these recounts to bring the MM data together. This overreliance is due to a lack of data saturation. Data saturation is when enough data exists to replicate a qualitative study, when no new information can be obtained and when further coding during analysis is no longer feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). An increase in the number of informants in the qualitative phase may have led to a broader understanding of the quantitative data and therefore improved the generalisability of the findings and its validity.

The concept of confirmability is referred to in section 3.12. Member checks were used to ensure this. Although all participants were sent their narratives only two individuals returned them to the researcher within the allocated time frame. A higher return rate may have potentially improved the rigor of the research in the qualitative phase and ensured all informants' views and perspectives were represented and not influenced by the researcher. Future research should consider this.

5.10 Reflections

5.10.1 Experience of completing the thesis.

The present research was challenging yet enjoyable and exciting. As identified in chapter one, the researcher's personal experience and encounters with colleagues were the driving force in exploring this topic. The sense of responsibility to collect the

unheard stories of others who have encountered the process was of significant relevance to my values. Additionally, regular attendance at university open days and interaction on an online forum provided another layer of interest in planning and completing this study. My experiences as an AP and discovering this profession by accident made it even more important to ensure future aspirants knew there are a range of experiences out there and all make for rich contribution to teaching sessions, assignments and placement experiences once on the training.

New insight was gained as I became more engrossed with the literature and developed the methodology. The findings from the quantitative phase surprised me and challenged my existing assumptions about experiences of the application process. It caused me to reflect on my own journey and provided me with an increased sense of duty to make sense of the data and reflect it in a way that was accessible for those who shy away from statistics. Moreover, when bringing the phases of the data together, the researcher felt impelled to not negate the novel findings.

5.10.2 Being a TEP and a researcher.

Whilst completing the doctoral-level research I developed my professional and academic knowledge. Through the programme, my knowledge about research practice and active engagement with academia became increasingly important.

My skills in carrying out statistical analysis developed better than I expected. Completing this research and engaging in a topic which had meaning to me, resulted in an enjoyment of the empirical aspects of the research. Venturing into qualitative research for the first time supported my analytical and reflective skills as a TEP and a researcher. I was better able to recognise the importance of this type of research particularly with regards to the complex and in-depth analysis of people's experience.

The finding about EPs being the most valued source of help has made me reflect on future roles. As a TEP who was an aspirant and hopefully soon an EP, my personal involvement in the research made me reflect on how I will make myself accessible to

a new generation of aspirants. So far, I have volunteered to have a supporting role in my placement LAs appointment of a new AP, and whilst I will resume my activity on online forums, I would like to explore other means of face-to-face interaction with aspirants.

5.10.3 Reflexivity.

In section 3.13, the researcher identified areas of prospective reflexivity - that is, the considered effect of the researcher on the research. This section will highlight the engagement in retrospective reflexivity and look at the effect the research has had on me (Attia & Edge, 2017).

I went into this research knowing I had a privileged experience of the application process. Being an AP in a large LA, my personal statement was reviewed multiple times by qualified EPs, and I went through a course of mock interviews. I also had the benefit of working alongside EPs for nearly two years, with weekly supervision and went on to develop and apply my psychological skills and knowledge with a group of APs. I had all of this and found it by accident. Hearing anecdotal experiences made me believe my situation was the norm for those who got onto training and that a smaller group battled relentlessly to join the community of A-TEPs. My awareness as a subject in a context I had previously been embedded in meant the nature of this research demanded an empathic quality and for me to relate to individuals' psychological and social reality which may be different from my own. I also needed to channel humility and acknowledge I had my own standpoint having lived the experience I was asking others to talk about and as such the openness to having my standpoint changed. Engagement in this research certainly did that!

Separating myself from the research was difficult, particularly when interacting with informants and their stories. The complexities of thinking, feeling and acting which unfolded in the interviews reminded me of the more complex elements of my experience. However, removing myself from the Facebook community, journaling, supervision with my DoS, conducting the interviews remotely in an unstructured manner, *Concluding Talk* in the NIs and *Analytical Abstraction* in the NA all enabled me to continuously separate my own experience and reality from the data and its

interpretation. The novel and unexpected data obtained from the quantitative phase of this research forced me to step back, observe, reflect and see that in othering me, I had othered others. This separation reinforced the motivations for why this research was not only important to me but more so to the A-TEP community, EP profession and the wider bodies which govern them. In chapter 5 it became important that I was not rationalising or justifying the novel findings but discussing and doing my best to explain them.

The language used within the study changed throughout engagement with the research. Experiences were initially phrased as positive and negative and later changed to pleasant and unpleasant. Close analysis of the inferential statistics and engagement with theory (Holland & Kensinger, 2013) helped me reflect that the initial experience descriptors were too extreme and implied individuals had mutually exclusive polarised experiences. Findings demonstrated that although a difficult process, containing obstacles and sources of challenge, aspirants still encountered a slightly higher intensity of pleasant rather than unpleasant moments.

5.11 Implications for Future Research

Findings suggest this study offered valuable insight into A-TEPs' experiences of the application process. Participants highlighted sources of support and hindrance and the factors which categorised them to be such. Although stressful and challenging, reward, satisfaction and increased insight superseded these difficulties. Together these findings provide valuable information for future aspirants and hopefully normalise these aspects of the process as they embark on their own journey. That being said, there are some learning points which are discussed below.

5.11.1 Increased reach and further understanding of support sources.

EPs were deemed the most valued support source for A-TEPs, and some felt disadvantaged about not being an AP in their preparatory phase of the process. However, there is no empirical evidence about the quality and type of experience assistant EPs actually get. Future research should seek to audit of the range and breadth of experiences APs get whilst working with EPs. This should support A-TEPs to look for roles which afford them similar opportunities in other sectors and

identify transferable skills they can reflect on their application. It should also seek to highlight not just the opportunities but too the challenges this role affords.

5.11.2 Absence of diversity in the study and the profession.

The current study's population was 90% female and 86% white. These demographics are slightly higher than those in the profession (NCTL, 2016). The absence of diversity in the study and the profession implores future research to explore and capture the experiences of minority A-TEPs. This is relevant as it is important to ensure a range of minds and experiences contribute to the profession and also so the individuals who represent the profession can identify with the service users who access the profession. This lack of representation of males and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups in the profession calls for a mentoring group similar to that within the BPS's Division of Clinical Psychology. This group pairs TEPs and EPs with A-TEPs so individual mentoring can occur and hosts conferences for these groups to attend and network at. Through this, the representation of these groups can increase in training and therefore within the profession.

5.11.3 The call for changes within the system.

A-TEPs highlighted it appeared universities made the effort to be fair and some even provided empathy to alleviate A-TEPs' nerves during interviews. Whilst for some the process came across as a well-oiled machine, some important considerations for EPs, course providers and the AEP were still highlighted.

5.11.4 Implications for EPs.

Deemed most useful, EPs should do all they can to welcome a new generation of EPs who cannot leave their jobs, relocate, or consider temporary contracts. EPs will need to be creative and can do this by hosting LA EP meet and greet conferences or contribute to forums with 'day in the life of' articles to increase the reach of those who wish to consider joining the profession.

5.11.5 Implications for universities.

As one of the most used sources, universities must ensure the information they publish on their website for A-TEPs is reviewed annually. Members of faculty and

dates on documents should be updated accordingly as this is the first thing A-TEPs use to create an impression of the provider and assess fit.

The research highlighted that participants experienced a reduced sense of control as the application process progressed, this loss of control was associated with experiencing the process as stressful and nerve-racking. To support aspirants in the 'before' phase universities could publish reading lists that provide insight for those who could not access their open day or make direct contact with EPs. They should also consider co-ordinating their open days regionally as they do their interview days. This way aspirants can attend a range and find out about the unique differences between course providers to assess their fit in line with their values.

To support A-TEPs in the during phase, universities should consider publishing their marking criteria as this has been found to support personal statement completion. Given the understanding that aspirants perceive the highest level of negative experience at this stage and report physiological and cognitive impairments at the hands of this, interview panels should steer away from what has been described as a 'cold' interviewing style. Finally, universities must ensure the wording of their interview questions are free from cultural bias. To mitigate this and truly ensure a fair process, agreed adjustments to phraseology should be prepared in advance, thus ensuring some standardisation.

5.11.6 Implications for the AEP.

As the most utilised source, the AEP website was described as impartial. However, the information on it was described as generic. Aspirants identified a need for a transparent, accessible and centralised handbook similar to that which is provided for aspiring CPs by the Clearing House. The handbook would enable aspirants to access information about all universities, their demographics, application statistics and gain a sense of their culture in one location.

The research also highlighted the need for the AEP website to update deadlines in a timely fashion. It could also host centralised information about course providers' or LAs' open days, and alternative funding streams. The last point is particularly pertinent as the self-funded and bursary options may significantly impact aspirants'

finances, therefore causing them to rule out the whole process and preventing a whole group of individuals from entering the profession.

Finally, the power difference between aspirants and current employers which results in some missing the opportunity to apply due to referees not submitting references on time has contributed to the following. The referee form could be simplified so it is more like modern reference forms whereby referees provide more closed end responses therefore increasing the likelihood it will be completed. In addition, the AEP could send an automatic prompt to referees. This would reinforce the significance of the strict deadline and may support aspirants' confidence with chasing referees. It would also take the pressure off aspirants as they juggle the application with the rest of their life.

5.12 Distinct Contribution

This research identified a range of experiences encountered when applying for the EP ProfDoc in the UK. It integrated psychological theory and research to the earliest stage of the EP profession and suggested that on the whole, course providers and the AEP are in most cases providing a system which aspirants engage with pleasantly. In addition, involvement in the qualitative phase of the research provided a platform for participants to celebrate their successes, share the challenges, and express what may have improved their interaction with these systems.

With regard to the utility of this research, a TEP representative from the Division of Educational and Child Psychology made contact to discuss the study. This could be a valuable opportunity to share the findings and implications from it and generate further discussion about any means that could be implemented to enhance the experience of future aspirants as they pursue their journey to becoming an EP.

5.13 Conclusion

This research explored A-TEPs' experiences of the EP ProfDoc application process. It provided participants the opportunity to share their perceptions about their experiences so future aspirants could understand what it may entail. The research also sought to contribute to training providers' and professional bodies' knowledge

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and understanding about how they influence and could enhance future A-TEPs' experiences of the application process.

Using a MM design, an invitation letter to an online questionnaire was distributed to potential participants via online forums and was followed up with three negatively framed narratives and three positively framed narratives.

The MM approach enabled the collection of data with both a semantic and episodic focus (Holland & Kensinger, 2013). Integration of the findings and engagement with psychological theory generated key conclusions. Although A-TEPs experienced the application process pleasantly, aspirants associated it with peaks and troughs of emotion (Fisher, 2012; Schlossberg, 1981). Unpleasant experience arose wherever waiting was required and increased as aspirants experienced a reduction in perceived control (Fiske & Dépret, 1996). This was followed by pleasant experience and brief celebration for those who heard favourable news. The stress experienced, although persistent, was facilitative and drove participants into action (Trimpop, 1994). At each stage aspirants were required to present themselves in a certain light which triggered them to question who they were and how they wanted to be seen (Baumeister & Hutton, 1987). Once they had progressed to the next stage, aspirants could see themselves as an EP and although risky, it enabled them to plough through and work hard. Finally, acceptance that the hard work had paid off at each stage enabled them to move forward (Fisher, 2012). Theory around motivation, risk and reward, self-identity, control and memory offered possible explanations for why participants experienced the process the way they did.

Aspirants found support in gaining information from more knowledgeable others namely the AEP, university websites and EPs (Schlossberg, 1981). Naïve inquiries from those who did not know about the process, group speculation in forums and awareness of conscious incompetence contributed to unpleasant experiences within the process.

Finally, it could be argued the research met not only its' exploratory aims associated with normalising the stress experienced throughout the process, but also its

emancipatory ones. This is so, as the reflective segment of informants' NIs formed the basis for the implications section (5.10).

5.13.1 Closing messages

To all future A-TEPs the journey to the Holy Grail is difficult, you will experience stress and challenge, but it will be worth it in the end. Find comfort in your loved ones and use online forums to your advantage.

To the bodies within the ProfDoc system, aspirants would benefit from increased access to EPs, and deserve websites which are updated in a timely manner and reviewed annually. Take measurable action to increase and inspire diversity into the profession. Consider publishing marking criteria to guide personal statements. Coordinate open days and interviews with each other so clashes seldom arise. Interview with warmth and without cultural bias. Finally, liberate us from being CPs "poor relation" (Gersch, 1997, p. 15) and work towards a centralised handbook which improves access for all future aspirants to the profession.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – The AEP Application Deadlines for 2018-2019

- The online application system went live on 26th September 2018 (12pm),
- Applicants must have their referees submit their references by 28th November 2018 (12 pm),
- The deadline for application submission from aspirants was on 5th December 2018 (5 pm),
- Course providers shortlisted their candidates and interviewed them by 20th March 2019 (12 pm),
- Offers for places to candidates were made on 27th March 2019 (12 pm),
- Aspirants had to accept the offer made by 3rd April (12 pm).

Appendix 2 – Summary of papers from narrative literature review*Summary of Selected Papers*

Study and Location	Focus/ Methodology
Dornfeld, Green, Hennessy, Lating, and Kirkhart (2012) America	N = 394 psychology doctorate students and N =17 course directors completed a 45-item questionnaire (SPP-GS). Participants were recruited via email. Factors for applicants to consider when choosing a program were considered, findings were also reported to be of benefit to course directors when shaping the culture of their course.
Ekblad (2006) America	A CP reflects on his own journey through the training process. He also uses a retrospective recount to advise aspirants and provide them with points for consideration they should contemplate before they embark on their own journey.
Knoetze and Stroud (2012) South Africa	Narrative analysis (NA) of N =9 personal statements was conducted. Convenience sampling was used to gather the personal statements from a pool of 32. They found successful aspirants made a heavy use of psychological jargon, followed by a temporal order often commencing with what drew them to the profession and an ending with a note of self-evaluation.
Malston and Logue (2008) England	Two Assistant CPs (AssCPs) describe their reflections on the journey towards CP training. They generated a framework for understanding the process and looked at the physiological and emotional factors which help shape it.
Morris and Thomas (2006)	Two AssCPs in a reflection paper, provide a recount of their personal experiences as they gained clinical

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England	experience whilst working towards the CP doctorate. Each outline the advantages and disadvantages of the role.
Reynolds, Sargeant, Rooney, Tashiro, and Lejuez (2008)	Multiple case study (N =2) interviews were used to evaluate how programs fit with current student's training goals and interests. The three variables looked at during the interviews were: student mentors, the training and program orientation.
America	
Sullivan (2006)	Research sought to normalise student concerns and answer aspiring doctoral student questions about predoctoral internships. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants. Aspirants posed their question to the researcher via email, who categorised them and forwarded them to individuals with more experience than the students.
America	

Appendix 3 – Published questionnaire

Screening Information

1. Did you apply to an educational psychology course provider For a September 2019 Start?

- Yes
- No

2. Were you shortlisted to interview or placed on an interview reserve list for September 2019 entry?

- Yes
- No

Demographic Information

3. How would you describe your sex?

- Female
- Male
- Other (please specify)
- Prefer not to specify

4. What is your age?

- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 50+
- Prefer not to specific

5. What is your ethnic group/background?

- White British
- White other
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups
- Asian/Asian British
- Prefer not to specify
- Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British
- Any other ethnic group, please describe

6. What is your relationship status ?

- single
- married
- in a registered civil partnership
- separated
- divorced
- widowed
- long term relationship
- prefer not to specify

7. Do you have any dependents (adults, relatives, a partner, child, friend or neighbour?)

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- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to specify

8. Where do you permanently reside?

- East Anglia
- East Midlands
- The North
- London
- The North West
- The South East
- South West
- Wales
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and Humberside
- Europe
- Outside of Europe
- Prefer not to specify

9. What was your most recent job title?

10. In years, how long ago did you decide you wanted to be an Educational Psychologist?

- <12 months ago
- 1 year ago
- 2-3 years ago
- 3-4 years ago
- 5-6 years ago
- Other, please specify

11. How many times have you applied for the Professional Doctorate in Educational Psychology?

- This is my first time
- Twice
- Three times
- Four times
- More than four times
- Prefer not to specific

Application Process Questions

The following questions will seek to explore your experience following your decision to apply for the professional doctorate in educational psychology.

12. Listed below are sources which you may have explored to find out about Professional Doctorate training. Please select all the sources you explored to find out about Professional Doctorate training

- AEP website
- University Open Days
- University Websites
- Local authority open days
- Online forums
- People you know in training
- People you know who are qualified
- Direct contact with course staff
- Conversion course
- Other, please specify

13. Please rank the sources you explored from most to least useful. Make your selection by dragging and dropping the sources?

- AEP website
- University Open Days
- University Websites
- Local authority open days
- Online forums
- People you know in training
- People you know who are qualified
- Direct contact with course staff
- Conversion course
- Other, please specify

Next are some questions which seek to gain insight into your perceptions about you preparing to apply for the doctorate. Please indicate how strongly you would agree or disagree with the following statements

ASPIRANTS' APPLICATION EXPERIENCES

14. Below are some questions which seek to gain an insight into your perceptions about you preparing to apply for the doctorate. Please indicate how strongly you would agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Preparing to apply for the doctorate was a stressful experience for me					
Preparing to apply for the doctorate was challenging for me					
I enjoyed the process of applying for the doctorate					
Preparing to apply for the doctorate was a manageable experience for me					
Preparing to apply for the doctorate gave me new insight into the EP role					

15. Please rate your experience of applying for the doctorate	Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very positive

Next is a set of questions which relate to the AEP application timeline and they are plotted against emotions. These emotions are taken from John Fisher's (2012) Model of Transition. Using the boxes below, please indicate which emotion best describes what you experienced at a particular stage of the application process. **NO** stage should be left blank.

ASPIRANTS' APPLICATION EXPERIENCES

16. On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not at all and 5 being a lot) how much did you experience each of these emotions at each stage before starting your application for the doctorate?

At which time point did you experience:	The month before applications opened	When applications opened
Anxiety		
Happiness		
Fear		
Anger towards others		
A feeling of threat		
Vulnerability		
Anger towards myself		
Guilt		
Depression		
Hostility		
Disillusionment		
Gradual acceptance		
Complacency		
Denial		
A feeling of moving forward		

ASPIRANTS' APPLICATION EXPERIENCES

17. On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not at all and 5 being a lot) how much did you experience each of these emotions at each stage during the process of completing your application for the doctorate?

At which time point did you experience:	Throughout the process of completing the application form	On the date of the reference's deadline	Between the referee deadlines & application submission	The day you submitted your application
anxiety				
happiness				
fear				
anger towards others				
A feeling of threat				
Vulnerability				
Anger towards myself				
Guilt				
Depression				
Hostility				
Disillusionment				
Gradual acceptance				
Complacency				
Denial				
a feeling of moving forward				

ASPIRANTS' APPLICATION EXPERIENCES

18. On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being not at all and 5 being a lot) how much did you experience each of these emotions at each stage following the submission of your application for the doctorate?

At which time point did you experience:	During the interview period	Between the offer release date & offer acceptance deadline
anxiety		
happiness		
fear		
anger towards others		
A feeling of threat		
Vulnerability		
Anger towards myself		
Guilt		
Depression		
Hostility		
Disillusionment		
Gradual acceptance		
Complacency		
Denial		
a feeling of moving forward		

ASPIRANTS' APPLICATION EXPERIENCES

19. Are you willing to participate in the interview component of this research?

- Yes
- No

My contact details are:

Please Provide your contact details below

Email: _____

Mobile number (optional) _____

Appendix 4 – Cardwell et al, (2017) data collection tool

Research Project 1: How was it for you?

A qualitative study of veterinary students' experiences of conducting an independent research project.

The aim of this study is to learn about students' experiences of doing Research Project 1 (RP1), in order to help develop teaching and support for future student projects.

We would be very grateful if you would complete this brief questionnaire. Your responses to the questionnaire will be recorded anonymously. Return of a completed or partially completed questionnaire will be regarded as indication of your consent for the information you provide to be used in this research.

We will also run some focus groups to hear about your experiences in more detail. These will be moderated by a non-academic member of staff, so that participants will not be identifiable to researchers analysing the data and any views expressed will remain anonymous to teaching staff. If you would be willing to participate in a focus group, please provide contact details at the end of the questionnaire. Focus group volunteers will be selected and contacted later. Further details will be provided and you will have the opportunity to change your mind. Responses to this questionnaire or participation/non-participation in a focus group will in no way affect your academic progress.

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
RP1 was a worthwhile learning experience for me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
RP1 was a stressful experience for me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
RP1 was a challenging experience for me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I gained useful skills through doing RP1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I enjoyed doing RP1	<input type="checkbox"/>				
RP1 has given me a greater interest in research	<input type="checkbox"/>				
RP1 has given me a useful insight into research methods	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I received useful advice from my tutor/other member of staff	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Please rate your overall experience of doing RP1:					
	Extremely negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Extremely positive
	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Please rate your experience of the following aspects of RP1:					
	Extremely negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Extremely positive
Developing a project idea	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Researching the literature	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Obtaining a suitable dataset	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Analysing the dataset	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Writing up the report	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Have you ever done a research project previously?					
	Yes	No			
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

I am willing to participate in a focus group. My contact details are:

Email: _____

Mobile number (optional): _____

Thank you very much!

Appendix 5 — Abbreviated participation invitation letter

CALLING ASPIRING EPs/ TEPs WHO HAVE APPLIED FOR TRAINING IN THE UK BETWEEN SEPT 2016 AND SEPT 2018!

Hi everyone,

I'm Tanieka and I'm studying for a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. As part of the course, I am conducting research into aspiring EP's experiences of the doctoral application.

If you applied to one of the 13 Educational Psychologist (EP) training providers across the UK for a September 2017, September 2018 or September 2019 start **AND** were invited for an interview (regardless of whether you were offered a place or not) please feel free to share your views in the following survey.

https://uelpsyh.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eKUctH13p3gspwN

please feel free to share this survey with anyone who meets the inclusion criteria.

If you have any questions, please do contact me on:

AspiringEPresearch2019@outlook.com

Appendix 6 – Interview schedule

Hello, is this??

It's Tanieka from UEL. Will it be okay to do the interview now? I just want to remind you that this interview is being recorded. Is this still okay?

Opening Statement: Ok, so if we start, and I'd like to do is ask you to share as much or as little as you might want to. Different people characterise the process of applying for the doctorate in a range of ways. In your own words, how would you describe your experience of applying?

Are there any emotions you experienced throughout the process?

Are there any particular thoughts you remember having throughout the process?

Where did the journey to wanting to become an educational psychologist begin for you?

Appendix 7 – Transcript sample with paralinguistic additions

Key: (ch)= Chuckle, (in)- deep breath **bold**=stressed word, (!) = enthusiasm, ~ =slow articulation, (^)=increased pitch, (v)= lowered pitch, (P) = pause more than 3 seconds, (p) = pause less than 3 seconds, [] = transcriber comments, •= lowered volume

S78: Hello, Sasha speaking

I: Hello, good afternoon Sasha. It's Tanieka

S78: Oh, hi, how are you?

I: I'm fine. Thank you. How are you?

S78: I'm good (ch) .Well, done for getting hold of me.

I: [non interview related conversation removed]. So, it will be an unstructured interview.

S78: Okay

I: Because I don't want to kind of impose anything on your own like story or recollection of the experience. And so, you've been selected based on the analysis of the quantitative data. So, participants were ranked based on their responses, and you were selected. So, there's kind of an overarching question that I've been asking umm all of my participants, and I'll read it for kind of reliability and validity. And you share as much or as little as you want, speak as freely as you want. It will all be anonymized. Ummm, and I'm just really interested in your truth. So, assume I know nothing, and share whatever comes to mind. Nothing is too big or too small.

S78: Okay (^), that's fine

I: So, I'll read the core research question to you. Okay, so if we start, I'd like to ask you to share as much or as little as you might want to different people characterise the process of applying for the doctorate in a range of ways. In your own words, how would you describe your experience of applying?

S78: (P) Umm I think, I think the short answer is stressful. Umm So I'll tell you a little bit about my application. I was working. So, my background is as a teacher(^), primary teacher for eight ~years~. Before that I worked and did a bit of nursing and

mental health, including with adolescence, •but also with adults and elderly. And I've also done some research work over the years, as well as various different research settings, universities, things like that. Umm so, I had quite a varied background. But in the run up to my application, I'd been a teacher or teacher training for nearly 10 years. So ~when I applied the first time~, basically what happened was someone came into my school and gave the pensions talk and I (ch) thought about working, running around after school children, till about 70 odd (ch) or I'd lose the vast majority of my pension, sort of, •I was like oh okay, I need a different job. And, and then my undergraduate degree was in psychology, I had a background in mental health and sort of felt like educational psychology would pull everything that I really enjoyed together(^). (p) So that was how I sort of got into it. So, it was A long ~running~ idea that I had, it was just a sort of I don't want to do this, and I want something that I find more enjoyable and a bit more manageable.(P) And so, I applied the first time. And I applied to University D, University E and University F and got an interview at University D but didn't get accepted or on the waitlist. (P) And so, the first time around, it all felt very (p) ~unknown~, very unsure. And I'd done some bits of shadowing in the run up. I was quite lucky that when I actually started asking around, (ch) I had a couple of friends who were educational psychologists. And so, I did some shadowing, but still felt I didn't have a really clear idea in my head about the role itself or the history of the role. Just really liked the idea of sort of psychology, education, working umm primarily with children with additional needs. Ummm so I think it was all quite fluffy in my head (p) at that point. And that was the feedback that I got from the University D interview, which was **really helpful**. And because I got to interview someone spoke to me and sort of said, a couple of things, (P) we think you need more one to one work because I've been working as a class Teacher for nearly 10 years by then. And we also think that you need a clear idea of, (^) particularly the history of the role(^). When they asked one of the questions at the University D interview was tell us about how educational psychology came into being right. And I just, (ch) you know, and as someone who's never worked in educational psychology hadn't started the doctorate. I kind of have a clear idea now but in that moment in that interview ~**did not have a clue**~(!). Umm so, I went away, and people reading and also decided to change my job, so I left teaching.

I: Okay.

S78: And at that point (p)I think it all became ~**much more pressured**(^V)~. So, the first time around because it was kind of almost exploratory(^).

I: Yeah

S78: Definitely interested. And the interview process made me more interested(^V). •And the more I read about it, the more interested I got. But the first time around (p) while stressful, ~wasn't really stressful~ because it all felt a little bit woolly.

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I: Okay.

S78: But I think by the time **~I got that knock back~** that almost increased the sort of (P) how much I wanted to do it(^).

I: Okay.

S78: And because I decided that because I needed more one to one work, and I wasn't going to get that as a class teacher^(V), so I left my job, (p) I took a significant pay cut, (p) and **about a third of my income**

I: Oh Wow,

S78: •**And I'm a single parent as well.** (P) Umm so, I took pay cuts by third of my income to go and work at Liverpool uni umm who were doing a large-scale research study. And that involves one to one assessment(^) with children and their families(^) and, and also talking to teachers and things(^). **Which felt very relevant(^).** So, I applied for that. But before getting that one, I applied for ~lots of Assistant posts^(V)~, •got lots of interviews, but didn't quite make it (p) into the post. So, as this was going on **assistant applications, (p) interviews, (p) looking for a job,** (p) knowing that I **needed to do something** different **but(!)**, having to find that ~while~ also •teaching at the time, that also sort of ramped it up.

I: Yeah,

S78: ~I think once I was in the post~ and **got used to having less money^(V)(ch),** and that **felt quite nice,** because then it was sort of ~on a road to it(^)~.

I: Yeah.

S78: So, there's almost a sort of **lull** at that process of, I'm working towards it(p). I'm doing a job that I ~enjoy~^(V)(p). ~And~ (p) that was in sort of, so I started working there in September. So, I left teaching over the summer, working there in the September. And then obviously, **the application process** starts up again for the **deadline in December.** (p) And I think (P) there's a sort of gradual for me anyway, there was a gradual **ramping up of,** I was only on a one-year contract^(V)(p), my I'd taken a cut in income. And it's sort of okay if I don't get on this time. **What am I going to do? Am I going to find another job? Am I going to write it off?** Because, statistically the chances of getting on are so slim and you always have to have these. •**if it doesn't happen(!) if it doesn't happen(!).** ~So (p) did the application~ and **definitely did** more research about the role itself umm did some more shadowing in ~my spare time~, did more reading around the role of

educational psychology (^V)**did a lot more** reading around the history of psychology (ch). Applied to the same three universities. Umm (p) I just remember that the previous time once I had applied it was sort of okay. You know, (p) you ~it's slightly heightened(^)~.

I: Yeah.

S78: I want to know **what's going to happen(^)**. •But I remember it being very different the second time. The second time around, it was even once the application went in, it was sort of, [exhale] **okay, when will it come back? When will it come back?** And (p) then I got offered interviews at all three

I: Well done!

S78: Which was very nice. (^)which had it sort of dual sort of, •made it quite different. The first time around it was kind I've only else been offered one and this is the first time I'm applying •so I'll just go along and do my best (P). Second time around I'd already applied once(^V), **all my friends and family knew** that this was what I was aiming at, **because I'd ~lost my job~, changed jobs and things**. Umm, and knew that I was applying so when I got three interviews, it almost added (^)**an extra layer of pressure(!)(^)** because then everyone was saying "oh wow, **you're a sure thing**. You're definitely going to get one of them". And that's not actually(^) (p) (ch)statistically true. ~You're just as likely to fail~ **all three, as you are to...** and so ~that added another layer of pressure as well~. I'm gonna have to go definitely gonna have to it felt like with the job, my contract was ending. So, lots of conversations at work around... When the contracts were ending, I've got these interviews, **I've got three of them**. (p) I've got everyone telling me I'm definitely going to get on(!). So, it felt (p) **quite pressured**. Ummm

So ,I had, (p) my ~first one was~ at University D. And my car broke down two or three days beforehand. (ch)So, I had to get my mum to drive me there and stay in a hotel •overnight. Umm, and the interview, I just felt went (p) **so badly**. And it just, (P) I felt like it was good to have already been through the interview at University D because you kind of get an idea of the sort of tasks you're going to be asked to do. So that felt easier. The sort of **group tasks**, the **written tasks** on computers, umm that all felt more familiar and more relaxed, but the panel interview itself at University D felt **really, really hard**. Umm I think to invite five or maybe six panel members and It just **and it was very cold**. There's sort of No "(^)Okay, we just want to hear you know what you think about(^) (^V)none of that(!). It was sort of (p) "This is a **standardised process, you will not(!)** get any feedback, **we will not(!)** acknowledge your response". It **was very cold**. (P)And, I've spoken to other TEPs who've interviews or got on at University D. And they all felt the same way. Everyone that I spoke to including me walked away from that interview going, **No(!)**, no chance

(ch). We've not got on there. And that was that felt really(P) I think I was quite upset at first and then gradually came around to thinking well, you've got another two, **we'll call that one a practice**. (ch) I genuinely walked away from it thinking, •Well, that was a complete waste of time. Um, although it wasn't - because it was helpful to kind of give a run of it. I felt, it felt easy the second time, having more than one interview that you kind of felt like you were **getting into a groove(!)**.

I: Yeah,

S78: And the thinking around it. So, then my University D and University E interviews are about three weeks later and they were back to back one was on one day and another one was on the next day. So, I did the University D one first. And because I'd already had an interview at University D, the year before, (p) that one felt very familiar, felt much more relaxed. There were other people who were- because it's like a (ch) group day, the other people who were on it were um, it was their first time applying. So, like they were visibly nervous. I felt much more relaxed the second time around that while I knew it was going to be difficult, I at least felt like I knew (^) ~(^)what the process was(^)~. I think knowing what the **day looks like, and the process** and the sort of things you're going to be asked. **Definitely takes down the anxiety**.

I: Okay.

S78: So, I (P) did the University D one. And immediately after I drove up to University E. Went to a hotel. (ch) Sorted out my presentation **for the day after**. • and then my interview, the University E one was the following morning. Because they didn't have days at University E. You have some in the morning and some of the afternoon, so I think it was like an 8 or 8:30 start the following day. So that felt quite intense. By the by then having already done University D (p) the sort of ~prolonged stress~ from handing in. I found the time and I'd done University D and the day before and then travelled. I felt by the time I got to the University E one I felt **~really fatigued~** I almost kind of went into that one going Mehhhh (ch). Whatever. **I've ~sooo had enough~ of this now** (ch). And I just I think I went into it sort of thinking, you know, **I'll do(!) my best** •(^)but I'm actually just really tired of this whole thing now(p). Ummm, so did and(^) (p) that day was(P), I think I felt a bit more pressure in the University E one because I did my masters at University E. I did my undergrad in University E. I did my teacher training at University E. So, I felt like (p) I **should be able** to do this. And... but it was okay(^), I felt like it went okay, and then after that there was just this **massive drop**. I just felt absolutely from getting home after the University E one. Umm, I think I had a few days off work because I think I was **just** ~absolutely exhausted~. I just felt really empty. (P) And yeah, but **very nicely** got offered at ~University D and University D~.

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I: Okay.

S78: And got, I was on the waitlist umm on the reserve list for University E. University E was my first choice because I live near University E umm, so and I think I was like **third**.

I: Okay,

S78: So, I rang up and said to them, I'm really interested in University E, but I'm scared. Should I hang on and wait and see if it moves or should I accept? I said, I've got offers at other ones, should I accept them(^)? And they said, "oh, it always moves quite a bit. Definitely hang on". And so, University D was quite a long way away, away from me.

I: Okay.

S78: So, I um, it was sort of like University D and University E are my closest two and University D was sort of •just in case.

I: Right.

S78: Um, so I tell University D straightaway, thanks very much, but **I won't be accepting**.

I: Yeah.

S78: And then hung on and hung (p)on for the, ~I think it's a week, isn't it?~

I: Yeah

S78: So then, I had a week of sort of(p) constantly checking, trying to resist ringing up University E (ch) to see if it had moved and it moved **one place** (ch) the whole week. They said it was the least it had **ever moved**. So literally on the last morning, (p)I thought, well, you know, I can't hang on anymore and I accepted University D. But actually,(ch) (p) • this is probably just me sort of making it okay in my head. I'm actually really pleased I ended up at University D, just because I always **really liked** ~the University D ethos~. But University E was physically closer. **~And University D let you do your own research(^)~** rather than you sort of being part of a research idea that's already established. I quite liked the idea as well, I think 'cause I've got a research background, I quite like the idea of doing my own thing a bit more(^). And I would have been very happy to be at University E too. So, I think it was that sort of (P)

Yeah(p), that sort of drop. And then the list again when you're waiting for the results. Um and then that just sort of stage because of that week of being on the waitlist, and then almost just absolute **relief**, at the end of it (ch). Just, **oh my God, I don't**, and not even (P)I think part of it is relief at getting on the course because it's something you want to do and something that •you work very hard towards. But I think there's also that relief of ~I don't have to go through that application process again(^)~. Because the idea of going through ~all of that~, (P) and then the following year, having to do all of that again, having **had two rounds under your belt(!)**, where you haven't got through. And, that's sort of, the idea of expectation increasing. Just Yeah, I was. I was, I was grateful I got on the course. But I was also grateful that I **would not(!)** have to apply. I know a few people who've applied for four or five times. Someone who's on my course gone on their fourth time, I knew someone on the masters who **had applied ~seven(!) times~**. And I just think that must be that's your whole life on hold while you wait, to see if you're going to get on, •that just sounds horrendous.

I: yeah,

S78: Is that okay? Sorry, I know that was long

I: Yeah. No, no, not at all. Honestly, not at all. I think

S78: it felt easier to tell it as a story(ch).

I: What, than to live it?

S78: I like narrative.

I: [Discussion removed as unrelated to the interview or research]. You took me through kind of the journey particularly of **kind of before** the application form itself. And I guess the interview, is there anything that stands out about kind of, I guess the application form opening and closing? Is there anything in that window that is salient for you?

S78: I think (p). Between the application opening and closing. (P) It's kind of because it opens quite early, doesn't it? You've got, •you've got a decent run at it. (P) I think to do with the application form itself, the fact that it's **a single application**, but you're **writing** (p) generally **to three different institutions**, or two, and different universities are very different. And **their courses are very different. And what they're looking for can be quite different(!) • as well**. And it is, it's a small application form. (p) Which means that you're effectively trying to write in three different ways for three different audiences but **only on one small very concise form** and I think that's, that can be quite stressful that can be quite anxiety provoking

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of, am I getting enough film for the ~university I want~ but then Am I making sure that I'm covering sort of the universities who are backup as well. I think the first (P) time around, I tried to sort of write everything for everyone,

I: Right

S78: And I think the second time around, University E are really specific they give you like a **criterion**,

I: okay

S78: Um a criteria list. They are they actively give it to everyone at open days, it's on the website, it's everywhere.

I: okay.

S78: And they basically say, we will be scoring you on these (p) criteria. "If it's not related to one of these criteria, we won't look at it, so don't bother putting it in". Um and basically, this is all we look at every candidate will be scored according to these criteria. And I think because **they were so specific**, that made it easier.

I: right

S78: Um so I literally wrote my application for University E, and then just added in a few little bits **for the ones(^)** because it felt like at least then I had structure.

I: Yeah.

S78: So, to work with Whereas, University D and much more. "Well, we just want to see who you are". (ch) •, they are just like, "we just want to see what everyone brings". And **you're like, but what do you want? (!)** (ch). Um, And University D, I think were very academically focused, **which again is quite different**. So, it's the three that I applied for, felt like very different universities and **were purely a product** of where I lived because I had a family. So, I couldn't move house. And so, I think that made it more difficult. (^)I think the application itself because it's quite concise. It's both helpful. **And not**. It feels really hard to write.

I: Yeah,

S78: Because you've got to keep it so short. But actually, it really makes you refine down what's important. It does cut out a lot of waffle and I do love to waffle. (ch). So, I think it's, it's helpful and it's not. If you see what I mean? I think it increases the

difficulty. But it also **makes you really home in on** the information that matters. And think and think about what matters. And after the application had gone in (p) the first time around, I remember feeling like a lull of the relief of •Oh it's in. And now I can just, I'll wait until January when it's supposed to be coming in(^), but I can't do anything before then and so it's going to be okay. But the second time around from when the application went in, **I don't think my stress levels dropped at all**. I think from, from one the application went in (p) to two when I, (P) um, I think when I got accepted, and when I when I got the results, you know that when you log into the website **on that horrendous day** and (ch) to have a look, um I don't think my stress levels dropped from the moment from sort of doing the application, right up until when I got told that I definitely had to place at least one (p) university and then sort of that carried on to during that week. But I think from the moment I knew I had somewhere. (P) It' felt easier.

I: Yeah.

S78: So, you're just. **And there's ~these forums as well~**. I don't know if you know go to Facebook forum(^)?

I: Yeah.

S78: **Oh God(!)**. That thing is **just(!) (p) everyone(!)** on there is in a state of heightened panic and anxiety. Constantly saying, “[increased pace] does anyone know what this university is looking for? Is anyone you know, they're going to be I've heard from a friend of a friend whose aunts, uncles, dog works in the office of the course and they're going to be releasing the results tomorrow”. So, I think that, that's there's some helpful information on there. But I think all of that really heightens anxiety as well. Because even when you're not thinking about it, that's pinging through all the time, so it's almost waiting process and everyone trying to interpret, and second guess just becomes **part of your everyday(!) ~conversation~**

I: Right

S78: And so I think the second time around, I think I **~used~** a few of those forums when I was writing the application, and while waiting for interview days to come out because sometimes interview days are late or things like that, so it's and people also swap interview days around if they have two on the same day. So, I think I kept it up until that point, and then I turned them off. Because (p) it just felt like that was, it feels **very heightened** or it felt **very heightened to me**. Yeah, is that helpful?

I: It's all been helpful. I keep kind of trying to say to participants, like, anything you share is that's the lovely thing about unstructured interviews and narrative. There's no wrong.

S78: it's never wrong.

I: Yeah. It's your truth. So, ya know, is really helpful. You kind of helped me understand a bit about kind of your emotions. Relief is definitely one that you've kind of spoken about it. A few times, kind of different points. Stress was kind of your first one that you highlighted(ch).

[post interview information and reflection]

S78: I think we talked about that as TEPs on the first day when we also got there, and you've got that imposter syndrome. For the first Well, (ch) constantly (ch), but a lot of it in the first week.

I: Yeah.

S78: Where everyone just sort of sits there going. Am I actually here(^)? Look at these amazingly impressive people around me, am I I'm not one of these people. And but I think everyone who I spoke to bar a couple, actually. Um but most people who've been trying to apply either for a while or have been thinking about it for a while or been working towards it for a while. Um were just massively relieved **just to have made it**.

I: Yeah.

S78: Um, and I think the only people who didn't feel that was as heightened by the imposter syndrome. There are a couple of people on my course, where they just sort of, it wasn't really a career choice. They heard about it. It was interesting so they thought they'd apply and then got on. (ch) There was someone who worked in the SEND office.

I: Okay,

S78: And who'd worked with educational psychologist thought it'd be interesting and thought she'd give it a go applying. She previously worked in schools. She is really amazing. She definitely deserves to be on. Um and someone else who was a social worker. Um who was really enjoying social work but fancied a bit of a change in law should apply and got on. So, I think for them, it wasn't that same sense of relief, but definitely still the imposter stuff. Yeah. But there's also people have been working towards it for **years and years**. Where it's sort of like, I've made it. •I've done a couple of open days as well. 'Cause, I'm at University D now. And I've done those. Do you do them for your course?

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I: Yeah, I do them too

S78: I've done a couple of those. And it always just feels like there's just an atmosphere of tension and sort of fear and anticipation and um almost desperation. That sort of: What do we what do we need to do? We're gonna watch anything, any phone, you can throw us. So, I think it's a very stressful process. And I think the fact that, well I know the numbers have gone up this year.

I: Yes.

S78: Um but I think the fact that it's such a bottleneck, the fact that the chances are so low, and that the line between people who get on and people who don't, is so, wafer thin that. Um I think that really heightens it, you sort of feel like you have to be the best, best of the best. And that's not necessarily the case. It's who you are, it's how you perform on a day. It's what they're looking for it's what skill set, what cohort they're trying to slot you in with.

I: And who else is applied that year? I think

S78: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely.

I: Is there anything you think that could be changed or improved about the process that may alleviate some of the emotions that you've described?

S78: I think, if you could write separate applications for different institutions that would help, because then you'd feel like, you're not, having to juggle quite so many plates in that one concise application. I think that would be helpful, because then you don't feel like you're trying to be all things to all people. Um, I think that would, I think, if there was some sort of, and I know this is really hard, but if there could be some sort of grouping for interview days, then people aren't, because I know on the groups people were talking about I've been offered two interviews, but they're both on the same day and I can't move it which means I can't go to one of them. Can anyone swap and then swap. So, I think if there can be some sort of arrangement and like I said, I had one of mine in the afternoon in University D, and the next one first thing in the morning, the next day University E. So, some sort of thought about when,

I: okay,

S78: When interviews are, I think would be really helpful. I found the criteria that University E offered very helpful. And it wasn't anything super specific, but at least gave you things to talk to you know, they basically said we're looking for, I don't

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know, this level of experience of working with children and young people between these ages. So, you knew that you have to talk about that?

I: Yeah,

S78: Do you see what I mean? They talked about you know, you must have relevant experience in related areas. So, you knew you needed to talk about - it just basically gave you a bullet list of things that you needed to make sure you included explicitly in your application.

I: A bit like a person spec isn't it?

S78: It was exactly that and I found that much more helpful using that the second time sort of tick off, okay, I've spoken about that. Mmm what else, more places (ch)

I: Baby steps, there's more than when we started.

S78: Definitely. And I think that will help. Will help sort of alleviate that sort of I've got a one in two hundred and fifty chance of doing this. Um, so yeah. I also think. I think some of it's also about self-management as well. So, the stuff with the forums which really increased anxiety, they are helpful, but it's also about sort of understanding that they can be unhelpful as well. And that's sort of overanalysing of what do you want? And yeah give me anything that sort of maybe they do just want what they say they want. And I know that people try to say that because I I've said it at open days.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah absolutely

S78: So yeah, I think I think there are sort of things to do with the process. I think it is helpful to have set days for the deadline for everyone. I think it is helpful that everyone finds out on the same day. Because I think when you hear about the interviews, everyone finding out about different interviews at different universities on different days that can increase stress levels, 'casue you sort of like oh wow, University A, have already sent out theirs and it's three weeks later in University E haven't. So, I think I think maybe having a set release date for when the interviews are out might be helpful. Um because then you're not hearing about other people and you haven't heard about yours, then you're contacting the University and they're saying we're still working it out. Bu then other people of someone's uncle's, Dad's dog. Knows about their. (ch). Yeah, so it's I think that might help as well. Yeah, it's tough isn't it? It just the fact that it's a bottle neck and so many people want to do it just makes it innately, stressful. Yes, I think I think those things would help ,would have helped me.

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I: Yeah.

S78: Anyway, another point it was really stressful actually. And this is only because my referees both times are really rubbish. Um was that you have to have your referees' references in first, don't you? Yeah.

And then if you don't get those in, then you can't put your application in. And I know a couple of people whose referees didn't get theirs in on time because they didn't understand how serious that deadline is. And so, they couldn't apply. And my referee, basically, my employer at the time, it was just because she was really, really busy. And she and she literally put hers in about 20 minutes before the final deadline. And that was like a week of chasing her. And but then because she was my employer that felt really difficult constantly asking her so, so have you done it yet? So, can you do it? I'm trying to get across the toilet if you don't do this, this is not one of those deadlines where you're like, Mehh, it's a couple of days later, I won't be able to apply in this application form that I've been working on for weeks now.

I: Yeah,

S78: I can't, I can't use, and I will have to wait another year before reapplying again. So, I think if they could make the gap between the referees, applications longer, and they're also a little bit of leeway in that as in if they don't get a referee's application in on time, there is a notification process saying the deadline has now passed. So, you have, and for that to come from them?

I: Yeah,

S78: Do you know what I mean?

I: yeah.

S78: I think that must be stressful. I remember that being particularly stressful. Because, my application was done but chasing her when she was my boss. So, there's that power differential as well. Felt really difficult. So, something around the way referees,

I: okay

S78: references are gathered and the impact that has on whether you can apply or not the fact if they don't come in you just can't apply. Feels very feels very just really harsh. If you've got someone who's literally, I don't know who's ill, yeah, or their partner becomes sick or has an accident or whatever then all of a sudden for

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completely for reasons completely beyond your control, you're not applying for a year.

I: It's been so fascinating. Really fascinating.

S78: Good I'm glad you're finding it interesting. No, it is important how people can access the profession then, isn't it?

I: Yeah.

S78: Because if we're, if we're not just taking teachers anymore if we're broadening it out. We're saying we're wanting people with a broad range of skills from a broad range of backgrounds, and that is beneficial, which I think is, then you want that - the application process to be accessible. And a bit yeah, it didn't feel super easy. It felt difficult.

I: Yeah. Thank you.

S78: You're welcome. Thank you for the chat.

Appendix 8 – Sample of segmentation

A83: Yeah. Okay, errrrrm (P). ~So~, I think the first thing that comes to mind is **definitely stressful. Very anxiety provoking**, errrr a **lot of uncertainty**. Ummm, I **felt competition** and (P) also I had no previous experience of applying. I had no previous experience of **applying for anything** in England really. (p) So, things are also a bit like culturally, errrrm (p) sort of conditioned. (P) Yeah, there are some cultural aspects so, (P) I found myself like **asking** the few people I knew here **how you, do things(^)** what you put in the **CV(^)**, how you **structure it(^)**? **~How you dress up for, for an interview?(^)**~ Like things that - I wouldn't have known, like, that are different, different in my country.

I: Yeah

A83: So, there were a lot of uncertainties, and a lot of things I didn't know how to handle. And that **was the first time** for me so, there was a lot of **~learning(^)** as well ~as well, so it was definitely a **~useful! Experience~** in terms of managing stress and (p) ermmm, yeah, learning how to what, **what to** put in a 9p)statement, a personal statement, I had never written one before(^).

I: Okay.

A83: ermmm (-) Yeah, and again, how you structure your CV, how CVs are usually done in this country. And (-) and also, I guess the, the interview itself was part of the application process or are you just interested in the first part? or shall I?

I: I think you can share whatever you want. There's no, no rules. It's just kind of thinking about from the very beginning of the process wherever that was for you. Some people that would have been 10 years ago when they knew they wanted to be an EP out of their A levels. And for some people it would have been the before applying. So, kind of from wherever that journey starts for you, to the point of interview.

A83: Okay, so... I guess(p) it started in~ a bit of an **unusual** way maybe compared to some other people who are British and grew up in this country, because I was already working in the educational psychology field **in my own country(^)**.

I: Right

A83: But I wasn't happy with the (p) way things were **for me** and I wanted to **move abroad**, and I wanted to develop (p) **my kind of profession, really(!^)**, my errrrm. Yeah to move on in my professional development and errrrm, my own country **didn't allow me to do that** in the way I wanted. When I was deciding where, where to move, (p) I was actually, my first like choice from the heart really was to go to a **different country(^) •not the UK (V)**. But then the main reason why I decided that I actually wanted to move to London, or to the UK was because of this doctorate so it seemed like the **perfect way** for me **~to move~ (P)** to... move on and to **develop(!)** as a professional as an EP. (p) It seemed the **perfect way to do it(!)**, because I found out how the doctorate was(^) and it was like the placement(^) and the academic part(^) and the programme was seemed interesting(V) the fact that the profession is kind of errrrm there is a clear professional path in this country. So, if you **manage** to get into the programme then you are qualified EP, that's a protected title. So, in other countries it's not that like that...

I: Right

A83: So there were many, many reasons why I felt this was wanted what I wanted, but **I already knew that I wanted to be an EP** because I was, I mean, that started when I was aware, first was aware of that when I started my psychology degree, like my undergraduate degree in psychology,

I: Okay

A83: In my own country. And then (p) after that, I started working in the field and I **was even more sure(!)** that that's what I wanted.

I: Right

A83: So, I guess what brought me to the doctorate was the **desire to improve(!)**. To (p) make progress with my career as an EP and feel... I felt that I was missing. I was lacking(p) ... There were things lacking in my (p) **training** and in my professional **experience** and in the way the profession was, was handled in my country. And so, the doctorate was the perfect way for me to develop these things.

I: Okay.

A83: Ummm (p) And so (p) when I moved to the UK, my **~main goal~** was to **get in**, basically. To manage to get a place ~and I was ~ hoping to get a place with a bursary(^) scheme(^), but I was also determined to make that **~like a family project~** with the support of my partner(^) and to **fund it(^) (-) if necessary (^)**...

I: Right

A83: There was a high level of (p) determination and that I **really, really wanted this** (p) and **again**, it was one of the reasons why Well, I moved to this country so, it was part of a family project, let's say for me and my partner. And **of course**, he had his own) kind of goals.

I: Of Course,...

A83: Yeah, it was part of the project. And then I spent **~a year~ preparing(^)**, •No, that's not true. I **moved** the UK **~in~** the summer (**p**) 2016 and I applied in December that yeah. So yeah, I had a **few months(^)** to prepare and work my application

I: Mhmm

A83: And that was **very, very** difficult because, well I moved in August so that left me with **three months and a half, basically(^)**.

I: Okay.

A83: And also, as an EU applicant, I had to prove that my English was **good enough**. So, I attended an English course to prove my English and prepare for the English exam **I had to take(^)** and then there was a **lot(^)** of anxiety around (p) being able to **get the grades(^)** I needed from that exam. So, there was a kind of a **requirement** to apply for the doctorate as an EU applicant and the requirement was to have, • I don't remember, I think a certain **level** of fluency in all the domains, so: speaking, writing, reading, listening. And so yeah, there was, of course, if I that was the kind of the **first requirement if I didn't meet that**, I wouldn't have been able to

(p) apply at all. So, (-) the beginning the anxiety was around that and then when I finally managed to get the grades I **~needed~**, that was a (p) **relief**. I Had a kind of a couple of days **~happiness(!)~ and everything ~seemed possible(!)~**. And I felt like **yeah, ~maybe I can do it~**. And then I started working on my personal statement and again, it felt like• **~No, I can't do it(V)~**. (ch) I **had never (ch) done a personal statement ~in my whole life~**. (-) Even less so in **another language(^)**. I **didn't know** what was expected of me. There is **no information online** on how to do these things. I guess, (p) (ch) the process, (p) especially for coming from another country, I think where things are not (-) fair in these situations, most of the times - it seemed **very fair**. So, it **seemed fair (~ ^) that** there wasn't a way to get **information or advice or help** so there were **just instructions(^)**, like broad instructions of what (p) you had **kind of submit** and that was it (P).

I: Yeah.

A83: And then **now** in retrospective, I **guess**, I've developed this opinion like that that people who managed to have a job as an assistant **might** have an advantage in the sense that if **you are inside the system ~you start to~** think as an EP, or least see where you're thinking **should** be heading towards. Ummm (p) But that's the **~only~** way you can have an advantage but at that time, I didn't really know (^).

I: Yeah

A83: I was trying to get in contact with EPs.(p) But **just by sending, sending random emails really!** because I **didn't know anyone(V)**. I sent emails to (p) like **~associations~** and **~private EPs~** this just to have **contact**. I wanted to do some **shadowing!** but of course no one **let me**. ~I just do some **volunteering** and even that was **difficult~** and in the end I managed to volunteer for some months in a special school(^) and in a nursery setting, you know, I was a qualified, well I had received the qualification from the BPS saying that my title was **recognised**. So I was, I was, of course, I wasn't qualified as an EP in this country, but my degree in psychology was valid here.

I: Right

A83: So, I was saying, **you know(^)**, I'm a person with (p) a **degree!** in psychology, ~experience in working with children with **SEN~**, can I volunteer? and even that, it was difficult (ch). So, it was **frustrating** (p). And ummm, while I mean, I didn't manage to get any volunteering experience **prior** to submitting my application that that I managed to do that **only afterwards** , ~so I think, ~from February of the next year~, something like that.

I: Okay.

A83: So, by December,(p) I only I only received **one email** from **one EP** •who kindly replied to my **request** for information and she said I couldn't shadow her. She just gave me a couple of encouraging kind (ch) of tips but very broad, nothing - **nothing really (P) helpful**. It was more like **emotionally encouraging (ch)**. (P)And so, ~I had to~ (p) basically work on my application, yeah, **my own**, my sister in law helped me with **structuring** my CV a bit(^). Like she said like "**I think that in England (^)**, you wouldn't put these things in this way, you would probably **start with this instead of that**" but she, of course, she works in a deal if you like marketing

I: mmmm

A83: So, she was just giving me some very general tips •on (p) Yeah, aha **language**. or I had, she **proofread** my application - **that was helpful (V)**. Yeah, **these things(^)** were really **stressful and frustrating** because I wanted to **give my best(!)** (-)and to **make sure** that my experiences **were there(!)**, and my motivation was there **in the statement** and in the, in the **application form(^)**. But I felt like if I could have received some **help**, you know, I would have **had** maybe a chance(^), a **fair chance**, but by the end of the application process, like I felt like no (ch), **this rubbish** it's never gonna be good enough.

I: ohhhh

A83: I **did my best**. but I don't feel like this **stands(V)** out, you know? (P) And then. And then (-) after I submitted, yeah, there was the• waiting for (p) the next phase, and when I got the **~invitation for the interview(^!)~** then again, (ch) there was a lot of (ch) like, couple days of, **oh maybe(^) this is possible(^) after all(^)**. And (p)

my partner and encouraging me a lot saying stuff like **"ahhhh (^) ~I knew – I knew it~.(^!). I had no doubts (^)". •Yeah(✓)**, and then again there was the **preparing** for the interview (p) and sooo **(ch)**. I went back to being **(ch) very** stressed and very **insecure** and I (P). I found ummm. (p). I had put a •how do you say that? • Like a message on the on a message board in a university, •in well I'm not sure if I should mention places but•, in the county where I was leaving. So wasn't living in London at that time.

I: Okay.

A83: So, in the University of the place where I was living, the local university, and I put a note saying, -• I asked for permission first•. saying, "I'm a **~foreigner ~psychologist~ or ~aspiring psychologist~**, something like that. I would **like** to find someone a postgraduate student to have some **conversations** (p) errrr around psychological topics to improve my English, my **technical** English and luckily I found a very nice guy who helped me out just to have some (p) practice of **speaking(^)** **really(✓)** about psychology, because I had (ch) never done (ch) that before in English. And ummm (p) him being a postgraduate, in psychology he had some background knowledge for **~research~** and **psychology(^)**. So, we could (p) practice that. We did some mock interviews, but yeah, he wasn't in -his field was **completely** different from child and educational psychology(^), but still, (p) we did some mock interviews and that was helpful. Also, because he was **British**. You know, he knew what he had been through some interviews himself. So he **knew** how to kind of structure it a bit.(p) like he had some ideas on **potential questions** or (p) **very broad vague ones**, but at least they were around psychology and I Practiced with him I felt **supported** just by the fact that I could (p) have someone to practice with. Someone who at least knew something about psychology and the process of applying for a doctorate. (p) ummm and **that(!)** was helpful.

Ummm **Still I felt like alone a bit in this**. Now I know that there was a Facebook group, but I've not been on Facebook. So (p) maybe that would have helped a little with not feeling **~alone~**-(p) and connecting with others on the **~same journey~**. and maybe **~sharing~ ~same~ fears** -That would be would have been helpful. errrrm (p)It felt (o) (^) It all felt (p) very stressful(^). If I look back, I don't feel any **positive** kind of memory about those months.

I: Okay

A83: (P) There's ~nothing~. Like (!) I see it as a very relevant learning opportunity(^), but there's ~nothing~ happy about it. Errrr. On an emotional side it ~•wasn't (V) (-). there was excitement(!^) but most of it, it was feeling that I wasn't good enough (-), feeling that I was bigger than me.

I: Right.

A83: It probably also relates to my insecurities and the fact that (p) I don't have a lot of(ch) self-esteem(^) but let's say that the whole process brought out the bad, the worst (p)

I: Oh gosh

A83: Of my, of the way I think I feel about myself. (p) And then came the interview(^). That was tough(!), but I have to say that from the moment I met the tutors, I mean, the interview I did is in the university I'm currently on training in. I have to say that the moment I met them, they made me feel a bit calmer(V) because they were super(!) nice and lovely.

I: Mhmm

A83: And I think, and down to earth! as well (p). I felt like I was a(p) a human being(!) again and not (p) just an application number.

I: Yeah.

A83: And I felt like I was worth (ch) some human kind of contact and reassurance, really(!).

I: Okay

A83: (p) So that that helped. I was so nervous. Yeah, I mean, in my own country. I went through two VIVAs, let's say, the equivalent of live in England. And those were moments which I recall as(p) among the most, like anxiety provoking moments in my

whole life. **Not even then, I was so nervous.** The day of the interview is definitely the way I was most nervous in my **whole life**.

I: Okay

A83: And I remember trying to drink (ch) some water, (ch)and my hand was shaking **so much** like didn't even (ch) reach my mouth. (ch) I gave up the whole idea of drinking some water. (p) But yeah, and it was also **aware** that it **showed** how nervous(^) I was, •which was making me feel even more nervous(^). Although, the tutors, well I shouldn't say tutors, really because the panel was made up of different.

I felt like they weren't judging me for being (ch) that nervous and they were trying everything they could to **be fair(!)** not say **help me(!)** out of course. But so, to make me feel that **human connection**. That **helped** and I also (p) found the questions a bit, (p) like one question in particular, I thought it wasn't, (P) it wasn't very clear because it was like in retrospective I can say it was a **bit culturally biased(^)** in the way that a psychology is thought and spoken of in this country. So, in my country, for example, you would never (p) like the question was about applying psychology. errrr "Tell me about (p) •how you have applied psychology?" No, I don't know, **something about applying. psychology**, and it is something you say this country and **now I know what it means**. But at **that** time, during the interview, I felt like I didn't know.(p) I **didn't understand** what the question meant(^).

Appendix 9 – Separation of a transcript into indexical and non-indexical features

Robyn's Introduction

Errrrr yeah(!). So, I applied twice. The first time I interviewed at University C, but I didn't get any interviews at the English universities. (P). And I was really ummm **really quite despondent** I think the first time when I didn't get on. Errm because I felt like umm, (p) you know I'd worked quite hard on my application and that kind of thing. But actually, now I look back I think it was for the best(^)

Before it Even Started

Yeah. I think **in terms of preparing**, umm it was one of those things where. It was ~at the back of my mind~, (p) like bubbling

So, umm, sort of like the, the closer it got to the application process opening(p), erm, **I think the more heightened my thoughts** process, my emotions ramped up(^). Because it was sort of umm, coming up soon. Knowing that I had to focus on applying it, applying to it(^).

And then yeah, (p) so that was sort of before. I think yeah. Generally, it started off quite calmly and then it sort of got a bit like **"okay" this is something I need to do now. Something I need to start thinking about**

Strain

Errrr. •Gosh. I think I was not necessarily people [hindering] but trying to balance it alongside working fulltime. Umm **and I was doing a masters** at the time as well. So, it wasn't necessarily umm people who were hindering but trying to fit it into, into life. And, sort of giving it the attention that it **~needed really~**.

Yeah. Ummm yeah, I think, I think you put a bit more pressure on yourself the second time as well because it's something you really want, but I think found it (P) it easier the second time because I knew what was coming and I'd done it once before and that kind of thing

Writing the Application

Errrr. I think it was quite a stressful experience(^). Errrr. (p) Cuz, you know you sort of got this **~one opportunity~** to showcase your skills. And justify **why they should pick you potentially for an interview**(^).

Whereas I felt, even though the application process was **stressful**, Errrrrrrr a lot of the universities have sort of specifications for that kind of thing(^)

So, I felt like I **had a bit more ~guidance~** about what I needed to be putting in. Errrr but I think, I found the application process more stressful because **that was the hardest thing to get spot on(!)** (p) with the amount of people applying

Errrm. I found **that a bit stressful as well**. And I think the other part of the process that, errrm that stressed me out. (ch). Stressful is a key word in this interview... It was the fact that you have to rely on your referees(^) to submit on time, in order for you to apply(^). Err, I think that's quite a hard part of the process because potentially, **you're placing all your trust in those people** to submit it in time for you. Errrm, Yeah. Sort of a little thought process there.

Errrm. Yeah, and I, I found the word restriction quite difficult as well. And I understand that it cuz they want you to be concise to demonstrate that you have that, that skill, errm but I think **it's quite hard** (p) trying to say, errm what you want to in a small amount of words.

Ummm, err but yeah, I think **stress(!) is the key one to be honest** because they're so ummm well the English unis more than University C. University C is quite lenient about stuff. But the English ones are very intense on things like if things aren't in by this point then that's it.

Errrm. And also, the fact that it's the same application for all universities (...) I found, **I found that quite tricky** because, errrm how to sort of(p) errm, you're trying to tailor, but obviously you don't want to tailor it too specifically to one universities criteria, when it's going to three separate universities(^).

Support

Umm, so I, one of my **very good friends**. Um, she was very helpful during the process. She sorts of proofread my application about 5 or 6 times.

So, every time I sort of edited it, umm, she'd have another look over it to see what she thought. (p) Umm and **that was very helpful**. Also, a first-year student on the course, who um, she sent me her application so I could have look at the way she structured hers and errm she also **proofread it for me as well** before it went off.

Umm so definitely I think, umm drawing on other people was quite beneficial during the process.

Errm, I think stress but it's also, I think, I think it's quite an important process as well, not in terms of necessarily for the official application process but in terms of like the Facebook group. I found that quiet, **I felt quite supported in there**. I felt that was quite a positive thing, to be in the lead going up to it.

Yeah. Errm so I think **that was quite nice**. Because errrm, you know, ~if I was worrying~ about something, like should I include this? there were people in there who could give you the answer, that you could draw(!) on. **Whether you were wrong or that kind of thing**, you know. Whether I needed to put stuff in **the extra information box(^)** or things like that. And there were people who were in the group who were in the, the universities I was applying to. They were able to sort of say, no that's fine. You don't need that.

So, think that was quite a reassuring place to be, ~**quite a calming place to be(!)** ~. because everyone else was going through the same sort of motions as you(^). So, you had that sort of (P) that sort of weird support network because you're sort of all competing against each other but you're also all in a place where you understand how stressful it is.

So, I had friends and students to look at my application and things like that. I think that helped keep me a bit, Ummm a bit less stressed and but more focused on it. Because (p) I knew that she'd been able to get on the course I knew that any feedback I had from her would be beneficial because she had quite a good understanding of what they were looking for.

It's Been Submitted

That was sort of before. And then afterwards, I think it was ermm.(p) (^)It wasn't **quite relief that it was done** and that it had gone. I think I **sort of flitted** between, well it's done now and absolutely well, there's nothing I can do about it. What will happen, will happen kind of thing. Umm To then okay, **fine it's gone**. But then all of a sudden be like, Ooo what if I'd tweaked this, what if I'd added that bit in? Or did I change that bit that I was going to change. Umm but **I tried really hard not to re-read** it. I sort of, I was trying to stay in the mindset of: Well it's done, there's nothing else I can do now. **There's no point (p) ruminating over it.**
... **There are peaks and troughs** in the application process

Waiting to Hear About Interviews

And things like that so **that was the hardest thing to get cut down from the application process the interview process(^)**
So, I think that's why I found that more stressful. Because I knew once I sort of got past that bit the **odds were a lot better(^)**. Not that it should be considered an odds thing but obviously you do think about it that way
So, I think ummm (p) Yeah, I think (p) **the [interview] preparation process for that was the hardest bit for me.** because I had no idea what I should be sort of revising or what I should be preparing

I Got One!

yeah. Umm (P) yeah, I dunno. I found **the interview days** really interesting. **Ahh I think they were weirdly enjoyable (ch).** You know, because it was an opportunity to meet a lot of different people with lots of different experiences and (P) yeah think, it's also a time to show off what you know and **learn** from other people as well. I think they were, awfully interesting days anyway because everyone is feeling quite nervous you want to show off the best of your abilities.

Summary

Errm, Cuz I think, I think something you find it that it is **a really tough process (!)** and you know often it is more than one try.

Ummm so I do think, it did teach me to pick myself up, brush myself off and yeah, if this is what I want then I just gotta keep going with it. So, I definitely think there were positive in there as well.

Errm, •I'm tryna think. Errm, I think ~stress~ is the key one to be honest. Just because it was so important to me. **And you know, I place a lot of value on this course.** Because it was something that I really wanted to do. And I was passionate about. Ummm I think pressure is another I can think of. **Because it's not something that you put yourself through unless you really want to do it(^).** Cuz it is a hard application process.

And I think (p) it was more the pinch points where that stress was sort of highlighted. When it was coming up to **references** needing to be submitted and also when it's coming up to sort of the **deadlines to submit**

Reflection

So, I think even though at the time I was really disappointed(^V), actually when I look back now, I think it was for the best. Probably the second time round, (p) **even though I was still stressed doing it**, I wasn't as stressed at the first time(^) because I had an idea of the process, and what to expect and that kind of thing. Ummm I think for the second time as well, I had (P) more people to draw on.

Errm I think what I would take from it is possibly. Errm I think yeah, I definitely learnt skills, but I think **patience is really a big one** Because, you commit quite early on obviously. It might be sort of 6-8 weeks well longer than that before you hear back. errrm so I think you sought of have to learn patience in the process. I think (p) errm it also improved my writing style and like that kind of skill as well. Errrm because err I **applied twice, and I didn't get anywhere the first year.** So, I think I really had to ~re-evaluate~ errm from on the second year and I think it really developed my resilience as well.

I think it's after stepping away (p) and having that time. Ummm I think at the time when you're in the process you're in such, you're sort of going through peaks and troughs having lots of different emotions. Sometimes it's sort of hard to sort of reflect in the moment. I think having that time away from it now, you know - over a year, I find that I can sit and look back and actually think about it a bit more

Because the experience I got between my first and second year of applying, I think put me in a much better position for when I came to apply again ummm, and I think it

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gave me that space where I could really actually think about **the sort of the psychology** and how that I reflect still.

Umm but I think that the universities **try their best to make them as nice(!) as they can be**, there's no real (p) way to make an interview process nice. But I suppose they try and do what they can (p) by to make it as smooth as possible and to give you as good of an opportunity as possible to show yourself off I guess

Appendix 10 – Re-storied narrative sample

Robyn's First attempt

Robyn applied twice for the doctorate.

The first-time, she interviewed at and did not get any interviews at the English universities. Unfortunately, Robyn was unsuccessful, and this left her feeling quite despondent. She knew she'd worked hard on her application!

Build up to Attempt No 2

After her first submission Robyn reflected that perhaps it was all for the best, she walked away from it calmly. As the year between the first and second try developed, the thought of applications was bubbling at the back of Robyn's mind. The closer they got the more heightened her thoughts became and the more her emotions ramped up. The thought of "there's something I need to do now, there's something I need to start thinking about seeped into her consciousness.

The Strains

Robyn REALLY wanted this! Although people didn't hinder her application process, trying to balance the whole with working fulltime and completing a masters made it hard for Robyn to give her application the attention it really needed. She put increasing levels of pressure on herself as it was her second attempt.

Writing the Applications

In spite of these pressures this time seemed slightly easier. She had written an application before. Keeping these rational thoughts at the forefront of her mind was hard. "I've only got one opportunity to showcase my skills. How will I justify why they should pick me for an interview" Whirled the thoughts in Robyn's mind? Robyn remembered that a lot of universities had specifications as guidance to write an application against. This gave her some idea about what she should include. "But so many people are applying! Each uni wanted something different. How will I tailor what I include and demonstrate my skills with such a word restriction for those English unis?" Questioned Robyn. It was so hard and stressful she wondered if she'd do enough to get it spot on?

So, I applied twice. The first time I interviewed at University C, but I didn't get any interviews at the English universities. I was really ummm **really quite despondent** I think the first time when I didn't get on. Errm I felt like umm, (p) you know I'd worked quite hard on my application and that kind of thing.

But actually, now I look back I think it was for the best(^). **terms of preparing**, umm it was one of those things where. It was ~at the back of my mind~, (p) like **bubbling**. So, umm, sort of like the, the closer it got to the application process opening(p), errm, **I think the more heightened my thoughts** process, my emotions ramped up(^)... **"okay" this is something I need to do now. Something I need to start thinking about**

Errrm. •Gosh. I think **trying to balance it alongside working fulltime. Umm and I was doing a masters** at the time as well. So, it wasn't necessarily umm people who were hindering but trying to fit it into, into life. And, sort of giving it the attention that it ~**needed really**~. Yeah. Ummm yeah, I think, I think you put a bit more pressure on yourself the **second time as well because it's something you really want,**

I think **stress(!) is the key one to be honest** ...I think found it (P) it easier the **second time** because I knew what was coming and I'd done it once before and that kind of thing. Whereas I felt, even though the application process was **stressful**, ... lot of the universities have sort of specifications for that kind of thing(^). So, I felt like I **had a bit more ~guidance~** about what I needed to be putting in. ... I found the word restriction quite difficult as well. **And I understand that it cuz they want you to be concise to demonstrate that you have that, that skill, errm but I think it's quite hard** ... the fact that it's the same application for all universities...I found, **I found that quite tricky** because, errrm how to sort of(p) errm, you're trying to tailor Errm but I think, I found the application process **more stressful because that was the hardest thing to get spot on(!) (p)** with the amount of people applying

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At least University C wasn't as strict. Exhaled Robyn

Systems of Support

Robyn spent a lot of time battling with her thoughts and feelings, but during that second attempt, she wasn't alone. One of her very good friends was helpful during the process. Every time she edited her application her friend took a look at it and told her what she thought. In total, she proofread her application 5 of 6 times! This helped Robyn immensely. She also made contact with a first year TEP at University C who was willing to send a copy of her successful application from the previous year. She also took a peek just before it went off.

In addition to the people she made personal connections with, Robyn found positive support in the Facebook group. She found it a reassuring place that provided her with knowledge. For example, there was a time she was worrying what went in the extra information box and she found people in the group who were in the universities she was applying to who were able to say, "No that's fine, you don't need that". It provided a weird support network because everyone was competing against each other but were also going through the same sort of motions and understood how stressful it all was.

These friends, students and aspirants helped Robyn experience less stress and remain a bit more focused.

It's Been Submitted!

Robyn was relieved. The Application had been worked and re-worked and was done and gone. After sending it, she flitted between thoughts of acceptance "it's done and there's nothing I can do about it" and then would enter sudden moments of panic where she was concerned if she'd tweaked it enough or added the right things. She desperately tried hard not to read and re-read it. It was hard not to ruminate over it.

Waiting to Hear About Interviews

Robyn decided that the hardest thing to achieve was to be selected for interview. If she could get an interview the odds of her getting on a course would be a lot better.

University C is quite lenient about stuff. But the English ones are very intense on things like if things aren't in by this point then that's it.

one of my very good friends, she was very helpful during the process. She sorts of proofread my application about 5 or 6 times. So, every time I sort of edited it, umm, she'd have another look over it to see what she thought. (p) That was very helpful. Also, a first-year student on the course, who um, she sent me her application so I could have look at the way she structured hers ... she also proofread it for me as well before it went off

Facebook group. I found that quite, I felt quite supported in there. I felt that was quite a positive thing, to be in the lead going up to it. if I was worrying~ about something, there were people in there who could give you the answer, that you could draw(!) on... Whether I needed to put stuff in the extra information box(^) or things like that. And there were people who were in the group who were in the, the universities I was applying to. They were able to sort of say, no that's fine. that was quite a reassuring place to be, ~quite a calming place to be(!) So, you had that sort of (P) that sort of weird support network because you're sort of all competing against each other but you're also all in a place where you understand how stressful it is.

I had friends and students to look at my application and things like that. because she had quite a good understanding of what they were looking for. I think that helped keep me a bit, Ummm a bit less stressed and but more focused on it.

...the other part of the process that, errrm that stressed me out. (ch). Stressful is a key word in this interview... the fact that you have to rely on your referees(^) to submit on time, in order for you to apply(^). I think that's quite a hard part of the process because potentially, you're placing all your trust in those people to submit it in time for you

... Yeah, I think (p) the [interview] preparation process that was the hardest bit for me. because I had no idea what I should be sort of revising or what I should be preparing

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I Got One!

Up until this point, Robyn had experienced the steps of the process before. She'd written application and done the bits of waiting before, during and after. But she'd never had an interview with a course provider. So, she'd never prepared for one. She wondered how on earth was she going to this

When the interview day came around. Robyn was quite nervous and wanted to show off the best of her abilities. She also looked forward to meeting different people who had lots of different experiences. It was her time to show off what she'd learnt but learn from other people as well. It was awfully interesting!

Overall, it was a tough process that was filled with consistent stress. The pinch points are where the stress was highlighted for her. Although it took her more than one try, she acknowledged if this is what she wanted, she would have to pick herself up and brush herself off. It was stressful and pressurised. It's not something you put yourself through unless you really want. Because it was so important to her and she placed a lot of value on getting onto the course and was passionate about joining the profession.

Ahh I think they were weirdly enjoyable (ch). You know, because it was an opportunity to meet a lot of different people with lots of different experiences and (P) yeah think, it's also a time to show off what you know and learn from other people as well. I think they were, awfully interesting days anyway because everyone is feeling quite nervous you want to show off the best of your abilities.

it is a **really tough process (!)** and you know often it is more than one try ...I think stress but it's also, I think, I think it's quite an important process... , it did teach me to pick myself up, brush myself off and yeah, if this is what I want then I just gotta keep going with it... I think pressure is another I can think of. **Because it's not something that you put yourself through unless you really want to do it(^)**... it was so important to me. **And you know, I place a lot of value on this course.** Because it was something that I really wanted to do.

Appendix 12 – Evidence of ethical approval

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants

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

REVIEWER: Mary-Jane Budd

SUPERVISOR: Miles Thomas

STUDENT: Tanieka Mitchell-Blake

Course: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

Title of proposed study: What are aspiring TEPs' perceptions of the application process?

DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **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/examination.
2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but 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 below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): 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.

DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

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APPROVED,

Minor amendments required (*for reviewer*):

Major amendments required (*for reviewer*):

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments (*for students*):

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name (*Typed name to act as signature*):

Student number:

Date:

(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEARCHER (*for reviewer*)

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES / 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 and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure, please refer to the Chair of Ethics.

MEDIUM (**Please approve but with appropriate recommendations**)

LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).

Reviewer (*Typed name to act as signature*): Mary-Jane Budd

Date: 4th March 2019

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research 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 Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

Appendix 13 – Screeners included in questionnaire

Do you wish to take part in this research?

- Yes
- No

Did you apply to an educational psychology training course provider for a September 2017, September 2018 or September 2019 Start?

- Yes
- No

Were you shortlisted to interview or placed on an interview reserve list for a September 2017, September 2018 or September 2019 start?

- Yes
- No

How is your training status in September 2019 best described?

- I am not a Trainee
- Year 1 Trainee
- Year 2 Trainee
- Year 3 Trainee

Appendix 14 – Debrief and thank you for participation letter

Thank you very much for your time and responses, they are truly appreciated!

Below is some additional information should you have any questions, concerns or should you wish to withdraw from the research.

What will happen to the information that you provide?

What I will do with the material you provide will involve:

- Personal contact details will be securely stored on a password protected drive where only I will have access to them.
- Your name and contact details will not be linked to the data/material you provide. All names will be changed in data written up.
- Anonymous data will be seen by supervisor and examiners and may be published in academic journals.
- After the study has been completed the data will be safely stored with myself having the only access to it. This includes contact details of participants, interview recordings and transcripts.
- Access to a summary of the findings will be made available upon request

What if you want to withdraw?

There is a 14 day 'cooling off period' following your involvement where you can request that all or part of what you shared is omitted from the analysis. You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw, I would reserve the right from 14 days after your participation to use material, including fully anonymised interview extracts that you provide up until the point of my analysis of the data.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me on AspiringEPresearch2019@outlook.com. If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact My research supervisor Dr Miles Thomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London.

Appendix 15 – Data Management Plan

UEL Data Management Plan: Lite

For PGRs to submit to PhD Manager prior to Examination

This 'lite' DMP is written at project completion stating what will happen to your research data: if you already have a DMP from earlier in your project you do not need to complete this form.

Plans must be sent to researchdata@uel.ac.uk for review.



Research data is defined as information or material captured or created during the course of research, and which underpins, tests, or validates the content of the final research output. It is often empirical or statistical, but also includes material such as drafts, prototypes, and multimedia objects that underpin creative or 'non-traditional' outputs.

Administrative Data					
Researcher	Name: Tanieka Mitchell-Blake				
	Email: u1724866@uel.ac.uk		ORCID:		
Research title and description	<p>TITLE "I want to be an Educational Psychologist": Aspiring Trainee Educational Psychologist's Perceptions of the Course Application Process</p> <p>DESCRIPTION Through a mixed methods design of questionnaires and interviews, information from participants will be gathered and analysed via descriptive statistics and narrative analysis to explore how aspiring Trainee Educational Psychologists experience the application process.</p>				
Research Duration dd/mm/yy	Start date: 12 February 2019		End date: 31 July 2020		
Ethics application reference	School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee Approval date 04/03/2019				
Funder	N/A				
Date of DMP	First version: 29/12/2019		Last update: 30/01/2020		
Related Policies	Research Data Management Policy				
About your Data					
What data have you collected and	Data type	Format	Volume	Storage location	Back up location

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where is it stored?	Anonymised transcripts	.docx	300MB	Encrypted and saved on Personal laptop	UEL OneDrive will be kept separate from identifiable data
	Questionnaire Responses	Online source	150MB	Qualtrics	UEL OneDrive
	Participants email addresses	.xlsx	150MB	On H Drive in a folder named 'Aspiring Trainee Participants' The document will be encrypted using Bitlocker.	Encrypted USB which will be kept in a safety lock box at the researcher's residence.
	Recorded Interviews	MPEG 4	200GB	The files will be saved on UEL One Drive using participants' unique participation code to preserve anonymity. The laptop will be kept in the researcher's residence. [As suggested move to the H: Drive once transcribed to ensure	Once transcribed the H: Drive will be used to store
<p>Which data (if any) is personal or sensitive? The email addresses, telephone numbers and audio recordings are sensitive</p>					

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Documentation and Metadata	
What documentation and metadata accompanies the data?	<p>Meta data about Qualtrics (XM) and the version of SPSS (V26) used, will be kept.</p> <p>Each chapter of the thesis will have its own folder and all documents' versions will be saved systematically on my laptop and remotely on UEL OneDrive.</p>
Data Sharing	
Other researchers may be interested in your data: can you share on UEL's repository?	<p>Samples of the anonymised transcripts and analysed quantitative data will be shared on UEL's repository as part of the appendices and within the data analysis chapter.</p> <p>All raw data will be kept with the researcher in line with the ethics application made.</p>
Data Retention	
Which data are of long-term value and should be kept?	<p>All raw data from questionnaires and interviews will be kept for 2 years after the submission of the thesis. Data will be destroyed on 31 July 2022 to allow for possible publication</p> <p>All data will be kept on a password protected and encrypted personal hard drive.</p> <p>Data which is stored on Qualtrics will be exported in Microsoft Excel and saved on an encrypted USB. The USB will be kept in a safety lock box in the researcher's residence. Participants will only be identifiable by their unique participant code (First and last initial and last 2 digits of their year of birth: e.g. TMB91). Telephone numbers and email addresses will be kept in a separate document to the data in a password protected file on the same encrypted USB.</p> <p>Personal data such as email addresses, telephone numbers, consent forms and audio recordings will be deleted from UEL storage and Qualtrics by 31 July 2020 following the passing of the Thesis component of the research</p>
Review	Please send your plan to researchdata@uel.ac.uk
Date: 17/02/2020	Reviewer name: Penny Jackson Research Data Management Officer

Appendix 16 – Formal invitation letter

Dear Prospective Participant,

You are being invited to participate in a research study. From start to finish the survey should take no longer than 25 minutes. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Whilst you can use your phone, it is advised that you complete this questionnaire on a larger device e.g. tablet or laptop.

Who am I?

I am a student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London and am studying for a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. As part of the course, I am conducting the research you are being invited to participate in.

What is the research?

I am conducting research to explore your perceptions as an aspiring Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) of the course application process. My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Why have you been asked to participate?

You have been invited to participate in my research as someone who's views will help contribute to the exploration and understanding of knowledge about the Professional Doctorate application process. I am looking to involve those who:

- applied to one of the 13 Educational Psychologist (EP) training providers across the UK for a September 2017, September 2018 or September 2019 start
- AND were invited for an interview.

I emphasise that I am not looking for those who:

- have already qualified as EPs
- were not invited for an interview, or

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- those who have applied in the past but before December 2016 or after December 2018.

You will not be judged or personally analysed in any way and you will be treated with respect. Ultimately it is your choice as to whether or not to participate and should not feel coerced.

What general participation involves

I will be interested in what you thought, felt and experienced throughout the process of applying - from preparing to apply to submitting the application. I will not be able to pay you for participating in my research, but your participation would be very valuable in helping to develop knowledge and understanding of my research topic, your taking part will be safe and confidential. Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times. Participants will not be identified by name, by the data collected, on any written material resulting from the data collected, or in any write-up of the research. Participants can stop their participation at any time. Where there is risk of a participant being identified through the information they disclose within the interview, this will be carefully handled when written up so as to maintain anonymity.

What will your participation in the questionnaire involve?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to:

- complete a self-completion online questionnaire about your perceptions of the application process and
- agree to have anonymous quotes from your responses being used in the body of the research.

What will your participation in the semi structured interview involve?

If you agree to participate, you are agreeing to:

- being contactable via telephone at an agreed time for a semi structured interview to take place,
- engaging for 30-40 minutes in a one to one informal chat about your perceptions of the application process,
- the chat being recorded on a Dictaphone,

- having anonymous quotes from your responses being used in the body of the research.

What will happen to the information that you provide?

With the information you provide I will ensure:

Personal contact details are kept in a separate document to responses. Both will be securely stored on a password protected hard drive where only I will have access to them. Participants' names and contact details will not be linked to the data/material they provide. All names will be changed to unique identifying codes in data written up. Anonymous data will be seen by supervisor and examiners and may be published in academic journals. After the study has been completed, the data will be safely stored with myself having the only access to it. This includes contact details of participants, interview recordings and transcripts. Access to a summary of the findings up request

What if you want to withdraw?

There is a 14 day 'cooling off period' following your involvement where you can request that all or part of what you share is omitted from the analysis. You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw, I would reserve the right from 14 days after the interview to use material, including fully anonymised interview extracts that you provide up until the point of my analysis of the data.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me on AspiringEPresearch2019@outlook.com. If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor Dr Miles Thomas, School of Psychology, Room AE132, University of East London, Water Lane, London, E15 4LZ. Tel: 020 8223 6396.

Appendix 17 – Consent statements

Please select **ALL** the boxes to indicate that you have read the participation invitation letter. In doing this you are giving your informed consent to participate in following research .

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study and understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study and understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I understand that participation can involve taking part in the completion of an online questionnaire and an optional 30-40-minute telephone interview.
- Should I participate in the interview, I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. However, disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a thesis, conference presentation and potentially a published paper.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms, original audio recordings and transcripts will be retained on a password protected hard drive to which only

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the researcher will have access until the exam board confirms that the final drafted thesis is complete.

- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board's marking of the research.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information. [Tanieka Mitchell-Blake BSc, MSc; Email: AspiringEPresearch2019@outlook.com. (Academic supervisor: Dr Miles Thomas, School of Psychology, Room AE132, University of East London, Water Lane, London, E15 4LZ. Tel: 020 8223 6396.)].

Appendix 18 – Word Cloud of language used to describe experience

