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**EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS EXPERIENCE OF TAKING  
PART IN GROUP SUPERVISION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
STUDY**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the University of East London  
for the degree of Doctor of Applied Educational and  
Child Psychology.

August 2013

## STUDENT DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and it is not currently being submitted for any other degrees.

This research is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of East London for the degree of Applied Educational and Child Psychology.

The thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is included in the thesis.

I hereby give permission for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for reading and for inter-library loans, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Emma Rawlings', written in a cursive style.

Emma Rawlings

## Acknowledgements

*This thesis is dedicated to my dad who died on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2013, two days after I typed the final few words. He taught me children learn what they live and alongside my mum is the foundation of a nurturing and happy childhood which allowed me to have the confidence and determination to have completed this doctoral journey.*

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## Abstract

This study offers an insight into eight educational psychologists' (EPs) experiences of being supervised in a group. Two males, six females (aged between 29 and 64), working as EPs in one of two local authorities in England took part in semi-structured interviews. Their experience as EPs ranged from one year to 36 however they all had a minimum of one year of experience of group supervision.

Transcripts of the interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative methodology. Researchers using IPA are interested in the individual and see those individuals as experts in their own experience.

In a model by Hawkins and Shoet (2006) commonly known as the 'Seven Eyed Model of Supervision', a multi layered approach to supervision is suggested. This dovetails with Adair's (1986) Functional Management Approach of effective groups which talks of groups needing to attend to the individual, group and task needs in unison. These models are at the heart of this study which found that the experience of EPs in group supervision can also be considered as a three layered experience where the **PURPOSE, PROCESS** and **PERSONAL NEEDS**, the three Ps of group supervision, are simultaneously interacting.

This thesis was produced at a time where, once again, educational psychologists were faced with huge changes in the education system. I anticipate that group supervision across the children's workforce will become an area of rapid growth and educational psychologists are well placed to be at the heart of this growth. However for this to happen we need to ensure that group supervision is not misunderstood and, therefore, the findings of this study offer a unique opportunity in understanding what it feels like to be supervised in a group.

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## List of Abbreviations

BPS	British Psychological Society
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DECP	Division of Education and Child Psychology
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
ECM	Every Child Matters
HCPC	Health & Care Professions Council
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LA	Local Authority
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologist
SEN	Special Educational Needs
UEL	University of East London

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## **Preface**

### **How to read this thesis**

This thesis will be written in the first person in order to acknowledge the interpretative analysis I have provided, in an open and transparent attempt to express the participants' story as told during the interviews. As a practising educational psychologist, with a special interest in supervision, I will refer to my experience and background throughout through a number of reflexive notes to ensure transparency in an attempt to meet the quality criteria for qualitative research studies (Yardley, 2000).

The thesis starts with Chapter One: Introduction, where the aims and rationale for the study are first introduced, followed by an overview of the current climate in education and an introduction to general definitions of supervision, including reference to some of the more general supervision literature. The introduction chapter also presents a first look at epistemology and my justification for using IPA as a tool for analysis, a more in-depth discussion of this is reserved for the methodology chapter. Reflexive thinking is first introduced at this point and subsequently referred to throughout each chapter.

Chapter Two: Literature Review initially presents a more detailed discussion of the literature on supervision and then includes a focus on group supervision literature. This centres around Figure 2, a visual representation of how the initial literature search started with the more general literature on supervision, then moved to group functioning literature, then onto literature on group supervision and then supervision of EPs, it culminated in the review of the scant literature on group supervision and EPs. In the second half of Chapter Two there is a more in-depth description of the actual literature review carried out for this study. This details the search procedures and critical analysis of the literature reviewed, which focused on published literature concerning research into supervision and EPs.

Chapter Three: Methodology starts with reflections upon ontology, epistemology and methodology for research on supervision. It then goes on to give a very detailed description of each step of the analysis used in this study with justification for why decisions were made. A unique approach to recording the process has been taken with photographic evidence and reflective noting throughout. This is once again an attempt to meet the quality criteria for qualitative research (Yardley, 2000) and in particular to adhere to the stringent level of reflexivity needed in a quality IPA study (Smith, 2011a).

Chapter Four: Findings introduces the three main themes and a number of superordinate and subthemes derived from the data. The idiographic nature is achieved by presenting the superordinate and subthemes evidenced with examples of participant's quotes, these examples evidence the theme. An in-depth commentary is provided which includes interpretations at a descriptive, linguistic and analytical level and includes specific reference to my reflections. This constitutes a level of dialogue typically reserved for the discussion chapter but as an IPA study it was felt that transparency was paramount in achieving robustness and therefore the traditional 'discussion' is included alongside the findings.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusions considers the findings in the light of the literature reviewed and attempts to consider whether the findings of this study support or conflict with any previously published research. In considering the implications of this research, Chapter Five examines the findings from the subsidiary research aim 'To ascertain whether group supervision could be offered by EPs to other professionals within the children's workforce'. Finally, Chapter Five concludes with a critical review of the research process and considers possible future research in the subject area.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Overview of Chapter One**

### **1.2. Research aims**

### **1.3. Research rationale**

#### ***1.3.1 The current climate in education***

#### ***1.3.2 A definition of supervision***

#### ***1.3.3 Why do EPs need supervision?***

### **1.4. Genesis of the research, professional and personal influences**

### **1.5. Original and distinctive contribution**

### **1.6. Epistemological position and IPA**

#### ***1.6.1 Epistemological position***

#### ***1.6.2 Introduction to IPA***

### **1.7. Reflexive thinking**

### **1.8. Summary of Chapter One**

## **1.1 Overview of Chapter One**

This research study explores the topic of group supervision by using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to consider how educational psychologists experience being supervised in a group.

Supervision can mean different things to different people in a multitude of professions. At a later stage of this introductory chapter, I will consider different definitions of supervision for those in the helping professions. For the sake of this study, I will be considering educational psychologists engaging in group supervision.

Supervision for educational psychologists should be an educative, supportive and developmental activity aimed at reducing EP stress and building capacity to support children and young people, their families and the systems within which they are educated. This opening chapter provides an overview of the aims, rationale and context of the study.

Initially, in section 1.3.1, the chapter outlines the current political moves to overhaul the Special Educational Needs systems in England. With this overhaul there are plans to review the role of educational psychologists and consider the unique contribution that EPs make within the SEN system. In section 1.3.2 the definition and background of supervision will be introduced and considered as an integral part of the core skills of being an EP. With this in mind, the rationale for understanding the experience of group supervision, from the point of view of the EPs taking part, is discussed in section 1.5. In section 1.6, the chapter will go on to consider the unique contribution this study could make by using qualitative methodology to understand EPs experience of group supervision, a section on reflexivity is included (1.7).

## 1.2 Research aims

The aims of the study are as follows:

- *To explore the experience of educational psychologists taking part in group supervision*
- *To ascertain whether group supervision could be offered by EPs to other professionals within the children's workforce*

The study focuses on the primary research question:

### ***What is the experience of taking part in group supervision?***

Semi – structured interviews will be used as an opportunity to encourage an open ended response from participants. As a qualitative study, the aim is to get a full picture of the emotions experienced and the impact these emotions have on participation. It is felt that a semi-structured interview schedule will allow each participant to tell their own story in their own words. As I am interested in the future developments of the EP role, in this study I will also focus on EPs being able to facilitate group supervision for other professionals. With this in mind the interviews will include questions to gain participants' thoughts on how being part of group supervision influences their view on their ability to be a group supervisor. Therefore a subsidiary research question is:

### ***How does a person's experience of supervision (group or individual) influence their confidence in being a group supervisor?***

In considering a possible future role for EPs, in offering supervision to a range of professionals across the children's workforce, the findings from this subsidiary research question may have implications for any future training that is needed initially when training to be an EP and also post qualification.



### **1.3 Research rationale**

This section will consider the rationale for research into the experiences of educational psychologists who participate in group supervision.

#### **1.3.1 The current climate in education**

At the time of writing, the world of special educational needs in England, and so by association the wider world of educational psychology, is in a state of change. In 2011, the Department for Education published its vision for the future of special educational needs in the green paper '*Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability*' (DfE, 2011). Alongside the 2011 paper, the government also called for a review of EP training which was to focus on the skills EPs will need to develop, and be equipped with to work in the children's services of the future, hence my interest in linking this study to future roles for EPs.

In 2013 the DfE published an '*indicative draft*' of the special educational needs code of practice. The '*indicative draft*' is the government's response to the SEN clauses in part 3 of the Children and Families Bill (2013). In this draft there is greater emphasis placed on the roles and responsibilities of a range of agencies supporting children and young people with special needs such as health and social care via the planned introduction of a joint health, education and care plan. Alongside these plans there is a strong push for better joint working partnerships between agencies. Group supervision of multi – agency professionals could be one way to achieve this.

As the children's workforce evolves and develops at a rapid rate, educational psychologists will need to consider how they are best placed to respond to these changes. Farrell et al (2006) found that stakeholders typically referred to the academic background and training in psychology, of educational psychologists, when considering the distinctive contribution they could make. The 2013 indicative draft refers to the external support schools and colleges may wish to seek from an educational psychologist and states that:

*These specialists provide on-going advice about children and young people....as well as contributing to school and college understanding of practical interventions that will support progress and well-being (p48)*

### **1.3.2 A definition of supervision**

There are a multitude of books, widely available, about 'supervision, the term means different things to different people in different professions. The definition of supervision provided in the Oxford English Dictionary (2008) is to

*Observe and direct the performance of a task or the work of a person*  
(p 1041)

An initial search using the word 'supervision' in April 2013 on the University of East London's library search for 'books and more' finds 321 results in the entire library. Sorted by 'relevance' the list starts with some familiar names from previous supervision training for educational psychologists that I have attended (Carroll & Holloway, 1999; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Proctor, 2008; Proctor, 2009; Scaife, 2010; Scaife & Inskipp, 2001). Amongst the most relevant are also some authors with which I am less familiar. On closer reading their supervision texts refer mainly to social work or coaching/mentoring (Bachkirova, 2011; Tsui, 2004).

Many of these texts mentioned above return to popular definitions of supervision from authors in the helping professionals such as Loganbill, Hardy and Delworth (1982) who define supervision as

*an intensive, interpersonally focused, one-to-one relationship in which one person is designated to facilitate the development of therapeutic competence on the other person (cited on page 57, Hawkins & Shohet, 2006)*

A special edition of the Division of Education and Child Psychology journal 'Educational and Child Psychology (1993, Vol 10, Issue 2,) focused on supervision and educational psychology. As part of the general literature collection a manual search of the articles reference section was carried out. A subsequent search of the original cited texts for further seminal texts on supervision was then completed (Cal & Stoltenberg, 1987; Gardiner, 1989; Whitaker & Lieberman, 1964). Each of the textbooks mentioned tend to focus on the why's and how's of supervision, often

providing a model developed by the author. In the main, the focus is on supervision for counsellors, psychotherapists, clinical psychologists and social workers.

Scaife (2001) acknowledges that supervision is commonplace in a number of professions; mental health, social work, education, health and clinical and counselling psychology to name but a few. She uses a definition that focuses on the supervisee, ensuring the client receives the best possible service, and the supervisee enhancing their professional development.

Supervision can also be used by some as a catch all for activities which are actually better defined as coaching, problem solving, mentoring, consultation or appraisal. For the purpose of this study I am interested in supervision of the helping professions, specifically educational psychologists. With this focus in mind I turned to the British Psychological Society, Division of Education and Child Psychology for guidance on what the term supervision means for educational psychology profession.

In 2011, the BPS published '*Professional Supervision: Guidelines for Practice for Educational Psychologists*' (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010). In this document there is an acknowledgement that there are a range of different definitions of supervision however, they state that,

*Many consider supervision to be a psychological process that enables a focus on personal and professional development that offers a confidential and reflective space for the EP to consider their work and their response to it (p7)*

In my opinion, it is significant that the definition focuses on the personal and professional development of the EPs and does not allude to a more managerial overview of work. I would agree that personal and professional development should be the focus of supervision for those in the helping professions, and appraisal systems with management personnel should cover the quality assurance aspects.

The BPS document describes supervision as

*central to the delivery of high quality psychological services (p2)*

It goes on to say that

*good supervision supports professionally competent practice and ensures that legal and ethical responsibilities to clients are met (p2).*

There is a genuine acknowledgement that the process of supervision is there to protect the client, alongside ensuring the development and psychological wellbeing of the EPs being supervised.

The guidelines recognize that other bodies exist to provide guidance and codes of conduct for supervision of EPs. In particular they refer to the Health Care & Professionals Council who became the regulatory body for EPs in 2009. However, the HCPC only specifically mentions supervision in its *practitioner guidelines* (2012) within the section on reflecting and reviewing practice, where it suggests EPs need to understand models of supervision and their contribution to practice. Similarly the DECP's *general professional practice guidelines* (2002) are not specific in the functions of supervision nor do they give guidance about amount and frequency other than stating that,

*Supervision should be an entitlement for all educational psychologists working with clients (p19)*

When working as a Local Authority educational psychologist (2001 – 2011) I was trained to use the Seven Eyed Model of Supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006). The Seven 'Eyes' are also referred to as modes and refer to the levels supervisee's are encouraged to attend to when considering the issues they raise in supervision. The BPS guidelines (2011) acknowledge that Hawkins and Shohet's model is one of the most common in EP services alongside Scaife's General Supervisory Framework (GSF: 2001).

The Seven Eyed Model is primarily grounded in psychodynamic theory. It defines supervision as a process whereby a practitioner can attend to, and better understand, their clients and the system within which their clients are functioning. Hawkins and Shohet define the three main functions of supervision as

developmental, resourcing and qualitative. Developmentally the sessions are aimed at increasing the supervisee's skills and capacity to support others. The resourcing element refers to the process of ensuring professionals can be mindful of the emotions which are often transferred from clients in distress, being aware of this and encouraging practitioners to process this is an attempt to reduce burn out, which is often high in the helping professions. The qualitative aspect is described as the quality control element, where supervision provides an opportunity to ensure ethical guidelines are being adhered to, and the best interest of the client is central to all decisions.

As this is the method I have been trained in and is acknowledged in the DECP guidelines to be one of the most popular amongst EP services, it is a model I will use as central to this research study although others will be discussed in the Chapter Two: Literature Review.

### ***1.3.3 Why do EPs need supervision?***

I have chosen to adopt the definition of supervision provided on page 19 of this thesis, from the BPS guidelines (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010), which classifies supervision as a reflective space for an EP to consider their work and their responses to it. In my opinion then supervision should therefore be integral to supporting EPs to be able to provide the on-going advice and support alluded to in the DfE's indicative draft (referred to on page 18 of this thesis). EPs are typically involved in highly emotive situations often working with children and young people who are in crisis. There is a very strong supportive element to the EP role, and in many cases EPs are offering emotional support to teachers, head teachers and other professionals so that they can then support and empower children and young people. In response to this EPs need support to consider the personal impact of their work if they are going to be emotionally healthy and continue to help others.

Gersch and Teuma (2005) used a standard postal questionnaire design which involved a Likert – type scale to look at sources of EP stress. They found that 58 % of EPs felt they were moderately stressed, and 30.8 % felt they were very stressed. Supervision was a factor that EPs identified as reducing the level of EP stress,

however Gersch and Teuma state that they are aware that their study had a very small sample (N = 26) and therefore the generalizability of findings was limited.

Cox (1978) developed a transactional model of organization healthiness, where an individual was recognized as belonging to a number of systems that interacted and were interrelated; one such system was the workplace. Much of Cox's work was carried out with teachers due to the link between teaching and stress, and his transactional model could easily be transferred to the workplace of Local Authority EPs. Kuk and Leyden (1993) wrote a paper on healthy organizations which focused on EP services. They outlined how in their opinion good supervision could contribute to better levels of coping, as well as supporting individual EPs to deal with difficult situations in healthy EP services. I would wholeheartedly agree that if a service puts good quality supervision at its heart then more effective practise will result.

#### **1.4 Genesis of the research, professional and personal influences**

As a practising educational psychologist with over ten years' experience and a special interest in supervision, I have witnessed first-hand the growth of both individual and group supervision. However, I have some concerns about the lack of specific training in supervision for EPs, in both the initial training and post qualification. In my opinion, from my experience on an Eastern Region supervision interest group and as a lead on supervision in my authority, I experienced that EPs' general understanding of the theory to support the development of positive enabling conditions in a supervision setting was also questionable. I am even more concerned about EPs lack of training and experience for working with groups, the EP job is increasingly one that is carried out in isolation. Even when EPs are working together in groups they are often still encouraged to problem solve and/or work on projects individually as it appears to be more cost effective.

In my experience, there is very little opportunity for joint work with other EPs, and particularly in times of austerity there are limited circumstances for a team or group approach because of the lack of personnel. As an educational psychologist who has worked in a number of multi-disciplinary and multi-agency teams I have also witnessed the rapid growth in the interest of supervision across the children's workforce. This first-hand experience has lead me to conclude that educational

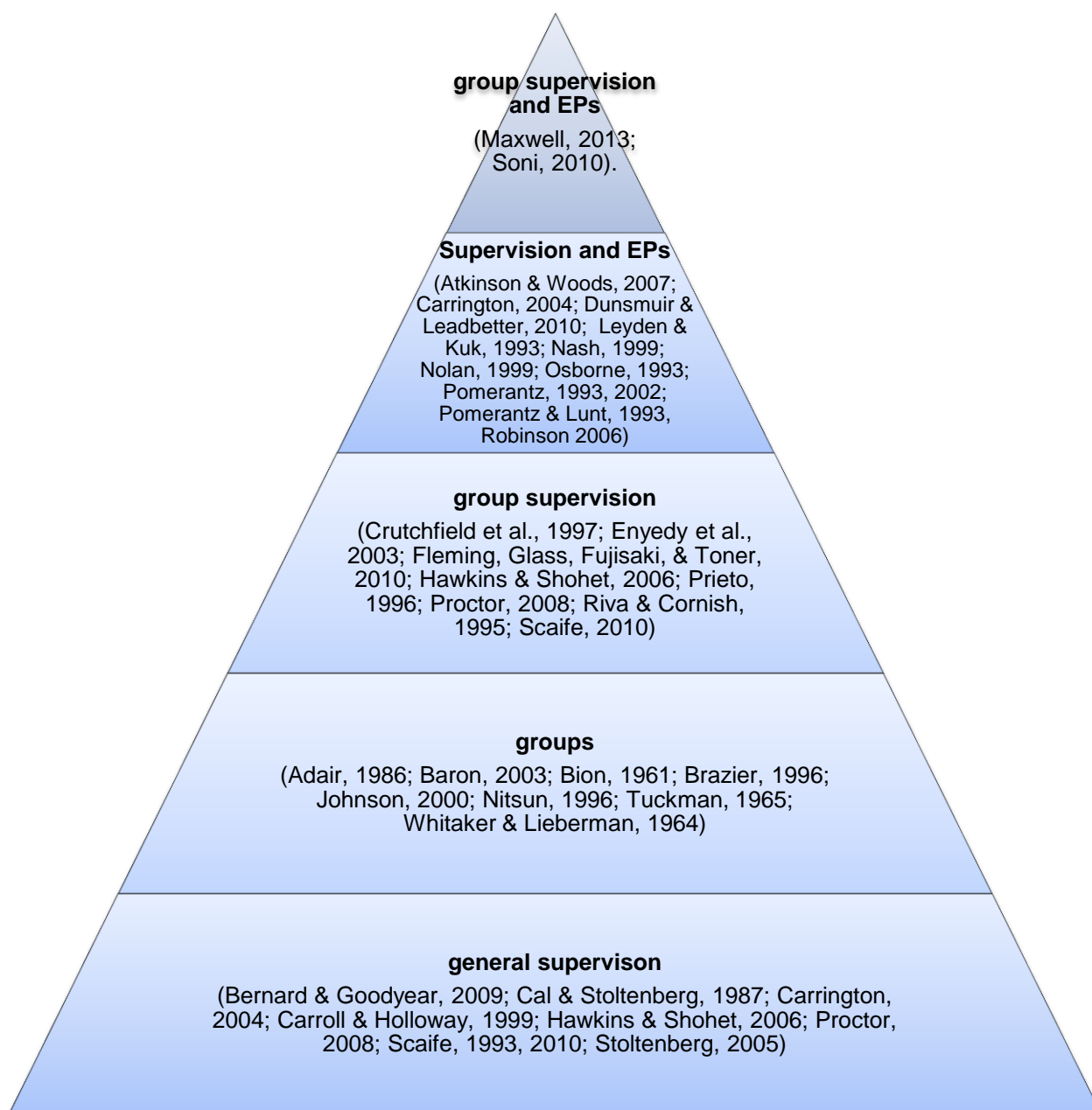
psychologists, with their unique understanding of children, their families, the school and education system, alongside their use of psychology when considering ways of reflecting and acting on situations, could be ideally placed to support each other and other professionals through group supervision.

In my experience, good group supervision is a very effective method of ensuring EPs and others deliver positive outcomes for children and young people. However, this is only possible if those who take part and those who facilitate these groups are involved in high quality on-going training and supervision.

### **1.5 Original and distinctive contribution**

Throughout my time studying for a doctorate I have also been involved in supervision training and over time I have collected together and categorized a range of literature by general literature searches, using the UEL library, the British library, Google Scholar, Athens and through reading lists and recommendations from training sessions. The literature collected concerns supervision in general, theory and research on group functioning, supervision of EPs, and group supervision of a range of practitioners including EPs. With each piece of reading I have completed a 'literature review sheet' (see Appendix 1 for an example).

Whilst the literature on supervision in the helping professions and general group and team theory and/or models is vast, there are only a small number of articles in the last 20 years that specifically relate to supervision for educational psychologists. Furthermore, much of this literature relates to the supervision of trainee EPs, leaving the issue of the supervision of qualified EPs and supervision of other professionals by EPs as a relatively under-researched and written about area. Figure 1 is a visual representation of, examples of, the literature collected and considered in preparation for this research study. A pyramid has been used to help the reader visualise the journey taken in reviewing the literature for this study. Initially a large collection of general supervision literature was reviewed, following this general literature on group functioning was considered before looking more closely at group supervision literature. The top sections of the pyramid represent the more detailed review of the literature on supervision and EPs then finally at the top, the lack of current literature on group supervision and EPs is represented.



**Figure 1: Visual representation of some of the literature considered which shows a limited focus, in the literature, on supervision and EPs**

Proctor, (2008), in her guide to creative practice of group supervision, states that

*Supervision in groups has many benefits including cost effectiveness and added value of learning through the experience of others (ix)*

From my own experience, of being supervised in a group and facilitating group supervision, I would wholeheartedly agree that good-quality, well-managed, group



supervision can be one of the best opportunities available to reflect upon and learn to manage the intense emotions that arise from working in often very complex situations. It is my belief that positive experience can be credited to feeling a sense of safety in a group, of having feelings about difficult situations validated by those in the same profession who are respected. There is something very fundamental about having acknowledgement from others that 'you are not alone'. The aim of this reflection and subsequent problem solving is to reduce the stress in the EP profession as identified by Gersch and Teuma (2005).

In the current economic climate it seems highly likely that many EP services will consider group supervision as a cost effective way of ensuring EPs access supervision. I am also becoming aware of a growing number of requests to EP services for EPs to offer group supervision to a range of other professionals within the children's workforce. However, I remain concerned that group supervision is still widely practiced but poorly understood.

Prieto (1996) updated Holloway and Johnston's (1985) review concerning the group supervision of trainee psychotherapists. Prieto's review included a computerized search of abstracts and dissertation abstracts from 1960 – 1994 alongside a manual search of all issues of *Counsellor Education and Supervision*, *The Counselling Psychologist*, *Journal of Counselling Psychology* and *The Clinical Supervisor* from 1984 – 1994. This is felt to be a thorough analysis of group supervision literature, concerning psychotherapy of the time with a clear reference to inclusion and exclusion criteria. In my opinion this 'gold standard' review makes for a robust and valid source of information, which concludes that more research is needed alongside better assimilation of this knowledge into the practice of those taking part in group supervision.

A potential explanation for this 'poor understanding' of group supervision is the methodology chosen in the past for understanding such a complex and highly subjective issue. It is only in very recent times that researchers have had at their disposal the tools to gain a rich picture of their data in a wider range of qualitative methods. The literature search completed concerning general supervision and group supervision of EPs, discussed in the next chapter, has found very few articles that

refer to the more sophisticated qualitative methods of data analysis available today such as IPA, grounded theory or thematic analysis. Prieto (1996) criticized the literature of group supervision of psychotherapists as methodologically flawed due to its heavy reliance on quantitative methodology, and nearly a decade later only one or two articles take a discursive/qualitative approach to considering the experience of EPs taking part in or delivering group supervision (Maxwell, 2013; Soni, 2010).

## **1.6 Epistemological position and IPA**

The next section will outline my epistemological position and subsequent choice of methodology, in order to be transparent and, therefore, reflexive in my approach to research.

### ***1.6.1 Epistemological position***

As an exploratory study its aim is to provide a vehicle to describe the lived experience of group supervision, and how this is interpreted and considered by the educational psychologists who take part.

Ontology is concerned with the nature of being, and refers to the beliefs about reality. One researcher might believe that there are observable and measureable phenomena, while another will think that many aspects of what we as humans believe to be real are actually created, institutionalized and, therefore, constructed by individuals through interaction and subsequent interpretation. Epistemology is concerned with how we know what we know (Willig, 2010). An epistemological position will define the validity and reliability of knowledge claims with some researchers controlling variables in order to measure things accurately and reliably. Other researchers will be more concerned with observing phenomena as it happens because their epistemological position is that there is no one reality and in fact knowledge is constructed by each individual.

As an educational psychologist who works in an ever-changing applied setting, I take a very pragmatic view in terms of ontological position. The journey to my current position is described and justified in Chapter Three, 'Methodology'. However; at this stage in order to introduce the study and to offer transparency and attempt high quality qualitative research I am keen to be clear about my position. Mertens (2005)

proposes that those engaged in research need to overtly examine their world view and the effect this has had on the decisions they have made in the research process. I have an epistemological and ontological view that is based on critical realism. This is a position that is critical of the concept of 'one reality' and instead considers that individuals have multiple versions of the world (Burr, 2003). However, I do not reject the concept of reality in its entirety but believe that the meanings and experiences of this reality are fluid because they are based on an individual's beliefs and expectations.

### **1.6.2 Introduction to IPA**

Phenomenology is described by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) as a philosophical approach to the study of experience; in particular it is concerned with people making sense of the world. Phenomenology acknowledges the subjective nature of reality and reflects the intent to explore the experiences of those who have actually taken part in something. A variety of methods can be used to collect data in phenomenological-based research; in this study semi-structured interviews were conducted and then analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

The roots of IPA and its justification as a relevant methodology for this study will be covered in Chapter Three, 'Methodology'. However, as a brief introduction; IPA is a methodology concerned with expressing experience in its own terms. Smith et al. (2009) define IPA as;

*a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of life experiences (p1)*

Dickson, Knussen and Flowers, (2009) used IPA to explore the experience of living with chronic fatigue syndrome. Their justification for the use of IPA was

*because it's phenomenological focus primarily addresses a hermeneutic of empathy: it seeks to explore the links between what people say within interviews, and the way they think about their own experiences (p 461)*

By using IPA this in study I aimed to provide an interesting and potentially unique approach in the EP world to looking at supervision from the supervisees' lived

experience. This is felt to be a unique alternative to focusing on the supervisor's view of how effective supervision is. Smith (2011a) talks of researchers trying to get 'experience close' instead of trying to guess or find out in an exact manner what the participant is thinking. The aim is for the researcher to engage with, and interpret, the experience. The interview itself was described by one participant in the current study as similar to being supervised. In my opinion this is due to the hermeneutic opportunities that are available in the semi-structured interview situation, with very open ended questions and the space to explore a phenomenon such as the experience of group supervision.

### **1.7 Reflexive thinking**

Willig (2010) discusses the significance of qualitative studies acknowledging that the researcher influences the research and so a criterion for high quality qualitative research is reflexivity. Robson defines reflexive thinking as:

*An awareness of the ways in which the researcher as an individual with a particular social identity and background has an impact on the research process (Robson, 2002, p.172)*

Throughout this thesis there is an acknowledgement of the personal motivation for taking part in research on group supervision. In Chapter Three, 'Methodology', there is a thorough description of the process of data collection and analysis using IPA with a step by step guide covering the process of how decisions were made. Within Chapter Four, 'Findings', there is a thorough description of each stage of analysis and justifications for various interpretations of the data. The depth of description and personal reflection included is an attempt to meet the stringent level of reflexivity needed in a quality IPA study (Smith, 2011a). However, I fully acknowledge that in making sense of EPs making sense of their experience there will be an element of my own personal influences on the analysis. Whilst I acknowledge that my own interpretations have an influence on the data analysis and, therefore, transferability of the findings is limited, there are some real positives in not being a positivist scientific researcher trying not to influence the data. As a practicing main grade educational psychologist working in a local authority at the time of conducting the interviews I was able to, quite quickly, build a rapport with the participants.

Participants were aware of my experience and interest in group supervision and were keen to add to the body of knowledge and so this set the scene for the interview. What resulted was a mutual sense of understanding that led to real openness from the participants. There were lots of “well, you know” type comments, the participants appeared to feel that they were talking to someone who had a shared understanding of their experiences. During the analysis stage it was clear that there was lots of rich data in the interviews and this was felt to be in part a result of the relationship created in the interview situation.

### **1.8 Summary of Chapter One**

The focus of this study is to explore and understand educational psychologists' experience of taking part in group supervision, to provide the EPs with space to 'tell their stories' and express their feelings regarding these phenomena. This chapter has provided a brief summary of the aims, rationale and context for the study alongside an overview of the epistemological position in which this study will be carried out.

The next chapter will critically evaluate the literature available on the supervision of EPs and group supervision of those in the helping professions, alongside some acknowledgement of the current literature on the future role of educational psychologists.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Overview of Chapter Two**

### **2.2 Supervision and the justification for this study**

### **2.3 The initial literature search**

### **2.4 The psychology of an effective group**

#### ***2.4.1 Adair's(1986) Functional Management Approach***

*2.4.1.1 Individual needs of group members*

*2.4.1.2 Group needs*

*2.4.1.3 Task element: The need to define and understand group supervision*

### **2.5 Research into group supervision**

#### ***2.5.1 Hawkins and Shohet's (2006) Seven Eyed Model of Supervision***

#### ***2.5.2 Proctor's (2008) Group Supervision Alliance Model***

### **2.6 The literature review**

***2.6.1 The search procedure***

***2.6.2 Discussion and critical review of studies***

***2.6.3 Summary of critique***

### **2.7 Theoretical framework for this research study**

### **2.8 Summary of Chapter Two**

## **2.1 Overview of Chapter Two**

This chapter presents a more detailed discussion of the literature on supervision addressed briefly in Chapter One 'Introduction'. The aim of this review was to critically examine the use of group supervision by EPs in order to identify 1) the use of group supervision and its effectiveness, 2) limitations or gaps within research studies on group supervision 3) models of group supervision and 4) how these informed the current research study. This chapter covers the definitions of supervision and the prevailing climate in the educational field leading to the rationale for this research study. In considering the rationale, this chapter recaps on the initial literature search which led to grouping the literature into five areas. These were: general supervision, groups, group supervision, supervision and EPs, group supervision and EPs. The initial literature search was built on throughout the duration of the research study and the procedure employed in undertaking this will be discussed and critiqued throughout this chapter.

It should be stated at the outset that there is a substantive body of literature on a number of supportive/learning groups such as, staff problem solving groups (Hanko, 1999), teacher support teams (Creese, Norwich & Daniels 1997), and staff consultation and work discussion groups (Farouk, 2004; Jackson, 2008; Pearpoint, Forrest & Snow, 2002; Stringer, Stow, Hibert & Powell, 1992; Wilson & Newton, 2006). Although there are some overlaps and differences between supervision and these groups, they are primarily a forum for problem solving and discussion utilising a range of tools. Although the function of such problem solving groups mirror the formative task of supervision in terms of development of skills, knowledge and understanding (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993), they do not in themselves constitute supervision in its purest form. They are not bound by requisite professional and organisational standards, ethics and expectations as outlined by professional bodies such as the Health and Care Professions Council. They are therefore not included for the purposes of this literature review.

Section 2.4 of this chapter focuses on the general literature on group functioning and an exploration of the psychological theories of effective group functioning. This is considered crucial in order to understand the theoretical models underpinning this

study. The general critique of the literature on group functioning is structured around Adair's functional management approach and therefore the literature on group functioning will be discussed in relation to individual, group and task needs. When discussing task needs, the definition of group supervision is introduced and an exploration of the considerations that need to be taken into account when carrying out group supervision is addressed.

A critique of the literature on group supervision by those in the helping professions (not EPs) is provided in section 2.5 alongside the introduction of two popular models of group supervision. An in-depth critical analysis of the literature on supervision and EPs using a checklist based on the work of Crombie (1996), Fink (2005) and Petticrew and Roberts (2006) follows.

Finally, the theoretical underpinnings of this study are outlined in section 2.7. The review highlighted that very little has actually been investigated about what EPs gain from being supervised, little is known about how it informs their practise and nothing has been done to investigate how EPs experience group supervision. The implications of the review are discussed in terms of informing the methodology employed in this study and then section 2.8 concludes the chapter and introduces Chapter Three, 'Methodology'.



## 2.2 Supervision and the justification for this study

Chapter One, 'Introduction', considered definitions of supervision from some of the most seminal texts on supervision (Carroll & Holloway, 1999; Hawkins & Shohet, 2006; Proctor, 2008; Proctor, 2009; Scaife, 2010; Scaife & Inskipp, 2001). Chapter One also introduced the BPS guidelines '*Professional Supervision: Guidelines for Practice for Educational Psychologists*' (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010) which acknowledged that there are a range of different definitions of supervision. Definitions of supervision are often related to professional orientations. However, irrespective of the professional view point; there is an acknowledgement that supervision is

*a multi-layered process involving multiple systems and subsystems*  
(Bennett, Gower, Maynerd & Wyse, 2005, p 185).

The multi-layered aspect of supervision refers to the recognition of the existence of different types of supervision.

The BPS guidelines (2011) acknowledge that Hawkins and Shohet's (2006), Seven Eyed Model of Supervision is one of the most commonly used ones in EP services. It can be applied to individual or group supervision and is one that remains central to this research study. This model is explained and considered in terms of group supervision in more depth and compared and contrasted with another popular supervision model, The Supervision Alliance Model (Inskipp & Proctor, 1995) which was developed by Proctor (2008) specifically for use with groups.

The justification and relevance of this study and the implications for educational psychology have to some extent been addressed in Chapter One. This study aimed to explore the experiences of being supervised in a group and the findings should be useful to service leaders considering systems for offering supervision in the future. Gersch (2009), in speculating about what the profession would need in the future, highlighted that it was imperative to consider

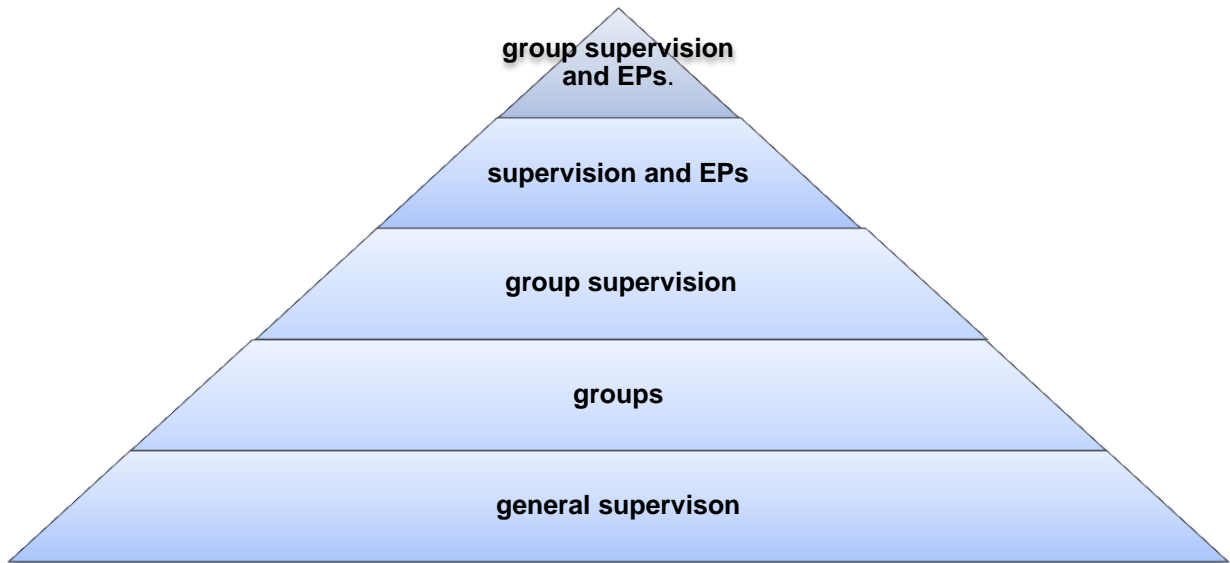
*....what support networks they (EPs) have access to, and bluntly, who is looking after them (p11).*

In order to ensure that EPs can facilitate productive, supportive and developmental group supervision it is imperative that good-quality, epistemologically-sound research forms the basis for decisions on how supervision is conducted. Maxwell (2013) is the first EP to publish an article concerning educational psychologists facilitating group supervision for other professionals. He describes a supervision group he facilitated for support workers, supporting families with vulnerable adolescents. Maxwell describes his work as grounded in a social constructionist paradigm, he outlines an eclectic approach to devising his own model of supervision based on the work of Atkinson and Woods (2007); Carrington (2004); Farouk (2004); Ravenette (1999) and Wagner (2000), amongst others. Maxwell uses a discursive, case study approach to describe the positive aspects of his experience and offers some implications for future practise.

Maxwell (2013) provides a unique and fascinating article based on sound theoretical underpinnings but does not provide research evidence from his experience.

### **2.3 The initial literature search**

Chapter One, introduced the overall literature review process that was undertaken alongside involvement in a range of supervision development projects. General literature searches were conducted online using the UEL library, the British Library, Google Scholar, Athens and through reading lists and recommendations from training sessions. In order to provide some structure to the large body of literature on supervision, the literature was grouped according to the manner of its delivery as depicted in Figure 2. The rationale for this was for specificity and relevancy to the topic of the research which was about group supervision undertaken and experienced by EPs. In Chapter One, references to the literature for each grouping are provided in Figure 1.



**Figure 2: Initial grouping of literature on supervision**

Chapter One considered the general supervision literature and outlined the rationale for this research being the political context and the dearth of published research on EPs and supervision (group or individual). The next sections (sections 2.4 to 2.4.1.3) discuss the literature on the psychological underpinnings that make for an effective group. This provides the theoretical context for this study.

#### **2.4 The psychology of an effective group**

Bion (1961) worked with soldiers in a psychiatric hospital offering group therapy for depression and neurosis. He published a series of papers detailing his observations and devised a theory on how and why groups function. These papers are now seen as a seminal text concerning a psychoanalytic explanation of how individuals behave in groups. Bion referred to the early work of Freud (1921) and Klein (1928) when discussing individuals regressing to the typical earliest phases of life when trying to make a connection with a group in which they are interacting and the issues group members had with their loss of individual distinctiveness. Bion depicted groups operating at conscious and unconscious levels. His work discussed the interplay between the function of the group and the environment within which it is occurring.

It is my belief that when being supervised in a group, the conscious and unconscious needs of the individuals are at play and participants seek to meet their own deep seated individual needs on both levels. In order for EPs to participate effectively in,

and be able to facilitate, good-quality group supervision an understanding of the various dimensions of group functioning is necessary.

A great deal has been written about the psychological underpinnings of effective groups/teams. Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory discusses a group being effective when the leader is aware that the group dynamics will change depending on the task, job or function that needs to be accomplished (Hersey, 1988). Johnson (2000) states that

*To be effective, a group must (a) achieve its goals, (b) maintain good working relationships among members, and (c) adapt to changing conditions in the surrounding organization, society, and world (p.12)*

In recent years the Every Child Matters agenda has led to an increasing interest amongst EPs concerned with working in multi-agency teams (DfES, 2003). Watson (2006) used questionnaires as a method of eliciting participants views on team effectiveness with members of multi-agency teams and found that members placed a high importance on having a

*shared vision, with clear and realistic aims and objectives (p.15)*

while Leadbetter (2006) looked into a four year research project into the developmental process a team goes through which was based on activity theory and concluded that

*a greater knowledge of what may be happening within teams, and the possible dynamics and underpinning psychological and social processes, should be helpful and should facilitate increased reflective practice (p57)*

Dennison, McBay and Shaldon (2006) reflected on the contribution educational psychology can make to effective teamwork. Adopting a psychodynamic, social constructionist and systemic background, they reflected on their experiences of working in multiagency teams and noted that psychological understanding of teams/groups and psychological input to the setting up and maintenance of those teams/groups played a crucial factor. Aguinis and Kraiger's (2009) review of training

and development literature highlighted a significant finding that teams which were trained together, performed better together.

**2.4.1 Adair’s(1986) Functional Management Approach**

Adair’s(1986) Functional Management Approach is an approach that identifies the needs of a group as comprising individual, group and task needs. Adair argues that all three elements need to be addressed in order for a group or team to function effectively. Table 1 shows examples of factors affecting group performance at the three levels outlined by Adair.

**Table 1: Examples of factors affecting group performance at three levels; individual, group and task**

Individual needs	Group needs	Task needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attending to personal problems/issues</li> <li>▪ Valuing individuals</li> <li>▪ Recognising &amp; using individual abilities</li> <li>▪ Training/helping the individual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Setting standards</li> <li>▪ Maintaining discipline</li> <li>▪ Building team spirit</li> <li>▪ Encouraging, motivating and giving a sense of purpose</li> <li>▪ Appointing roles</li> <li>▪ Ensuring communication within the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Defining the task</li> <li>▪ Making a plan</li> <li>▪ Allocating work &amp; resources</li> <li>▪ Controlling quality &amp; tempo of work</li> <li>▪ Checking performance against plan</li> <li>▪ Adjusting plan</li> </ul>

Adair’s approach was chosen as a basis for exploring the underpinnings of groups in this study as it was central to my understanding of group functioning based on my professional practice as an educational psychologist and my work on the development of training on team/group processes for EPs.

In order to explore the three levels of group functioning a literature search was completed in 2009 using Google Scholar, the library of the Local Authority where I was previously employed and notes from an undergraduate module on group and team functioning. This formed the basis of my understanding of the effective

functioning of groups/teams. Many psychological theories assisted with explaining the three levels of functioning identified by Adair and in considering these theories the theoretical underpinnings of this study were clarified.

#### *2.4.1.1 Individual needs of group members*

Those working in, or with groups, need to understand that as individual group members, all participants bring issues to the group that affect how they perform. Psychoanalytic theory can help with understanding the concepts that unconscious thoughts affect how much individuals are able to engage as members of a team. Psychoanalytic theory and the work of Freud and Strachey (1959) highlights the concept that individuals like to have a connection with other people and, therefore, in groups some individuals may struggle when conflict occurs. Maslow's hierarchy of need can be considered when looking at how individuals within a group would be seeking to have their basic needs met first and may be unable to commit to team membership if they felt ultimately unsafe (Maslow, 1970). Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955 and Ravenette, 1999) allows consideration of how individuals have their own constructs of the world which are unique to them and based on their past experiences.

#### *2.4.1.2 Group needs*

Adair's functional approach considers the group's collective needs as a crucial element of group functioning that needs to be understood. The psychological principles of group needs can be categorized as either equilibrium models or developmental models.

Lewin (1936) is widely acknowledged as the father of group dynamic research. He developed an equilibrium model that focused on understanding that a group really exists when individuals begin to understand that their fate depends on the fate of the group as a whole. The concept of a common objective being important is highlighted in the literature. For example, the work of Bion (1961) discussed earlier, focuses on the basic assumptions that often occur in groups. There are dependency assumptions (expecting the leader to do everything), pairing assumptions (members acting as if the group is purely social; focus on relationships) and fight-flight assumptions (challenging leadership; rebellion against group norms).

Focal conflict theory is another equilibrium model which attempts to use psychology to explain why group needs are important. Whitaker and Lieberman, (1964) discussed the idea of inevitable conflict in groups; they considered conflict as a threat to the group's equilibrium.

Developmental models are a set of theories that attempt to consider how groups change over time. Perhaps the most widely known is Tuckman's (1965) model which describes groups passing through a forming, storming, norming and performing stage and the later stage of mourning that was added by Lacoursiere (1980). Bennis and Sheppard's (1956) work considers key stages of group development where initially power relationships are the main focus and then following what is often termed as a barometric event, personal relationships become more pertinent.

#### *2.4.1.3 Task element: The need to define and understand group supervision*

In order to consider the task needs of this particular study, it was necessary to understand the functioning of a group, in group supervision and more particularly EPs participating and/or providing group supervision. Supervision can be conducted individually on a 1:1 basis or in a group where a number of professionals, often with the same role, come together to receive supervision.

## **2.5 Research into group supervision**

As mentioned earlier, the collation of literature on group supervision was undertaken throughout the research process. Athens searches using the keyword, 'group supervision' retrieved over 1000 articles. Excluding anything published more than five years ago, for specificity and recentness of the literature, reduced the results to around 500. This followed a manual search of the articles that referred to psychologists, counsellors or psychotherapists. Google Scholar and <http://www.copac.ac.uk/copac/> were accessed to locate any "gray" literature (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Soni's (2010) unpublished thesis was retrieved. This was an evaluative study of group supervision carried out by an EP of children's centre staff which led to further manual searches to identify studies on group supervision cited in Soni's reference section.

Of those reviewed, some articles discussed the advantages of group supervision over individual supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Proctor, 2008), this was not of particular significance for this research study into the experience of group supervision nevertheless the subject was worthy of note. Ray and Altekruze, (2000), used quantitative methods to consider the benefits and issues of both group and individual supervision. They justified the distinctive contribution of each, citing only two studies, in their literature review, that had attempted this type of research previously. Their study used 64 participants and randomly assigned them to various groups. The authors used a number of questionnaires which they claimed were valid and reliable measures. They undertook a statistical analysis of the findings in order to substantiate the robustness and generalizability of the findings. The study concluded that student counsellors preferred individual supervision but the authors critiqued their findings by acknowledging that the questionnaire used was not designed for consideration of the benefits and disadvantages of supervision per se which somewhat negated their findings.

There seemed to be a general consensus that more research continues to be needed on the experience of group supervision. As discussed in Chapter One 'Introduction' (1.5), Prieto (1996) updated Holloway and Johnston's (1985) review concerning the group supervision of trainee psychotherapists. Prieto concluded that more research was needed alongside better assimilation of this knowledge into the practice of those taking part in group supervision. A potential explanation for this 'poor understanding' of group supervision was the choice of methodology. The literature search concerning general supervision and group supervision of EPs found very few articles that referred to the more sophisticated qualitative methods of data analysis available today such as IPA, grounded theory or thematic analysis. Prieto's (1996) criticism of the heavy reliance on flawed quantitative methodology in the literature on group supervision of psychotherapists continues to have relevance today for other professional groups.

Mastoras and Andrews, (2011) carried out a very comprehensive empirical review of papers published following Prieto's suggestion that research into group supervision should be exploratory rather than confirmatory. They set out a very clear set of inclusion and exclusion criteria for considering studies. They focused on counsellors,



therapists and psychologists, and ensured that the focus of studies reviewed was the supervisee's perspective of the supervision. One of the main discussion points from this review of literature was the range of group supervision practices and the number of models in use. Mastoras and Andrews suggest that a model should be fit for purpose and that the findings had not suggested one model was favourable above any others. Instead Mastoras and Andrews suggest that there were a number of consistently mentioned issues from participants concerning their experience of group supervision. Firstly, 'the need to encourage peer feedback', in particular ensuring that as many participants as possible get to contribute rather than encouraging individual supervision in front of an audience. Secondly, 'balancing the multiple roles of the supervisor' so that the group supervisor is encouraging other members to actively participate as well as offering guidance, containment and feedback. Thirdly 'awareness of group processes' in the sense that both group members and the facilitator needs to be aware and work towards establishing a healthy, safe and productive group. The fourth, and final, consistently mentioned issue was 'working with supervisee anxiety', this was seen by Mastoras and Andrews as an issue that was not well understood from the studies they had reviewed. They discussed articles that raise the unproductiveness of high levels of supervisee anxiety, in particular how this can lead to members withdrawing and not participating which in turn leads to all members feeling the group is pointless. They also discuss how this level of anxiety can be channelled into productivity with participants being more motivated to learn in order to return to a more manageable state of emotions. Mastoras and Andrews concluded their review by stating that the researchers had risen to Prieto's challenge and suggested more quantitative methods should be employed in order to encourage empirically grounded practices in group supervision. An important counter argument would be that by going full circle there is a danger of once again applying positivist criteria to essentially non positivist activity.

A further set of literature considered for this more general review of group supervision was of a more discursive nature often recommending, describing or evaluating models of group supervision. Melnick and Fall (2008) proposed a model for how a group could function. They justified the necessity of this framework due to the paucity of literature on group supervision as opposed to individual supervision despite it being a regular occurring method for supervising counsellors. By

recommending a Gestalt approach to group supervision, the authors were concerned with supervisees organizing the experience of their clients. As part of this process supervisee's were also organizing their experience of supervision. Melnick and Fall asserted that all supervision occurred in the context of a system. It was the supervisees' choice as to what element of the system they focused on but the supervisors' job was to notice what the supervisee was attending to. They argued that group supervision gave participants the opportunity to look at their experiences with the view of a number of other members and therefore the ability to examine that experience was heightened. Whilst conceptually and theoretically thorough, this article proposed a model but did not offer any evidence based research to evaluate the usefulness of the model.

Fleming, Glass, Fujisaki and Toner (2010) cited the previous calls for research on group supervision (Holloway & Johnson, 1985; Prieto, 1996; Riva & Cornish, 1995) as motivation for using grounded theory to consider the most effective factors for quality group supervision. Fleming et al. were very clear of their epistemological and ontological stance justifying the study of a small group of participants over time by placing themselves in a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm. A justification for the use of post-positivist methodology may have negated their original intentions. Fleming et al. used questionnaires repeatedly with a number of participants of group supervision over time to consider the experience of group supervision. They acknowledged that the use of a standard questionnaire and then an auditor and the necessity of reaching a consensus, meant they are erring towards a positivist stance but justified this as a means of making the study more robust. This begs the question whether they then totally missed the experience of the participants. These methodological issues aside, the study produced some interesting findings, primarily group supervision was either facilitated by safety or inhibited by a lack of safety and a greater degree of learning occurred when participants were in a safe 'place'.

The research on group supervision discussed so far covers a wide range of issues on the enabling and disabling issues of group supervision with some reference to various models or theoretical positions. In designing this study two models of group supervision were explored at a more critical level. These were Hawkins and Shohet's (2006) Seven Eyed Model of Supervision and The Supervision Alliance Model

(Inskipp and Proctor, 1995, 2001) which was then developed specifically for groups by Proctor (2008). The rationale for this was that Hawkins and Shohet's model was one that the researcher had experienced both as a supervisee and a supervisor and trainer and because it was highlighted in the BPS supervision guidelines. Proctor's model was chosen as it appeared to be (alongside Hawkins and Shohet's model) one of the most cited models in articles on EP supervision in the literature. The next section provides a description and critique of these models of group supervision.

### ***2.5.1 Hawkins and Shohet's (2006) Seven Eyed Model of Supervision***

Hawkins and Shohet (2006) define supervision as a process whereby a practitioner can attend to, and better understand, their clients and the system within which their clients are functioning. They go on to define the three main functions of supervision as developmental, resourcing and qualitative. Hawkins and Shohet's, 2006, text primarily covers 'how to supervise' and the authors recommend various models developed by others that they see as suitable for various supervision situations. However, the textbook also includes an in-depth guide to understanding and being able to use a model they developed themselves which they claim is very different to others in that it focuses on the supervisory relationship as opposed to a focus on context and wider organisational issues.

Hawkins and Shohet's Seven Eyed Model directly teaches supervisors and supervisee's to be aware of the two interlocking systems that are present during supervision; the client/supervisee matrix and the supervisee/supervisor matrix. The 'seven eyes' that are needed during supervision are described as seven modes:

- Mode 1: Focus on the client and what and how they present
- Mode 2: Exploration of the strategies and interventions used by the supervisee
- Mode 3: Focusing on the relationship between the client and the supervisee
- Mode 4: Focusing on the supervisee
- Mode 5: Focusing on the supervisory relationship
- Mode 6: The supervisor focusing on their own process
- Mode 7: Focusing on the wider context in which the work happen.

While acknowledging a partiality for this model, due in part to its familiarity and use in my professional practice, the main strengths of this model are its clear theoretical stance articulated by its authors throughout its development. The Seven Eyed Model fundamentally draws on understanding from systemic and psychodynamic theories as well as drawing on behavioural and humanistic approaches to understanding relationships. Hawkins and Shohet's theoretical stance sits at the heart of this research study. It also dovetails with Adair's Functional Management Approach. The individual, group and task needs, draw on an understanding of psychodynamic and humanistic theory (individual), systemic (group) and behavioural (task) theory. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) directly discuss three similar elements of group functioning:

*In supervision groups, as in any other group, it is important to create a balance between focusing on the task, the individuals within the group and the group maintenance activities..... The individual needs include development, support, reassurance, approval, acceptance.....The group maintenance needs include issues of competitiveness, rivalry, authority, inclusion/exclusion.....Where there are good group supervisors, they will try and see that all three types of needs are attended to (p179).*

It is my opinion that this acknowledgement of wider influences on supervisees in group supervision that makes for a robust model which is more likely to produce stronger commitment from group members.

### **2.5.2. Proctor's (2008) Group Supervision Alliance Model**

Proctor (2008) describes the three main functions of supervision as formative (educative), normative (managerial and a form of quality control) and restorative (emotionally cathartic). She describes a framework where three types of working alliances are at play; the professional alliance (one's codes of ethics), the supervision alliance (the contract between the supervisor and the supervisees and from 'the group' to the stakeholders) and the group alliance (the working group contract between members).

Proctor looks at the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor and the roles and responsibilities of the supervisees. She discusses the flexibility and skills modelling that the group with the supervisor must manage, the participation and repair

element, managing the responses to supervisees' issues and the creative methods the group can use to support each other. This links to the literature discussed earlier about group dynamics and group development. It alludes to both developmental and equilibrium methods with a focus on the way the group evolves over time but also processes such as a barometric event in the participation and repair element.

Proctor encourages supervisors and supervisees to be aware of the typology of groups as clearly different groups will require different frameworks to follow:

- Authoritative – supervision in a group
- Participative – supervision with the group
- Co-operative and/or peer group – supervision by the group

Proctor is clear that no one type is better than another and although the process, through different makeups can be developmental, she recommends that some very experienced practitioners can still benefit from, and enjoy, being in an authoritative group. What seems more crucial in Proctor's guidance is the way in which the group is developed, the ground rules, the atmosphere and the working alliance.

One of the major problems for groups that Proctor describes is the confusion and lack of focus in responding to issues brought by group members. 'The group' and/or the facilitator need to learn 'whether' and 'when' to respond to ensure the group remains focused and useful to its members. Proctor feels this is something that is learnt over time and is, therefore, developmental. However, this could also be experienced as a barometric event as the reactions of supervisee's to comments and responses from the group, in my experience, can change the course of the group functioning and the group dynamic irreversibly.

One of my main criticisms of Proctor's (2008) text, *'Group Supervision: A guide to creative practice'* is that there is very little acknowledgement of the individual needs, elements that were explored within the initial sections of this chapter. Proctor gives thorough guidance and exploration of 'how' to set up and undertake group supervision. However, there is very little explanation of her theoretical position which

contributes to the lack of acknowledgement of the individual needs of members which in my opinion can totally consume the working alliance of the group.

The next section provides a detailed account of the specific literature reviewed for the purposes of this research study.

## **2.6 The literature review**

This section details the more specific critical review of literature relevant to this study, encapsulating the experience of EPs in group supervision, as opposed to the more general review of the background literature discussed in this and the previous chapter. The next section outlines the search strategy used to find relevant studies including the key words and databases searched, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria adopted. The checklist for critiquing qualitative and quantitative studies (Appendix 2) is introduced and the relevant articles and texts resulting from the more specific literature search are reviewed and critiqued.

### **2.6.1 The search procedure**

The search for articles and texts for the more in depth critical analysis needed for a literature review began in January 2012 and was carried out several times, most recently in May 2013. Published and unpublished research in the field over a 20 year period was chosen for recency, an Athens search was undertaken using the EBSCO host which included the databases:

- Academic Search Complete
- Education Research Complete
- PsyArticles
- PsylInfo

Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 illustrate the search procedure and the exclusion and inclusion criteria:

**Table 2: Athens search no 1**

<b>Key words used</b>	'group supervision Educational Psychologist' 'group supervision EPs'
<b>Initial results</b>	N = 0

**Table 3: Athens search no 2**

<b>Key words used</b>	Supervision EPs
<b>Initial results</b>	N = 7
<b>Manual inclusion criteria applied</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to supervision of trainee or qualified educational psychologists (group or individual) in title or abstract</li> <li>• Post 1993</li> </ul>
<b>Manual exclusion criteria applied</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to assistant EPs or other psychologists (not EPs)</li> <li>• 1992 and previous</li> </ul>
<b>Suitable references for review</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pomerantz &amp; Lunt (1993)</li> <li>2. Nolan (1999)</li> <li>3. Sayeed &amp; Lunt (1995)</li> </ol>
<b>Final results</b>	N = 3

**Table 4: Athens search no 3**

<b>Key words used</b>	Supervision Educational Psychologists
<b>Initial results</b>	N = 24
<b>Manual inclusion criteria applied</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to supervision of trainee or qualified educational psychologists (group or individual) in title or abstract</li> <li>• EPs in England</li> <li>• Post 1993</li> </ul>
<b>Manual exclusion criteria applied</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to assistant EPs or other psychologists (not EPs)</li> <li>• EPs outside of England</li> <li>• 1992 and previous</li> </ul>
<b>Suitable reference for review</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Atkinson &amp; Woods (2007)</li> <li>6 Farrell (1993)</li> <li>7 Kuk &amp; Leyden (1993)</li> <li>8 Leyden &amp; Kuk (1993)</li> <li>9 Lunt (1993)</li> <li>10 Maxwell (2013)</li> <li>11 Nash (1999)</li> <li>12 Nolan (1999)</li> <li>13 Osborne (1993)</li> <li>14 Pomerantz (1993)</li> <li>15 Pomerantz &amp; Lunt (1993)</li> <li>16 Sayeed &amp; Lunt (1995)</li> </ol>
<b>Final results</b>	N = 12 (3 of which had been found in the previous search, see Table 4)

The term Educational Psychologist and EP were chosen as search terms in order to mirror the participants of this study who were practising Educational Psychologists in England. The practise of educational psychology and in particular EPs involvement with supervision is felt to be very context specific. Terms such as school psychologist were felt to be more representative of the American school based system and therefore the literature associated with these terms were not felt to be relevant at this point. On completing the electronic search of databases, a manual search of pertinent Educational Psychology Journals from 1993-2013 was undertaken to ensure nothing had been overlooked (Table 6). These included: *Educational Psychology in Practice*, *Educational and Child Psychology Journal* and the *Division of Educational and Child Psychology's Debate* from 1993 onwards. A manual search was undertaken of the contents lists in these journals for articles on supervision and EPs and/or group supervision and EPs. Google Scholar was used inserting permutations of the keywords 'supervision and EPs/Educational Psychologists' and 'group supervision and EPs/Educational Psychologists'. One unpublished thesis was located. A search of UEL's thesis repository also found two unpublished thesis. The researcher also contacted one of the authors of the *BPS, Professional Supervision Guidelines* (Dunsmuir) and asked for her opinion on the references collected so far and if there was any further unpublished work that the researcher had inadvertently failed to include.

**Table 5: Manual search/Google Scholar search**

<b>Key words used</b>	Supervision Educational Psychologists Group Supervision Educational Psychologists
<b>Manual inclusion criteria applied</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to supervision of trainee or qualified educational psychologists (group or individual) in title or abstract</li> <li>• EPs in England</li> <li>• Post 1993</li> </ul>
<b>Manual exclusion criteria applied</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to assistant EPs or other psychologists (not EPs)</li> <li>• EPs outside of England</li> <li>• 1992 and previous</li> </ul>
<b>Reference</b>	17 Carrington (2004) 18 Nolan (1996) 19 Robinson (2006) 20 Scaife (1993) 21 Soni (2010)
<b>Final results</b>	N = 4(Nolan, 1996, was excluded as an article by the same author summarizing the findings of her 1996 thesis was published in 1999 and had been found in the above literature search)



The abstracts from each article identified in the final results from both the electronic and manual searches ( $N=16$ ) described above were then reviewed using a narrow focus review given the aims of the literature review, a table containing the results of this review can be found in Appendix 3. Articles were included that were research based rather than discursive or case studies as it was felt that this was more relevant to the aim of the current research. Studies that employed qualitative/quantitative or mixed methods were included due to the limited number of studies available. The studies needed to include qualified or newly qualified EPs and not trainees in an attempt to mirror this study's participants and, finally, the review included both published and unpublished articles, again because of the limited number of studies available. Of the 16 articles considered, seven were excluded because they were discursive in nature or case studies without any element of research included. Although interesting and relevant to the topic of EPs and supervision it was not felt that a systematic and robust review of the quality could be undertaken. The other main exclusion criteria were the participants of the studies being trainee EPs. On balance it was felt that the factors impacting on their experiences would be very different to those of qualified EPs and, therefore, a further three studies were excluded. A total of six articles met the inclusion criteria relevant to the context of this review. In the references section these studies are indicated by an asterisk.

The next section provides a description of how these selected articles were evaluated using two checklists based on the work of Crombie (1996), Fink (2005) and Petticrew and Roberts (2005). These checklists are included in Appendix 2.

### ***2.6.2 Discussion and critical review of studies***

The studies have been grouped and analysed in date of publication with the earliest being reviewed first.

The special 1993 edition of the DECP focused on supervision and contained three articles by Kuk, and Leyden, (1993) (c); Pomerantz, (1993) (b) and Pomerantz, and Lunt, (1993) (a) which are of relevance to this review.

These three articles introduced, reported on and discussed a questionnaire survey that investigated various forms of supervision for qualified educational psychologists which was completed in 1991. Unusually, due to the special edition, three separate articles were used to cover, the justification and methodology of inquiry, (b), (a) a general report of results and (c), a statistical analysis of the results.

Pomerantz and Lunt (1993) set the scene for the research, focusing on an earlier survey in 1984 where trainee EPs had been asked about a range of supportive and enabling activities that they had experienced in their training year. Pomerantz and Lunt commented that this had proved difficult due to the fact supervision amongst qualified EPs had been hard to define and understand as well as difficult to quantify (Pomerantz, 1990). They reasoned that there had been improvements in the approach to supervision with trainees but that there was still very little clarity on the situation with qualified EPs, hence the justification for the study. It would seem then that when assessing for quality, this study, is clear in its aims and relies on previous published work. The methodology included inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants, incorporating a wide spread of the EP population. It would be fair to say the study's aims were valid. A specific repeatable methodology was included enabling its replication some years later. There was very little about the authors' theoretical position and the procedure for analysis and interpretation of the questionnaires was patchy. There was not any mention of epistemology or ontology. As such there was a lack of reflexivity and one could question the robustness and reliability of any findings and subsequent interpretations.

Pomerantz (1993) reported on the raw data from the 1991 survey in relation to supervision. He took each category of the questionnaire and reported the frequency of responses and a percentage. Kuk and Leyden (1993) discussed a factor analysis which was completed on questionnaire results and responses to a further question on the gains from supervision. Kuk and Leyden are clear in the statistical procedures they used but they suggest caution in view of the size of the statistical subsample. The factorial analysis identified three main components: *the importance of professional boundaries, individual's appraisal of the underlying rationale for supervision and training needs of the supervisor.*

The results were valid and interesting, especially in the light of the justification for the study. However, very little was known about supervision take up and response across the general EP population. Pomerantz (1993) summarised the main findings and commented that the frequency of supervision provided was variable, ranging from two or three times a year to, most commonly, monthly. He reported that participants generally commented that supervision was more effective and most valued when it was frequent, protected time that was timetabled and planned for. An overwhelming majority of participants (77%) in the study reported being able to raise issues that were important in relation to their practice which Pomerantz viewed as encouraging.

Another important element of the findings was in relation to training. 72 percent of the participants reported that they had not had any useful training on supervision. It was also the participants' views that qualified EPs required more training in how to take advantage of supervision. This was particularly interesting as Hawkins and Shohet (2006) and Proctor (2008) focus on the training supervisors need (confirmed as an issue by 72 % of participants saying they hadn't had training) but this clearly picks up on the idea that supervisees need training to be part of supervision, something this research addresses in the discussion section of this research study.

One criticism, however, is the lack of rigor in the analysis of the range of experiences participants reported and a lack of a truly qualitative element meant that a rich picture was lacking. Questionnaires were used but with very little option for open ended responses meaning there is little depth to their reports. At a later stage of the questionnaire participants were given a Likert scale with five responses from strongly agree through to strongly disagree being available. Pomerantz reported that

*Attitudes about being able to address emotionally based issues like frustration, anger or helplessness vary considerably, about 41% of respondents do not feel these issues are adequately addressed in supervision (p23)*

Pomerantz went on to comment that there was a feeling that the focus was the needs of the supervisor or the employing body rather than that of the supervisee but

there was no evidence for this statement or a sense of how he had arrived at this conclusion. If only half true, this conclusion negates the reasons for providing supervision in the first place. This throw away conclusion, at the end of the comprehensive questionnaire, was one of the most important findings but its impact was lost due to the methodology employed and, therefore, the ability for further analyses and reporting. This criticism is compounded by a report that of the population of EPs who did not receive supervision 28 % said they did not want any, there is no room for following up this significant finding although Pomerantz acknowledges the questions this raises. He suggests an element of fear is at play but is unable to speculate further.

To summarise, these three articles offered a robust justification for the aims of the research and for aspects of the methodology and results. The use of three separate articles allowed for a wider discussion of some aspects of the study that are not often provided within the format of journal articles. The explicit lack of a discussion of the authors' epistemological and theoretical stance, which informed their choice of methodology, which in turn did not allow for an adequate lack of exploration of some potentially important findings, were a serious limitation of these three articles.

Lunt and Sayeed (1995) followed up a previous piece of research Sayeed and Lunt (1992) which used postal questionnaires and a series of structured interviews with newly qualified EPs and Principal Educational Psychologists to investigate the experience of induction. The authors justified the selection of newly qualified EPs by proposing that the first year of practice as a newly qualified EP was a year where practitioners were still learning the practicalities of the job and trying to assimilate the theoretical elements into everyday practice. They set the scene for their 1992 study by discussing the professional climate at the time and the current moves towards considering a pre-chartered year with reduced caseload and enhanced supervision. In their 1995 study they refer to the increased pressure due to the implementation of the 1993 Code of Practice, and raise concerns that the original survey found great and worrying variations of practice. No theoretical underpinnings, epistemology or ontology for the basis of the study were provided and it was, therefore, difficult to get any sense of the framework in which the research was undertaken. One can assume that the authors felt the main functions of supervision in this situation (the first year of

practice) would be educative and supportive although this was not specifically mentioned. The main thrust of the literature reviewed was that of induction and extended 'on the job' learning. Literature on supervision was not discussed.

The strengths of the research lay in the reporting of the selection of participants. The selection criteria were relevant and the coverage was representative, targeting the appropriate population. Questionnaires were sent to all the qualified trainees from London courses in a given year and the Principal EPs of the Local Authorities where they were employed. Of these, ten were followed up for a structured interview. The authors described the process for developing the questionnaire in their 1992 study and provided a copy in the appendices but it was unclear which frameworks were used for devising the questionnaire.

The aims were not specifically stated but alluded to, however, it is not clear from the introduction or methodology section what the authors were trying to find out. A list of 'areas' that the questionnaire sought to explore were provided but with no reference to epistemology nor ontology it was unclear if the authors were interested in experience, frequency or quality of supervision.

One of the four areas explored by the questionnaire was named 'supervision' but again this remained ambiguous. The findings reported on whether there was a designated supervisor for newly qualified EPs and how much supervision was available but with no mention of previous literature it was hard to know whether this confirmed perceived trends or highlighted an issue.

The conclusion focused on the supervision element of the findings despite there being little mention of this as the main aim of the study. They reported that 14 per cent of newly qualified EPs had less than one hour supervision a week, 43 per cent received regular supervision and 10 per cent received it on request. They comment that for a profession that operates in situations bound by high levels of stress it is worrying that supervision practice is not more uniform for all. The authors concluded that there was a clear variation in practices across EP services but no hard evidence was discussed. The survey included questions about how supervision time was

used, Lunt and Sayeed focus on the responses that indicate little opportunity for reflection and comment that supervision seemed to have an administrative focus. Despite limited depth to the methodological aspects the study raises important issues, in mitigation, these articles were published over 20 years ago. However, they failed to meet a number of criteria using the checklists indicating a lack of academic rigor in the research process.

Nolan's (1999) qualitative research explored the practice of supervision within one Educational Psychology Service. She conducted 14 interviews with EPs in her Educational Psychology Service and then analysed the data from 58 PEPs about the practise of supervision within their EPSs. The article gave a very comprehensive review of the previous literature divided into three sections; supervision from an individual perspective, a managerial view and an overview of models. The research targeted the ideal population and balanced the more in depth individual perspective with an attempt at generalizeability by including questionnaires that covered nearly 50 per cent of EPSs' in the country. The method for selecting participants was relatively clear and repeatable, and the collection of data clearly described. However, the methodology had its limitations. There was no mention of the theoretical or epistemological position of the author so it was difficult to ascertain whether the research questions had been answered and Nolan did not describe or discuss the process of analysis so reflexivity was non-existent.

The interviews resulted in some significant findings being discussed by the author. These were issues raised about senior members of staff being the ones who offered supervision and yet there were limited examples of them being supervised themselves. There were also tensions identified in managers offering both management and supervision and Nolan concluded by suggesting the managerial and supportive functions of supervision were provided by separate individuals.

In describing what they needed from supervision many of the participants spoke of new advice, creative ideas, reassurance and balanced feedback. They specifically mentioned group supervision with ground rules being a possible way to address the gap between their supervision needs and the current provision at the time. Participants also mentioned specific training in supervision being necessary.

The questionnaire responses were analysed using Miles and Hubermans (1984) qualitative data analysis techniques but again no detail was provided. The results focus around Who? What? Where? and detail the variation in amount and type of supervision received. The strengths, difficulties and developments that Nolan identified were discussed with the most frequently mentioned strength that EPs felt valued and supported. The PEPs felt that the main purpose of the activity was to improve practice, ensure support and reduce stress. Nolan noted that supervision was gradually becoming more formalised in 44 percent of EPSs' which was interesting given the mixed picture that the 1991 survey by Pomerantz, (1993) reported.

To summarise, Nolan offered a comprehensive exploration of supervision with a discussion of some interesting developments. For its time, Nolan's study provided an in depth and robust study on a relatively under researched topic of EP's experiences of supervision. However, using the checklists for assessing qualitative research it still falls short of the strict criteria used today to claim gold standard qualitative research.

Soni (2010) examined an EP facilitating group supervision with family support workers at a children's centre. She provided a clear extensive description of previous literature although limited critique was offered. As an unpublished thesis there was the room for a thorough, replicable description of participant selection, data collection and analysis procedures including many references to reflexivity. The research aims were clear - to explore the mechanisms, context and outcomes of group supervision. The procedures used allowed the original research questions to be addressed, she used realistic evaluation (Pawson & Tilley, 2007) to examine the data and provided detailed examples of the matrices used to look for connections and relationships within the data set. Soni included sections on the threats to objectivity, reliability and validity and the steps taken to control these all of which add to the quality research undertaken.

The mechanisms used to look for connectedness attempted to answer the research questions about the inhibiting and enabling factors of group supervision. The highest on the positive list was that participants could listen and not speak, the second was

that the manager was not present and a joint third was the relaxed and informal approach and that more than one person's view was available. The negative issues were issues with timing, domination by one participant and having too big a group.

The study also looked at outcomes of being part of group supervision, Soni coded these outcomes as reported by the family support workers that took part and found that they could be roughly coded to support Hawkins and Shoheit's (2006) functions; educative, supportive and managerial. An interesting and potentially significant managerial outcome was that both the family support workers and their managers felt that there was a positive impact on the service they could provide and, therefore, in their opinion this should lead to better outcomes for children and young people. However, as it is a qualitative study there is no quantifiable evidence of this.

In conclusion, as the most recent literature reviewed Soni offered an epistemologically sound attempt at using qualitative methodology to examine the mechanisms, context and outcomes of group supervision facilitated by an EP which could now lead to some quantifiable follow up.

### ***2.6.3 Summary of the critique***

The reviewed studies raised some interesting issues for discussion. It would appear that 20 years after the initial attempts by Lunt, Pomerantz, Leyden and Guk to start to understand the approach to supervision across EP services, there is still very little known about the frequency, approaches and outcomes of supervision amongst EPs. Nolan attempted an update in 1996 and her article in 1999 offered food for thought for EP services in how they should be providing for and supporting their EPs. A theme identified across several of the studies was the enthusiasm for supervision as a tool to reduce stress and offer support and new ways of approaching cases. The literature identified concerns that supervision is often provided by managers who are not themselves accessing supervision and then the issue of managerial/supportive roles become confused.

Group supervision was mentioned as a format for providing supervision in the future due to the range of perspectives on offer and the opportunity for EPs to work



together although the lack of training on supervision is a substantial issue noted in all the literature reviewed.

The most recent research produced by Soni is the first attempt by an EP to research group supervision from a theoretical stance and consider the implications of using group supervision to support professionals outside of the EP service. In conclusion, then, the current literature leaves many areas to be explored, not least, in my view, the experience of being supervised in a group and the implications this has for offering group supervision to others.

## **2.7 Theoretical framework for this research study**

This study employed a framework based on systemic and psychodynamic approaches to understanding human behaviour as well as drawing on humanistic approaches to understanding relationships. The theoretical stance underpinning Hawkins and Shohet's Seven Eyed Model sits at the heart of this research study, it also dovetails well with Adair's Functional Management Approach of how groups work.

The individual, group and task needs, draw on an understanding of psychodynamic theory (Freud, 1921; Klein, 1928), humanistic theory (Maslow, 1970), organisational and systemic theory (Lewin 1936) an understanding of these will enable an in-depth exploration of the experiences of EPs in group supervision.

## **2.8 Summary of Chapter Two**

This chapter set the scene for this research study by reviewing the literature on group functioning, group supervision, and supervision and EPs. A comprehensive description of the search criteria and the framework for reviewing the literature was detailed and a critical analysis of the most relevant literature was described. There are many gaps in the current literature, primarily, the over reliance on quantitative methodology has left the research arena somewhat sterile in terms of the understanding of the 'experience' of taking part in group supervision. We have at our disposal data which relates to who is having supervision, how to set up supervision, the types of models that are popular but at no point in the literature reviewed for this study is there a thorough analysis of the participants' views on what supervision

means for them. The literature that is out there refers generally to clinical psychologists and/or psychotherapists, a population who share many of the same issues with educational psychologists but the unique perspectives of a group of people working *within* the education system at the same time as working *on* the system was felt to be crucial. The critical review described, assisted in not only identifying the gaps in the current literature but also in clarifying the attributes of best qualitative research practice, those of transparency, rigour and sensitivity to context.

The next chapter provides an account of how these issues were incorporated into the methodology used in this study to provide a transparent and reflective description of the stages of data collection and analysis using IPA to understand the experience of EPs in group supervision.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Overview of Chapter Three

### 3.2 Research Paradigm

#### *3.2.1 Reflections upon ontological, epistemological and methodological frameworks for research into professional supervision of educational psychologists*

### 3.3 Research Design: Reflections upon the use of qualitative methodology to begin to understand the experience of group supervision of educational psychologists

#### *3.3.1 Collection of data*

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### 3.5 Research Process

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### 3.6 Summary of Chapter Three

### **3.1 Overview of Chapter Three**

This chapter will include a detailed description of the methodology used to gain insight to the experience of educational psychologists in group supervision

Educational psychologists are engaged in research on a daily basis; either at an idiographic, case study level with the children and young people who they are supporting or at a systemic level with the complex groups with whom they work, such as schools or Local Authorities. However, in my opinion, the motivation for, and understanding of, why they are engaged in such research is often poorly considered. Mertens (2005) proposes that those engaged in research need to overtly examine their world view and the effect this has had on the decisions they have made in the research process, section 3.2 of this chapter aims to be transparent in the understanding of the issues concerned with carrying out this research study.

A description of the process of data collection and analysis using IPA is given in section 3.5 with a step by step guide covering the process of how decisions were made and justifications for various levels of analysis (3.5.4). Yardley's (2000) quality criteria for qualitative research of: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence and impact and importance are kept in mind throughout the explanation. The depth of description and personal reflection included is an attempt to meet the stringent level of reflexivity needed in a quality IPA study (Smith, 2011a).

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

Fossey, Harvey, McDermott and Davidson (2002) refer to the three principal research paradigms as empirico-analytical, interpretive and critical, Guba and Lincoln (2000) maintain that answers to the following three questions would define a particular research paradigm:

The ontological question: what is the nature of reality?

The epistemological question: what can we know?

The methodological question: how do we find out what can be known?

As initially discussed in Chapter One, 'Introduction', ontology is concerned with the nature of being and refers to the beliefs about reality. One researcher might believe that there are observable and measurable phenomena while another will think that many aspects of what we as humans believe to be real, are actually created, institutionalized and, therefore, constructed by individuals through interaction and subsequent interpretation. Epistemology is concerned with how we know what we know (Willig, 2010). An epistemological position will define the validity and reliability of knowledge claims with some researchers controlling variables in order to measure things accurately and reliably. Other researchers will be more concerned with observing phenomena as it happens, because their epistemological position is that there is no one reality and, in fact, knowledge is constructed by each individual. Clearly then, the reason for considering all of this is that, in order to be transparent in answering the methodological question of how we would find out what can be known, a researcher needs to be open about their ontology and epistemology.

#### ***3.2.1 Reflections upon ontological, epistemological and methodological frameworks for research into professional supervision of Educational Psychologists***

Again, as discussed in the introduction to this study in Chapter One, and represented in Figure 1, the literature on supervision in the helping professions is vast. However, there are only a small number of articles in the last 20 years that specifically relate to supervision for educational psychologists. As previously stated, the majority of this literature relates to the supervision of trainee EPs, leaving the issue of the

supervision of qualified EPs and supervision of other professionals by EPs as a relatively under-researched and under-written about area.

As discussed in Chapter Two, 'Literature review', the published research concerning supervision of educational psychologists is very scant in its reference to the ontological and epistemological position of the researchers. It would appear that there is an over-representation of post-positivistic studies in the cohort with the small number of articles published describing research using either quantitative or mixed methods methodology in order to provide a robust, valid and generalizable set of results (Pomerantz & Lunt, 1993, Pomerantz, 1993, Osborne, 1993, Nolan, 1999). Some of the articles identified during an initial literature search seem to revolve around the author's descriptions of various supervision models using what could roughly be described as idiographic, case study type methodology (Jennings, 1996; Carrington, 2004). One assumes these methods have been chosen in order to reflect the authors' social constructionist position. However, there is little reference in any of the articles to the essential characteristics of good quality qualitative research such as sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence or impact and importance (Yardley, 2000).

Group supervision was chosen as the specific area of interest for this study as the current literature is even more scant when it comes to EPs engaging in this form of supervision. Chapter Two 'Methodology' briefly mentions Maxwell (2013) and Soni (2010). As discussed Maxwell provides an epistemological position but not a research focus, while Soni provides both but her work is yet to be published. The literature search completed at an early stage, for the research proposal, on published, research into group supervision in general, found very few articles that referred to the more sophisticated qualitative methods of data analysis such as IPA, grounded theory or thematic analysis. Prieto (1996) criticized the group supervision literature as methodologically flawed due to its heavy reliance on quantitative methodology. A decade later, only a handful of studies have used qualitative methods to try to understand the experience of taking part in group supervision (Fleming, Glass, Fujisaki, & Toner, 2010, Soni, 2010). Fleming et al. (2010) clearly state they are using grounded theory because they are working in a post positivist paradigm, while Soni (2010) uses realistic evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997)

because of its roots in realism but its acknowledgement of the criticisms of positivism.

As an educational psychologist who works in an ever-changing applied setting, I take a very pragmatic view in terms of ontological position. As an undergraduate, when in the early years of practice, the scientific rigour of positivism seemed to offer more security in a world where an 'expert' opinion was often sought. However, now just over a decade later the experience of working with young people and their families alongside the complex nature of the education system has led to an understanding that the theories people generate due to their lived experiences, while maybe not as valid and reliable as the scientists would like, are in fact very important when considering ways forward for those concerned. In the world of applied educational psychology I have had ample opportunities of applying theoretical understanding to a complex situation and in the end accepting that the 'client' too has a theory of their own, based on the life they have lived- that is often much more powerful in affecting their future choices. As an EP I find myself applying a range of theories from a range of positions, from the positivist cognitive assessment, to the realist classroom observation. As a pragmatist I find myself considering a position that is fit for purpose at the time on a day to day basis, and so I would argue that in order to best consider the actual experience of EPs taking part in group supervision, it would be most useful to take a critical realist viewpoint. Ultimately, supervision is a process by which educational psychologists work together to make sense of, and add meaning to, the world around them. By taking a critical realist viewpoint I felt that the use of a qualitative methodology was necessary to gain an idiographic view on how participants experienced being part of group supervision.

### **3.3 Research Design: Reflections upon the use of qualitative methodology to begin to understand the experience of group supervision of educational psychologists**

The aims of the study were as follows:

- To explore the experience of educational psychologists taking part in group supervision
- To ascertain whether group supervision could be offered by EPs to other professionals within the children's workforce

As an exploratory study the aim was to provide a vehicle to describe the lived experience of group supervision, how this is interpreted and considered by the educational psychologists who take part. The literature review has produced much theory about how and why one would engage in supervision which is based on the results of questionnaires, observations, focus groups and other scientifically valid methods (Atkinson & Woods, 2007; Carrington, 2004; Leyden, 1993; Nash, 1999; Nolan, 1999; Osborne, 1993; Pomerantz, 1993, 2002; Pomerantz & Lunt, 1993) but I still remain unconvinced that the experiences of being part of group supervision have been fully explored to date.

Therefore, for this study I will be considering an epistemological and ontological view that is based on social constructionism. Social constructionists are critical of the concept of 'one reality' and instead believe that as individuals people have multiple versions of the world (Burr, 2003). Supervision is a process whereby practitioners are encouraged to reflect on their own assumptions about their clients and, therefore, the study of supervision should, one could argue, be conducted in a research paradigm that also questions the concept of one real truth. It is, therefore, crucial to consider the interpretations people have about their world when trying to understand the thoughts, many feelings and behaviours people have. IPA's particular form of social constructionism goes beyond socio-cultural and historical processes and while it agrees that language and narrative is an important part of process it proposes that the participants being interviewed are creatively involved in developing a sense of self when interpreting the situation they are describing (Eatough and Smith, 2008).



## Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Phenomenology is a term used to refer to both a philosophical movement as well as models of psychological and interpretive enquiry. Phenomenology was founded by Edmund Husserl (1927) although it was later adapted by Heidegger (1962/1927) and Merleau-Ponty (1962). Husserl proposed that phenomenology is interested in the world as experienced by people rather than the nature of the world in general so objects and subjects are described by the way someone experiences them. He referred to “intentionality” when describing the way different people would experience the ‘same’ phenomena in different ways depending on their thoughts, beliefs and judgements.

When considering phenomenology as applied to research, one considers the study of phenomena: their nature and meanings. Its theoretical viewpoint derives from a belief that an individual’s behaviour is determined by the experience gained from their direct interaction with the phenomena. During this complex and very individual interaction, human beings interpret and attach meanings to different actions or ideas and thereby construct new experiences. Willig (2010) describes phenomenology as an approach to research that fits in the critical realist stance as it is a human scientific approach that aims to redress the limitations of a natural scientific approach by enabling human experience to be investigated by exploring the meanings and interpretations of human experience. Phenomenology is described by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) as a philosophical approach to the study of experience; in particular it is concerned with people making sense of the world. Phenomenology acknowledges the subjective nature of reality and reflects an intent to explore the experiences of those who have actually taken part in group supervision. It is a method which makes limited claims of generalizability because it is concerned with the particular, Smith et al. (2009) talk about theoretical transferability rather than generalizability, there are dangers of undermining the benefits of qualitative methodology if you get wrapped up in such quantitative concepts of generalizability. One could argue it is better to concentrate on quality in qualitative terms such as representativeness of participants quotes within themes (Smith, 2011a).

### **3.3.1 Collection of data**

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used with eight qualified educational psychologists. Semi-structured interviews are regularly used in IPA studies as they involve the use of open-ended questions which enable a deeper exploration of the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). The use of semi-structured interviews allows the interviewer to let the interviewee explore their own issues at their own pace which can often mean an area of great significance is explored at a depth not allowed for in a more structured interview or via a questionnaire.

### **3.3.2 Analysis of data**

Once the data collection phase was completed the interviews were analysed following Smith et al. (2009) guidelines for IPA and Smith's (2011a) recommendations for a quality IPA study.

IPA is a methodology concerned with expressing experience in its own terms, Smith et al. (2009) define IPA as;

*a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of life experiences (p1)*

IPA is a framework for analysing qualitative research data that is most frequently used to analyse data from one-to-one interviews in order to develop a deeper understanding of a situation from the point of view of those who have lived it. Smith et al. (2009) discuss a key use of IPA being applied psychology or, in particular, to listen to the views of people who are engaging with the world. As an idiographic approach, IPA is interested in the individual and sees those individuals as expert in their own experience. By using IPA, this study provides an interesting and potentially unique approach in the EP world to looking at supervision from the supervisees' lived experience rather than focusing on the supervisor's view of how effective supervision is.

A key factor of IPA is the concept of hermeneutics - the theory of interpretation. Heidegger (1962/1927), who began his career as a student of Husserl, is credited

with the move away from the transcendental and towards the existential and the beginnings of hermeneutics being very critical of the view that it is possible to get a view of a phenomena without some form of interpretation on the part of the person experiencing it. Hermeneutics viewed phenomenology as an interpretative activity and the hermeneutic cycle is perhaps the most interesting element to consider further at this point.

In the context of research the hermeneutic cycle is concerned with the interconnected relationship between the number of levels connecting the part and the whole. Within IPA the hermeneutic cycle is apparent throughout the methodological process as the researcher moves back and forth interpreting the data from a number of angles at a number of levels taking a dynamic, non-linear path. When first introduced to IPA as a methodological tool it struck me that the process drew many parallels with the multi layered, non-linear approach to reflection encouraged in clinical supervision and, therefore, it felt appropriate to use a tool such as IPA to explore the experience of taking part in supervision. A further connection was noted when considering the role of the double hermeneutic whereby the researchers influence on the analysis is acknowledged (Smith et al. 2009) because within my experience of group supervision the group often considered the interpretations they were making of the issues being brought to the group.

### **3.4 Role of the researcher and reflexivity**

The concept of reflexivity has become a key factor in the world of qualitative inquiry and is described as the practitioner

*acknowledging active subjectivity and opening the practitioner up to the diverse and contingent nature of their own knowledge and truth*  
(Moore, 2005, p111).

Gough (2003) refers to Wilkinson's three distinct forms of reflexivity: personal, functional and disciplinary (Wilkinson, 1988). At the very least quality qualitative research should include a visible acknowledgement of the personal position of the researcher, there should be an attempt to be transparent in the motivations, interests and attitudes that have influenced the researcher's decisions every step of the way. It is not just personal reflexivity that should be apparent though, the functional

element of reflexivity should be made explicit by the researcher relating the effects of their role on the research process, issues of power need to be considered as it is virtually impossible to escape such issues when it is the researcher who develops an idea, asks the questions and interprets the participants' responses.

Educational psychologists carry out idiographic research on a daily basis as they solve problems with children and young people. Being reflective is a key part of this problem-solving process that I would suggest is developed during professional supervision. I would also suggest that good quality professional supervision should involve exploration at a number of levels using similar techniques to those described as necessary for being reflexive; exploration and questioning at a number of levels and scrutinising the 'reality' to consider what interpretations have occurred. From the very outset it was my belief that the reflective nature of supervision and the reflexive nature of IPA fit seamlessly together because at their core are the same values and processes.

As a phenomenological tool IPA connects to the core ideas of phenomenology, that it is an interpretative process that involves a sustained and systematic analysis of the participant's experience of something (a phenomena) by the researcher. Throughout the whole process of conducting this study from the initial tentative ideas, to research group supervision, to the final stages of writing I have engaged in many levels of active reflexivity both implicitly and explicitly to ensure that I have been able to stay true to the phenomena being explored 'the experience of taking part in group supervision'. The use of a research journal alongside tutorials at the university and supervision in the work place has meant a rigorous questioning of processes, decisions and the interpretations being made. The whole process has at times felt like a life changing experience whereby the very essence of what is known and how one knows it has been questioned alongside significant philosophical and moral concepts concerning how EP's work together to ensure better outcomes for children and young people.

#### *Reflective note*

As a practising educational psychologist I have a long-standing personal interest of, and experience in, supervision, group dynamics and the combination of both in

group supervision. There is genuine acknowledgement that in making sense of others making sense of their experiences a great deal of reflexivity is necessary. However, rather than trying to bracket this involvement and try and deny its influence, IPA was chosen as a tool due to its acceptance and embracement of the concept that the analysis and interpretation will be influenced by my own phenomenology.

Clearly as a practising educational psychologist with a special interest in group supervision I have continually needed to ensure reflexivity at every level to ensure the idiographic nature of every participants experience is maintained. One of the participants, Lisa's, descriptions of presenting a different type of self in supervision were very close to my own experiences at times and so I shared my interpretations of parts of her transcript with my research group for confirmation that I was staying true to the experience she had described and not that of my own.

It has been, at times, very difficult to bracket one's own experience, as in the example above, but also to try and shut out the voice of previous participants as each new interview was analysed. Another participant, Sheila, talked about her negative experience of individual supervision holding her back from fully participating in group supervision, this was such a powerful description that I found myself examining other transcripts for something similar because I was keen to turn this into a superordinate theme, when I realised this was a phenomena described by Sheila alone I felt a sense of disappointment and I found myself over examining other transcripts willing the phenomena to be present but it was not and it was relegated to a subtheme but this felt appropriate as it was a significant but not common theme.

The interpretative nature of analysing each participants reflections of their own experience, the double hermeneutic, has meant that the process feels unique and subjective but at the same time an important perspective that is missing in the current literature.

Throughout the rest of this chapter as well as through Chapter four 'Findings', I have included an on-going reference to 'reflexivity' in order to guide the reader through the decisions that were made and the manner in which they were undertaken. This is an

attempt at meeting Yardley's (2000) criteria for quality qualitative research, in particular the principle of transparency.

Whilst writing this chapter I have reflected that the process of deep systematic and attentive reflection undertaken throughout this piece of IPA analysis could be best described by one subtheme developed from participants views of the experience of group supervision, subtheme R4: 'It is the ultimate psychological experience'.

### **3.5 The research process**

The following section will detail the research process from start to completion:

#### ***3.5.1 Stage 1: Preparation***

At the time of developing a research proposal I was a lead member of the Local Authorities special interest group for supervision, the climate of working practice for educational psychologists was on the precipice of change and a range of requests were being presented to the group for consideration. A number of new requests arose for various EPs to facilitate group supervision to a range of professionals within the children's workforce such as learning support assistants, learning mentors and teams of teachers in special schools. There were varying levels of response across the service to such requests ranging from reservations due to conscious incompetence, to over -confident enthusiasm due to unconscious incompetence and everything in between but the main issue that became apparent was the distinct lack of experience of participation in group supervision let alone being able to facilitate group supervision for others. In fact alongside a small group of about 12 other colleagues, I had been involved in being supervised in a group and was becoming increasingly aware of the complexity of this process. Turning to the literature for guidance I became acutely aware that very little had been published on the subject of EPs and group supervision and the unique contribution for research was born.

##### ***3.5.1.1 Stage 1: Ethical approval***

A research proposal was developed and submitted with appropriate ethical approval. The research was completed with full compliance to the British Psychological Society's code of ethics (BPS, 2006) and the University of East London's guidelines (UEL, 2011), a copy of the ethics form is available in Appendix 4. As practising

qualified educational psychologists, the participants were trained and experienced in the nature of research and their rights as participants. It was, however, made explicit, that the transcripts of the interviews would be anonymous and any write up would minimise the chances of individual EPs being identified by including minimal biographical data. Participants were assured that the data would be stored securely and participants were given the option of withdrawing from the research, without needing to give a reason any time prior to any analysis of the data.

#### *3.5.1.2 Stage 1: Preparation; developing the interview schedule*

The use of a semi-structured interview schedule allowed for an element of structure to give confidence to the researcher and to ensure the general aims of the project would be met. The schedule covered three sections:

- **General supervision**, with questions considering how one would define supervision and the participants background in terms of supervision, for example what kind of supervision they got, how long they had been having it for and questions on any formal training
- **Group supervision**, with questions about the supervision group that they were part of, how long had they been part of it for and most importantly what did it feel like to be part of this supervision group?
- **Offering group supervision**, with questions covering how they thought EPs could act as facilitators in group supervision of other professionals and what issues that might bring

#### *3.5.1.3 Stage 1: Preparation; pilot interview*

A pilot interview was conducted with a qualified educational psychologist who had been part of a supervision group for around three years. The interviewee was made aware that it was a pilot interview and her data would be destroyed and not used after the initial lessons on interview technique and the suitability of the subject had been learnt. This interview followed a similar schedule to the one finally used but included many more prompts. The aim of the pilot was to test out the schedule, practise the interviewing technique and ensure the digital recorder would be suitable so the interviews were ready to be transcribed at a later date.

The pilot interview quickly established that the topic was of great interest to EPs and any nervousness about a lack of data was unnecessary as the interview lasted nearly two hours. On reflection, at a later date in supervision, it was clear that the skill of interviewing for research was more complicated than it had first appeared and whilst listening to the tape it was apparent that I had been far too vocal and in fact it was less like an interview and more like a conversation, I had interrupted regularly and unknowingly stopped the participant mid flow often then halting her exploration at a deeper level. An opportunity arose to observe a very experienced IPA researcher conducting a mock interview. In particular the use of prompts such as “go on” and “tell me more” were demonstrated which were crucial in honing my interview techniques. A further reading of Smith et al. (2009) reiterated the importance of the interview technique in meeting another of Yardley’s (2000) principles for quality qualitative research, sensitivity to context. Smith et al. states that sensitivity to context begins with the appreciation of the interactional nature of the interview and goes on to say that:

*obtaining good data requires close awareness of the interview process  
(Smith et al., 2009, p180)*

The pilot interview led to re-writing the schedule which resulted in the version used which can be seen in Appendix 5. It also led to a much broader understanding of the more subtle interactional style needed and the tendency to over rely on prompts and needing to let the participants take the interview in whichever direction they wanted if a robust picture of their lived experience was to be gained.

#### *3.5.1.4 Stage 1: Preparation, sampling framework*

At the time of writing the research proposal I worked in a large Local Authority Educational Psychology Service and, as a member of a local special interest group, found various opportunities to recruit participants who had experienced group supervision and were willing to be interviewed. Links had also been made through a regional interest group and a further pool of participants was sought from a neighbouring EPS.



In line with IPA design, the participants needed to be a small homogenous group and, therefore, potential participants needed to be qualified educational psychologists who had experienced group supervision for at least one year. It was felt that a year into the experience participants would have established a feel for what the group was about and the process would be more fluid. Potential participants, who met the criteria, were contacted via email personally and introduced to the nature of the study. They were then invited to participate and if they wished to take part, were sent an information leaflet and consent form to fill in (Appendix 6). Data collection for this study therefore involved a process known as purposive or non-probability sampling (Smith & Osborn, 2003) in other words participants were purposefully selected due to their experience being relevant to the research question.

Typical IPA studies involve up to six participants (Smith et al., 2009), I invited ten potential participants to take part in the research in the hope that a minimum of six interviews could be conducted. It is acknowledged that the small sample size of six – ten makes generalizability very difficult but;

*the primary concern of IPA is with a detailed account of individual experience*  
(Smith et al., 2009, p51)

In the end nine participants replied to the initial request, one person was an EP in training so they were politely declined but the rest met the criteria of being a qualified educational psychologist and having taken part in group supervision for at least one year. The final group of eight included two males, six females, age ranging from 29 to 64 years of age, they were all European and Caucasian and working as an EP in one of two local authorities. Their experience as an EP ranged from one year to 36 years other identifying features were changed to protect identity.

### **3.5.2 Stage 2: Completing the interviews**

Participants were contacted and invited to complete a consent form. The interviews took place in the summer and autumn of 2011 and participants were interviewed at their workplace in a private room. The interviews took in the region of one hour and were digitally recorded. The interviews were audiotaped and participants were told

they would be transcribed verbatim by the author with the tapes and transcripts being carefully stored in secure facilities. Participants were given the right to withdraw at any time up to the stage of data being analysed.

### *Reflexive note*

A great deal of reflexivity was needed throughout the data collection stage and as each interview was conducted I needed more and more time and effort to make a conscious awareness of the idiographic nature of the research. As each interview was conducted I made diary entries and listened to each recording to try and ensure the schedule for subsequent interviews had not been affected. This was a very exciting but complex process involving extra supervision sessions and many re-readings of key IPA texts (Hefferon and Gill-Rodriguez, 2011; Smith and Osborn, 2003; Smith, 2011a; Willig, 2010) . I found it particularly difficult not to get over-excited by certain comments from participants and overly respond, thus affecting the direction of the interview. The use of “go on” and “tell me more” became second nature and as the interviews progressed I found it easier to sit back and listen allowing the participants to tell their story. Reflections in the research journal at the time comment on the difference in direction within some of the interviews but at the same time an over-arching similarity in the content of many of the transcripts. By writing initial reflections in a research journal after each interview there was an attempt to suspend my interpretations and truly allow the next participant

*every opportunity to tell their own story in their own words and to have a central role in the course of the interview, both central premises of IPA (Dickson, Knussen and Flowers, 2008, p463)*

There was also an acute awareness of the emotions provoked in the telling of the stories and the similarities with my own experiences, at times this was difficult to ignore but a conscious noting of these emotions made it easier to bracket and ensure a commitment to the participant was maintained. A further issue of note from the research journal is the ease with which the majority of participants reflected on their experiences, many directly said

*It's interesting to talk about it retrospectively because talking now to you it makes me realise (Lisa, line 377)*

*Looking back now I hardly missed any and I used to look forward to it. It's only as I think about it now that I realise how different I felt about that group to how I feel about the other group I have been part of more recently (James, line 253)*

These quotes are felt to be an example of the concept of hermeneutics as the participants use the interview to explore the phenomena at a more in-depth level. It was a privilege to witness the frankness and honesty of the participants and I was grateful for the depth of data they provided, again it really was 'the ultimate psychological experience' for many.

### **3.5.3 Stage 3: Transcription**

At this stage I decided that an important phase of immersing myself in the data was to complete the transcription personally. The transcripts were formatted as recommended by Smith et al., (2009) with a wide margin to the left and right ready to complete the data analysis (see Appendix 7 for an example of one participant's transcript)

#### *Reflexive note*

This process involved initially listening to the transcripts again having not heard some of them for many months. Notes from the research journal reminded me of the immense pleasure that was gained from once again immersing myself in the world of the participants. The phenomenological nature of the analysis even at that early stage was apparent in a commitment to the phenomena itself, 'the experience of taking part in group supervision'. The difficulty at that stage was the need to stay idiographic when overall themes were already starting to emerge in my mind. An almost obsessive use of the research journal at this stage was necessary to control the urge to move from individual to cross case analysis. The hermeneutic cycle moved to another level, the double hermeneutic as the interpretative element of IPA started to emerge and I made sense of the participants making sense of their experiences. Again it was important to stay true to the data at this stage and ensure an accurate transcription of everything that was said, this was in many ways a frustrating stage as the analysis loomed but the transcription needed finishing.

### **3.5.4 Stage 4: Data analysis**

Once the transcripts were prepared the daunting phase of deep analysis began. A number of informal meetings with fellow IPA researchers coincided with the opportunity to attend a BPS training day on IPA. The reading list from this session included a review by Smith (2011a) and a reply to the commentary of the review (Smith 2011b) which proved to be invaluable, participants at the BPS training were also signposted to a website <http://www.ipa.bbk.ac.uk> with links to a number of quality IPA articles which I was able to review (Borkoles, Nicholls, Bell, Butterly & Polman, 2008; Robinson, 2010; Smith and Osborn, 2007). In particular the articles focused on the need to be

*experience close* (Smith 2011a, p10)

but at the same time ensure the “I” in IPA was apparent in the analysis;

*Equally important to high quality IPA analysis are the complementary qualities of rigour and interpretive flair.....the writing needs to be bold and confident in presenting the interpretation of that unfolding evidence trail* (Smith 2011a, p23)

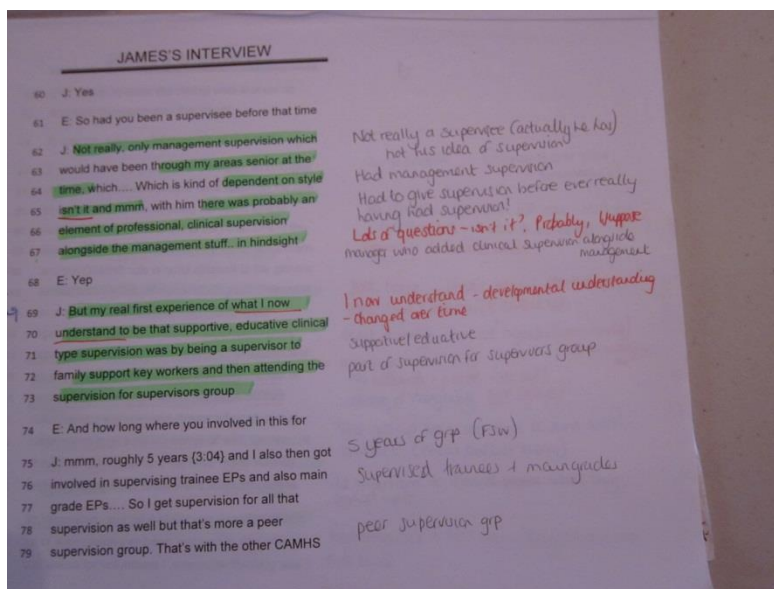
What follows is the step by step process of my data analysis with examples to illustrate the analytic process.

#### **3.5.4.1 Step 1: Reading and re-reading transcripts**

Initially I once again spent time reading and re-reading the transcripts at one point this included listening to the recordings on an iPod to reconnect with the non-verbal essence of each participant as hearing their voices transported me back to the original interview. At this stage a long list of first ideas were made in the research journal and shared during supervision. I can recall being stuck for some weeks at this point unable to take the leap into the following stages and extracts from the research journal record the internal discomfort at starting such a complex task.

### 3.5.4.2 Step 2: Initial notes (free text analysis)

The next step meant taking each transcript, one at a time, and conducting a free text analysis, the first case was shared during supervision in order to consider the depth of analysis necessary and in fact the first participants transcript was revisited a number of times before the process became more fluent.



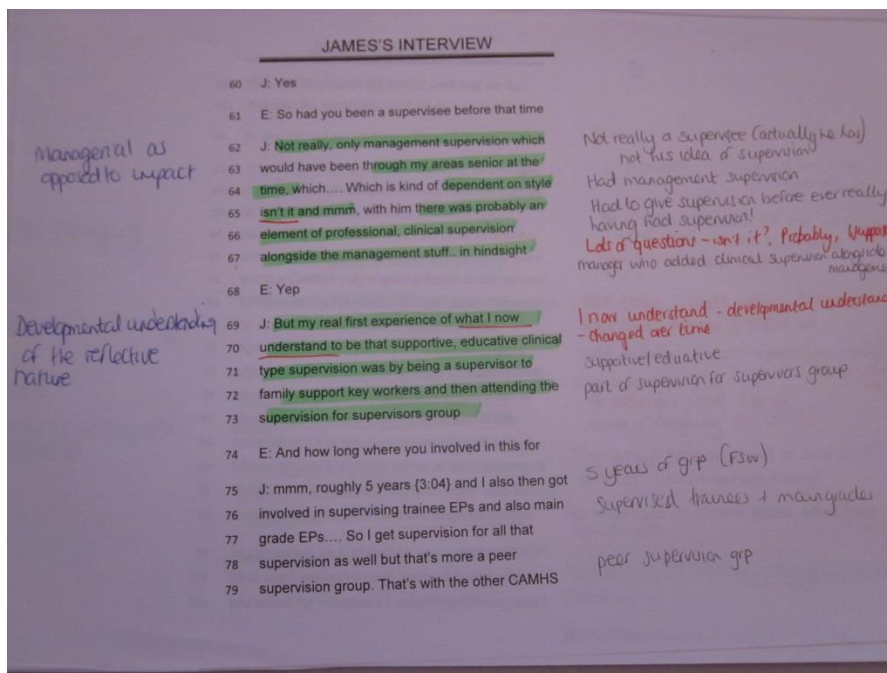
**Figure 3: Example of step 2, initial noting for one participant**

Following the recommendations of Smith et al (2009), initial notes were made in the right hand column using three different colour pens, one each for descriptive comments, linguistic comments and analytical comments. This stage took several weeks as great care was taken to ensure the comments were analytical and not just descriptive in an effort to ensure that the end analysis would meet Smith's (2011a) criteria for good quality IPA. In being analytical the hermeneutic cycle quickly became quite apparent

*it is useful and it's about getting out of your comfort zone and sharing your inner thoughts actions feelings (very fast talking) and..... not having them judged, that's wrong but actually having them reflected back to you*  
(Lisa, line 304)

This comment by Lisa was initially accompanied by the descriptive comments ‘feeling judged by the others who know more than her’ and the analytic comments ‘things happen to her, no sense of her with the group’. It is also an example of Lisa on the first phase of the hermeneutic cycle, her use of the comment “that’s wrong” was felt to be her considering this experience and the impact it has had in a way she has not done before and the analysis of the comments is an example of the double hermeneutic.

### 3.5.4.3 Step 3: Emergent themes



**Figure 4: Example of step 3, emergent themes in left hand column for one participant**

During step 3 an analytic shift was needed from working with the participants words themselves to working with the notes which had been made. The initial notes were read and condensed into the left hand column where emergent themes were recorded. The data set seemed to swell and then needed reducing and this was quite an uncomfortable process as I wrestled with staying experience close while still being analytical, the use of the research journal was critical here as the emergent themes needed checking to ensure they were capturing the phenomena appropriately. It was an exciting phase, as themes started to emerge that touched a chord with my own personal experience of group supervision.

### *Reflexive note*

Concepts such as the example shared in step 2 'feeling judged' were the emotions I too had experienced. In highlighting this and making it an emergent theme I had to ensure it really was a significant theme for this participant. Notes in the reflective log were shared during supervision and checked against the original transcript to clarify analysis. Transparency of the interpretive role is something that Brocki and Weardon (2006) feel is not apparent in many of the studies they reviewed, in their quest for better quality IPA studies they talk about more transparency through reflexivity which is what is attempted in this chapter.

#### *3.5.4.4 Step 4: Listing emergent themes*

During step 4 a list was compiled of all the emergent themes from the left hand column including every repeat, for most participants this numbered at least 40, in the process of labelling emergent themes I had tried to stay close to the experience and so purposefully did not try to give themes similar names although this was tempting. For example, belonging and feeling judged felt similar but were actually unique and needed to be separate at this stage. This became more complicated with each subsequent participant but the bracketing of interpretations of previous participants was crucial at this stage.

### **Lisa's experience of group supervision**

- Letting go of negative emotions
- Stressed practitioners need support to ignore the background noise of the day job
- Self-monitoring/capacity building
- Group supervision allows you to learn from different perspectives
- Able to actively listen and therefore learn at a more thorough level in group supervision because someone else is presenting
- Its effects permeates all elements of your practise
- Limited understanding as a new EP thought it was about doing the job properly from a management point of view
- Initially thought it was a one way process
- Need to be mentally prepared for the level of reflection, training doesn't prepare you mentally only experience does but training had warned her that she may end up feeling uncomfortable
- Feeling inadequate in comparison to other members/ feeling under pressure to perform
- Sense of the group doing something to you rather than with you
- Need to present myself in a better light/presenting a different story/it's an act
- The need to show I'm not a fraud
- Establishing group cohesion is very tricky
- Training needs to include a chance to experience good group supervision
- EPs need training in group dynamics and power relationships
- Active participation in training provokes anxiety but is very useful
- Training makes you think what kind of supervisee you want to be
- Training influences how you receive supervision – gets you in a zone
- School staff would need training to be reflective, training moved her from being passive to active in supervision
- Participants need to understand they need to prepare mentally, that they won't always leave feeling better
- Participants need to know why they need supervision – it's not management checking up
- A sense of something to guide participants through
- A sense that people can't focus /prioritise supervision with everything else that is going on

**Figure 5: Example of step 4, list of emergent themes for one participant**

#### *3.5.4.5 Step 5: Clustering related emergent themes to create superordinate and subthemes*

At this stage the emergent themes for a participant were transferred from the list in step 4 onto post it notes, three colours were used for the three types of themes (descriptive, linguistic, analytical) to ensure a good spread of all types of themes were being represented, in particular to ensure the themes were not purely descriptive and thus ensuring the "A" in IPA. These emergent themes were then put together to become the superordinate and subthemes reported on in the findings section.





**Figure 6: Example of step 5, clustering related emergent themes to create superordinate and subthemes for one participant**

Following closely the guidance of Smith et al., (2009) patterns of connectedness were being sought via various means referred to as:

- Abstraction
- Subsumption
- Polarization
- Numeration
- Function

The most obvious method of looking for connectedness was **abstraction** where like was put with like and given a new name, the example referred to in step 2 of ‘feeling judged’ was found in various forms in Lisa’s transcript alongside issues around ‘a pressure to perform’ and ‘feeling done to by the group’. All of these issues came together under the sub theme ‘group members feel a constant pressure to perform’ and were then brought together with other similar negative feelings towards other group members that was eventually labelled as a superordinate theme ‘Not Belonging’ (NB).

'Not Belonging' (NB) then became **polarised** with another set of sub themes concerning various issues to do with the opposite set of experiences of feeling part of the team and eventually a further superordinate theme was born: 'Belonging' (B)

A process termed **subsumption** by Smith et al., (2009) was used whereby the emergent theme itself becomes the superordinate theme. This can be best illustrated by the superordinate theme 'Reaffirmation of oneself as a Psychologist' (RP). This was a very strong theme for Liam and the title actually came from the initial notes made in step 2 and the resulting emergent theme in step 3 from this quote:

*So that's why I go along to it, the one thing I've done over the years is to focus on how I can use some psychology. It's a reason for this team to come together I think, to put psychology at the centre of what we do. It actually brings you back to earth, coz you can be out there in schools busying away and the supervision groups brings you back, to what you are doing it all for.*  
(Liam, line 298)

**Numeration** is described as one of the most simple of processes whereby the frequency with which an emergent theme occurs is taken into account. This is probably best illustrated by the superordinate theme 'Productive' (P) which was identified on numerous occasions in every participant's transcripts. Smith et al., (2009) point out that the lack of frequency for a theme does not mean it should be over -looked and this can be illustrated by the sub theme: Productive 5: 'Is it productive? Is it only useful if it's productive?' this was only developed from Sarah's transcript but in the analysis of the interview it was felt to be such a significant factor in conceptualising Sarah's overall experience of the phenomena that it was promoted to a sub theme and related to the superordinate theme 'Productive' (P).

Finally connectedness was sought by considering the **function** of a specific theme, this process felt very interpretative as often the initial notes and emergent theme were my own interpretation of the function of the participant discussing the experience rather than just accepting what the participant was saying on face value, for example in this quote:

*I would say I really enjoy it, no, I really enjoy it and I love to hear what other people have to say (Caron, line 149)*

This was felt to be an example of how Caron often seemed to feel she was being 'done to rather than done with' in group supervision. Her use of the term 'I would say' and the fact that in many parts of her transcript she over emphasised 'I really enjoy it' to the point where I began to question whether she really was trying to convince herself, were seen as examples of feeling very unsure of herself. In the end this section became an example of sub theme Not Belonging 4: 'Group members feel a constant pressure to perform' however a further interpretation was that Caron rephrased this uncomfortable emotion as something that must be good for her and so this experience also became an example of sub theme Productive 1: 'Being part of group supervision actively develops ones practise as an Educational Psychologist'.

**Lisa's experience of group supervision**

The power of the group

- Left feeling exposed
- needing to talk herself into it – it must be good for me
- it takes time to feel comfortable to reflect in a group
- left feeling exposed
- exposed/judged
- need to be mentally prepared for the level of reflection
- training doesn't prepare you mentally only experience does
- training had warned her that she may end up feeling uncomfortable
- the more painful it is the more useful it is

Feeling judged

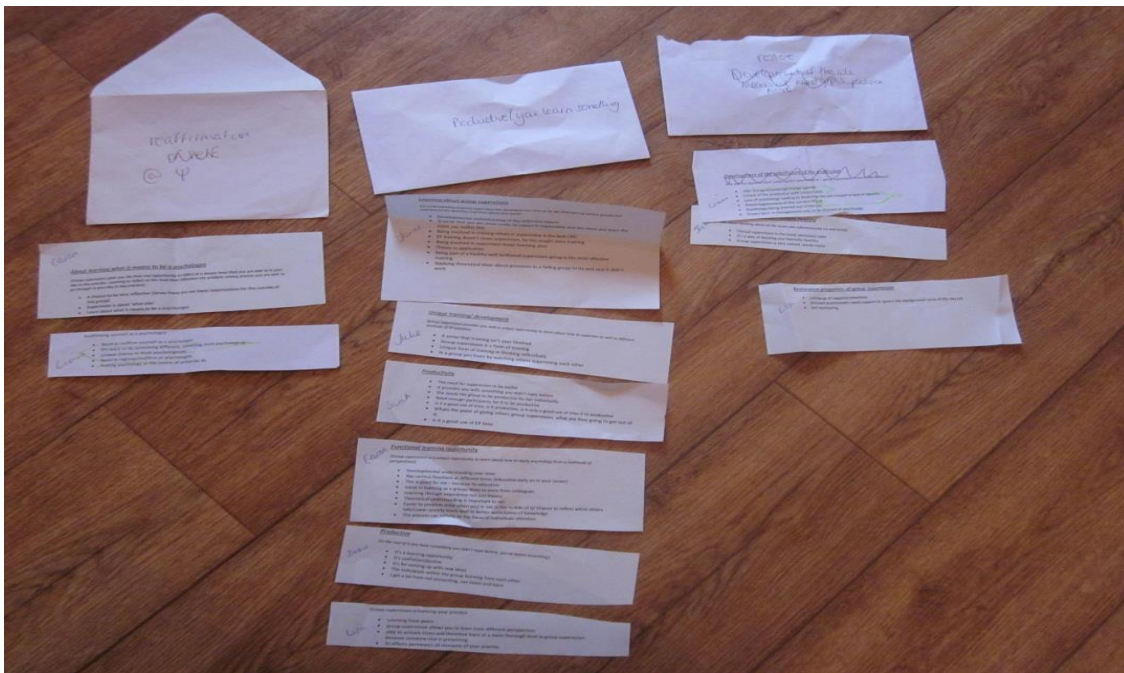
- feeling inadequate in comparison to other members
- feeling under pressure to perform
- sense of the group doing something to you rather than with you
- need to present myself in a better light
- presenting a different story/it's an act
- how I cope is by presenting a different picture
- the need to show I'm not a fraud
- familiarity had got in the way of taking it seriously

**Figure 7: Example of end of step 5, draft of one participants superordinate and subthemes**

### 3.5.4.6 Step 6: Looking for superordinate and main themes across cases

Each participants draft list of themes was scrutinised and similarities were highlighted with a deep deconstruction of the choice of superordinate titles considered. For example, a set of comments highlighting Caron and Lisa's experience of 'feeling judged' were noted to be very similar to Julie and James' s experience of 'not feeling like they understood other group members' and both were considered to fit better in a superordinate theme 'Not Belonging'.

A process whereby envelopes were labelled with the draft superordinate themes and each participants sub themes were cut up and moved around to see which superordinate title they best represented was used.



**Figure 8: Example of step 6, looking at each superordinate themes across the cases**

By the end of step 6 a finalised list of seven superordinate themes which represented the analysis of the main research aim 'participants experiences of taking part in group supervision' had been developed :

- Productive (P),
- Restoration of self (R),
- Reaffirmation of oneself as a psychologist (RP),
- Active process of getting in the zone (A),
- The group as a separate identity working as one (G),
- Belonging (B),
- Not Belonging (NB)

The final seven superordinate themes in relation to the main research question were felt to be clustered around three main themes:

- Purpose
- Process
- Personal needs

There were also a number of interesting sub themes relating to the subsidiary research aim, how does a person's experience of supervision (group or individual) influence their confidence in being a group supervisor? Which were drawn together under a further superordinate theme which will be explored within the discussion rather than the findings chapter:

- Future Issues for EPs in supervising other professionals (FI)

*Reflexive note*

This was a phase that caused much grief and confusion. The research journal records many weeks of postulation and a sense of hovering over the data ready to pounce on anything that seemed to emerge. Quite often the scrutiny of one participant lead to finding something more significant hidden amongst the words of another and again a sense of reflexivity was necessary in examining how this experience had appeared to emerge. In examining why an issue was being explored I tried to stay aware of what was personally significant in the experience of group supervision and ensure that although the process involved a truly analytic phase it stayed idiographic in nature.

3.5.4.7 Step 7: Looking at each superordinate theme and condensing the original emergent themes to create sub themes

At this step each superordinate theme was looked at in turn with the associated list of emergent themes taken from the original analysis at step 3. The emergent themes were condensed and rearranged so that each of the eight superordinate themes (seven from the main aim and one from the subsidiary aim) had a condensed set of sub themes that represented the original emergent themes.

<u>Not belonging</u>	
Original emergent theme	Final subtheme
Negative influence caused by inadequate individual supervision highlighted at a later date (during training)	NB1
Confidentiality and boundaries being broken	NB1
Non-attendance, Bad experiences led to a refusing patch	NB1
The risks are even higher in a group	NB1
No sense of group commitment	NB2
No cohesion = she doesn't belong	NB2
Fluid nature of people keep leaving and joining	NB2
Smaller group = nowhere to hide	removed
More people are witness to the agreements you make so in a way it's safer	NB1
An overwhelming experience	NB3
Unable to learn due to high anxiety (removed)	removed
Conflicting feelings about attendance/involvement	NB4
Awkwardness/trickiness of feeling you have to perform	NB4
Confusion/feeling torn	NB4

**Figure 9: Example of step 7, example of condensing a superordinate themes, emergent themes to create subthemes**

<u>Not Belonging (NB)</u>
NB1: Confidentiality and boundaries
NB2: Poor group cohesion
NB3: Unmanageable emotions
NB4: Pressure to perform
NB5: Group needs vs. Individual needs

**Figure 10: Example of a final superordinate theme and condensed subthemes**

#### 3.5.4.8 Step 8: Evidencing each sub and superordinate theme

The final step of the analysis involved checking back to the original transcript for quotes to evidence each subtheme across the range of participants, this will be discussed within the findings section and a full table of quotes are included in the Appendices (8 - 14). A continual cycle of refining and cross referencing the themes looking to make sure the theme really did represent the original story told by the participants continued for many weeks. In some cases it felt that the year long journey had taken the analysis so far away from the original words of the participants that the theme no longer felt relevant or in fact did not actually represent the true essence of the experience.

A final activity involved creating a frequency table for the findings section that would represent the incidence at which participants contributed to themes (Appendix 15). Smith et al., (2009) talk about measuring recurrence of themes in studies with large sample sizes and comment that;

*Doing IPA with numbers of participants constantly involves negotiating the relationship between convergence, divergence, commonality and individuality (p107)*

In these last stages I found it difficult to step away from the process and be able to finish the analysis, at times it felt like the cycle could continue forever as every revisit means a further questioning of the data and, therefore, another set of findings. In the end it was felt that saturation point had been reached and almost a year to the day since the transcription had begun the analysis was complete.

### 3.6 Summary of Chapter Three

Chapter Three started with an exploration of research paradigms used in research concerned with the professional supervision of educational psychologists. The reasons for choosing to conduct a qualitative study in the critical realist paradigm using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was explored and an in depth guide to the analysis of the data collected from eight semi-structured interviews with educational psychologists concerning their experience of group supervision was discussed. The next chapter will describe the process of consideration of the findings of this study, a thorough analysis, using the qualitative methodology IPA.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### 4.1. Overview of Chapter Four

### 4.2. Overview of the participants

### 4.3. Presentation of main themes, superordinate and subthemes

### 4.4. Main Theme 1: PURPOSE

*4.4.1. Superordinate theme: Productive (P)*

*4.4.2. Superordinate theme: Restoration of self (R)*

*4.4.3. Superordinate theme: Reaffirming oneself as a psychologist (RP)*

### 4.5. Main Theme 2: PROCESS

*4.5.1. Superordinate theme: Active process of getting in the zone (A)*

*4.5.2. Superordinate theme: 'The group' as a separate entity working as one (G)*

### 4.6. Main Theme 3: PERSONAL NEEDS

*4.6.1. Superordinate theme: Belonging (B)*

*4.6.2. Superordinate theme: Not Belonging (NB)*

### 4.7. Summary of Chapter Four



#### 4.1. Overview of Chapter Four

The main aim of this study was to examine the experience; educational psychologists taking part in group supervision. The analysis of eight participants transcripts has resulted in the development of three main themes (seen below in bold and capitals) and a number of superordinate themes (below in bold) and subthemes (below in bold and italics). The analysis is presented by examining themes across cases rather than focusing on individual participant's experiences due to the relative large number of participants for an IPA study. The aim of presenting themes for all participants was to provide the reader with an overall sense of the meaning of the phenomenon for the group while still trying to stay true to the idiographic nature of this study. The idiographic nature is achieved by presenting the superordinate and subthemes evidenced with examples of participant's quotes, these examples evidence the theme. A commentary is provided which includes interpretations at a descriptive, linguistic and analytical level. This constitutes a level of dialogue usually reserved for Chapter Five 'Discussion', therefore, Chapter Five will cover the links between the findings and the literature review.

Appendices 8 – 10 contain tables of quotes to evidence the development of the superordinate and subthemes within the first main theme **PURPOSE**, Appendices 11 and 12 refer to the second main theme **PROCESS** and Appendices 13 and 14 refer to the third main theme **PERSONAL NEEDS**. Each table has quotes from every participant whose transcripts evidence and support the development of the overall findings. Appendix 15 contains tables which summarise the analysis of the data for every participant and the superordinate and subthemes felt to be present within their transcript.

## 4.2 Overview of the participants

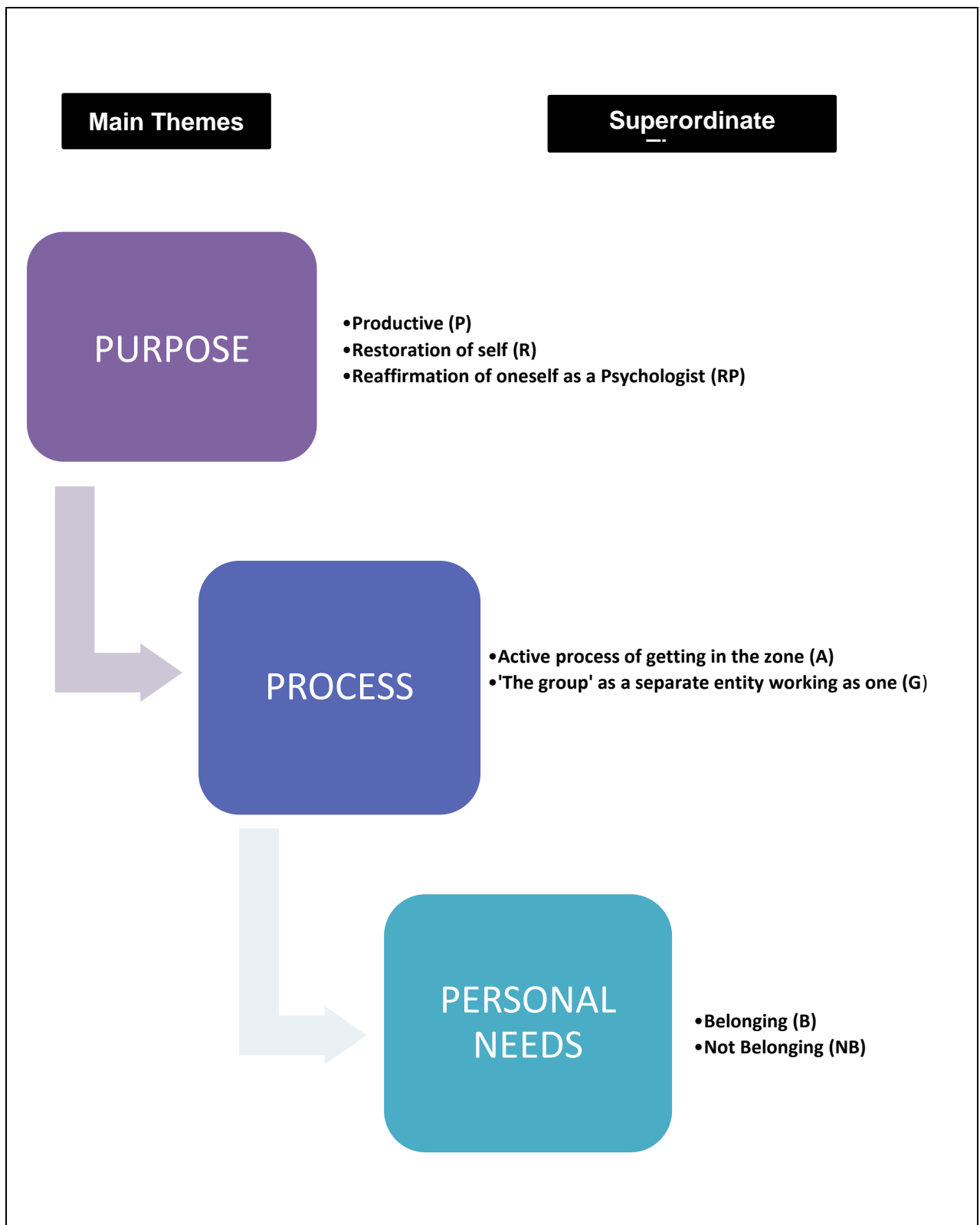
Table 6 provides information about the participants which helps to provide a context for the reader. To ensure confidentiality the names of all participants have been changed and replaced by pseudonyms. The main audience for this research is educational psychologists and due to the relatively small world of practising educational psychologists in England at this time the amount and type of demographic information made available in this thesis has been limited to maintain anonymity. The aim of limiting demographic data was to ensure participants are unable to be easily identified, for example a conscious decision was made not to include ages and number of authorities worked in within Table 6.

**Table 6: Overview of the participants**

Pseudonym	Gender	Years in EP practice	Years of having individual supervision	Years of having group supervision
Julie	Female	14	7	5
James	Male	9	7	5
Lisa	Female	6	5	3
Sarah	Female	10	10	2
Liam	Male	30	30	10
Jackie	Female	5	5	2
Sheila	Female	6	5	3
Caron	Female	1	1	1

## 4.3. Presentation of main, superordinate and subthemes

The main themes, derived from clustering together related interpretations of the experience of taking part in group supervision were '**PURPOSE**', '**PROCESS**' and '**PERSONAL NEEDS**'. The following section of this chapter outlines these main themes and the clustered superordinate themes as shown in Figure 11. Figure 12 then represents the further subthemes that were derived from interpretation of the data.



**Figure 11: Main and Superordinate themes**

**Main theme:  
PURPOSE**

**Superordinate: Productive (P)**

**Subthemes:**

- P1: Being part of group supervision actively develops one's practise as an educational psychologist*
- P2: The range of other perspectives is unique to group supervision*
- P3: Greater assimilation of knowledge results from reduced anxiety when others are the focus of the group*
- P4: The best form of training in supervision, learning by observing others being supervised*
- P5: How useful is it? Is it only useful if it's productive?*

**Superordinate: Restoration of self (R)**

**Subthemes:**

- R1: Restoring a sense of self*
- R2: Reducing the personal impact of the background noise of the day job*
- R3: Building one's capacity to face the task of being an EP*
- R4: The ultimate psychological experience*

**Superordinate: Reaffirmation of oneself as a Psychologist (RP)**

**Subthemes:**

- RP1: Being part of group supervision provides a chance to reflect on the factors that affect ones decisions*
- RP2: During group supervision there is a unique opportunity to think psychologically as a group*

**Main theme:  
PROCESS**

**Superordinate: Active process of getting in the zone (A)**

**Subthemes:**

- A1: Drilling down to look at all the impacting factors*
- A2: Working to shut out the insignificant 'background noise'*
- A3: Active process the supervisee needs to engage with*
- A4: Two way process between the supervisee and the group*
- A5: Making sure the supervisee gets their own house in order before going off to help others*

**Superordinate: 'The group' as a separate entity working as one (G)**

**Subthemes:**

- G1: Identity of 'the group' not just the people in it*
- G2: 'The group' evolving and having a life of its own*
- G3: Automaticity of 'the group'; fluid together not fluid within*
- G4: 'The group' has an established purpose*
- G5: Protective nature of 'the group'*

**Main theme:  
PERSONAL  
NEEDS**

**Superordinate: Belonging (B)**

**Subthemes:**

- B1: Individual members sharing a vision*
- B2: The group working together to rebuild itself*
- B3: A sense of safety allows members to make themselves Vulnerable*
- B4: In a safe group individuals who have started to unravel can rebuild themselves*

**Superordinate: Not Belonging (NB)**

**Subthemes:**

- NB1: The impact of breaking confidentiality and boundaries*
- NB2: The effect of poor group cohesion*
- NB3: Poor group supervision can leave members with unmanageable emotions*
- NB4: Group members feel a constant pressure to perform*
- NB5: Group needs vs. In needs*

**Figure 12: Main, Superordinate and Subthemes**

Overall the participants discussed their experience of group supervision in relation to three main themes. The first being the **PURPOSE** of taking part which included the superordinate themes; it is **Productive (P)**, it is **Restorative (R)** and it allows one to **Reaffirm oneself as a Psychologist (RP)**. These experiences covered issues such as group supervision being a learning experience, giving them something they did not have before and a real sense of being a psychologist, digging down to the route of why decisions were made and what influenced these choices. They also described the way good group supervision became a restorative experience where those weary from the day job could take stock and rebuild themselves.

The second main theme explains the **PROCESS** of doing group supervision which included the superordinate themes; **It's an active process of getting in the zone (A)** and **'The group' as a separate entity working as one (G)**, this main theme was more about the journey than the final product. The experiences recounted explore the active nature of EPs moving away from the usual frenetic pace of work and slowing down to a new level of awareness where they were mindful of every detail of their decision making process alongside considering the uniqueness of participants experiences of becoming a separate being 'the group' and the protective aspect this provided.

Finally their experience is discussed in relation to the third main theme the **PERSONAL NEEDS** of the participants; this was accounted for by two further superordinate themes **Belonging (B)** and **Not Belonging (NB)**. Within this section of the chapter the polar opposite set of emotions that participants explored are discussed. Participants described their experiences as either leaving them feeling safe and looked after in a group where they had a shared sense of who they were or a really uncomfortable sense of not sharing the outlook of the rest of the group and feeling judged or under a constant pressure to perform.

**Table 7: Identifying recurrence of superordinate themes amongst participants**



<b>Superordinate theme</b>  <b>Participant</b> 	<b>P</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>RP</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>NB</b>	<b>Number of superordinate themes developed from participants data</b>
Lisa	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y	5/7
Caron	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	5/7
Jackie	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7/7
Sarah	Y						Y	2/7
Julie	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7/7
James	Y				Y	Y	Y	4/7
Liam		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		5/7
Sheila	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	6/7
<b>Number of participants whose data led to the development of the superordinate theme</b>	7/8	6/8	3/8	6/8	6/8	6/8	7/8	

Table 7 shows how each participant interacts with the superordinate themes, Smith (2011a) proposed that a quality IPA study with four to eight participants should have each superordinate theme evidenced with extracts from at least three participants and therefore the table aims to provide a summary of which participants extracts led to the development of each superordinate theme.

#### 4.4. Main Theme 1: PURPOSE

The first main theme to be explored is '**PURPOSE**' which has been created from the superordinate themes; group supervision is **Productive (P)**, **Restorative (R)** and it allows one to **Reaffirm oneself as a Psychologist (RP)**.

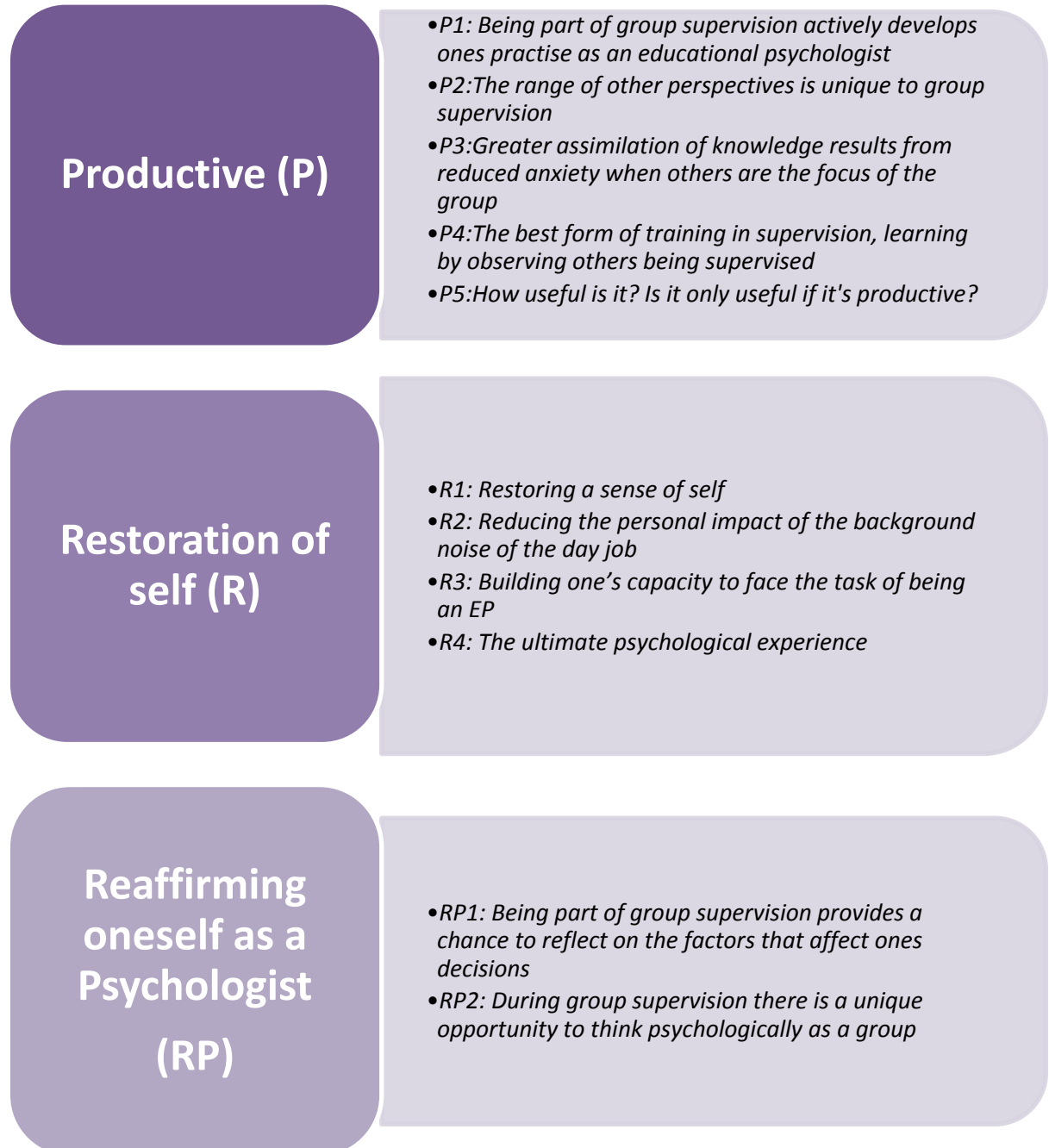


Figure 13: Presentation of main theme 1; PURPOSE and its associated superordinate and subthemes

The main theme **PURPOSE** draws together the motivations participants explore for taking part in group supervision. The interview began with the participants being asked to describe the supervision groups they were part of and included initial thoughts on how and why the group was important. It became quite clear during the analysis that the participants had a strong sense of their reasons for wanting to be part of supervision groups which enabled a condensation of the initial emergent themes into three distinct superordinate themes which I have described below.

#### **4.4.1. Superordinate theme: Productive (P)**

The first superordinate theme explored within the main theme **PURPOSE** is **Productive (P)**, seven out of eight participants' transcripts contained quotes which were used to develop this superordinate theme (see Appendix 8). All of the participants talked of the usefulness of supervision, that it provided them with something they did not get anywhere else and that with attendance at each session the participants walked away with a sense of having 'something' afterwards that they did not have before. The narratives included the educative nature of group supervision and participants were clear that being supervised in a group meant there were greater opportunities for further learning due to the range of perspectives they were exposed to.

The first subtheme within the superordinate theme **Productive (P)** is **P1: *Being part of group supervision actively develops ones practise as an educational psychologist*** where participants discussed the group supervision sessions as moving on their practise in a supportive but challenging way;

*The group is useful for exploring complex issues in a way that you can resolve them or.. move forward with something that is stuck or...to share something that has worked well.....so it's a supportive set of*



*umm relationships within the group but it's also challenging ... and.... helping you develop your practice... its umm well, educative as well (Julie, line 44)*

Here Julie describes the multi-dimensional aspects of group supervision, in particular I was interested in the way she described the group as being supportive at the same time as challenging. There is a sense that the sessions raised anxiety but that this was necessary in order to develop her practise. This theme runs throughout Julie's transcripts as she explored the most useful groups as being those where she felt comfortable enough to let the other members challenge her.

The concept of challenge was explored further in relation to this idea of developing EP practise when participants talked about each member of the group needing to be prepared for group supervision. Participants felt that colleagues needed to take ownership of their own development which included preparation before during and after the session and being responsible for taking on board the views of others and changing their practise in light of the session;

*well, the first thing is it's well, it's helping me to develop my own solutions to my own problems well, because of late I've brought some really challenging cases to supervision and I, urm, I urm, value hearing others opinions and well, sometimes just hearing someone else say why don't you do this and helping me to problem solve and everything..... (Sarah, line 47)*

Like Julie, Sarah described the process as providing her with new ways of thinking about challenging cases or issues and for Sarah the key concept was her ability to 'own' this. It is interesting to note her use of 'I brought, I value' and also '**me** develop **my own** solutions'. This sense that she has some ownership of the process appeared to help Sarah to value group supervision because she was in control of the agenda and if and how she participated. As the analysis of Sarah's transcript deepened I had a strong sense of how put

upon she felt in her working life, later on she described the top down pressures she felt from the management system and what she seemed to like about group supervision was the fact that she had control over what she discussed and how that influenced her.

I became aware of a number of participants considering how the uncomfortable emotions experienced during group supervision of embarrassment and anxiety had driven them to act differently in future scenarios, this, they reflected was the exact nature of the productiveness they were describing;

*Well, I suppose talking now I know really that I get more out of that, because it's more painful I think (laughs), I'm more reflective because of it, its developed my practice a lot more, I'm probably mentally clocking more things to do differently and ways to be in the future, whereas the other one is comfortable and nice but well, it's not a conscious reflection that I'm doing, I'm just there enjoying talking and learning more in the present so to speak  
(Lisa, line 454)*

I felt that this quote by Lisa was a good example of the hermeneutic cycle whereby Lisa considered her perceptions of group supervision as she talked. The voyage of self-discovery started at this point where Lisa considered why one session she attended was more uncomfortable than another yet she also reflects that the uncomfortable session was more useful. A linguistic interpretation could be made when considering the non-verbal action of 'laughing', she laughs as if to say; well it's obvious really but thinking about it during the interview gave her the opportunity to consider it more fully.

Subtheme **P2: The range of other perspectives is unique to group supervision** saw participants describing the distinctiveness of being supervised in a group

*what I've valued the most is that ...well, the people that come a bit more regularly now, well .....well I know them a bit better now and I really well urmmmm well they think very differently to me, in some ways soo and well I think they come from different viewpoints which has been well, really brilliant for me (Caron, line 126)*

Caron describes how enjoyable and informative she found the experience of having comments and observations from other psychologists with different theoretical backgrounds and, therefore, different hypothesis on a situation. As someone who had only been a practising psychologist for a year the theme running throughout her interview was the usefulness of being able to learn from others. Within this research that was not only the case for the newly qualified EP but also, Lisa who had been an EP for six years said;

*ummmmm..... obviously on a practical level it's kind of keeping your CPD up to date and also with things like group supervision I learn a lot from hearing other peoples view point, you know it's a way of learning from your peers (Lisa, line 45)*

Sheila, an experienced EP (six years) also commented;

*well, when there's a bigger group, well you know you've got a bit more interaction going on and you can learn a lot more from other people (Sheila, line 184).*

Several participants alluded to the developmental nature of group supervision but their focus was on the range of perspectives available being a unique facet. In the main the EP job is one which offers a lot of autonomy but also a great deal of isolation and, therefore, a motivation for commitment to the process appeared to be the unique opportunity to learn from others.

A number of participants alluded to **P3: Greater assimilation of knowledge results from reduced anxiety when others are the focus of the group.**

This concept was first explored by Sheila;

*I think she has a very psychodynamic back ground and she would certainly ask some very different style of questions.... She's quiet but when she says stuff it's really pertinent and she would bring cases quite often that she'd ... really to ask for advice and input. I would sit quietly at the back and \*\*\*\* would chip in and \*\*\*\* would chip in and by osmosis, well I don't mean that but I really did learn a lot from just listening to her (Sheila, line 238)*

who spoke of group supervision providing a unique opportunity to sit and listen when she was not the focus of the group. She went on to explore the lower anxiety associated with not being on the spot leading to greater assimilation of knowledge because she was more able to learn in this more relaxed state as opposed to when she was presenting and therefore very nervous. This echoed similar experiences for others, Caron was also very conscious that group supervision was the perfect opportunity for learning from others presenting and uses this purposefully as a development tool;

*I really enjoy it and I love to hear what other people have to say and well I find it so much easier to problem solve when you're not in the middle of it so that's why I **LOVE** (shouts) it and well when you're listening and you think well that's a really good point so why don't I do that with my case*

*E: Mmm, that's a really interesting point so when you're not presenting it allows you to urrm.....well to sit back and be able to reflect more easily*

*C: yeah definitely, well when the focus is not on me (Caron, line 149).*

As discussed in P2, at this stage in her career Caron's drive for group supervision was tied up with her motivation to develop her problem solving skills and she appreciated that this was often more effective when she was observing others in the group rather than at the centre of the discussion.

A subtheme that many of the more experienced group supervisors explored was **P4: The best form of training in supervision, learning by observing**

**others being supervised**, Julie had been supervising for seven years and been part of group supervision for five years and commented;

*J: its on-going really, being in a group supervision session is like having training on supervision*

*E: that's interesting*

*J: You know what I mean though, especially when the group is made up of EPs who supervise, obviously the content is heavily based on how to supervise and so it's like constantly being trained, that's what makes it so interesting (Julie, line 101)*

*J: She taught us through that group actually*

*E: Go on*

*J: About questioning and about reflecting and about.....involved everybody and that's how we learnt by observing and having good supervision modelled to us..... (Julie, line 146)*

Her enthusiasm for the process comes from her positive involvement in a supervision group that had enabled her to become a more confident supervisor. She focused on the active learning that she could be part of and how observing and having supervision modelled was the ultimate learning environment.

James too had been involved in group supervision for a similar amount of time and also focused on the unique training opportunity that being part of group supervision provided;

*I've learnt that from the training but ..... the best training we have been part of is the \*\*\*\*\* training that has all those practical elements and then being part of group, well,.... good group supervision where you learn from others*

*(James, line 152)*

His passion for group supervision was apparent throughout his transcript but at this point the non-verbal use of the pause, when James reiterated that it is not just being part of group supervision but *good*, group supervision that was necessary, led to a focus on the underlying issues for James. James grappled with the difference in experiences that he has had and how that difference

has tainted his overall attitude to the usefulness of group supervision. Here he was discussing the productive nature of group supervision as a training tool but he offered a caveat, it has to be quality group supervision. As discussed further on in this chapter James's experiences of poor group supervision have left him doubting the usefulness of the process and this has overshadowed the positive experiences he has had previously.

Finally the subtheme **P5: How useful is it? Is it only useful if it's productive?** Has been included within the overall superordinate theme; **Productive (P)**. This was a subtheme that caused a certain level of angst as I grappled with the numerative concept of deduction. Sarah was the only participant that I felt explored the productive nature of group supervision to such a strong extent and the main thrust of her argument was that group supervision could only be productive if it was useful in the very obvious sense, she needed to feel that it provided her with something tangible, something new, something she did not have before. While this sentiment was apparent in others transcripts it was the singularity of the concept within Sarah's transcript that was felt to be loud and clear. Therefore, this subtheme has only been developed through quotes from Sarah's transcript. Reflexively, I considered how resentful Sarah appeared to be in relation to the constant dichotomy she experienced. She talked of the time pressures put on her, the expectations that she would keep up with the ridiculously high work load and still find time (often, she felt, her own time) to attend group supervision. Sarah's main focus was whether she personally got to share her particular problem;

*I don't feel that it's a waste of time, whatever we discuss I always come out thinking it was a good use of time but it just depends whether you've been able to speak, to get your voice heard (Sarah, line 255)*

Through further analysis and re-reading of the text I was able to reflect that Sarah had made it clear that she had not always got time for group

supervision. She commented that it was the first thing to go from her diary and that she didn't have the luxury of being able to prioritise something that was all about team building;

*that's aside from all the stuff about it being useful for helping you to be part of a team and well, all that (Sarah, line 54),*

For her it was only useful if it was productive to her, however, the real juxtaposition was that all the other participants felt that the real use of group supervision was the more psychological element of feeling like they belonged, of restoring themselves and of putting psychology at the heart of what they did. This was something they felt came under the team building element of group supervision. It was then interesting that in the end it appeared that Sarah did not feel like she belonged and could not find her place within the group and I could not help wondering then if it was her inability to prioritise it that led to group supervision being unproductive for Sarah? If you relate Sarah's aim for productivity to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs she was aiming for the cognitive learning level without building on the foundations of safety and belonging.

#### **4.4.2. Superordinate theme: Restoration of self (R)**

The second superordinate theme within the main theme **PURPOSE** is the superordinate theme **Restoration of self (R)**. Six out of eight participants discussed issues that were felt to conceptualise this superordinate theme (Appendix 9 contains a complete table of quotes) which at its heart refers to the process of group supervision as a process which redresses the psychological balance for a group of professionals involved in a psychologically draining job. Participants referred to the restorative nature of group supervision and the sense that the purpose of attending supervision was to wash off the psychological coal dust gathered from the stressful role of being an EP.

The subtheme; **R1: Restoring a sense of self**, attempts to capture the concept that the purpose of attending was to keep an internal personal balance, to keep oneself mentally healthy. Jackie describes the necessity of making room for this type of activity;

*Well that I think is the best type, well actually not the best but the most necessary as it's about being safe, having a place to learn and share with your colleagues and some way of making sure we are not taking things to heart, too personally all that. Basically it's a way of keeping you mentally healthy (Jackie, line 37)*

What Jackie was really referring to was the difference between it being productive in terms of developing her role as an EP, with her ability to move cases on and it being productive in terms of keeping her mentally healthy so she can continue to focus on the cases. Participants described the sense that they used the group as a place to let go;

*To me.... It's a safe place... to bounce ideas around and quite often to de-baggage for want of a better phrase (Lisa, line 34)*

And Julie talks of the fact that she was not always aware of how much an issue had got to her but that through group supervision she has had the opportunity to look into the personal impact of the difficult situations that arise at work;

*Well I once brought along something that was on my mind but .... I thought it was just getting to me a bit and I started talking about it and I just burst into tears and it took me by surprise and afterwards I was shocked that I had done that because it's not like me to do that and I felt a bit embarrassed but it did feel OK, it felt like the group were OK with me doing that even though I hadn't expected to do it. The group was safe for me to do that in I suppose I could fall apart safe in the knowledge that the group would put me back together again (Julie, line 253)*



Note the use of 'I', 'my' and 'me' throughout this extract, this is a very personal insight to the level of trust Julie placed in the group. Initial noting and subsequently more detailed emergent themes note the use of the Humpty Dumpty analogy, she has fallen apart knowing she would be put back together again and there was a sense that she could not do that in many situations. It also gives the reader a sense of how fragile she felt that it didn't take much for her to break. The analysis also led to a scrutiny of this idea that she knew she hadn't quite processed the 'tricky situation' but the space available and the sense of safety she felt in this group allowed her to open Pandora's box and take a look at what was really inside. It is worth noting that for participants to achieve the desired **PURPOSE (main theme)** of group supervision, for it to be **Productive (superordinate theme)** and for it to **Restore a sense of self (subtheme)**, participants are saying all these ingredients need to be present and further analysis of the experiences of the participants in this study suggest that this does not happen easily, in fact in many of the participants descriptions the exact opposite occurs.

***R2: Reducing the personal impact of the background noise of the day job***, is a subtheme whereby participants describe letting go of some of the emotions that clients unconsciously transfer onto EPs in their general day to day work. Liam described the experience as a way of resisting being drawn into the complex systems such as schools and local authorities that EPs interact with;

*It actually brings you back to earth, coz you can be out there in schools busying away and the supervision group brings you back, to what you are doing it all for.*

*E: mmmm*

*L: Out there in schools you can get quite drawn into all the systems and bogged down in all their problems and time to reflect in a group just reminds you what else is out there. (Liam, line 302)*

*I thought, oh I don't know, I got out (whispers), and I'm unashamed about it but, I do good clinical work, that's what I do. I understand politics, I understand the system but I keep a real strong focus on who am I working for, whom am I trying to help and support. (Liam, line 292)*

The world of the educational psychologist is potentially very different now to how it was when Liam first started his career, as the longest serving member of the participants he appeared to look back wistfully at a bygone era when EPs were expected to take time to consider all the elements of a case and postulate about what was impacting on the problem. Whereas, the participants talked about the current EP role in a frenetic way that felt uncomfortable and caused them a certain level of conflict between what was best for the client and the expectations placed on them by their employers. Jackie comments;

It's a busy job, there are never enough hours in the day  
(Jackie, line 288)

And Liam confirms;

There are a lot of external pressures these days (Liam, line 119)

They both described the constant balancing act that EPs have to manage when working for a local authority and it felt like a certain level of being made to feel 'grateful' for the time they were given by the local authority to be able to take part in group supervision, the use of 'special' and 'put aside' lead to an assumption that this does not happen a great deal;

this is different, its time, special time, time people have put aside to focus and help each other. (Jackie, line 246).

Lisa also described the frenetic nature of the job;

*Well, you know reflection, looking at why we've done something. We can't get close to that sort of process because we are really embroiled in how they can do a practically impossible job on a day to day basis*  
(Lisa, line 76)

The subtheme **R3: Building one's capacity to face the task of being an EP** had similarities to **R2: Reducing the background noise of the day job** but the distinctiveness of restoring the participants in a way that built their capacity was felt noteworthy. In R2 the focus was on setting aside the potentially damaging emotional baggage transferred to the EPs from working with highly complex clients, however, R3 focuses on capacity building at a time when the role is leaving EPs more vulnerable than ever before. Liam was keen to describe the way he felt that the current EP role meant individual EPs were completely isolated from each other,

*I think it's getting worse in the sense that I think it's a very isolating job essentially and I think, why are you in a team?*  
(Liam, line 237)

This was clearly something that Liam was very concerned about and his experience of group supervision was that this had been an opportunity to redress the impact of the issue:

*a lot of people go out for the week, fully equipped for everything and go from school to school or school to home or come into the office not at a time when you are in*  
(Liam, line 54)

The capacity building element became a strong feature of the justification for demanding time to get together with colleagues. This reflects the current crisis in local authority working where EP services have had to fight for survival and in times of austerity have had to justify the need to spend time on group problem solving and reflection.

*this is different, its time, special time, time people have put aside to focus and help each other. There's also something about having everyone there together, a real range of perspectives and experience all thinking together on the same level. (Jackie, line 246)*

As Jackie points out the unique element here is the focus on restoring an individual's capacity to cope personally, this places a strong priority on the mental health of the helping professional and maintains that supervision in a group can contribute positively to this. The subtheme links to the superordinate theme described later on of **'The group' as a separate entity working as one (G)** but within the subtheme being described here **R3: *Building one's capacity to face the task of being an EP*** the emphasis was felt to be around the unique feature of being able to improve one's coping strategy for the day to day EP job by taking part in group supervision as opposed to other capacity building activities that are generally experienced alone.

The final subtheme, **R4: *The ultimate psychological experience***, was an underlying, often unconscious, emotion that I had a very strong sense of through analysis of many of the participants' transcripts. Despite some of the focus being on situations where group supervision had not been a pleasant experience there was still a sense that when all the elements were right it really was the pinnacle of acting psychologically. The process of deep, active reflection was alluded to in some participants' transcripts with a focus on the sense that this was the only situation in which this 'luxury' was allowed. Liam described a set of very difficult professional situations he had encountered throughout his career as an EP and reflected that he needed to put psychology at the centre of his practice:

*L: Well it was in a system that I actually despised to be honest*

*E: Oh, ok*

*L: and, and they, I thought, oh I don't know, I got out (whispers), and I'm unashamed about it but, I do good clinical work, that's what I do. I understand politics, I understand the system but I keep a real strong focus on who am I working for, whom am I trying to help and support.*

*E: Yep*

*L: So that's why I go along to it, the one thing I've done over the years is to focus on how I can use some psychology. It's a reason for this team to come together I think to put psychology at the centre of what we do. (Liam, line 287)*

When considering what Liam shared I felt humbled by his honesty and his willingness to reflect on the impact of a lack of quality group supervision throughout his earlier career. Throughout the latter part of his interview there was an increasing sense of him resisting the constant pull of management positions where he realised there was no room for reflective thinking, no room for supervision and ultimately it felt like, no room for psychology.

#### **4.4.3. Superordinate theme: Reaffirming oneself as a Psychologist (RP)**

The third and final superordinate theme within the main theme **PURPOSE** is **Reaffirming oneself as a psychologist (RP)**, for many of the participants the process of group supervision was described in the light of being the one time they could truly be psychological in its purest of senses. They discussed the changing role of an educational psychologist in a local authority, the way they viewed the job as becoming outcome driven following the target setting agenda with little or no time for reflecting on a range of hypotheses on a given issue. Group supervision was described as a time where the local authority 'allowed' them to take time and work together to problem solve. This, for them was the only time they could be truly psychological. Four out of eight participants discussed issues that were felt to conceptualise this superordinate theme (see Appendix 10 for a complete table of quotes).

The first subtheme, *RP1: Being part of group supervision provides a chance to reflect on the factors that affect ones decisions*, was derived from participants discussing group supervision in a manner that implied they were considering their motivation for becoming an EP and their initial ideas about the reflective nature of the job compared to the current EP role that they found themselves in. There was a sense of loss as they considered the reality of the day to day work they were having to face and yet when they talked about group supervision there was a more positive vibe as they described the chance to think at a deeper level about their motivation for making decisions;

*You know, reflection, looking at why we've done something. We can't get close to that sort of process because we are really embroiled in how they can do a practically impossible job on a day to day basis (Julie, line 76)*

Julie's use of the term 'embroiled' and 'practically impossible job' presented a sense of desperation about having to deal with the level of work she had. Participants reflected on the purpose for engaging in group supervision as being a way to keep a mental check on why they made decisions. They discussed this 'reflective thinking' as a unique factor of the role of a psychologist but acknowledged that group supervision was becoming the only opportunity they had in which to carry this out, it was almost as if they were saying without group supervision they would not actually be doing anything psychological.

Caron commented on the others in the group encouraging her to consider the personal impact of decisions;

*I really, well I really yeah I really enjoy the different approaches people bring and well this colleague in particular well (inaudible as she is mumbling again) he thinks about not just the child but what impact the child is having on the situation and then what impact that is having on you and you like **ohhh (loud)** coz when you're in it you don't really don't think much outside the box do you*

*Yeah so for me supervision is about what else, why has this situation become difficult for me and the chance to think deeply rather than just well, just moving on (Caron, line 134)*

As a newly qualified EP, Caron realised that group supervision was providing a protective element for her. The level of burn out in the helping professions is high and supervision aims to protect professionals from the impact of working with highly emotive issues. Newly qualified EPs are particularly vulnerable to struggling with the work life balance and Caron described something that sounded like permission from her peers to think about the impact on herself.

Liam is very open and honest in discussing the impact that work has had on his emotional wellbeing over the years, there is a very strong sense of how difficult it has been for Liam to take time out and consider the personal scars of the job but he talks about group supervision giving him the chance to think more laterally and of this active reflection being a chance to consider;

*What are you actually about, what do you do, and why and when you're stuck why do you do this (Liam, line 184)*

Subtheme **RP2: During group supervision there is a unique opportunity to think psychologically as a group**, takes this concept of analytic thinking slightly further as participants considered the unique factor of 'thinking psychologically' but this time they discussed the added value of doing this with other EPs. This doubly unique and wholly psychological element of being able to take time to pick apart decisions in the presence of others is, in my opinion the true sense of thinking psychologically. A psychologist aims to problem solve, to gather evidence, considers a number of hypothesis, test them out and aim to find a way forward. Having a number of others present as they do this heightens their level of thinking and therefore the number of possible solutions and, one could assume, improves the depth at which this psychological thinking occurs. Participants appeared to view the experience of group supervision as the perfect and unique opportunity to do this;

*The reason for being there, I think..... I get the sense that people were feeling like their identity was being lost and there wasn't an opportunity to come together in the psychological sense at any other time (Liam, line 222)*

A strong feature of Liam's account was the loss of psychological thinking, something he has fought hard to keep hold of. The interview became a tool for Liam to reflect on the on-going battle he had waged throughout his career between managerial issues and reflective thinking and I had a strong feeling that it was the power of being with the group that gave him the confidence to keep up this fight. I wondered if Liam had spent the early part of his career feeling he was on his own in carrying this disappointment but the fact that he found other like-minded EP's who also wanted to spend time being more reflective seemed to absolve him from these feelings of guilt and move him more into an emancipatory state.

Julie explored the nature of what the other group members offer her in terms of developing her reflective thinking;

*To sit with 6 or 7 other experienced supervisors and watch how they draw things out from each other and how they support someone to solve their own problems (Julie, line 329)*

Her use of the words 'watch how they draw things out' led to the development of the idea that the process of group supervision becomes a joint experience for all group members and was explored further within the superordinate theme **it's about the group as a separate entity working as one (G)** later in the analysis. But at this point the quote is used to evidence the concept that she was developing her own problem solving approach by witnessing the group working on someone else's problems. The sense of excitement at being given time to reflect in a group was evident in Sheila's words and also in her non-verbal behaviour;

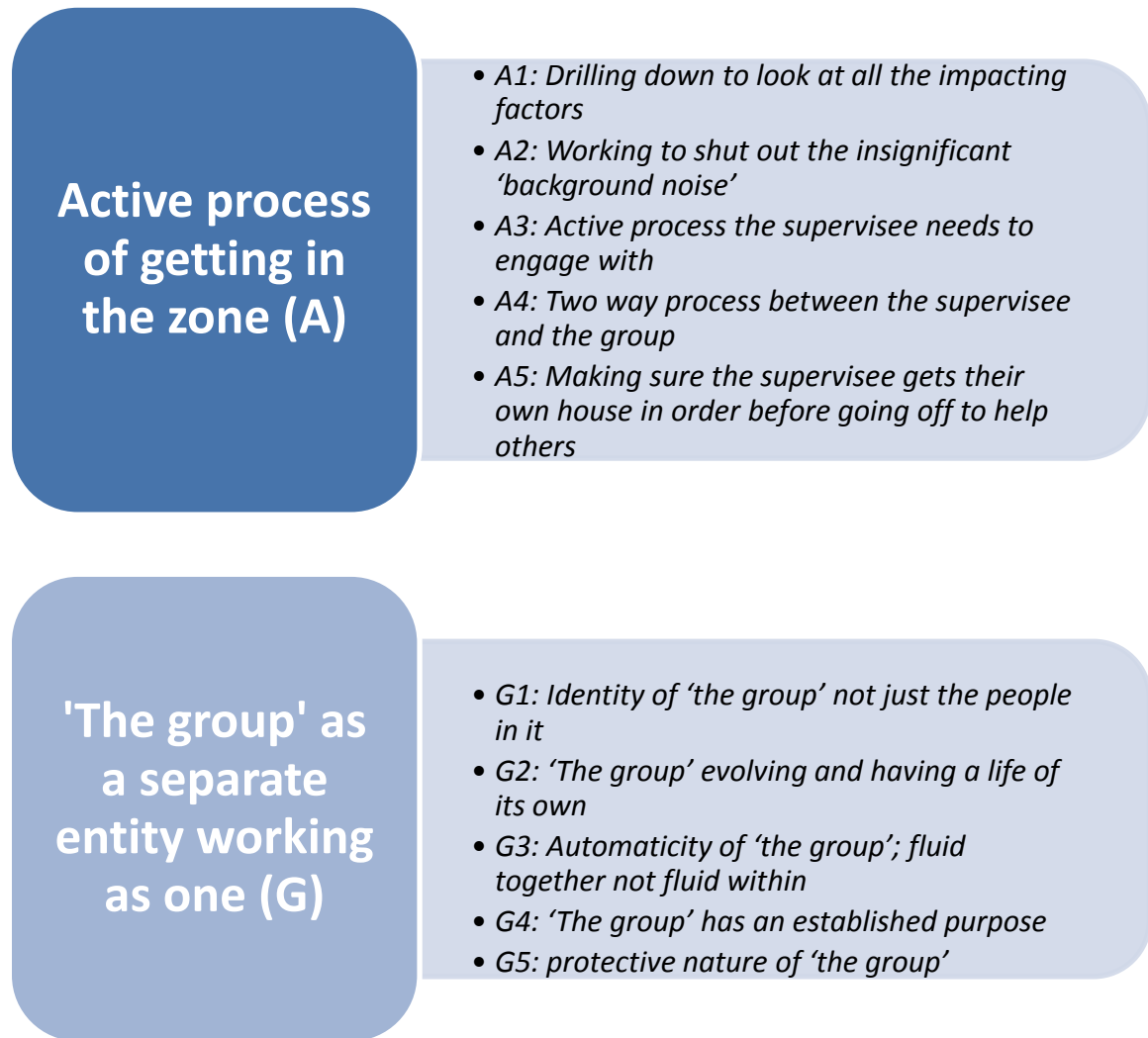


*It's like setting you alight (very fast talking now) it's like when you have  
a good group of like- minded psychologists it can be really good,  
mmmm really great  
(Sheila, line 320)*

The use of 'good' twice in short succession and 'really great' is quite child-like as if she was describing something forbidden. Again you get a sense that the participants aren't usually 'allowed' to spend time thinking and yet in having group supervision sessions in their programme they have the permission to partake in reflective thinking.

#### 4.5. Main Theme 2: PROCESS

The second main theme derived from the data was the **PROCESS** of doing group supervision which included the superordinate themes; **Active process of getting in the zone (A)** and **'The group' as a separate entity working as one (G)**.



**Figure 14: Presentation of main theme 2; PROCESS and its associated superordinate and subthemes**

The second main theme, the **PROCESS** of doing group supervision includes two superordinate themes; **Active process of getting in the zone (A)** and **'The group' as a separate entity working as one (G)**. This set of experiences focuses on 'how' group supervision works (or does not) and focuses on the journey that participants make when taking part. Participants recounted the active nature of EPs moving away from the usual frenetic pace of work and slowing down to a new level of awareness in group supervision where they were mindful of every detail of the decision making process. This section also clusters together the uniqueness described by participants, of becoming a separate being 'the group' and the protective aspect this provided.

#### ***4.5.1. Superordinate theme: Active process of getting in the zone (A)***

The first superordinate theme within the main theme **PROCESS** is **Active process of getting in the zone (A)**.

Six out of eight participants discussed issues that were felt to conceptualise the superordinate theme **Active process of getting in the zone (A)**, Appendix 11 contains a complete table of quotes but the following section exemplifies those which were felt to offer the best examples of the associated subthemes. The predominant issue reported by participants was the concept that group supervision was a dynamic, two-way process that the participants themselves had to actively engage with, they also talked about the process needing participation from both sides, from the individual, and the group responding to that individual, if the ultimate goal was to be achieved. There was a belief that rather than letting the stress of being an EP chip away at one's mental wellbeing, actively engaging in group supervision became some sort of antidote and encouraged participants to let go of any negative feelings.

The first subtheme **A1: Drilling down to look at all the impacting factors** saw participants exploring the idea that in group supervision the aim of the process was to explore the motivations for making choices in how EPs go about working with others. This was felt to be best exemplified by this quote from Sheila;

*It's like the group knows the process now so they drill down quicker you know, from when the problem is raised the group works together through the layers at a pace now (line, 234)*

In fact it was her words that led to the labelling of the subtheme as she actually used the phrase 'drilling down' to describe the process the group goes through when they work with individuals to pick apart their motivation for acting in certain ways. Sheila reflected on the group's ability to get to the heart of what the motivating factors were, for the person who had presented a problem, very quickly. An individual trying to reflect on why they had done something would be side-lined or distracted, but the group working together is more effective in getting to the goal.

Subtheme **A2: Working to shut out the insignificant 'background noise'**, focuses on the mental process of participants actively choosing to shut off the baggage they accumulate throughout their working week. This subtheme has a lot of links to the previously discussed subtheme **R2: Reducing the background noise of the day job** but R2 covers the product while **A2: Working to shut out the insignificant 'background noise'** is placed within the superordinate theme **Active process of getting in the zone (A)** because of the focus on the process. The way participants purposefully discuss the 'active' nature of using the time to find some space to focus on what is actually important. In R2 quotes were used to evidence the more psychological nature of the EP role during group supervision but in A2 the concept being described was the metacognitive shift that was encouraged

when EPs actively stepped away from the 'white noise' they were often embroiled in on a day to day basis.

*I think there is an element of "we're in the room now" because well, it's kind of like we are in a zone. (Jackie, line 242)*

Jackie was regularly trying to describe this 'zone', this idea that the participants have to mentally make a shift in the level of exploration they are prepared to do. It was apparent as she and others described a sense of 'getting ready', for preparing themselves for the high level of scrutiny. Jackie and Lisa both discussed group supervision as a process where they had to present themselves to the group. If this analogy is taken to another level, this 'zone' they describe needs a high level of preparedness because in presenting themselves they are actually baring their souls, warts and all, for others to pick over. This, they describe, is something that they need to be mentally ready for. Ultimately a number of participants gave a real impression that members had to actively do something rather than just turning up and seeing what happened;

*It .. it ...set up a frame of mind and we weren't in the zone*

*E: The zone?*

*L: I think you need to set the scene for supervision, for being reflective (Lisa, line 234)*

Jackie and Lisa both skirt around the idea that the process can provoke some very raw emotions and they need to be prepared for this. This was extended further in the subtheme **A3: Active process the supervisee needs to engage with** where a number of the participants explore the idea that they planned for the process in advance;

*For me....., for me it's a **PLANNED** (loud), formal meeting where I can consider things in my working life that are an issue for me.*

*(Julie, line 37)*

Julie came across as very organised in her approach to group supervision, she was one of the more experienced (in group supervision) participants and her experience seemed to have taught her that the sessions would be more useful if she thought carefully about what she wanted to explore. As one of the least experienced participants Caron described the anticipation that she felt before a session.

*Well I always think about it in advance because well (laughs, goes all high pitched and inaudible) ..... I think about a pupil and well no and now well there's always loads of questions and you think ohhhh, I haven't thought (inaudible and laughing) well basically now I try and think about using the time more usefully (Caron, line 121)*

Her exploration of that preparation gives a sense of her commitment to the process not just in turning up but in spending some time planning what she was going to bring as she knew the process would be intense and she could not just bluff her way through it. Caron's words definitely evoked a feeling of her wanting to appear competent in front of colleagues, of wanting to make a good impression.

Sarah on the other hand seemed less bothered about others' judgements and more interested in getting the most out of the session as she could, she exemplified this idea that participants need to actively engage in order to get best value where she talked about the motivation for attending the group;

*well, the first thing is its well, it's helping me to develop my own solutions to my own problems well, because of late I've brought some really challenging cases to supervision and I, urm, I urm, value hearing others opinions (Sarah, line 47)*

Sarah spoke a lot about not being able to prioritise group supervision and the dichotomy she experienced between, being told she must attend to get support and at the same time as experiencing a great deal of pressure as a

part time worker to fit in her caseload. Underneath it all it felt like Sarah did not always see the point of the 'support' element of group supervision but she did have a strong motivation for attending, to get different perspectives with her cases. The extract highlighted here gives the reader a real feel for why Sarah thinks it was important to engage with the process, because it develops her ability to support children and young people. To her that was of the utmost importance because it did this by helping her to develop her own solutions to her own problems. Unlike the others, Sarah actively engaged with group supervision because it built her capacity to do her job well whereas for the others there was more to it than that, they were actively engaging with the team building element too.

**A4: Two way process between the supervisee and the group** the quotes evidence the interconnectedness of the individuals within the group and the group itself and how both parties need to work together to develop the participants' skills. Julie talked about the different roles that the group took on;

*so it's a supportive set of umm relationships within the group but it's also challenging ... and.... Helping you develop your practice... it's umm well, educative as well. (Julie, line 49)*

Her use of the term 'it's, three times, was interesting, she was in fact describing a separate being, the group and the different roles it can provide. Lisa described initially thinking that group supervision was something she turned up to and had 'done to her' but now she appreciated she had an active role to play;

*It changed how I was in supervision I think, I started to understand I needed to be more proactive and take things to think about rather than just expecting answers from my supervisor. (Lisa, line 147)*

Sheila's ideas about the group working on a problem were felt to be another good example of **A4: Two way process between the supervisee and the group**. Her way of describing the process was quite poignant, her use of the phrase peeling away at the layers led to the image of an onion being stripped of its layers and this seemed to touch the core of what group supervision was meant to be like. The frenetic pace at which Sheila described this process was like a parallel process to the activity she was describing;

*Well it's like the bigger the group and the more experienced they are in a model of supervision you're kind of caught up in the content and they are like peeling away at the layers and if some of the group are really tuned in they will ask you a question and take you straight to the point of it rather than you having to zig zag back and forwards with it.....it's like frenetic and people are like have you thought of and I was thinking and it's like setting you alight (very fast talking now) (Sheila, line 308)*

The final subtheme within the superordinate theme **Active process of getting in the zone (A)** is subtheme **A5: Making sure the supervisee gets their own house in order before going off to help others**. This was first conceptualised quite clearly during the interview process with Liam;

*So from my point of view you need to value the skills as part of the profession and at the same time appreciate the fact that it may have a value to other people, it's like I've said before, if you can't put your own house in order you can't very well be doing you know, feng shui for other people (Liam, line 154)*

I felt Liam described the concept that some EPs did not always know what issues were having an effect on their core sense of self. As a practicing EP I am aware that it is often easy to feel you can let supervision slip due to the often seemingly more important duty of working with families but Liam explored the idea that one has a responsibility to stop for a minute and shine a light on what is happening on a day to day basis in order to ensure the EP is in a good position to help their clients.



Julie mentioned

*I brought things that I didn't know would be an issue (Julie, line 248)*

And then went on to describe a situation where she had started to talk about something she felt was quite insignificant but all of a sudden had burst into tears, this was clearly a situation that had affected her deeply and yet she described the deep sense of shock she felt as she reacted in such an extreme manner. As with Liam, Julie provided the reader with a feel for why she thought group supervision was so important. She reflected that she had not realised a case had affected her so deeply, her reaction had taken her by surprise. She went on to consider what would have happened if she had not had group supervision, she concluded that the opportunity to explore this may never have arisen and at some point in the future this case and its psychological impact would have become an even bigger issue.

#### **4.5.2. Superordinate theme: 'The group' as a separate entity working as one (G)**

The second superordinate theme within the main theme **PROCESS** is the superordinate theme: **'The group' as a separate entity working as one (G)**. Six out of eight participants discussed issues that were felt to conceptualise this superordinate theme. Appendix 12 contains a complete table of quotes but the following section includes some of the most salient examples. The predominant feature of this superordinate theme was the sense that in group supervision another 'being' was created, the group. It was more than just the individual members joining together it was something extra, something special that only occurred right there, in that moment as they met to undertake this very special task. The idea was born that the group was more than just the sum of its parts, when all the pieces came together and everyone was in the 'zone' then something almost other worldly occurred. Personally, I feel, this is

the very essence of phenomenology, this sense of an experience which is hard to put into words and is really only present for those that experience it.

The first subtheme within the superordinate theme **'The group' as a separate entity working as one (G)** is the subtheme **G1: Identity of 'the group' not just the people in it**. Liam had a strong sense of the potential power of 'the group', he described his group as his team, this takes it to another level as he explored the power this invoked, as it giving him something new and different;

*you have to find a way to make it clear to whomever, clients, managers that there is a difference between professionals working alone and professionals working in a team, what's the value added of being in a team. (Liam, line 243)*

A major theme for Liam was the dumbing down of the EP role and a sense that management were chipping away at all the protective factors that allowed him to be psychological. For Liam a large part of being psychological was looking from a range of perspectives and being in group supervision enabled this to happen more easily. Liam was trying to describe the identity of his group as a powerful problem solving team but he leaves you with a sense that the management does not get this and instead feel they can get better value for money in carving it up and having eight separate problem solvers who on their own could get more things done!

James touched on this concept when contrasting two different supervision groups he had been part of and the enabling factors of having been part of a group where this sense of 'all singing from the same song sheet' helped. As will be described later, James recalled very clearly the overwhelming feelings of not having his personal needs met in a group. He discussed the disappointment and uncomfortable feelings of not belonging because he did not feel comfortable with the identity of 'the group'. However, he was also very

sure that when he did have his personal needs met and he felt a connection with the groups identity his ability to function within the group lead to greater productivity all round. It was clear that James did not expect everyone to have the same viewpoint, in fact, at other times in the interview he spoke positively about the usefulness of being challenged by the group but ultimately he needed to feel that the group was working together as one;

*well the first real contrast is that my attendance at the\*\*\* group was always really good, partly because it was all new and I really felt like I needed it but also because the group was well run, there were clear ground rules and the people in the group were on the same wave length as me, I felt we could all talk at the same level, I could understand what they were saying, they got me, I don't always feel like that. (James, line 241)*

Sheila reflected on this sense of 'the group' taking a while to develop and that consistent attendance by members had an effect on this development;

*well the supervisor has changed and with the old one it was well, well, it was well attended, the same people turned up and you felt, really comfortable but it's different now, people dip in and out now and well, it doesn't **feel** the same any more. I mean, I know everyone, you know as you do when you've been around a long while but well. Its ok for me coz I know everyone but well, if I was new it would be like really hard because people keep chopping and changing and like you don't feel quite the same if it's different people each time. (Sheila, line 168)*

Sheila explored how a group sets out what it is all about and how it's identity was created over time as participants came together for a common purpose, while she didn't directly say it she was felt to be describing the chaotic nature of people coming and going and the threat this brought to the groups identity and sense of purpose.

This sense of development is explored further by participants in a subtheme which was named **G2: 'The group' evolving and having a life of its own.** There are a number of very powerful quotes within Appendix 12 that were felt to lead to the development of this concept, the quotes are often long and

complex containing a number of features about the constantly evolving nature of the groups. There was a great deal of metaphor within the participants transcripts including the reference to a river with a life of its own cascading down stream taking everything in its wake and then a ship being steered along by the captain (the facilitator). There was a real sense of personal interpretation of the participants descriptions at this point as I felt a strong connection to these ideas as I had experienced similar feelings when in a supervision group myself. The use of the research journal and discussions in research supervision were crucial at this stage to consider the robustness of the evidence, after intense scrutiny of the data alongside research supervisors I felt confident that I could justify the interpretations due to the number of extracts that could be found in the text to back up this analysis.

For example on a number of occasions Julie portrayed a sense of being overwhelmed by the power of the group evolving;

*The \*\*\* supervision group that I am involved in has evolved over time and I have been involved in it through three different stages. It originally started off being a surprisingly fluid group because the same people didn't always attend but it was facilitated by a senior EP who took the lead on supervision and she was very professional and experienced in terms of holding the group and maintaining continuity even if different people were present.*  
(Julie, line 116)

*At one point the group burgeoned and I remember being.....I was shocked, the meeting was here at this base and I had booked the room and I didn't know so many people were coming and they just kept arriving and we couldn't get enough chairs (not pausing for breath) and I found it hugely uncomfortable and I think other people who had been used to the well-established group felt the same.....*  
(Julie, line 162)

She talked about being shocked and feeling hugely uncomfortable, she made it sound out of control when she described it as 'burgeoning' and the way she just tailed off at the ends leaves a feeling of the whole process running right over her and off into the distance leaving disaster in its wake.

There was a sense of the participants telling the story of the group, this idea that once upon a time there was a beginning, a middle and the end was not yet written. The non-verbal and linguistic noting in the research journal picked up on things like lots of pauses, deep breaths and, as in Sheila's transcript below, the use of 'OK' and 'right then' as she prepares herself to tell the tale;

*Ok, right, weeeeell (big deep breath) ummmm, (another deep breath) ..... I I I I , well it seems a bit fluid .....and I'm um I think there's a liiiittle bit of a uh, a concern that uh, well it's tricky trying to get everyone together at the same time..... but I think that once you've missed one or two well, .... It's hard to feel you can go back and then, well this term I, well I haven't been able to make any of them (laughs, nervously) so ummm, missing out feels horrible, going along does feel nice but fluidity is an issue, in terms of numbers. Well there's quite often different people there now, each time and well, it didn't used to be like that it was always the same people each time and you well felt like you belonged but it's changed now and well ..... it's not the same (silence) (Sheila, line 151)*

Again Sheila's words seemed to describe a sense of chaos but the manner in which they were delivered reflected the mood she was describing, again she just tailed off at the end but even more so than Julie she left a long silence, which creates a sense of disbelief as if she was still trying to process what had torn right through her.

Liam described the evolving nature of the group in a more factual manner with reference to a theoretical understanding (Tuckman, 1965);

*the first meeting was all about, what are we doing here, how is this going to work, are we going to minute this, if we are at the meeting are we obligated to bring something, you know all that.*

*E: yes*

*L: You know the stages that groups go through, all that storming, norming, forming, (Liam, line 200)*

A sense of movement continued within the subtheme **G3: Automaticity of 'the group'; fluid together not fluid within** but in this subtheme participants explored the idea that an effective 'group' was going on this journey together rather than fighting each other about the route. Whereas previously the analysis led to the idea of the group moving forwards as one, at this point participants were describing the fluid nature of group members working together through a problem solving model. They described a sense of not needing a manual or a set of prompts but just automatically sensing from each other when the time was right to probe further or let the problem presenter have some time to consider the implications of the process. Jackie alludes to the fact that it was not always plain sailing but the notion was there that the ultimate aim was to have a group of people working together in a seamless fashion;

*this is the way it's meant to work..... (laughs) in the real world it's not quite as beautifully orchestrated as this (Jackie, line 144)*

Here there is a further use of metaphor within the linguistic level of analysis of Jackie's words, the reference to an orchestra gave further evidence to the concept of the group consisting of a range of people with their own unique set of skills and perspectives working towards a common goal, the connotations of the term beautiful equalling perfect are worth considering as once again the phenomena being described seems almost unobtainable and yet when it works, it is perfect.

Sheila picked up on the idea that 'the group' gains an unstoppable momentum that she felt enhanced the object of group supervision, to develop the skills of the individuals within. She also explored the idea that this fluidity developed over time, the importance that participants appeared to be placing on this development was noteworthy. It was felt that participants were saying 'the group' learned about how to 'be' together in order that individuals could maximise the usefulness of group supervision;

*when it was 10 it made it exciting and it generated a lot of conversations and when it was a group of people who were really experienced you didn't have to spend time peeling away all the layers you could just jump to the nubbin of it.*  
(Sheila, line 291).

*It's like we talked about right at the beginning when we talked about fluidity, a group that has been together for some time is more fluid*  
(Sheila, line 340)

This quote from Sheila was used to devise the name of the subtheme, it was the analysis of what Sheila meant by fluid that led to this idea of fluid together not fluid within. On the surface when she talked about fluidity one may consider she was talking about the group members coming and going but her description of the phenomena was related to the idea that the group learnt to function together, over time, in a seamless fashion to support members to develop in their roles. 'The group' set to work on a problem as it was presented, as in quantum physics every interaction causes a reaction but this was on a level which was invisible to the naked eye.

Within the subtheme **G4: 'The group' has an established purpose**, participants talked about the most effective groups being clear about what they were meeting for;

*I think it's important, it's incumbent that the manager or whomever encourages working on issues as a group. I suppose what I'm saying is that if someone new joins the group, particularly if they are early in their career it is important that the group sets out what it's all about, this is what the group is for, this is what it isn't for you know*  
*E: Do you mean ground rules?*  
*L: I think it's more about principles*  
(Liam, line 314)

This linked to the previous subtheme in that the journey the group was taking should be towards a shared end point, in other words it needed to have an agreed purpose but rather than this being just about what the participants

would gain from being present as in main theme one, at this point the purpose was related to 'the group' and how it should go about meeting that aim.

Finally within the subtheme **G5: protective nature of 'the group'** there is a conscious awareness of the participants exploring the way they felt looked after by 'the group' in a way that meant they were equipped to take this journey of exploration that potentially could feel quite challenging. As previously explored in the subtheme **R1: Restoring a sense of self**, Julie talked about bringing issues to supervision that she had not realised had really bothered her;

*Well I once bought along something that was on my mind but .... I thought it was just getting to me a bit and I started talking about it and I just burst into tears and it took me by surprise and afterwards I was shocked that I had done that because it's not like me to do that and I felt a bit embarrassed but it did feel OK, it felt like the group were OK with me doing that even though I hadn't expected to do it. The group was safe for me to do that in I suppose. I could fall apart safe in the knowledge that the group would put me back together again  
(Julie, line 253)*

However, at this point the quote is felt to be a good example of a sense of protection from 'the group' as Julie talked about the group being OK with her doing this as if she felt that they would look after her even at her most vulnerable moments. Lisa talked about the same feelings when considering the critical friend approach that the group takes;

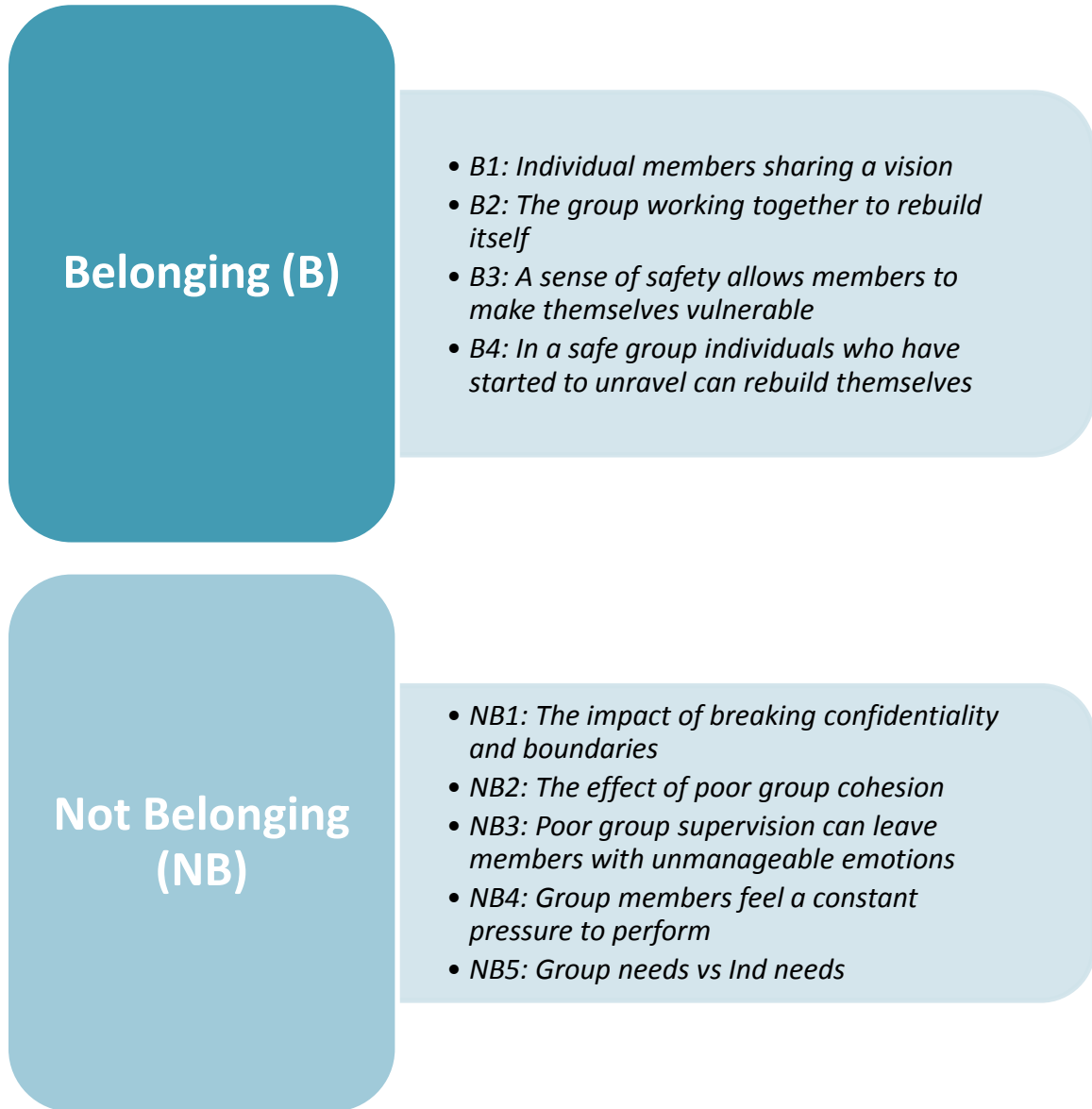
*I was prepared for the set up and that people were going to be critical but in a positive way and because I knew it was going to be like that it was OK (Lisa, 366)*

Lisa noted that the training she had in group supervision alerted her to the process of group members being challenging and that this had helped her to feel that it was not personal but it was in fact the group's job.



#### 4.6. Main Theme 3: PERSONAL NEEDS

The third main theme the **PERSONAL NEEDS** of the participants is categorised into two superordinate themes **Belonging** and **Not Belonging**.



**Figure 15: Presentation of main theme 3; PERSONAL NEEDS and its associated superordinate and subthemes**

The third main theme, the **PERSONAL NEEDS** of the participants is categorised into two further superordinate themes **Belonging** and **Not Belonging**. Within this section the aftermath of the experience of group supervision is considered, in particular the effects on one's core sense of self. The polar opposite set of feelings that participants explored is discussed whereby their experience either left them feeling safe and looked after in a group where they had a shared sense of who they were or a really uncomfortable sense of not sharing the outlook of the rest of the group and feeling judged or a constant pressure to perform.

#### **4.6.1. Superordinate theme: Belonging (B)**

The first superordinate theme within the main theme **PERSONAL NEEDS** is **Belonging (B)**. Six out of eight participants discussed issues that were felt to conceptualise this superordinate theme, Appendix 13 contains a complete table of quotes to evidence the associated subthemes. **Belonging** is an illustration of a set of experiences that led to an exploration of very powerful positive, enabling emotions that could be evoked from taking part in group supervision. Participants explored how they had felt able to bare their inner most concerns about decisions they had made in their day to day practise in front of their peers because of the safety and containment they experienced in the group.

The first subtheme within the superordinate theme **Belonging (B)** is **B1: Individual members sharing a vision**. This subtheme is felt to represent the core of the superordinate theme because participants reflected on what it was that bound them to the group and allowed them to put themselves out there during group supervision.

*J: because the group was well run, there were clear ground rules and the people in the group were on the same wave length as me, I felt we could all talk at the same level, I could understand what they were saying, they got me, I don't always feel like that*

*E: Ok, that obviously felt very different then.*

*J: Yes, I felt safe, I got a lot out of it and it's all related really, I had good attendance and I presented cases. Looking back now I hardly missed any and I used to look forward to it. It's only as I think about it now that I realise how different I felt about that group to how I feel about the other group I have been part of more recently  
(James, line 244)*

James really started to explore the concept of a joint vision towards the end of his interview. Reflexively I considered that this extract was a good example of the hermeneutic cycle, James commented that this was the first time (in the interview) that he had made the connection between how he felt and how he then subsequently behaved. It was at this point in the interview that things seemed to fall into place for James. There had been a real sense that he felt ashamed of his lack of commitment to group supervision when he first started talking, because, as he described, in recent months he had been avoiding sessions. At the start of the interview he had become embroiled in justifying why he thought group supervision was important (despite his lack of attendance) and become 'bogged down' in talking about theoretical underpinnings. He then went on to reflect that he did not think having a theoretical understanding was the most important element and so it seemed strange that he had made such an effort to discuss this. He appeared to be flitting back and forth and holding back from what he really wanted to say as if there was a real conscious/unconscious battle going on. Then at the point illustrated above he seemed to have a moment of clarity. As I witnessed him make this link it was as if the guilt lifted and he finally felt justified in his behaviour, for James, despite being totally committed to the process of group supervision he needed to have some connection with the other members of the group in order to be able to truly participate.

Sheila explored the same concept when she talked about "the ingredients being right" as she described the way she felt that her supervision group had jelled;

*well I don't know if it's just about the size, it's something to do with the fact that group at that time was established, together, you know, all the ingredients were right (Sheila, line 296)*

This metaphor of a recipe is interesting to consider as all the ingredients can be present but the conditions for development are also important to ensure a good end result. There is a sense here that the same is true for group supervision. It is not enough to just have the participants turning up and going through the motions, they need to share the same vision, the climate needs to be right, for it to be successful.

In subtheme **B2: The group working together to rebuild itself** the extracts from participants transcripts are felt to show good examples of how group members felt that when they really belong to a group they are committed to seeing the group through any crisis. The storming phase of a group is described by Tuckman (1965) as a normal phase of group development where conflict occurs and the group works through it and comes out stronger. Julie talked about the group taking ownership and making decisions about its future;

*J: Well, after that meeting someone else was going to take over the facilitator role and so we had lots of discussion as a group about the size of the group and how it would run now (Julie, line 192)*

James discussed the group having a challenge to deal with whereby some members appeared to want to use the group for something other than its agreed purpose, this resulted in other members pulling together to remind the others what that agreed purpose was;

*It is very much a peer supervision group although..... well.... It's dependent on personality, some people have um... taken or tried to take a central role um, at times **BUT** we have, when I say we umm there's a few of us that have maintained a strong sense of well, ummm... it should be leaderless and we have made sure by revisiting the ground rules that it stays leaderless. (James, line 91)*

James described perfectly this sense of power that group members had when they felt they belonged, to be able to challenge any threat to the equilibrium the group has established, this would be a good example of Focal Conflict Theory (Whitaker and Lieberman, 1964).

The subtheme **B3: A sense of safety allows members to make themselves vulnerable**, was derived by noticing that a number of participants explored how group members were able to open themselves up to be challenged during group supervision sessions. Participants often compared good/safe groups with groups that were not safe and tried to understand what elements had led to these feelings. Julie described feeling out of control and unsafe with the larger groups and reflected that a smaller group helped her and other members to feel safe enough to share things. Julie also reflected on the fact that, in this new supervision group she was part of, group members knew each other and again she felt this led to a sense of safety;

*Well to start with we all know each other more, we work in the same base and for the other two EPs that's... they liked it because they are new to the role of being a supervisor and they felt safe to talk about that together because we are all in the same district team together so we work together a lot, share the same office and so they felt safe to talk about things and which if the group .... If the group had been bigger and they had not known everyone so well they may not have felt so safe. (Julie, line 209)*

Caron shared her experience of being a new EP, joining a supervision group of well-established EPs with an experience of supervision. It was felt that Caron was exploring what that had initially felt like, quite uncomfortable, but then reflected on the fact that seeing as other more experienced people were

saying how hard they had found things in the end that had left her feeling safe to share her own vulnerabilities;

*it doesn't matter what level you are in the service people treat it very seriously and so I think "oh gosh I wonder what people are thinking" but then you listen to others comments and you feel valued and well as one of the newest members of the team it's nice to feel part of something. As a new member you know, being newly qualified it's nice to go along and hear things and you think oh that's good I'm not going mad this really was quite a hard child (goes squeaky and very fast) (Caron, line 172)*

The final subtheme within the superordinate theme **Belonging (B)** is subtheme **B4: In a safe group individuals who have started to unravel can rebuild themselves**. This subtheme has very clear overlaps with both the subtheme **G5: protective nature of 'the group'** and the subtheme **R1: being part of group supervision helps to restore a sense of self**. But the unique feature within the superordinate theme **Belonging (B)** is the focus on how participants felt looked after enough to let the process restore their sense of self, they were prepared to knowingly make themselves vulnerable by discussing issues that were a threat to their sense of being 'good psychologists'. The extract from Julie below talking about bringing issues to supervision that she had not realised had really bothered her were analysed to contain her conclusions being; she was prepared to put herself out there because she felt safe in the knowledge that the group would rebuild her;

*J: my original experience with someone who was highly experienced were hugely helpful at the same time as being challenging and I brought things that I didn't know would be an issue but it was always useful even if at the time it didn't always feel comfortable (Julie, line 245)*

Julie reflected that the containment offered by a hugely experienced supervisor sets a tone within the group which means they do not just sit there and watch it happen they actually have a sense of responsibility to help.

#### **4.6.2. Superordinate theme: Not Belonging (NB)**

The other superordinate theme within the main theme **PERSONAL NEEDS** is the superordinate theme **Not Belonging (NB)**. Seven out of eight participants discussed issues that were felt to conceptualise the superordinate theme **Not Belonging (NB)**, meaning that after the superordinate theme **Productive (P)** it is the most common. Participants made many references to a very raw set of powerful disabling emotions to do with the lack of safety and sense of threat they experienced during poor examples of group supervision. Participants described feeling scared to share their inner most concerns about decisions they had made in their day to day practise and essentially at times rendered the experience of group supervision unbearable and this sense for some was so powerful it tainted their attitude towards something they had once really valued. (Appendix 14 contains a complete table of quotes which evidence the associated subthemes).

The first subtheme within the superordinate theme **Not Belonging (NB)** is the subtheme **NB1: The impact of breaking confidentiality and boundaries**. This was only found in the analysis of one participant's transcripts, Sheila's, but the message seemed to be so powerful that it was felt that to stay true to the idiographic nature of IPA it was worthy of highlighting. Sheila discussed her reluctance to participate in the group she was initially part of because she had experienced issues of broken confidentiality in her individual supervision, what was interesting was the fact that she felt the risks were so much higher in group supervision as there were more people who could let her down;

*..... well I had had a bad experience in my own supervision with boundaries and confidentiality so in a way I had gone back a few stages and then I just refused to take those risks and I just wouldn't share with the group coz I didn't know the group really well and I thought well stuff that (pffff) coz if it can go wrong in individual supervision then the risks are even higher in a group. There are even more people who could break the rules. (Sheila, line 353)*

Key supervision texts (Hawkins and Shohet, 2006; Proctor, 2008) place confidentiality and boundaries high on the agenda for establishing an effective group. However, in this case Sheila highlights the lasting effects of previous bad experience which potentially has further implications for the work that needs to be carried out in establishing a sense of safety for all participants.

Seven out of eight participants talked about concepts which were categorised as leading to the development of the subtheme **NB2: The effect of poor group cohesion**. It was one of the strongest messages from the whole project, the idea that if the group does not 'fit' together well, participants won't feel like they belong and although they may turn up they won't commit to the process and therefore the activity is pointless. This concept would link succinctly to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs whereby the most basic human needs of connectedness and understanding need to be met before the more challenging states of cognition could be attempted. James made two very salient points;

*Let's just say I didn't ever really want to take a case to talk about because it just didn't feel right so I tended to either avoid going or not really feel like participating when I did attend. It didn't feel right, the way it worked and well, I didn't then have enough of a relationship because I didn't attend enough to have that out with anyone (James, line 184)*

*Sometimes I wonder if it's my problem but .. mmm, when you consider we are all psychologists I'm just amazed sometimes at peoples inability to listen and support each other and then so I feel a little apart from that group, like I don't fit because I don't understand it (James, line 232)*

It was fascinating to consider the idea that even though he went along and sat in the room he refused to really let himself be part of the group because he could not understand them, he did not feel like he belonged there. The implication is that from the outside it may look like the group is functioning but there is more to effective group supervision than having a group of people present.



Sarah made some interesting points along similar lines. Her whole interview felt like an outpouring of anger at the way she could not commit to the process of group supervision because of the time restraints put on her by such a heavy workload. It seemed that what made her angry was the way she may appear to colleagues to not be interested because she could not always get there, she was aware that others judged her by actions but she was cross that they did not understand her motivations. Underneath it all Sarah seemed really upset that she did not feel like she belonged in her group because they didn't know her well enough to understand that her non-attendance was not a sign of not committing to the group;

*I can talk for myself, I've probably got there about 3 times this year, soo that's 3 out of about 10, umm I can't speak for other people but my feeling is that there is probably a core group of about 3 people who go to most and then the rest are sort of like little satellites that dip in and out over the year, its once a week, Monday afternoon, hour and a half, two hours so we have quite a big chunk of time, and its rum solution circles type format.... Or that's how I understand it (Sarah, line 126)*

*I think we used sort of a similar format as we use for team meetings so I'm not aware... well sometimes I've got there 5 minutes after the start but I'm not aware that they were agreed.....well, there are agreements about timings and when and where and all that but no, no I'm not really aware we've gone into the group rules as such..... (Sarah, line 141)*

These quotes are felt to exemplify the over-arching issue for Sarah that she did not feel part of the group, her constant reference to herself as separate from the rest is apparent when looking carefully at what she is really saying. In the first extract she uses 'I' three times as a way of saying 'I'm on my own'. "I can only speak for myself", "I can't speak for others", "that's how I understand it", it felt like what she was really saying is, 'I have no idea what the others think as I'm not part of the group really'. In the second extract she goes on to explore the ground rules, the very thing one would assume helps to encourage good group cohesion and yet Sarah clearly has no idea what they were and was certainly not signing up to them. It was interesting to

reflect on a strong theme for Sarah that was placed within the superordinate theme **Productive (P)**, this idea that **P5: How useful is it? Is it only useful if it's productive?** For Sarah it was only useful if she came away with new knowledge yet it seemed that she refused (subconsciously) to put herself in a position where she could acquire new knowledge.

This sense of us and them was also explored by Lisa and Caron. Caron's use of language was interesting to explore because although she generally seemed very positive about the usefulness of group supervision there was a definite sense of being 'done to' by the group;

*well its very much like you kind of bring your case and rummy and then **They** will kind of ask questions and help you think error along the urn way and urm and urm well in a great way (Caron, line 103)*

Caron's use of "you" bring the cases and "they" ask the questions and then finally once again trying to convince herself with lots of "umms and arrs" before adding "in a great way", could be interpreted as Caron trying to convince herself it was OK when perhaps it wasn't and there was a definite sense of us and them about this passage. The same was true for Lisa who on the surface was saying 'it's all really great' but closer analysis of her words places doubt on her true feelings;

*It feels quite uncomfortable and for someone who's quite nervous it's like "oh golly, did I do the right thing" and he asks you quite a lot of questions (gulps loudly) and you sit there and think "help" (laughs wildly)... it is useful and it's about getting out of your comfort zone and sharing your inner thoughts actions feelings (very fast talking) and..... not having them judged, that's wrong but actually having them reflected back to you (Lisa, line 299)*

Her non-verbal signals suggested high levels of anxiety, she laughed wildly after practically yelping "help". Her words and actions conjure a vision of her desperate to escape a really awkward situation and you also get a sense of

her fighting between what she thinks she should say and what she actually wants to say. Her first thoughts, possibly her true instincts are reflected in her comment “having them judged” but she quickly retracts this however it leaves you wondering if her first comments really represent her experience.

In the subtheme **NB3: Poor group supervision can leave members with unmanageable emotions** participants extracts provide examples of this sense of feeling exposed by the process, an emotion which one can only feel cannot be particularly useful?

*The first time I spoke I left feeling like I'd been exposed, I was a fraud, “this girl knows **nothing** about supervision” and that felt very uncomfortable (Lisa, line 327)*

Lisa's descriptions at this point, of her being 'about to be found' out exemplified the main crux of her experience of group supervision, for her it was portrayed as an activity where at times she did her best to hide her true feelings from a group of people who were actively trying to expose her . From the beginning of her interview it felt as if she was nervously waiting to be exposed as knowing nothing about supervision. As she explored the experience a parallel process started to emerge where the interview became another situation where she was not sure if she could be truly honest. This extract comes from much later in the interview where she had relaxed and started to stop fighting the urge to present a different experience than the one she had actually experienced but it felt like she was sharing a secret, something she should not be saying.

James too seemed to be wrestling with an inner conflict of feelings he had about being passionate about the usefulness of supervision but really feeling like he did not belong to the group he was part of;

*Well its ... some felt safe and some really didn't I was like.... What am I doing here..... (tails off)*

*E: You have mentioned that this really affected your attendance, can you tell me a bit more*

*J: Yeah, I think I ... it was probably an unconscious decision in the first place but I think it was becoming more conscious and I tried to fight against that and I... I really did have to say to myself, come on you should be there, I should be part of this because that's not giving it that's not fair to other people who are going and it doesn't look good in terms of my programme management but ...*

*E: What is contributing to your feelings about attending*

*J: ummmm .....mmm partly because I'm .....we did touch on this in the last meeting.... I'm not the only one who hasn't committed to the group and it was aired by \*\*\*\*\* that because the group hasn't really jelled that because people aren't really committed I'm not sure I really want to bring this to this group.... I'm not sure how safe it feels (James, line 194)*

It links back to the emotions discussed earlier in G1, James seemed ashamed of himself, his behaviour in the situation he is describing does not seem to fit with his normal working practice. He was being pushed to act in a way he was really uncomfortable with, not attending. He explored an internal conflict which he then illustrates when describing giving himself a good talking to; “come on, you should be there”.

In the end nothing quite defined the sense she was getting from so many of the participants quite as simply as Sheila's words;

*Well it's sometimes a bit overwhelming so well, I haven't always attended, you know ..... (Sheila, line 65)*

A further set of emotions such as feeling judged and a threat to a sense of self were developed into the subtheme **NB4: Group members feel a constant pressure to perform**. This was a very prominent theme for Lisa who spoke a lot about the power balance between herself and other members and particularly focused on the sense that she was having to live up to expectations. A strong metaphor from Lisa was this idea of an actor on the

stage, the subtheme title was derived from the thoughts and feelings emanating from Lisa's words;

*I'm going to be honest now, initially and still to a certain extent they actually make me feel quite anxious, I'm very aware that I'm much less experienced than a lot of them and the facilitator has a way of going round the table and asking if we want to discuss a case and I feel under pressure sometimes and I couple of times I feel caught out so I might mutter something under my breath and then that's it I'm having to talk for 20 minutes (Lisa, line 290)*

Lisa consistently portrayed a sense of 'being found out', at other points in her interview she talked about being a fraud and she also talked about this feeling motivating her to be more aware of how she was presenting herself, this idea supported the initial concept from which the subtheme was derived; performing

*next time I needed to be a bit more prepared, I knew I wouldn't not go but at the same time I need to be a bit more in control and present myself in a better light and I suppose what I'm saying is there is an element of not complete honesty now for me (Lisa, line 347)*

The words "be a bit more in control" are interesting, as her core sense of self is being examined by others during group supervision she is struggling to feel safe and then the barriers go down and instead she presents a different perspective, one that will not be quite so under threat. Sheila is another participant who comments on this pressure to perform alongside a sense of not being completely honest;

*once it was **tricky** coz you, well you feel like you've got to come up with something and well I know last time I was like well I need to say something, I I I, well I did have something and I was like ohh, I don't know ..... should I bring this up but um, well no one else is speaking so I better so I did and then it was kind of (high pitched laughing – hard to hear) well it was like, really awkward (Sheila, line 188)*

There is a definite sense throughout the transcripts that group supervision is the perfect place for some EPs to 'show off' and test out the other members with tales of the most difficult cases that ultimately they do not really want help with, in some cases they described group supervision regressing to showing off in front of an audience as a means to making themselves feel better and the results being others sense of safety is damaged.

The final subtheme within the superordinate theme **Not Belonging (NB)** is the subtheme **NB5: Group needs vs. Ind needs** which was felt to sum up the overall sense of the superordinate theme. For group members to feel valued and an integral part of the team it appeared they needed to feel sure that the needs of the group were balanced against the needs of the individual. In many cases a sense of not belonging stemmed from the fact that individuals did not feel their needs were important to others which ultimately led to feelings of distrust with the process and withdrawal over time.

*I don't feel that it's a waste of time, whatever we discuss I always come out thinking it was a good use of time but it just depends whether you've been able to speak, to get your voice heard.....*  
(Sarah, line 181)

As has been discussed previously, ultimately Sarah seemed unsure about the value of group supervision but she also seemed nervous about actually saying this. The extract highlighted above appears to give the reader a taste of this reluctance. For Sarah the group is not somewhere she seemed to belong and so she is not always able to get her voice heard.

In a similar vein James confirmed suspicions discussed earlier that he did not feel part of the group he described and this has led to erratic attendance or a lack of participation when he did attend. At this point in the interview James seemed to come clean and admitted, to himself primarily, that it is because he

does not feel that individual needs of members are balanced with the needs of the group;

*I've got suspicions that it's partly to do with ..... Not always getting what other people mean when they say certain things and urrrrrrr, if I'm honest finding certain aspects of the way....certain people interact...irritating, I'm aware that's my problem as much as theirs but sometimes it tends to dominate how I'm feeling in a meeting by ummm certain people that don't listen to each other or .....*  
(James, line 222)

It is interesting to note his use of two phrases; "I've got my suspicions" and "I'm honest", these are felt to be good examples of the hermeneutic cycle at work as James explored his issues with the negative experience he has had. When he talks about being suspicious and questions his honesty it is with himself and no one else really. He uses the interview as a method for considering his motivations and concludes his lack of commitment has been due to his lack of cohesion with the group not because he is lazy or cannot be bothered.

All of the participants make reference to the crucial role of the facilitator in supporting every aspect of good quality group supervision, in the last part of the interview there was an attempt to explore the subsidiary aim of the research project; to ascertain the issues concerned with group supervision being offered by EPs to other professionals within the children's workforce. The analysis of participants thoughts on this found that the role of the facilitator was the most significant factor discussed but they also mentioned, specific group supervision training for EPs, participants needing training to take part and the commissioners needing to understand the complexity of group supervision. These ideas will be explored further in the discussion chapter where recommendations for the future will also be considered.

#### **4.7. Summary of Chapter Four**

The main aim of this study was to examine the phenomenon; educational psychologists' experience of taking part in group supervision, Chapter Four has given an extensive commentary on the interpretation of the participants' description of this phenomena. Three main themes were derived from clustering together related interpretations of the experience of taking part in group supervision which were '**PURPOSE**', '**PROCESS**' and '**PERSONAL NEEDS**'. These three main themes were then broken down further into seven superordinate and 30 subthemes which have been evidenced with quotes from the original interviews and a commentary of the analysis. Chapter Five, 'Discussion' will now attempt to link these findings to the literature discussed in Chapter Two, 'Literature Review' alongside an acknowledgement to the findings in relation to the subsidiary research aim, to ascertain whether group supervision could be offered by EPs to other professionals within the children's workforce.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Overview of Chapter Five**

### **5.2 Discussion of the findings in relation to the primary research question**

#### ***5.2.1 Main theme: PURPOSE***

#### ***5.2.2 Main theme: PROCESS***

#### ***5.2.3 Main theme: PERSONAL NEEDS***

### **5.3 Discussion of the findings in relation to the subsidiary research question**

#### ***5.3.1 Subtheme: FI1, EPs need specific training in supervision and group supervision***

#### ***5.3.2 Subtheme: FI2, The participants would need training to be able to take part***

#### ***5.3.3 Subtheme FI3: Everyone underestimates the skills of group supervision facilitators***

#### ***5.3.4 Subtheme: FI4: Commissioners need to understand the complexity of group supervision***

### **5.4 Critical evaluation of the research project.**

#### ***5.4.1 Assessing the quality of the research***

#### ***5.4.2 Sample selection, interview process***

#### ***5.4.3 Analysis, reflexivity and the role of the researcher, a unique and distinctive contribution***

### **5.5 Conclusions, implications and recommendations for further research**

## 5.1 Overview of Chapter Five

The main aim of this study was: **To explore the experience of educational psychologists taking part in group supervision**. Section 5.2 of this chapter will consider the findings in the light of the literature reviewed earlier and critically discuss the implications in relation to the main aim. The analysis of eight participants' transcripts resulted in the development of three main themes which give a summary of participants' experience. The main themes were: **PURPOSE**, **PROCESS** and **PERSONAL NEEDS**, within these main themes were a number of superordinate themes and subthemes which were detailed and evidenced in Chapter Four 'Findings'.

Section 5.3 will address the subsidiary aim: **To ascertain whether group supervision could be offered by EPs to other professionals within the children's workforce**. The analysis of participants responses to the subsidiary research question are clustered together under the superordinate theme '**Future Issues (FI)**' and discussed alongside literature that considers the implications for EP practice in the light of the current rapidly evolving socio-political landscape.

In section 5.4 a critical review of the research process is carried out giving consideration to different methodological aspects of the study and to reflexivity and the role of the researcher.

In section 5.5 the chapter concludes with drawing all the findings together with a view to discussing areas for future research and implications for EP practice.

## 5.2 Discussion of the findings in relation to the primary research question

Chapter Four: 'Findings' provides a detailed description and justification for the analysis of the findings of this research study. The nature of reporting the findings of a study using IPA meant that much of the ground usually devoted to the discussion chapter, in a research thesis, was addressed in the chapter addressing the findings. This section will, therefore, focus on the links from the main themes of this study to pertinent literature reviewed in Chapter Two: 'Literature review'.

Hawkins and Shohet (2006) state that:

*In supervision groups, as in any other group, it is important to create a balance between focusing on the task, the individuals within the group and the group maintenance activities..... The individual needs include development, support, reassurance, approval, acceptance.....The group maintenance needs include issues of competitiveness, rivalry, authority, inclusion/exclusion.....Where there are good group supervisors, they will try and see that all three types of needs are attended to (p179).*

As discussed in the Chapter Two: 'Literature review', in my opinion this multi-layered approach to supervision dovetails perfectly with Adair's (1986) Functional Management Approach. Adair sees the most effective groups being those that attend to the individual, group and task needs in unison. This study found that the experience of EPs in group supervision can also be considered as a three layered experience where the **PURPOSE, PROCESS** and **PERSONAL NEEDS**, the three P's of group supervision, are simultaneously interacting.

### 5.2.1 Main theme: **PURPOSE**

If we first look to the main theme **PURPOSE**, the findings from this study support the literature on many levels. The superordinate theme: **Productive (P)** supports the findings of Melnick and Fall (2008) who found that group

supervision gave participants the opportunity to look at their experiences with the view of a number of other members and, therefore, the ability to examine that experience was heightened. Nolan (1999) described what EPs needed from supervision was new advice, creative ideas, reassurance and balanced feedback while Soni, (2010) found that a positive aspect of being part of group supervision was that more than one person's view was available. All of these issues were explored within the superordinate theme **Productive (P)** with participants giving great importance to the number of other professionals they can listen and learn from, being available in a group setting.

This study, arguably, goes further than the present literature seems to, with its inclusion of two further superordinate themes within the main theme **PURPOSE**. The superordinate themes: **Restoration of self (R)** and **Reaffirming oneself as a psychologist (RP)** take the productivity element to a different level in describing the often unconscious positive effects of being part of good quality group supervision. There is little mention of these type of findings within the literature reviewed and, therefore, I feel a unique opportunity was created, in conducting this interpretative phenomenological analysis of participants experience of group supervision. This research study provided EPs with the space to become more consciously aware of the factors impacting their experience in group supervision and consequently gave them the chance to articulate then explore this at a more thorough level than if a structured interview or questionnaire had been used.

### **5.2.2 Main theme: PROCESS**

The main theme **PROCESS**, which included the superordinate themes: **Active process of getting in the zone (A)** and **'The group' as a separate entity working as one (G)** encapsulates a set of experiences which described the group processes at work and supported the findings of many of the pieces of published research discussed in Chapter Two: Literature Review. The findings from this study included the group having a life of its

own, of being a separate entity that needs nurturing and developing and the group needing an established purpose, all of which are consistent with the literature reviewed on group functioning (Adair, 1986; Bion 1961; Johnson 2000).

Mastoras and Andrews (2011) conducted the most recent meta-analysis of group supervision research and following this provided recommendations for good quality group supervision. 'The need to encourage peer feedback', in particular ensuring that as many participants as possible get to contribute rather than encouraging individual supervision in front of an audience, was one finding. 'Awareness of group processes' was another alongside 'balancing the multiple roles of the supervisor' so that the group supervisor was encouraging other members to actively participate as well as offering guidance, containment and feedback. This study's findings grouped under the superordinate theme **Active process of getting in the zone (A)** all support the recommendations by Mastoras & Andrews.

Lewin (1936) talked about a group functioning at optimum capacity when individuals begin to understand that their fate depends on the fate of the group as a whole. Developmental models are a set of theories that attempt to consider how groups change over time. Tuckman's (1965) model describes groups passing through a forming, storming, norming and performing stage and the later stage of mourning that was added by Lacoursiere (1980). Bennis and Sheppard's (1956) work considers key stages of group development where initially power relationships are the main focus and then following what is often termed a barometric event, personal relationships become more pertinent. Again the superordinate theme **Active process of getting in the zone (A)** supports this published research in its reference to supervision groups needing to develop over time.

Dennison, McBay and Shaldon (2006) reflected on their experiences of working in multiagency teams and noted that psychological understanding of teams/groups and psychological input to the setting up and maintenance of those teams/groups played a crucial factor. In my opinion the findings from my research study suggest that a thorough theoretical understanding of group dynamics is necessary alongside experience of actively participating in a group over time.

Although, primarily the findings of this study, clustered within the main theme **PROCESS** support the literature reviewed, I would, once again, suggest they go further in offering a deeper understanding of the experience of EPs taking part in group supervision not found within the current literature. Within the subthemes **A2: Working to shut out the insignificant 'background noise'** the participants discuss the 'active' nature of pulling together to remind each other what is significant about the problems they are working on and subsequently what is not significant, this is not highlighted within the reviewed literature. Similarly, **A5: Making sure the supervisee gets their own house in order before going off to help others** does not appear to be an issue discussed in any of the published literature I reviewed.

Within superordinate theme **(G) 'The group' as a separate entity working as one**, there is a further set of findings which seem unique to this study. Subtheme **G3: Automaticity of the 'the group'; fluid together not fluid within**, pulled together a collection of experiences which describe how the group needs to be a constantly evolving entity but the members need to evolve together. Participants described a sense of going on a journey of discovery together, in order to develop a common bond, which cements the relationships to allow a level of personal exploration not possible in any other setting. I do not believe the current literature highlights these ideas as significant to positive group supervision.

### **5.2.3 Main theme: PERSONAL NEEDS**

The fourth and final consistently mentioned issue in Mastoras and Andrews (2011) meta-analysis was: 'working with supervisee anxiety', this was seen as an issue that was not well understood from the studies they had reviewed. They discussed articles that raise the unproductiveness of high levels of supervisee anxiety, in particular how this can lead to members withdrawing and not participating which in turn led to all members feeling the group was pointless. In my opinion, the issue of emotions experienced during group supervision, was a key finding in this study, expressed as a main theme **PERSONAL NEEDS** encapsulated further by the superordinate themes: **Belonging (B) and Not Belonging (B)**.

Bion (1961) referred to the early work of Freud (1921), and Klein (1928), when he discussed individuals regressing to the typical earliest phases of life, when trying to make a connection with a group in which they are interacting. It is my belief that when being supervised in a group, the conscious and unconscious needs of the individuals are at play, and participants seek to meet their deep seated individual needs which can mean that group functioning is encouraged or inhibited. While the literature to support this premise is scant, the findings of this study strongly support this idea, participants explored a very personal range of emotions that they had experienced when being supervised in a group.

Psychoanalytic theory can help with understanding the concepts that unconscious thoughts affect how much individuals are able to engage as members of a team. Maslow's hierarchy of needs should also be considered when looking at how individuals within a group seek to have their basic needs met first, and may be unable to commit to team membership if they felt ultimately unsafe (Maslow, 1970). This concept is supported by Fleming et al. (2010) who concluded that group supervision was either facilitated by safety

or inhibited by a lack of safety and a greater degree of learning occurred when participants were in a safe 'place'.

Pomerantz (1993) noted that the participants in his study had a feeling that the focus of supervision was often the needs of the supervisor or the employing body rather than that of the supervisee. While in general the participants were positive about supervision he noted:

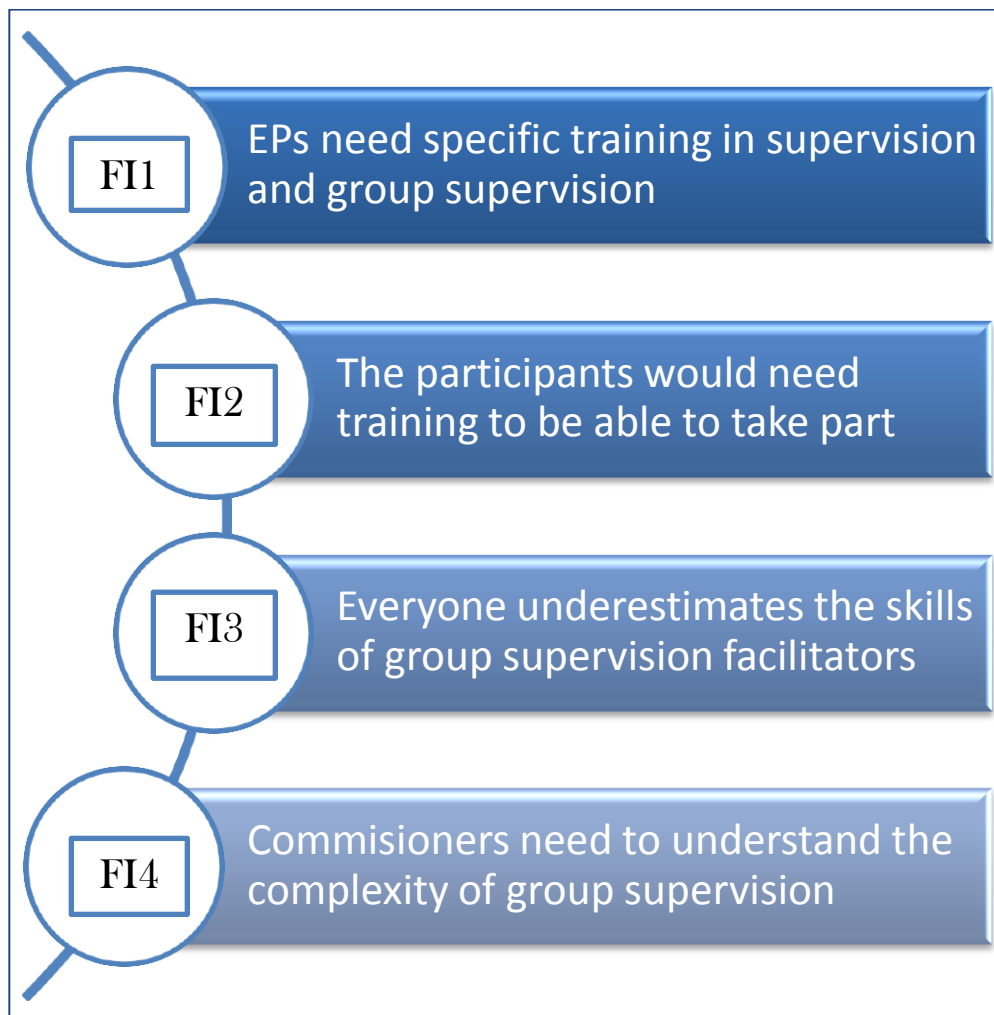
*Attitudes about being able to address emotionally based issues like frustration, anger or helplessness vary considerably, about 41% of respondents do not feel these issues are adequately addressed in supervision (p23)*

This would support the importance of the third main theme from this study: **PERSONAL NEEDS**, whereby individuals need to feel safe and secure in a group before they can honestly engage in the process, and if they do not engage either consciously or unconsciously then the group becomes meaningless. In my opinion Maslow's hierarchy of needs is of the utmost importance here, if participants in group supervision cannot get their most basic needs met, they are unable to attend to any further stages of engagement and, therefore, the group can never be productive.



### 5.3 Discussion of the findings in relation to the subsidiary research question

In the third part of the interview participants were asked to consider their responses concerning their experiences of group supervision, and discuss how those experiences influenced their views on whether EPs should be offering to facilitate group supervision for other professionals.



**Figure 16: Sub themes from analysis of responses to the subsidiary research question: *How does a person's experience of supervision influence their confidence in being a group supervisor?***

Figure 16 gives a visual representation of the four subthemes that were analysed as the most important factors for EPs offering group supervision to others. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to derive the four subthemes in the same manner as was used for the main research question, as described in the Chapter Three 'Methodology'. Participants' responses were once again analysed at a number of levels and were then clustered together under the superordinate theme: **Future Issues (FI)**, which then contained four subthemes which are discussed next (see Appendix 16 for a full range of quotes that were used to derive each subtheme).

### ***5.3.1 Subtheme: FI1, EPs need specific training in supervision and group supervision***

Training was clearly an important future issue, with participants highlighting the lack of training they had received in their initial EP training, or in subsequent years post qualifying.

Liam, an EP with many years of management experience, referred to the various types of training he had received over the years, none of which focused on supervision;

*years and years ago I used to do lots and lots of courses, I did all the post qualification courses that were available at the time, I did preparing you for management courses, the week long course at Southampton, quality assurance courses, leadership ones, but nothing that ever came under the title of supervision (Liam, line 123)*

Many of the participants commented on the depth of training needed, and focused on the elements that it would need to encompass. There was a sense, that participants felt, that some EPs may think they know enough to launch straight into offering group supervision, and yet they may have had very little experience of being supervised in a group. As evidenced by the following extract:

*well, it's like I said before, I think it's, it's something we go along with  
.....um.... we go along with some kind of umm, cock sure ness*

*E:Mmmm*

*L: for want of a better word and that could be because there is some,  
um, certain implied arrogance .... You know of course we can do this  
because it's part of our skills and I think that is presumptuous really  
(Liam, line 134)*

Julie is an experienced supervisor and yet still expressed caution about her ability to facilitate supervision groups, primarily because her experience of being in different groups had made her uneasy about the skills needed to be an effective supervisor.

*Yes, yes I do but even with the experience I have had in individual supervision I don't feel ready to really say I could do group supervision and yet I think some people would just say go on then, what harm can it do..... but I've experienced it and well, if you weren't aware of the dynamic and power relationships, mmmmm, some people are very vulnerable in a group, then if they feel that an EP is someone powerful and they are facilitating, they might feel under pressure. I've experienced groups with a very well trained and well experienced facilitator and a group where this was not the case and it has had a very direct impact on how I have felt in that group so without a doubt this is of the uppermost importance in my view (Julie, line 400).*

Pomerantz (1993) found that 72 percent of the participants in his study reported that they had not had any useful training on supervision. Participants in this study also focused on the lack of theoretical knowledge about groups amongst EPs, a) because it was not covered in EP training and b) because a great deal of the EP job is conducted in isolation.

*Well thinking back to the training I think you'd need something similar  
but it would need to focus more on group dynamics and power  
relationships*

*(Lisa, line 556)*

James focused on the monitoring aspect of being involved in a continual training cycle. He also encouraged attention on supervisors ensuring they are supervised themselves.

*Well I have been involved in some excellent training but it's the refreshers and update days and monitoring of your practice that make all the difference. People can have all the theory in the world about how to run a group but you need some honest feedback and regular monitoring, it's crucial that supervisors are supervised themselves in a group where they feel safe to talk about how tough it is, it's no good if that supervision group just becomes a competition and a chance to show off with examples of how good a supervisor you are. It's not helpful for me, it's like we are all pretending that it's easy when we know full well it isn't (James, line 324)*

### **5.3.2 Subtheme: FI2, *The participants would need training to be able to take part***

This is a collection of ideas that focus on the concept that supervisees actually need training, to be able to make the best use of their supervision group. Pomerantz's (1993) participants also had a view that qualified EPs required more training, in how to take advantage of supervision. Lisa focused heavily on this notion. She spent much of the early part of the interview reminiscing about her first experiences of supervision. She recalled the heavy reliance on educative factors, and how it took participation in training for her to understand that she needed to actively involve herself in setting the agenda and bring issues that she should work on. The following extract highlights Lisa reflecting on her earlier recollections, and considering the implications of this for non-EPs in group supervision;

*A lot of professionals that we work with would not of done anything like this before, It's not a concept that school staff are very familiar with and I think if I've just talked about how much we can struggle with being reflective then it would be a concern for me if I was trying to introduce this with some professional groups, particularly school staff. If I turned up to my first supervision session with my in-tray having just done a Masters in educational psychology I wonder what a group of LSA's would turn up expecting*

*E: Interesting point (laughs)*

*L: I think it could easily turn into a group moan session, not that moaning isn't beneficial but it must be managed well and I think key to all this is expectations, it's what the people turn up expecting to do. I would recommend that the people had some basic training initially and the training would involve some examples of live supervision. The two day \*\*\*\*\* course we did was brilliant for that but I did it at a different time to experiencing supervision so I still forgot what it was going to be like but if you had say week 1 training and an example and next week straight in people would be more aware of what to bring, they'd be prepared, mentally. I think people need to be aware of how it might make you feel and that sometimes you might feel uncomfortable but that's ok. (Lisa, line 489)*

This extract exemplifies many examples of the hermeneutic element at play. Lisa indicated that this was the first time she has considered the effect the training had for her, her focus at this point was being prepared for the scrutiny experienced in group supervision. When recalling her own experience of group supervision, Lisa emphasised the internal conflict she grappled with in terms of presenting an issue she needed to work on, and not wanting to look incompetent in front of the other group members. Lisa further reflected that after training she understood that these feelings were expected and part of the deeper thinking needed.

*It's interesting to talk about it retrospectively because talking now to you it makes me realise I'd been on the training, I knew what supervision was all about and yet I really wasn't prepared when I first went along, I thought I'd just have a chat for a few minutes but I hadn't linked it really to what it was actually going to feel like.*

*E: The main thing is though that you are talking about what it was like first time..... you went back again, that was brave*

*L: It was, it took a lot but I knew it was important, the training was really key there, I knew it was good for me and I had to work through it (Lisa, line 377)*

This extract encapsulates the impact of the training for Lisa, the implications are that participants need training to understand the depth of feelings they may experience. There is also a sense that the participants need training purely to understand why they need supervision:

*Part of the skill is getting people to the place where they know they need it, I mean how many EPs given the choice would avoid supervision*  
(Jackie, line 391)

Once again this mirrors the findings of Pomerantz (1993) who found that 28 % of the EPs who did not receive supervision at the time of his questionnaire said they did not actually want any.

### **5.3.3 Subtheme F13: Everyone underestimates the skills of group supervision facilitators**

This clusters together a range of thoughts which participants explored concerning the group facilitator.

*well you know, when you have someone who is highly experienced, in all the levels of supervision like, they can take themselves out of the picture can't they and then they have very little influence in a way.... They just become like this bland background colour that's just keeping everything going but whereas ..... (high pitched) I don't know..... it just... it feels like well the group has started to evolve now and with a different leader it's like, well its sometimes going off on a tangent*  
(Sheila, line 220)

The skills of the facilitator were a very important factor in Sheila's interview. She described two different groups that she had been part of and went into considerable depth about the crux of the different experiences being the type of containment offered by the supervisors. In the extract above Sheila was explaining how the more effective group was the one where the facilitator was able to influence the group, without the group really being aware of this. She went on to explain that with a change of supervisor the sense of direction was lost.

*She ..... She was not the leader, or the expert, or dominating in any way, she was just very experienced and really facilitated the group and she very quietly structured it so that an agenda was agreed by everybody, she didn't set the agenda, she was clear about the process, the context and all the issues and um, and um..... and.....*

*so it was actually quite formal and she had a very clear idea about what it should look like but it didn't actually feel like it was imposed upon us (Julie, line 130)*

Julie describes her experience of a facilitator who created a fine balance in allowing the participants to feel that they owned the sessions, while still clearly guiding them through the process. She was clear that this dual role took time and skill to develop, and relies on the group 'allowing' the facilitator to guide them along. Clearly this relationship with the group is something that a facilitator needs to earn by proving their worth to the group.

*I'd just like to reiterate how important this is. The ability to manage people's individual needs as oppose to the needs of the group and that's where the facilitator has to be so skilled ..... being able to gently but cooperatively ensure that everyone gets heard but at the same time everyone goes away feeling the session was useful. It's difficult because it's a very delicate balance, the facilitator is not in control but they are steering the group to take control themselves rather than deferring to a leader. That is a really hard skill  
(Julie, line 310)*

James alluded to this 'special' skill set towards the end of the following quote:

*I suppose, respect, trust and equality and not feeling although inevitably there is a not feeling a power balance in the room as much is possible trying to create a level playing field so people feel at least nominally able to be part of a group and not having to give way to someone who appears to be more knowledgeable etc. although that's something that's in the hands of the facilitator to try and manage but it isn't necessarily in the power of the facilitator to manage that  
(James, line 288)*

He describes the power that the group invest in the facilitator and there was a sense that the facilitator was on trial with this power, if they chose to abuse it then the group would revolt and refuse to play along, but if the facilitator used the power wisely the group would reciprocate and play by the 'rules'. These recollections feel like undercurrents, there is a necessary sense of analysis at many levels, neither James, Julie nor Sheila directly say any of this, but I

have a strong recollection of the feelings of 'comradeship' that was built up during the interview. The participants seemed to be offering up an experience to be analysed. It was as if they felt they would be betraying their supervisors but at the same time knew this was a significant factor of their experience that needed to be shared. I felt a great sense of responsibility in reporting this experience when analysing the data, the research journal alludes to this internal conflict I experienced when interpreting this aspect of their recollections.

*Well I think my experience of two very different facilitators has really reinforced my view that the back ground and training of the facilitator does make a difference to the impact it can have. You can't just facilitate group supervision because you are an Educational Psychologist. Managing a group takes a certain type of person but also the training and experience you have had has an impact. Many Educational Psychologists have very limited experience of working with groups. Quite often the EP job is about working on a 1:1 and depending on where you work the experience of groups can be very limited (Sheila, line 437)*

In this quote Sheila expressed a view held by many of the participants, that the unique set of skills needed for facilitation requires additional training and experience. She was keen to reiterate this due to her belief that some educational psychologists were somewhat naive about the complexity of this role.

#### **5.3.4 Subtheme: FI4: Commissioners need to understand the complexity of group supervision.**

This really encompasses issues raised in the other three subthemes, within the superordinate theme **Future Issues (FI)**, and also within all the three main themes. The findings from the entire study can be exemplified within this final subtheme, that the whole process of group supervision is complex on many levels and should not be entered into lightly. It is not an economical, easy response to offering support and development to those professionals



working with complex and emotionally draining issues. Within this specific grouping I have collated together quotes which exemplify the implications of not taking this issue seriously which can be viewed within Appendix 6. The quote by Julie encompasses the feeling perfectly:

*Well something I think is really important now, because of the experience I have had is that the person who has commissioned the work in the first place needs to be really clear what they are commissioning and what type of supervision they want.....There is a real skill in that initial negotiation and making sure that someone has thought about the issues they want the group to be working on and whether those issues would actually be addressed more suitably in a group or would it actually be better to do it through individual supervision. Then there is the dynamic of the group, is the group in a safe place at the moment, who are these people why are they being brought together, all those things, I suppose I have learnt over a long period of ..... through experience and even though you may have heard about these issues in training it's not until you live through some difficult supervision groups that you really understand what it's like and then you would be really careful before jumping in and saying, yes, I'll do that. It's easy.. well it's easy for some managers who haven't been trained in supervision or who haven't experienced supervision to go in and offer group supervision and thinking that it's easy to be a facilitator and thinking anyone can do it just because they are an EP*

(Julie, line 362)

Within this discussion I have attempted to encapsulate the crux of the experiences being explored by the participants in this study. Their descriptions and my subsequent interpretations have given the reader an opportunity to consider the complex but often highly rewarding nature of group supervision alongside being mindful of the level of personal engagement necessary to make the process purposeful. The next section will address the limitations of this study and considerations for any further research needed.

## **5.4 Critical evaluation of the research project**

The following section contains a critical review of the research process which includes consideration of: the quality of the research, the sample selection and the interview process. It includes reference to reflexivity and the role of the researcher in its critique and is structured around the quality criteria for qualitative research (Yardley, 2000) and the key factors of a good IPA study (Smith, 2011a). The section concludes by considering what is unique and distinctive about this study.

### ***5.4.1 Assessing the quality of the research***

Smith et al. (2009) talk about theoretical transferability rather than generalizability, when justifying the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, they argue that it is better to concentrate on quality in qualitative terms such as a clear focus, strong data, rigour and representativeness of participants quotes within themes (Smith, 2011a). I feel that this research has a very clear focus in its attempts to get close to the meaning making of the participants and really shines a light on EP's experiences of taking part in group supervision and the implications that this has for the continuing use of group supervision amongst EPs.

### ***5.4.2 Sample selection, interview process***

The small sample used in this IPA study may be open to criticism but the aim was to offer a window into the experience as opposed to a generalizable set of 'results'. The sample was purposefully selected and is not representative of the general EP population but as an IPA study I was aiming to represent a set of experiences and was not claiming the positivist attributes of validity and reliability. There were ethical issues associated with interviewing colleagues from the service where I was working, in particular the dual relationships may have led to a compromise in anonymity. A decision was taken to exclude

participants with whom I shared a base and limited personal data has been made available in the findings chapter. The sample were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, as reported in the methodology, the ethical principles of the BPS and the UEL ethics committee were complied with completely, this covered; anonymity, confidentiality and participants right to withdraw.

Smith (2011a) talks of having 'strong data', he refers to the source of strong data being good interviewing. The use of semi-structured interview allowed participants to explore their own issues at their own pace which meant areas of great importance were explored at a depth not allowed for in a more structured interview or via a questionnaire. One of Yardley's (2000) principles for quality in qualitative research, is sensitivity to context. Smith et al. (2011a) states that sensitivity to context begins with the appreciation of the interactional nature of the interview. The pilot interview led to a much broader understanding of the more subtle interactional style needed in order that the participants could take the interview in whichever direction they wanted so a clearer picture of their lived experience was gained. The interview was designed with a number of possible prompts but in fact these were rarely used as each participant took the interview in their own specific direction in order to explore significant aspects of their own experiences. As an experienced educational psychologist I felt that I was able to ensure that participants felt they were being listened to and understood which then led to a rich data set being available for analysis. The interview did not focus on specific aspects of the kinds of group supervision participants had experienced, such as models or structures. On reflection, however, it may have been interesting to have explored this and considered whether particular models led to particular types of experiences.

#### ***5.4.3 Analysis, reflexivity and the role of the researcher, a unique and distinctive contribution.***

Smith (2011a) talks of rigour and depth of analysis. Rigour is felt to come from a sense of prevalence for a theme and during the later parts of the analysis an attempt was made to ensure that convergence and divergence of themes was explored. Table 7 on page 94 shows how themes and participants link together and an attempt is made to show patterns of similarity alongside the uniqueness of some subthemes.

The space given for elaboration of themes in the findings section should give the reader confidence that this research study is rigorous and focused. Smith (ibid) also talks about the analysis being interpretative not just descriptive and the use of the research journal throughout the analysis stage was an attempt at ensuring personal reflection alongside monitoring the validity of the themes. A key factor of IPA is the concept of hermeneutics - the theory of interpretation. Heidegger (1962/1927), was very critical of the view that it is possible to get a view of a phenomena without some form of interpretation on the part of the person experiencing it. Throughout this IPA study I have been conscious of the hermeneutic cycle, primarily throughout the methodological process as I attempted to move back and forth interpreting the data from a number of angles at a number of levels taking a dynamic, non-linear path. It was very apparent to me that the process drew many parallels with the multi layered, non-linear approach to reflection encouraged in clinical supervision and, therefore, it felt completely appropriate and unique to use a tool such as IPA to explore the experience of taking part in group supervision. I used the research journal on a regular basis, initially, before and after, each interview and then at regular stages in the analysis of the data. I shared the contents of the journal with my supervisor and used this to interrogate the interpretations and to ensure that they were located in the original data set. I feel that this study has provided a unique piece of research missing from the published literature at this present time. In the double hermeneutic the researchers

influence on the analysis is acknowledged (Smith et al. 2009) which is attempted in the genesis of the research and justification for the study discussed in Chapter One 'Introduction'. Transparency of the interpretive role is something that Brocki and Weardon (2006) feel is not apparent in many of the studies they reviewed, in their quest for better quality IPA studies they talk about more transparency through reflexivity which is what is attempted throughout this thesis with constant reference to reflexivity.

### **5.5 Conclusions, implications and recommendations for further research**

From the very outset it was my belief that the reflective nature of supervision and the reflexive nature of IPA fit seamlessly together because at their core are the same values and processes. The interpretative nature of analysing each participants reflections of their own experience, the double hermeneutic, has meant that the process of analysis has felt unique and subjective but at the same time an important perspective that is missing in the current literature. The findings provide a rich picture of EPs experience in group supervision. It would now be interesting to take these initial findings and see if other groups of EPs would consider these similar or different to their own experiences. Further research is needed to consider the experiences of other professionals within the children's workforce. EPs could be considered to be equipped to be reflective due to their use of problem solving models during their training and in their usual working style. It would be interesting to find out if teachers, learning support assistants and others experience group supervision in a similar manner.

The main aim of this study was: **To explore the experience of educational psychologists taking part in group supervision.** The findings suggest that the participants of this study have experienced group supervision as a multi-layered phenomenon best described by the three main themes: **PURPOSE, PROCESS** and **PERSONAL NEEDS.** It is my hope that service leaders and commissioners will use this information when considering the needs of a group of professionals who are looking for supervision in a group.

The subsidiary aim: **To ascertain whether group supervision could be offered by EPs to other professionals within the children's workforce** gave rise to the development of the superordinate theme '**Future Issues**' (**FI**) which includes acknowledgement to the training needed by supervisors and supervisee's alongside acknowledgement by commissioners of the complexity of the process of group supervision. What is it that makes group supervision unique and what implications does this have for future EP services, not just those within Local Authorities but also the newly burgeoning community interest companies being created by groups of EPs? At a time where the delivery of Educational Psychology Services is changing and evolving at an incredible pace, it is essential that EPs give comprehensive thought to what is unique, as well as most effective, about the services they offer.

It would be a truism to say that the work of Educational Psychologists today, although characterised by many positive opportunities, as a result of changes to the profession also bring with it tensions and contemporary challenges in the form of increasing workloads and administrative responsibilities. EPs are by no means immune to the emotional impacts of these challenges which can impact both physically and psychologically (Gersch, 2013). In my opinion the provision of space for reflection and support is essential for EPs.

As established by this research, the uniqueness of group supervision lies in its ability to offer a facilitative space to foster growth through the interactions that occur among group members. It provides a very natural forum for collaborative learning, in a way that is mutually supportive and one that extends the insight and interpersonal competencies of group members. Group supervision provides a social modelling experience and opportunities to receive peer feedback, peer review and personal insight.

Transformation of Local Authority services brought about in part by the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2003) and issues around central funding and commissioning of services as well as the report by Farrell, et al. (2006) on the functions and potential contributions of EPs have led to fundamental changes to the management and delivery of services. This has had profound implications for all professional groups working within children's services. Providing commissioned supervision by EP services to multi-disciplinary teams is an area of development that is occurring within many EP services across the country. I anticipate that supervision across the children's workforce will become an area of rapid growth and suggest that educational psychologists are ideally placed to support other professionals through group supervision to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people.

With the above changes in mind and implications for a future EP role, the findings from this research become even more significant. A key finding was that the quality of the group supervision experience for participants was affected by the facilitator's understanding and ability to manage group processes. Group supervision sessions needed careful facilitation to ensure they didn't become an excuse for a power struggle or a "moan group" (Carrol, 1996).

As highlighted by the participants in this study, group supervision can easily be derailed, if there is a lack of knowledge of group processes or a misuse of them by individuals with a certain personal agenda. There therefore needs to be an investment and commitment by employers to training and skilling of both managers and staff in group processes that are key to group supervision. It would seem to be very important for supervisors and facilitators to receive adequate and specific training which is formally accredited in order to enhance the quality of their supervisory practice.

When all is said and done, in the light of the current economic climate it is worth considering the cost-effective nature of many professionals in the helping professionals having their educative, supportive and development needs met in one forum. In my opinion managers and service leaders would be very sensible indeed to invest in the development of good quality group supervision groups as a way of developing the children's workforce of the future. It would be fitting to conclude with the views of one of the participants on group supervision:

*I have learnt not only about my practice as an EP but also how to supervise, you learn from watching and being part of a supervision team, it really can be the best type of CPD you can have to sit with 6 or 7 other experienced supervisors and watch how they draw things out from each other and how they support someone to solve their own problems (Julie, line 324)*



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**APPENDIX 1: Literature review sheet**

## Literature review sheet

Classification	
Reference	
Key points	
Useful quotes	
Method	
Critique	
Notes to self	
Links to further articles	
Star rating	

## Appendix 2: Quality assessment checklists

### Quality assessment checklist for qualitative studies

1	Is the method used suitable to address the stated research question?	Yes/No/Partially
2	Does the article target the ideal population?	Yes/No/Partially
3	Does the article use the research methodology adequately?	Yes/No/Partially
4	Does the article discuss and of the previous work/literature?	Yes/No/Partially
5	Is the study process specified in the article repeatable?	Yes/No/Partially
6	Is the article biased towards one SPI framework model or technique?	Yes/No/Partially
7	Do the findings address the original research questions?	Yes/No/Partially
8	Does the article document any assumptions taken?	Yes/No/Partially
9	Does the article document the procedure used to validate its findings?	Yes/No/Partially

### Quality assessment checklist for quantitative studies

1	Are the aims of the research clearly stated?	Yes/No/Partially
2	Is the research methodology used suitable to address the research questions?	Yes/No/Partially
3	Does the article target the ideal population?	Yes/No/Partially
4	Was the sample used random?	Yes/No/Partially
5	Was the SPI technology/framework used clearly defined?	Yes/No/Partially
6	Did the study account for confounding factors?	Yes/No/Partially
7	Are the measures used in the study fully defined?	Yes/No/Partially
8	Are the measures used in the study relevant to the research question?	Yes/No/Partially
9	Are the data collection methods adequately defined?	Yes/No/Partially
10	If different groups are treated, are they treated equally in the study?	Yes/No/Partially
11	Was only relevant data used in the study?	Yes/No/Partially
12	Are any of the statistical methods used for analysis of data described?	Yes/No/Partially
13	Has the use of statistical methods been motivated?	Yes/No/Partially
14	Are all of the main findings relevant to answer the research questions	Yes/No/Partially
15	Are the negative findings presented?	Yes/No/Partially
16	Has the research ignored any significant factors, either methodology or measures?	Yes/No/Partially
17	Are the results compared with previous results or is it clear that there were no previous results?	Yes/No/Partially
18	Does the result adequately answer the research questions?	Yes/No/Partially



**Appendix 3: Refining literature search to consider most relevant articles to review**

Reference	Research/ Discursive/ Case study	Qualitative (QL)/ Quantitative (QN)/ Mixed Methods (MM)	Qualified EPs/ Trainee's/ Newly Qualified	Published/ unpublished	Included in review
Nolan (1999)	R	QL	EPs	P	✓
Sayeed & Lunt (1995)	R	QL	NQ	P	✓
Pomerantz & Lunt (1993)	R	QN	EPs	P	✓
Maxwell (2013)	D		EPs	P	X
Atkinson & Woods (2007)	R	MM	T	P	X
Kuk & Leyden (1993)	R	QN	EPs	P	✓
Leyden & Kuk (1993)	D		EPs	P	X
Farrell (1993)	R	QN	T	P	X
Lunt (1993)	D	Of previous QN study	T	P	X
Pomerantz (1993)	R	QN	EPs	P	✓
Osborne (1993)	D		EPs	P	X
Nash (1999)	C		T	P	X
Soni (2010)	R	MM	EPs	UP	✓
Robinson(2006)	R	QL	T	UP	X
Carrington (2004)	C		T	P	X
Scaife (1993)	D		T	P	X

**APPENDIX 4: Ethics form**

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

**APPLICATION FOR THE APPROVAL OF A RESEARCH PROGRAMME  
INVOLVING HUMAN  
PARTICIPANTS**

**Please read the Notes for Guidance before completing this form. If necessary, please continue your answers on a separate sheet of paper: indicate clearly which question the continuation sheet relates to and ensure that it is securely fastened to the report form.**

**1. Title of the programme:**

Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology.

**Title of research project (if different from above):**

Educational Psychologists' experiences of taking part in group supervision and the implications this experience has for the future of offering group supervision to other professionals in the children's workforce: A phenomenological study.

**Name of researcher (s) (including title):**

Mrs Emma Jane Rawlings

**Nature of researcher (delete as appropriate):**

Student

**Student number:**

O114194

**Email:**

philandemmarawlings@btinternet.com

**2. Name of person responsible for the programme (Principal Investigator):**

Professor Irvine Gersch

<p><b>Status:</b></p> <p>UEL Director of Studies and Supervisor</p> <p><b>Name of supervisor (if different from above)</b></p> <p>Dr Sharon Cahill</p>	
3.	<p><b>School:</b> Psychology      <b>Department/Unit:</b> Educational Psychology</p>
4.	<p><b>Level of the programme (delete as Appropriate):</b></p> <p>Postgraduate (Professional Doctorate)</p>
5.	<p><b>Number of:</b></p> <p>(a) researchers (approximately):</p> <p>1</p> <p>(b) participants (approximately):</p> <p>6 - 8</p>
6.	<p><b>Nature of participants (general characteristics, e.g. University students, primary school children, etc.):</b></p> <p>Qualified Educational Psychologists</p>
7.	<p><b>Probable duration of the research:</b></p> <p><b>from (starting date):</b>                      October 2011</p> <p><b>to (finishing date):</b>                         July 2013</p>

**8. Aims of the research including any hypothesis to be tested:**

The main aim of this project is to explore Educational Psychologists' (EPs) experiences of taking part in group supervision in order to gain an understanding of how it feels to be supervised in a group. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) will be used to analyse transcripts of six – eight semi-structured interviews where participants will be asked to consider the experience of the group supervision they have taken part in. The interviews will also include questions which elicit their thoughts on the implications these experiences have in terms of them being able to offer group supervision to other professionals within the children's workforce.

**9. Description of the procedures to be used (give sufficient detail for the Committee to be clear about what is involved in the research). Please append to the application form copies of any instructional leaflets, letters, questionnaires, forms or other documents which will be issued to participants:**

As the author works in a large Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and is a member of a local working party looking at the development of supervision, there will be opportunities to find participants who have experienced group supervision and may be willing to be interviewed. Links have been made through a regional interest group and a further pool of participants will be sought from a neighbouring EPS.

IPA is a framework for analysing qualitative research data that is most frequently used to analyse data from one-to-one interviews in order to develop a deeper understanding of a situation from the point of view of those who have lived it. This study will include semi-structured interviews initially based on the interviewees' experience of taking part in group supervision. The form of interviewing allows for modification in the light of the responses and the chance for the interviewer to follow up interesting points as they arise.

In line with IPA design, the participants will need to be a small homogenous group and, therefore, potential participants will need to be qualified Educational Psychologists who have experienced group supervision for at least one year. Potential participants who meet this criteria, will be contacted personally by the author and introduced to the nature of the study. They will then be invited to participate and if they wish to take part, will be sent a consent form to fill in

The participants will be interviewed at work. A private room will be arranged at their preferred location within the Educational Psychology Service (EPS)

The data will be collected via a semi structured-interview using the schedule available in Appendix A. The interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by the author with the tapes and transcripts being carefully stored in secure facilities within the EPS.

Interviews will be expected to take in the region of one hour

**10. Are there potential hazards to the participant(s) in these procedures?**

No

**11. Is medical care or after care necessary?**

N/A

**12. May these procedures cause discomfort or distress?**

No

**13. (a) Will there be administration of drugs (including alcohol)?**

No

**(b) Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress, please state what previous experience you have had in conducting this type of research:**

N/A

**14. (a) How will the participants' consent be obtained?**

Potential participants will be contacted personally by the author by email/telephone and introduced to the nature of the study. They will then be invited to participate and if they wish to take part, will be sent a consent form to fill in, see Appendix B

**(c) What will the participants be told as to the nature of the research?**

The researcher will explain via telephone/email that the main aim of this project is to explore Educational Psychologists' (EPs) experiences of taking part in group supervision in order to gain an understanding of how it feels to be supervised in a group

**15. (a) Will the participants be paid?**

No

**(b) If yes, please give the amount:** £

**(c) If yes, please give full details of the reason for the payment and how the amount given in 16 (b) above has been calculated (i.e. what expenses and time lost is it intended to cover):**

**16. Are the services of the University Health Service likely to be required during or after the research?**

No

**If yes, give details:**

**17. (a) Where will the research take place?**

The participants will be interviewed at their place of work. A private room will be arranged at their preferred location within the Educational Psychology Service (EPS)

**(b) What equipment (if any) will be used?**

The interviews will be digitally recorded and then transcribed by the researcher

(c) If equipment is being used is there any risk of accident or injury?

No

If yes, what precautions are being taken to ensure that should any untoward event happen adequate aid can be given:

18. Are personal data to be obtained from any of the participants?

Yes, however this information will only pertain to their professional role as an Educational Psychologist

If yes, (a) give details:

The interview schedule will include a question on how long they have been a qualified EP for and how long they have been engaged in group supervision. Names will not be required in order to avoid identification

(b) state what steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the data?

No names will be collected, no reference will be made to the county that each participant works Participants will be referred to by number only on the tapes and in the transcripts.

(d) state what will happen to the data once the research has been completed and the results written-up. If the data is to be destroyed how will this be done? How will you ensure that the data will be disposed of in such a way that there is no risk of its confidentiality being compromised?

The tapes and transcripts will be stored in the researcher's office in Essex EPS which is locked and secure.

**IF THE RESEARCH IS PUBLISHED THE ANONYMISED PROCESSED DATA WILL BE KEPT SECURELY FOR A MAXIMUM OF 5 YEARS FROM DATE OF PUBLICATION**

19. Will any part of the research take place in premises outside the University?

Yes

**Will any members of the research team be external to the University?**

No

**If yes, to either of the questions above please give full details of the extent to which the participating institution will indemnify the researchers against the consequences of any untoward event:**

The participants will be interviewed in their normal place of work, a local government building, for approximately one hour and therefore the risk against untoward events is deemed to be low

**20. Are there any other matters or details which you consider relevant to the consideration of this proposal? If so, please elaborate below:**

No

**21. If your programme involves contact with children or vulnerable adults, either direct or indirect (including observational), please confirm that you have the relevant clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau prior to the commencement of the study.**

No



**22. DECLARATION**

**I undertake to abide by accepted ethical principles and appropriate code(s) of practice in carrying out this programme.**

**Personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and not passed on to others without the written consent of the subject.**

**The nature of the investigation and any possible risks will be fully explained to intending participants, and they will be informed that:**

- (a) they are in no way obliged to volunteer if there is any personal reason (which they are under no obligation to divulge) why they should not participate in the programme; and**
- (b) they may withdraw from the programme at any time DURING DATA COLLECTION , without disadvantage to themselves and without being obliged to give any reason.**

**NAME OF APPLICANT:  
(Person responsible)**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**NAME OF DEAN OF SCHOOL:**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

## **APPENDIX 5: Interview Schedule**

### Interview Schedule

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today, as we discussed previously the research I am conducting aims to add to the body of literature concerning group supervision of Educational Psychologists. Do you remember the consent form that I sent to you? Hopefully that and the discussions we have had recently have answered any questions about the nature of the research and you understand that I will anonymise all the transcripts.

In order to reiterate, as discussed on the telephone, you are able to withdraw your consent for your data to be included in this study at any time prior to any analysis of the data.

### General supervision

*Prompts are to remind the researcher of information that may be interesting to probe*

1. How long have you been a qualified Educational Psychologist for?
2. How many years have you worked in this Local Authority, is this your first post?
3. The interview today will focus on your thoughts and feelings about EPs being involved in supervision, how would you define supervision?

*Prompts: Professional vs. line management, managerial?*

4. I would like to hear about your background in terms of supervision, for example what kind of supervision you get, how long you have been having it for?

*Prompts: Individual/ group, with whom*

*: What is their understanding of supervision, models e.g. managerial, supportive, educative*

5. Have you had any formal training on supervision?

*Prompts: where, what was this like, has it made a difference to uptake/value of supervision*

### Group supervision

6. Can you tell me about the supervision group that you are part of?

*Prompts: Is it peer, leaderless, facilitated?*

*What is it for; EP case work or something else?*

*What are the ground rules, are they all expected to attend all of the time, do they?*

7. How long have you been part of this supervision group for?

*Prompts: Did all members of the group start at the same time*

8. What does it feel like to be part of this supervision group?

*Prompts: Do they like coming, do they try to avoid it,*

*do others show the same commitment*

*Is it a positive experience, why?*

*What are the group dynamics like, are these managed*

*Does everyone contribute, do they learn from others?*

*What do they feel like before a session, during, after?*

*Have they always felt the same, has their*

*Is it useful to their client group, how would they know*

### Offering group supervision

9. How do you think Educational Psychologists could act as facilitators in group supervision of other professionals?

*Prompts: i.e. to LSAs or teachers*

*Are you aware of this happening already?*

*What would enable this to happen, how would it be received?*

10. How confident would you feel to do this?

*Prompts: what effects this confidence? training, experience as a supervisee and as a supervisor*

Thank you for your time today, are there any questions you would like to ask or things you need clarifying

## APPENDIX 6: Letter to participants

University of East London  
Stratford Campus  
Water Lane  
London  
E15 4LZ

### Information for participants

#### The Principal Investigator

**Name:** Emma Jane Rawlings  
**Work address:** Area Education Office, The Knares, Basildon, SS165RX  
**Telephone No:** 01268632345  
**email:** [emma.rawlings@essex.gov.uk](mailto:emma.rawlings@essex.gov.uk)

#### Research supervised by:

Professor Irvine Gersch  
[i.gersch@uel.ac.uk](mailto:i.gersch@uel.ac.uk)

#### Consent to Participate in a Research Study

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

#### Project Title

Educational Psychologists' experiences of taking part in group supervision and the implications this experience has for the future of offering group supervision to other professionals in the children's workforce: A phenomenological study.

#### Project Description including confidentiality of the data

The aims of the study are as follows:

- To explore the experience of taking part in group supervision
- To ascertain whether group supervision could be offered by Educational Psychologists to other professionals within the children's workforce

The data will be collected via semi structured-interview. The interview schedule will include a question on how long participants have been a qualified EP for and how long they have been engaged in group supervision. Names will not be required in order to avoid identification and no reference will be made to the county that each participant works

The interviews will be taped and transcribed verbatim by the principal investigator with the tapes and transcripts being carefully stored in secure facilities within the principal investigators place of work, a local government building. . Participants will be referred to by number only on the tapes and in the transcripts.

Interviews will be expected to take in the region of one hour

#### **Location**

Location: Participants will be interviewed at work. A private room will be arranged at a preferred location within the Educational Psychology Service (EPS)

#### **Disclaimer**

You are not obliged to take part in this study, and are free to withdraw at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason, you are able to withdraw your consent for your data to be included in this study at any time prior to any analysis of the data.

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON**

**Consent to Participate in this study**

**Project Title**

Educational Psychologists' experiences of taking part in group supervision and the implications this experience has for the future of offering group supervision to other professionals in the children's workforce: A phenomenological study

I have read the information leaflet relating to this research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the interview in which I will be involved has been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher and the supervisor involved in the study will have access to the data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw consent for my data to be included in this study at any time prior to any analysis of the data without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)  
.....

Participant's Signature  
.....

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)  
.....

Investigator's Signature  
.....

Date: .....

## APPENDIX 7: Example of one participant's transcript

### JAMES INTERVIEW

E: Thank you for agreeing to come and talk to me today, as we discussed in my email this interview is a chance for me to hear your views about supervision

J: OK

E: The type of interview I will be conducting is sometimes referred to as a 1 sided chat, which means I will try not to talk too much

J: OK (laughs)

E: You've signed the consent form so you understand that it's OK to withdraw prior to data analysis

J: yes, that's fine

E: I just want to hear as much as you can tell me about your experiences, try and give as much detail as you can in your responses

J: Yes, Ok, mmm, I'll try

E: The interview will be in 3 parts, initially just some basic factual questions about your position and experience as an EP, then some questions about general supervision and then some more in depth stuff about group supervision. It should take about 45 minutes in all

J: OK

E: Firstly can you tell me how long have you been a qualified Educational Psychologist for?

J: Urr, that's just coming up to 9 years, starting in 2002

E: OK, thanks, and is this the only Local Authority you have worked in

J: Yes, as an Educational Psychologist it's the only authority

E: OK, thanks and as I said initially we are going to talk about supervision in general, so I'd like to hear about what supervision means to you, how would you define it

J: umm, Ok, what does supervision mean to me..... I suppose.....a.... mm, time and place where..... one can explore issues related to their work and how much this impacts on them on a personal level

E: OK, thank you and then I'd like to hear about your back ground in terms of supervision, what types of supervision you've been involved in that sort of thing

J: OK, yeah, mmm, well, I suppose I started with the family support worker supervision quite a while ago and I think that was just a bit before I, uh ssssss started the CAMHS EP role, mmm, I'm not very clear now thinking about it mmmm certainly they either happened at the same time or the key workers came first and not the other way round and at the time there was..... a umm, version of training offered by \*\*\*\*\* not as extensive as it became and urrr, I missed out on some of that because err well it was kind of.... We had the supervision group of EPs supervising key workers and so, mm.....

E: So can I just clarify that was your first experience of being a supervisor

J: Yes

E: So had you been a supervisee before that time

J: Not really, only management supervision which would have been through my areas senior at the time, which.... Which is kind of dependent on style isn't it and mmm, with him there was probably an element of professional, clinical supervision alongside the management stuff.. in hindsight

E: Yep

J: But my real first experience of what I now understand to be that supportive, educative clinical type supervision was by being a supervisor to family support key workers and then attending the supervision for supervisors group

E: And how long were you involved in this for

J: mmm, roughly 5 years {3:04} and I also then got involved in supervising trainee EPs and also main grade EPs.... So I get supervision for all that supervision as well but that's more a peer supervision group. That's with the other CAMHS EPs and it's to cover the clinical work that we do and also the supervision that we do.

E: can you tell me a bit more about that group

J: urrm, well it's a group of 4 -6 people, its changed over time as different people have taken on the role or retired but we are all doing the same kind of work which is then different to the other EPs in the service so I suppose there is a common bond there and the CAMHS role is quite different to the generic EP work so we felt we needed this group. We meet on a termly basis and there isn't really



a set agenda. It is very much a peer supervision group although..... well.... Its dependent on personality, some people have um... taken or tried to take a central role um, at times **BUT** we have, when I say we umm there's a few of us that have maintained a strong sense of well, ummm... it should be leaderless and we have made sure by revisiting the ground rules that it stays leaderless.

It's interesting, as I list it all for you, I realise what a lot of supervision I've been involved in and when you asked for volunteers I remember thinking was I going to be able to say enough, had I had enough experience but well, listening to myself I realise how many different types I've been involved in

E: mmm, yes, it is a lot can I ask, I know you mentioned it a bit but how much training have you had on supervision

J: I have been part of the \*\*\*\*\* training, from the beginning really, as it developed and in fact I delivered some of that training, which I kind of count as a CPD activity itself (laughs). Then there is an annual update day each year, I suppose I have been to at least 5 or 6 of those. I did...as part...working towards the solution focused diploma and getting part of the brief therapy practice courses under my belt I did a course in solution focused brief therapy coaching

E:ohhh, interesting

J: yeah, it was and talking to the people there that run the place the distinction they make between coaching and supervision is minimal its more about context and expectation than what you do

E: yeah

J: and the kind of conversations you have and (whispers to self) any other formal training.... I suppose being part of the supervision interest group, a group of \*\*\*\*\*EPs who have developed policies etc., well that keeps the whole process alive doesn't it. Oh .... And the TEPs, there is some training given by the institutions they are from, the three I have supervised have been from different universities so I have experienced very different expectations but well, in all it seems, now I'm listing it for you that I have been involved in quite a lot of input.

E: What kind of strikes me is how much input you have had and so I feel I should ask, has all this input made you feel more confident, do you feel you have had enough training

J: Well, I suppose I would say I feel quite confident in that..... I'd say I'm quite a flexible person and I can adapt to a situation so.... Mmm, I feel quite happy that I have provided good supervision but I suppose the question I'd be worried about answering is mmm, what models would you use and what theories do you espouse, that sort of thing

E: so to you training is about the theory?

J: Well, no, when you say it like that I am a firm believer that the, mmmm, the .... I feel like I can be a good supervisor because of the practice and the understanding and well, I've learnt that from the training but ..... the best training we have been part of is the \*\*\*\*\* training that has all those practical elements and then being part of group well good group supervision where you learn from others but I'm not sure what theory that is

E: Well I'm interested in what it feels like to be part of supervision as oppose to what your theoretical understanding is so, well, that's what I'd like to hear about if that's OK. The next section is where I would like you to talk about your experience, your thoughts and feelings about being part of a supervision group

J:{13:42} well the family support key worker group was a facilitated group and I think because of that I always felt very safe in that group at that time, however the TEP supervisors group well..... in a fashion that was leaderless but well, it's not a group I feel meets my needs very well so mmmm it's hard to say really

E: can you say a bit more

J: Ummm, well \*\*\*\*\* has tried to add a clear structure and agenda, the other group well, that had clear structure and boundaries and well an understanding from everyone in it about .... Everyone was working towards the same goal I think but well, I don't find the TEP group is the same. Its ummm, well it's one thing talking about clients in a supervision group that no one else know about but we were encouraged to bring cases to the TEP group and they were colleagues that other people knew, sometimes in the same base and, let's just say I didn't ever really want to take a case to talk about because it just didn't feel right so I tended to either avoid going or not really feel like participating when I did attend. It didn't feel right, the way it worked and well, I didn't then have enough of a relationship because I didn't attend enough to have that out with anyone

E: mmm, all very interesting, I would like to push you a bit further if possible to tell me about what it felt like to actually be part of group supervision

J: Well its ... some felt safe and some really didn't I was like.... What am I doing here..... (tails off)

E: You have mentioned that this really effected your attendance, can you tell me a bit more

J: Yeah, I think I ... it was probably an unconscious decision in the first place but I think it was becoming more conscious and I tried to fight against that and I... I really did have to say to myself, come on you should be there, I should be part of this because that's not giving it..that's not fair to other people who are going and it doesn't look good in terms of my programme management but ...

E: What is contributing to your feelings about attending

J: {16:59}ummmm .....mmm partly because I'm .....we did touch on this in the last meeting.... I'm not the only one who hasn't committed to the group and it was aired by \*\*\*\*\* that because the group hasn't really jelled that because people aren't really committed I'm not sure I really want to bring this to this group.... I'm not sure how safe it feels

E: Why don't you think this group works

J: That's a subjective feeling, I don't know if everyone would feel like this

E: Yes but it's how you feel and I'm interested in why you think you feel this way

J: I'm I'm not sure why well I'm not sure why I've got suspicions that its partly to do with ..... Not always getting what other people mean when they say certain things and urmmm, if I'm honest finding certain aspects of the way....certain people interact...irritating, I'm aware that's my problem as much as theirs but sometimes it tends to dominate how I'm feeling in a meeting by ummm certain people that don't listen to each other or .....

E: go on

J: well.... Sometimes I wonder if it's my problem but .. mmm, when you consider we are all psychologists I'm just amazed sometimes at peoples inability to listen and support each other and then so I feel a little apart from that group, like I don't fit because I don't understand it

E: mmm, interesting, very interesting. Are there any contrasts or similarities to the other supervision groups that you are or have been part of?

J: well the first real contrast is that my attendance at the Family Support Key Worker group was always really good, partly because it was all new and I really felt like I needed it but also because the group was well run, there were clear ground rules and the people in the

group were on the same wave length as me, I felt we could all talk at the same level, I could understand what they were saying, they got me, I don't always feel like that

E: Ok, that obviously felt very different then.

J: Yes, I felt safe, I got a lot out of it and its all related really, I had good attendance and I presented cases. Looking back now I hardly missed any and I used to look forward to it. Its only as I think about it now that I realise how different I felt about that group to how I feel about the other group I have been part of more recently

E: Ok, so you've talked about the various experiences that you have had being part of a group and they seem to have been quite different. Moving to the final section of the interview now I want to hear your thoughts about EPs acting as facilitators in group supervision, what do you think, is this a good idea, is it something you would like to do, could do

J: Well, I have actually been involved in some group supervision, in my CAMHS role we supervise a group of people within the behaviour support service and well it's an interesting time to be asking me about this because well, I've been doing this for a while now over a year and well until recently we met in a group and all sorts of members of staff came along including the managers and I would of said it went really well until the last session only the LSA's could attend and it turned out, well they were completely different and said it was much better this time because they could talk freely and I was like, well I thought they were talking freely so well, it just made me think is this, has this been as good as I thought it was so it's complicated and well, you think I would know all that given what I've just explained to you (laughs)

E: Mmm, that is interesting so can you tell me some more about how your experiences of being part of group supervision effect how you feel about being a facilitator of a group {new tape}

J: ummm, I suppose, two things spring to mind, one is less is more as in the shorter you take to get someone to reflect the better, long winded, over constructed questions seem to confuse and that's how it feels when it happens to me so I try and do the same and the other is to try and urr maintain.....an....an air of respect and equality... I suppose, respect, trust and equality and not feeling although inevitably there is a not feeling a power balance in the room as much is possible trying to create a level playing field so people feel at least nominally able to be part of a group and not having to give way to someone who appears to be more knowledgeable etc. although

that's something that's in the hands of the facilitator to try and manage but it isn't necessarily in the power of the facilitator to manage that

E: uh huh

J: and I suppose keeping to the point in question, dealing with what people are talking about is easy for people to go off on a tangent and sometimes that can be useful and OK but if you are dealing with an issue that someone has raised it seems important to stick with that cos it's not respectful to allow yourself to drift off

E: OK, can I just recap then on whether your experiences have left you feeling like it is something that EPs could and should be doing as part of their work

J: I think some EPs are perfectly placed to be doing this but my experience with some quite senior, experienced EPs is that they would need a lot more training before they could facilitate a healthy supervision group

E: mmmm, that leads on quite nicely then to my final question about what type of training would EPs need to be able to facilitate group supervision

J: Well I have been involved in some excellent training but it's the refreshers and update days and monitoring of your practice that make all the difference. People can have all the theory in the world about how to run a group but you need some honest feedback and regular monitoring, it's crucial that supervisors are supervised themselves in a group where they feel safe to talk about how tough it is, it's no good if that supervision group just becomes a competition and a chance to show off with examples of how good a supervisor you are. It's not helpful for me, it's like we are all pretending that it's easy when we know full well it isn't.

I think ultimately just because we are psychologists it doesn't mean we are easily able to facilitate group supervision

E: OK, thank you, that's really helpful, you've told me a great deal about your experiences and been really open so thank you, is there anything else you would like to say

J: No I don't think so

## Appendix 8: Quotes to evidence superordinate theme: Productive (P)

Theme	Participant	Line number	Quote
P1: Being part of group supervision actively develops ones practise as an Educational Psychologist	Jackie	37	Well that I think is the best type, well actually not the best but the most necessary as its about being safe, having a place to learn and share with your colleagues and some way of making sure we are not taking things to heart, to personally all that. Basically it's a way of keeping you mentally healthy
	Julie	44	The group is useful for exploring complex issues in a way that you can resolve them or.. move forward with something that is stuck or...to share something that has worked well E: yep J: so it's a supportive set of umm relationships within the group but it's also challenging ... and.... Helping you develop your practice... its umm well, educative as well
	Sheila	203	with the bigger one, even if you've got something you can learn like, from the others and you can like listen and generate your own responses from what people are doing and you might think well how is that going and like what would I do then .
	Lisa	60	I was starting as a new EP and it was, "Oh my word", what do I do with this case (talking fast) and I well, ...well I never forget the first time I just took this massive pile of papers and was like (goes high pitched) "what do I do with this lot", well let's just say it was more educative and

		454	<p>really it wasn't supervision it was more like, coaching or buddying or well.....</p> <p>Well, I suppose talking now I know really that I get more out of that, because it's more painful I think (laughs), I'm more reflective because of it, its developed my practice a lot more, I'm probably mentally clocking more, things to do differently and ways to be in the future, whereas the other one is comfortable and nice but well, it's not a conscious reflection that I'm doing I'm just there enjoying talking and learning more in the present so to speak</p>
	Sarah	47	<p>well, the first thing is its well, it's helping me to develop my own solutions to my own problems well, because of late I've brought some really challenging cases to supervision and I, urm, I urm, value hearing others opinions and well, sometimes just hearing someone else say why don't you do this and helping me to problem solve and everything..... that's aside from all the stuff about it being useful for helping you to be part of a team and well, all that (mumbles, can't hear).....<b>BUT (LOUD)</b> for me it's the problem solving.</p>
	Caron	201	<p>Well, I think there is value in learning as a group and well, you find yourself listening to the others and you learn about being a psychologist and the types of questions and all that. I found that being part of that group was about seeing the use of using a structure rather than just having a chat and well, that was a useful</p>

			thing to be part of
P2: The range of other perspectives is unique to group supervision	Jackie	185	<p>There have been meetings when there are just the three of us there.....</p> <p>E: What's that like</p> <p>J: Clearly you don't get as many other people's ideas, but it's still useful</p> <p>E: I assume you get more space though</p> <p>J: Yeah but sometimes you don't have a case to bring, that's the difficulty, if you've earmarked that time and I haven't got a case **** hasn't got a case, everything's trickling along nicely. Personally I will only bring a case that I was really struggling with, if it was ummmm, well I'm meeting ***** today for example to talk quickly about a child and well, that's enough but if I need some real lateral thinking on a case you know let's just get a bit stupid about this and think of everything you can do ever then I'd bring it to group supervision</p>
	Caron	82	<p>yeah, that's it, yeah she kind of played around with, well you know different models and there was well, because there are like so many different people in different authorities and we all got to hear about different cases and well it was like really useful</p>
		126	<p>what I've valued the most is that ...well, the people that come a bit more regularly now, well .....well I know them a bit better now and I really well urmmmmm well they think very differently to me, in some ways soo and</p>



	Julie	322	<p>well I think they come from different viewpoints which has been well, really brilliant for me and well one of my colleagues in particular well he always phrases things well a bit Tavistocky and (pause and mumbles) well I really like that and subsequently I've asked to shadow him and well I like that I get to hear about others reflections and it's the bit I really, well I really yeah I really enjoy the different approaches people bring</p> <p>There have been times where I have felt like I don't know if I should say that but I feel like I have learnt over time that anything is OK, in an educative form I suppose I have learnt not only about my practice as an EP but also how to supervise, you learn from watching and being part of a supervision team, it really can be the best type of CPD you can have to sit with 6 or 7 other experienced supervisors and watch how they draw things out from each other and how they support someone to solve their own problems</p>
	Sheila	184	<p>well, when there's a bigger group, well you know you've got a bit more interaction going on and you can learn a lot more from other people</p>
	Lisa	45	<p>ummmmm..... obviously on a practical level it's kind of keeping your CPD up to date and also with things like group supervision I learn a lot from hearing other peoples view point, you know it's a way of learning from your peers</p>

	Sarah	157	It's...Its good, because it's another opportunities to share with peers and get support and its good because you do come away with ideas and suggestions that you didn't have before you went.
		197	It seems like the times I've been when there's about 6 or 7 people have been the most productive, where people have all been able to contribute and where you can really make the most of peoples knowledge
P3: Greater assimilation of knowledge results from reduced anxiety when others are the focus of the group	Jackie	269	I think you get a lot from not presenting a case actually, that's interesting you asking me coz, thinking about it I think that goes back to what you asked me earlier about why people don't come and I think there might be an element of why people don't always prioritise it because they think they don't have a case to bring but it doesn't work like that for me because I go coz I like to hear what other people have got to say but maybe some people don't feel there is anything to gain unless they have a problem to share
		198	well, it was like, there's this feeling of more pressure on you to perform, like you have to think of something to say when actually you haven't got anything to say, you know you're just trotting along nicely and then you go along and your trying to think of something to say but with the bigger one, even if you've got something you can learn like, from the others and you can like listen and generate

			<p>your own responses from what people are doing and you might think well how is that going and like what would I do then</p>
	Sheila	239	<p>Well, to be fair ***** was really good at that, ***** comes with a very different view point to things, I think she has a very psychodynamic back ground and she would certainly ask some very different style of questions.... She's quite but when she says stuff its really pertinent and she would bring cases quite often that she'd ... really to ask for advice and input. I would sit quietly at the back and ****would chip in and ****would chip in and by osmosis, well I don't mean that but I really did learn a lot from just listening to her</p>
	Sarah	161	<p>I quite enjoy being part of it, even if I haven't presented a case or if we have decided not to go with a case I've needed help with</p>
	Caron	135	<p>well this colleague in particular well (inaudible as she's mumbling again) he thinks about not just the child but what impact the child is having on the situation and then what impact that is having on you and your like <b>Ohhh (loud)</b> coz like when you're in it you really don't think much outside the box do you</p>
		149	<p>I really enjoy it and I love to hear what other people have to say and well I find it so much easier to problem solve when you're not in the middle of it so that's why I <b>love</b> it</p>

			<p>and well when you're listening and you think well that's a really good point so why don't I do that with my case</p> <p>E: Mmm, that's a really interesting point so when you're not presenting it allows you to urrm,</p> <p>C: yeah ,mmmmm</p> <p>E: well to sit back and be able to reflect more easily</p> <p>C: yeah definitely, well when the focus is not on me</p>
<p>P4: The best form of training in supervision, learning by observing others being supervised</p>	<p>Julie</p>	<p>101</p>	<p>its on-going really, being in a group supervision session is like having training on supervision</p> <p>E: that's interesting</p> <p>J: You know what I mean though, especially when the group is made up of EPs who supervise, obviously the content is heavily based on how to supervise and so it's like constantly being trained, that's what makes it so interesting</p>
		<p>146</p>	<p>She taught us through that group actually</p> <p>E: Go on</p> <p>J: About questioning and about reflecting and about.....involved everybody and that's how we learnt by observing and having good supervision modelled to us.....</p>
	<p>James</p>	<p>108</p>	<p>I have been part of the ***** training, from the beginning really, as it developed and in fact I delivered some of that training, which I kind of count as a CPD activity itself</p>
		<p>152</p>	<p>I've learnt that from the training but ..... the best training we have been part of is the ***** training that has all</p>

	Caron	57	<p>those practical elements and then being part of group well good group supervision where you learn from others And then in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year well a new tutor came to the course and well she was like very interested in supervision and like modelling group supervision</p> <p>E: Oh wow, interesting</p> <p>C: mmmm so that was just brilliant and then in our 3<sup>rd</sup> year we all went off in little groups and did peer supervision in that way and well we all, well we all found that the most valuable actually</p>
P5: How useful is it? Is it only useful if it's productive?	Sarah	<p>203</p> <p>255</p>	<p>well I've thought about this because I'm hoping to use a similar model with groups of parents and I'm worried about what if there are only a few and I think it would make it quite awkward, it's the didactic nature of it and there's something about not quite having enough voices to make it truly joint problem solving .....</p> <p>I don't feel that it's a waste of time, whatever we discuss I always come out thinking it was a good use of time but it just depends whether you've been able to speak, to get your voice heard..... It depends on the team, if you've got a good team</p>

## Appendix 9: Quotes to evidence superordinate theme: Restoration of self (R)

Theme	Participant	Line number	Quote
R1: Restoring a sense of self	Lisa	34	To me.... It's a safe place... to bounce ideas around and quite often to debagage for want of a better phrase
	Julie	253	Well I once bought along something that was on my mind but .... I thought it was just getting to me a bit and I started talking about it and I just burst into tears and it took me by surprise and afterwards I was shocked that I had done that because it's not like me to do that and I felt a bit embarrassed but it did feel OK, it felt like the group were OK with me doing that even though I hadn't expected to do it. The group was safe for me to do that in I suppose. I could fall apart safe in the knowledge that the group would put me back together again
	Jackie	37	Well that I think is the best type, well actually not the best but the most necessary as its about being safe, having a place to learn and share with your colleagues and some way of making sure we are not taking things to heart, to personally all that. Basically it's a way of keeping you mentally healthy

<p>R2:Reducing the personal impact of the background noise of the day job</p>	<p>Lisa</p>	<p>184</p> <p>76</p>	<p>It was quite, I became ummm, quite frustrated and it's not a criticism but.....</p> <p>E: I suppose that's what happens when..</p> <p>L: I became frustrated because I felt it was an opportunity for CPD and development, we all had a share in the running of the group so it wasn't any one person's fault but that's what it became when we all took ownership because I suppose we needed to do all that stuff and we don't get together very often so it seemed like a good opportunity but well, when one person is in charge they should make sure it's for supervision .... I suppose, I've not really thought about why that happened, at the time I just remember being a bit fed up with it keep turning into a business meeting when I thought it was supervision. The thing was ummmmm, can I tell you a bit about that group</p> <p>E: yes, please do</p> <p>L: Well there were about 5 of us, all main grade EP's because at that point the senior had gone on maternity leave so, the dynamics I suppose were quite different. It was, oh golly, I suppose those on the ground pulling together to carry on, if that makes sense</p> <p>Well, you know reflection, looking at why we've done something. We can't get close to that sort of process because we are really embroiled in how they can do a practically impossible job on a day to day basis</p>
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	Liam	174	<p>basically it always got cluttered up with whatever, you know, current matters, things that had cropped up since the last meeting and then we had things like, we should have a book club, what's the latest journal article on.....well, all those things that other people assume are important to everyone else and actually are not so there was quite a lot of frustration....and we weren't doing the other stuff, well what I had assumed was the point of meeting which was how do we make the best of ourselves as a group, you know, what are you actually about, what do you do, and why and when you're stuck why do you do this</p>
		302	<p>It actually brings you back to earth, coz you can be out there in schools busying away and the supervision groups brings you back, to what you are doing it all for. E: mmmm L: Out there in schools you can get quite drawn into all the systems and bogged down in all their problems and time to reflect in a group just reminds you what else is out there.</p>
		232	<p>If it serves nothing else it actually gives permission to people to stop for two hours, stop and think and I think that's very beneficial.</p>
		292	<p>I thought, oh I don't know, I got out (whispers), and I'm unashamed about it but, I do good clinical work, that's what I do. I understand politics, I understand the system</p>



	Julie	76	<p>but I keep a real strong focus on who am I working for, whom am I trying to help and support.</p> <p>Well, you know reflection, looking at why we've done something. We can't get close to that sort of process because we are really embroiled in how they can do a practically impossible job on a day to day basis</p>
	Jackie	233	<p>Coz its focused and its structured, when you're chatting in the office there is a lot of moaning and a lot of "cant' work with this school, yabber yabber yabber" and it's just off loading but this isn't its very solution focused aaand the questions that people ask are ummmm, quite intensive and so you get to a deeper level than with the kind of conversation you might have in the office.</p> <p>E: Can you tell me more about how that happens</p> <p>J: I think there is an element of "we're in the room now" because well, it's kind of like we are in a zone. It's different</p>
		288	<p>It's a busy job, there are never enough hours in the day mm</p>
		246	<p>this is different, its time, special time, time people have put aside to focus and help each other</p>
R3: Building one's capacity to face the task of being an EP	Lisa	40	<p>It's also to check out why I behave the way I do, you know quite often you can go down a way of working when you are normalising stuff and maybe that's not very helpful.....mmmm</p>

	Liam	54	a lot of people go out for the week, fully equipped for everything and go from school to school or school to home or come into the office not at a time when you are in and there's a lot of people that work part time and there days don't overlap so there's no predictability or anything like that so that's why I think in the last, well for more than a year now it came up in discussion would people like it more formalised so that people know there would be a slot.....
		237	I think it's getting worse in the sense that I think it's a very isolating job essentially and I think, why are you in a team, that's what I would think, you might as well just be, well it might be that in another 2 or 3 years it might just be a couple of like-minded EPs getting together and it'll just be a free for all
	Jackie	246	this is different, its time, special time, time people have put aside to focus and help each other. There's also something about having everyone there together, a real range of perspectives and experience all thinking together on the same level.
R4: The ultimate psychological experience	Liam	283	the mistake I made was that I downsized my life and my career and moved to a service near where I lived and just went back to basics and then within a year I was back in a promoted post E: mmm, these things have a habit of... L: Well it was in a system that I actually despised to be honest

	Julie	105	<p>E: Oh, ok</p> <p>L: and, and they, I thought, oh I don't know, I got out (whispers), and I'm unashamed about it but, I do good clinical work, that's what I do. I understand politics, I understand the system but I keep a real strong focus on who am I working for, whom am I trying to help and support.</p> <p>E: Yep</p> <p>L: So that's why I go along to it, the one thing I've done over the years is to focus on how I can use some psychology. It's a reason for this team to come together I think to put psychology at the centre of what we do.</p> <p>and its on-going really, being in a group supervision session is like having training on supervision</p> <p>E: that's interesting</p> <p>J: You know what I mean though, especially when the group is made up of EPs who supervise, obviously the content is heavily based on how to supervise and so it's like constantly being trained, that's what makes it so interesting</p>
	Jackie	308	<p>I think the bit where we go round and say something positive really helps to make you think that it's OK</p> <p>E: So is that something about the structure helping</p> <p>J: Yeah I think so, it's not such a risk to put yourself out there because you know that part of the process is to end on a positive and you know that will definitely happen so you kind of think "how bad can it be"</p>

## Appendix 10: Quotes to evidence superordinate theme: Reaffirming oneself as a Psychologist (RP)

Theme	Participant	Line number	Quote
RP1: Being part of group supervision gives chance to reflect on the factors that affect ones decisions	Julie	76	You know, reflection, looking at why we've done something. We can't get close to that sort of process because we are really embroiled in how they can do a practically impossible job on a day to day basis
		149	She taught us (facilitator) through that group actually....about questioning and about reflecting
	Liam	103	When I've had teams to manage I've always encouraged professionals exploring ways of being, sort of over-seeing, not just in terms of a manager saying that's good or you can get away with that but ummm, like a therapy model where you actually have supervision about your practice, about your professional model
		184	What are you actually about, what do you do, and why and when you're stuck why do you do this
	Caron	134	I really, well I really yeah I really enjoy the different approaches people bring and well this colleague in particular well (inaudible as she is mumbling again) he thinks about not just the child but what impact the child is having on the situation and then what impact that is having on you and you like <b>ohhh (loud)</b> coz when you're in it you don't really don't think much outside the box do you

			Yeah so for me supervision is about what else, why has this situation become difficult for me and the chance to think deeply rather than just well, just moving on
RP2: During group supervision there is a unique opportunity to think psychologically as a group	Jackie	198	If I need some real lateral thinking on a case, you know let's just get a bit stupid about this and think of everything you can do ever, then I'd bring it to group supervision
		367	I think that one of the motivating forces is that people don't often have time to work together, except at team meetings and team meetings have always got an agenda and so it was a chance for us to talk about cases and we never get to talk, formally about cases
	Julie	329	To sit with 6 or 7 other experienced supervisors and watch how they draw things out from each other and how they support someone to solve their own problems
	Liam	211	People seemed to like it, lots of people came along, people were keen to do this sort of thing
		222	The reason for being there, I think..... I get the sense that people were feeling like their identity was being lost and there wasn't an opportunity to come together in the psychological sense at any other time
	Caron	230	They are getting something outside of the case

	Sheila	201	<p>discussions that they don't get anywhere else</p> <p>Well I think there is value in learning as a group and well, you find yourself listening to others and you learn about being a psychologist and the types of questions and all that</p>
		320	<p>It's like setting you alight (very fast talking now) it's like when you have a good group of like- minded psychologists it can be really good, mmmm really great</p>

## Appendix 11: Quotes to evidence superordinate theme: Active process of getting in a zone (A)

Theme	Participant	Line number	Quote
A1: Drilling down to look at all the impacting factors	Jackie	233	Coz its focused and its structured, when you're chatting in the office there is a lot of moaning and a lot of "cant' work with this school, yabber yabber yabber" and it's just off loading but this isn't its very solution focused aaand the questions that people ask are ummmm, quite intensive and so you get to a deeper level than with the kind of conversation you might have in the office.
	Julie	76	Well, you know reflection, looking at why we've done something. We can't get close to that sort of process because we are really embroiled in how they can do a practically impossible job on a day to day basis
		44	The group is useful for exploring complex issues in a way that you can resolve them or.. move forward with something that is stuck or...to share something that has worked well
	Liam	102	I don't know coz I've always had.....I've always sort of encouraged peer supervision when I've had teams to manage and I've always encouraged ummm, what's the word ummm, I can't think of the term really, I've always encouraged professionals exploring ways of being sort of over-seeing, not just in terms of a manager saying that's good or you can get away with that but umm, like a therapy model where you actually have supervision about your practice, about your professional model and I don't

	Sheila	234	<p>think that's you know in a manager supervision it touches all those bases</p> <p>It's like the group knows the process now so they drill down quicker you know, from when the problem is raised the group works together through the layers at a pace now</p>
A2: Working to shut out the insignificant 'background noise'	Jackie	242	<p>I think there is an element of "we're in the room now" because well, it's kind of like we are in a zone.</p>
	Liam	196	<p>So to me it was a slot that I already had blocked out, it's not a time when I tend to book other meetings because we always have our team meetings at 3 so you're not rushing back from other things.</p>
		300	<p>It's a reason for this team to come together I think to put psychology at the centre of what we do. It actually brings you back to earth, coz you can be out there in schools busying away and the supervision group brings you back to what you are doing it all for..... Out there in schools you can get quite drawn into all the systems and bogged down in all their problems and time to reflect in a group just reminds you what else is out there.</p>
	Lisa	229	<p>Well..... it was a little bit jokey, clowning around and ....we often had a team meeting in the morning which was often a bit depressing and for want of a better word you'd come out thinking "oh my word, what's happening now" and then you needed some light relief and there was an element of that going on. It .. it ...set up a frame of mind</p>



			<p>and we weren't in the zone</p> <p>E: The zone?</p> <p>L: I think you need to set the scene for supervision, for being reflective</p>
A3: Active process that the supervisee needs to engage with	Julie	37	For me....., for me it's a PLANNED, formal meeting where I can consider things in my working life that are an issue for me.
	Liam	369	I suppose I am of the view that at least temporarily most people are adverse to change so if it's thrust upon them it's less likely to be successful. You know, at the Tavi, all that Bion group processing, if you analyse that logically then you can see why things happen, people might ask why did that group work but in honestly it's because people who belong to a group will go with the group and change will occur naturally and that's more the way my thinking is.
	Lisa	114	I think the training really made me understand what it's all about, before; when I was a new EP I just thought it was about case management, making sure I had done the job properly.... I ... well, looking back I realise now that I just used it as an opportunity to ask lots of questions about what to do next. I didn't know it at the time but ... well that was really just educative. It wasn't until I had the training that I understood supervision was meant to be about reflecting and.... Well doing the thinking myself.....

	Caron	121	Well I always think about it in advance because well (laughs, goes all high pitched and inaudible) ..... I think about a pupil and well no and now well there's always loads of questions and you think ohhhh, I haven't thought (inaudible and laughing) well basically now I try and think about using the time more usefully
	Sarah	47	well, the first thing is its well, it's helping me to develop my own solutions to my own problems well, because of late I've brought some really challenging cases to supervision and I, urm, I urm, value hearing others opinions
A4: Two way process between the supervisee and the group	Jackie	110	I think that's why at the beginning it is so managerial, partly because you are asking lots of questions about how the job is done and what do you do here, what's this report asking, who do I go to and .... You know all that but. Ummmmm it takes a good year, at least to be ready or able to do the more clinical supervision
	Julie	49	so it's a supportive set of umm relationships within the group but it's also challenging ... and.... Helping you develop your practice... it's umm well, educative as well.
	Lisa	147	It changed how I was in supervision I think, I started to understand I needed to be more proactive and take things to think about rather than just expecting answers from my supervisor. When you are training to be a supervisor you start to think what you want your supervisee to bring and to do in the session and it makes you think..... well it made me think "but I don't do that.... Perhaps I had better" you

	Caron	103	<p>know it's about practising what you preach, if that makes sense</p> <p>but now it's no, well its very much like you kind of bring your case and urmmm and then <b>They</b> will kind of assk questions and help you think urrrr along the urrr way and urm and urm well in a great way and urmm well at the last one I was at there were like lots of people, more than usual and one of the EPs said maybe we should go back to having a timed thing you know because well previously there were like only 2 or 3 cases discussed and well you know what it's like and well it's about an hour or an hour and a half or welllllll, urmm something like that and well when there were a lot of us and lots of people have things to say</p>
	Sheila	308	<p>Well it's like the bigger the group and the more experienced they are in a model of supervision you're kind of caught up in the content and they are like peeling away at the layers and if some of the group are really tuned in they will ask you a question and take you straight to the point of it rather than you having to zig zag back and forwards with it. Whereas a small group means the movement of the group, well the conversation isn't generated quite as quick and well, sometimes people are just too polite where as if you have ten people it's like frenetic and people are like have you thought of and I was thinking and it's like setting you alight (very fast talking now)</p>

A5: Making sure the supervisee can get their own house in order before going off to help others	Julie	248	I brought things that I didn't know would be an issue
	Liam	154	So from my point of view you need to value the skills as part of the profession and at the same time appreciate the fact that it may have a value to other people, it's like I've said before, if you can't put your own house in order you can't very well be doing you know, feng shui for other people
	Lisa	296	and I couple of times I feel caught out so I might mutter something under my breath and then that's it I'm having to talk for 20 minutes about something and It feels quite uncomfortable and for someone whose quite nervous it's like "oh golly, did I do the right thing" and he asks you quite a lot of questions (gulps loudly) and you sit there and think "help" (laughs wildly)... it is useful and it's about getting out of your comfort zone and sharing your inner thoughts actions feelings (very fast talking) and..... not having them judged, that's wrong but actually having them reflected back to you and at UCL we did something similar and for the first 6 weeks I sat there with my mouth open feeling very uncomfortable but actually I eventually got myself into the zone and I feel at the moment like I'm still developing that umm "Ok, I am comfortable with this and I can present" E: It takes a while doesn't it L: Yes, when you're not meeting that regularly it takes longer to develop, but I am getting there but I still find I'm sitting there thinking "Oh my god, what am I gonna say,

	Sheila	274	<p>what am I going to say”, I suppose that takes a while to become more comfortable with reflecting or learning in a group</p> <p>well, it's difficult, some people are really enthusiastic and you know get straight in there and other people are a bit like oohhh hoooh but again I think when its smaller it's harder..... mmm, whether or not that's a good thing or a bad thing but it's harder to hide if you like and not say anything and like I said you then feel a bit under pressure to say something but once you're in the swing of talking about something the whole group gets involved then and are sort of contributing to that discussion and <b>sooo</b> ..... even though they might not normally say something they get kind of carried along.</p>
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**Appendix 12: Quotes to evidence the superordinate theme: ‘The group’ as a separate entity, working as one (G)**

Theme	Participant	Line number	Quote
G1: Identity of ‘the group’ not just the identity of the people in it	Julie	267	<p>The dynamic, these groups are still developing and the people are not the same. It’s hard to tell at the moment about people’s commitment, whether they turn up, turn up regularly, whether they prioritise this over other things, whether they value it. It takes a long while to suss all this out and well, with the bigger group that was impossible, it was never going to happen which is why we made a decision to split. With the other group that I am part of that is also difficult, it is different for me anyway because everyone else is a senior EP and so my status in the group is different and yet I am doing the same job, supervising EPs.</p> <p>E: How does this effect things</p> <p>J: Well it feels quite strange, I’m not sure whether I really belong but I don’t think this is necessarily to do with power although that has a part to play but I have been supervising for a long time, much longer actually than some of the seniors and I feel quite confident with the other people</p> <p>E: OK, so it’s not about your role</p> <p>J: It’s not about me not being a senior, I get impatient with it, I get irritated because people follow their own agenda about things that are contextual..... I think the group has struggled to define what it’s about</p>

	Liam	237	<p>I think it's getting worse in the sense that I think it's a very isolating job essentially and I think, why are you in a team, that's what I would think, you might as well just be, well it might be that in another 2 or 3 years it might just be a couple of like- minded EPs getting together and it'll just be a free for all but until that time comes you have to find a way to make it clear to whomever, clients, managers that there is a difference between professionals working alone and professionals working in a team, what's the value added of being in a team.</p>
		329	<p>What amazes me is the range of thinking that goes on, people can look at things in such different ways, you can never imagine the things people are going to say and even though sometimes you really disagree with other peoples point of view it makes you examine your position even more, and sometimes that's just as important too</p>
	Sheila	168	<p>well the supervisor has changed and with the old one it was well, well, it was well attended, the same people turned up and you felt, really comfortable but it's different now, people dip in and out now and well, it doesn't <b>feel</b> the same any more. I mean, I know everyone, you know as you do when you've been around a long while but well. Its ok for me coz I know everyone but well, if I was new it would be like really hard because people keep chopping and changing and like you don't feel quite the same if it's different people each time</p>

<p>G2: 'The group' evolving and having a life of its own</p>	<p>Julie</p>	<p>116</p> <p>162</p>	<p>The family support key worker supervision group that I am involved in has evolved over time and I have been involved in it through three different stages. It originally started off being a surprisingly fluid group because the same people didn't always attend but it was facilitated by a senior EP who took the lead on supervision and she was very professional and experienced in terms of holding the group and maintaining continuity even if different people were present.</p> <p>At one point the group burgeoned and I remember being..... I was shocked, the meeting was here at this base and I had booked the room and I didn't know so many people were coming and they just kept arriving and we couldn't get enough chairs (not pausing for breath) and I found it hugely uncomfortable and I think other people who had been used to the well-established group felt the same</p> <p>E: Oh, that sounds quite difficult</p> <p>J: Yes and to top it off that was the final meeting before the facilitator was retiring and .... Well it was awful, just awful, not a good ending and people didn't know what to expect and some people who had been part of it for a number of years didn't get to finish it properly and others who had just joined didn't know what on earth was going on and well, it was just ..... not a good ending..... (tails off)</p>
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	Liam	200	<p>the first meeting was all about, what are we doing here, how is this going to work, are we going to minute this, if we are at the meeting are we obligated to bring something, you know all that.</p> <p>E: yes</p> <p>L: You know the stages that groups go through, all that storming, norming, forming,</p>
	Sheila	151	<p>Ok, right, weeeeell (big deep breath) ummmm, (another deep breath) ..... I I I , well it seems a bit fluid .....and I'm um I think there's a liiittle bit of a uh, a concern that uh, well it's tricky trying to get everyone together at the same time..... but I think that once you've missed one or two well, .... It's hard to feel you can go back and then, well this term I, well I haven't been able to make any of them (laughs, nervously) so ummm, missing out feels horrible, going along does feel nice but fluidity is an issue, in terms of numbers. Well there's quite often different people there now, each time and well, it didn't used to be like that it was always the same people each time and you well felt like you belonged but its changed now and well ..... it's not the same (silence)</p>
		218	<p>She was just, well almost invisible</p> <p>E: go on</p> <p>S: well you know, when you have someone who is highly experienced, in all the levels of supervision like, they can take themselves out of the picture can't they and then</p>

			<p>they have very little influence in a way.... They just become like this bland background colour that's just keeping everything going but whereas ..... (high pitched) I don't know..... it just... it feels like well the group has started to evolve now and with a different leader it's like, well its sometimes going off on a tangent</p>
G3: Automaticity of 'the group'; fluid together not fluid within	Jackie	144  233	<p>this is the way it's meant to work..... (laughs) in the real world it's not quite as beautifully orchestrated as this</p> <p>Coz its focused and its structured, when you're chatting in the office there is a lot of moaning and a lot of "cant' work with this school, yabber yabber yabber" and it's just off loading but this isn't its very solution focused aaand the questions that people ask are ummmm, quite intensive and so you get to a deeper level than with the kind of conversation you might have in the office.</p> <p>E: Can you tell me more about how that happens</p> <p>J: I think there is an element of "we're in the room now" because well, it's kind of like we are in a zone. It's different, just round the office people will stop and talk to you because they are polite and want to help but this is different, its time, special time, time people have put aside to focus and help each other. There's also something about having everyone there together, a real range of perspectives and experience all thinking together on the same level. I think what the group gives you is ummmm, can I give you an example</p> <p>E: yeah, yeah</p> <p>J: ***** bought a child where there was a lot of conflict</p>

	Julie	326	<p>between what the school thought was an issue and what the parents thought was an issue and he did a lot of personal construct theory stuff with her, now I've touched on personal construct theory when I was at Uni but I have never ever seen it used in a situation and ummmmm it's the fact that he brought something new to the table, it was a query for him but while he was describing it I , we were all like, can you train us up, can you show us how to do that, coz he's very systematic with numbers and ummm, so you learn so much</p> <p>you learn from watching and being part of a supervision team, it really can be the best type of CPD you can have to sit with 6 or 7 other experienced supervisors and watch how they draw things out from each other and how they support someone to solve their own problems</p>
	Sheila	234	<p>It's like the group knows the process now so they drill down quicker you know, from when the problem is raised the group works together through the layers at a pace</p>
		291	<p>when it was 10 it made it exciting and it generated a lot of conversations and when it was a group of people who were really experienced you didn't have to spend time peeling away all the layers you could just jump to the nubbin of it.</p>

		308	Well it's like the bigger the group and the more experienced they are in a model of supervision you're kind of caught up in the content and they are like peeling away at the layers and if some of the group are really tuned in they will ask you a question and take you straight to the point of it rather than you having to zig zag back and forwards with it. Whereas a small group means the movement of the group, well the conversation isn't generated quite as quick and well, sometimes people are just too polite where as if you have ten people it's like frenetic and people are like have you thought of and I was thinking and it's like setting you alight (very fast talking now)
		340	It's like we talked about right at the beginning when we talked about fluidity, a group that has been together for some time is more fluid so I don't know if that means you should have people grouped by experience ummmm
G4: 'The group' has an established purpose	Julie	66	Ohh, I also well, I've been meeting with a group of family support workers from a local special school. This was set up to be group supervision but in fact it hasn't been its just been really practical problem solving, how they can function in their role and know what to do on a day to day basis, we haven't had chance to get any-where near what you or I would refer to as supervision
	Liam	254	I think it's important; it's incumbent that the manager or whomever encourages working on issues as a group. I suppose what I'm saying is that if someone new joins the

	Sheila	296	<p>group, particularly if they are early in their career it is important that the group sets out what it's all about, this is what the group is for, this is what it isn't for you know</p> <p>E: Do you mean ground rules?</p> <p>L: I think it's more about principles</p> <p>It's something to do with the fact that group at that time was really established, together, you know, all the ingredients were right</p>
G5: Protective nature of 'the group'	Jackie	306	<p>I don't think it's a scary situation</p> <p>E: Ok, can you tell me why you think that is</p> <p>J: I think the bit where we go round and say something positive really helps to make you think that it's OK</p> <p>E: So is that something about the structure helping</p> <p>J: Yeah I think so, it's not such a risk to put yourself out there because you know that part of the process is to end on a positive and you know that will definitely happen so you kind of think "how bad can it be"</p>
	Julie	253	<p>Well I once bought along something that was on my mind but .... I thought it was just getting to me a bit and I started talking about it and I just burst into tears and it took me by surprise and afterwards I was shocked that I had done that because it's not like me to do that and I felt a bit embarrassed but it did feel OK, it felt like the group were OK with me doing that even though I hadn't expected to do it. The group was safe for me to do that in I suppose. I could fall apart safe in the knowledge that the group would put me back together again</p>

	Liam	314	Well, it's interesting you should mention that because one of the things that I think can be difficult is when the Trainee is in the group with their supervisor and in the group supervision we are all trying to be equal to each other, first of all the Trainee might be inhibited in what to bring but also then the supervisor may have the potential to get, well why haven't you brought that to me umm so that I could for-see that could be a problem so.... Well if the group is a good one, they should be able to manage that.
	Lisa	366	I was prepared for the set up and that people were going to be critical but in a positive way and because I knew it was going to be like that it was OK
	James	165	well the family support key worker group was a facilitated group and I think because of that I always felt very safe in that group at that time, however the TEP supervisors group well..... in a fashion that was leaderless but well, it's not a group I feel meets my needs very well so mmmm it's hard to say really

### Appendix 13: Quotes to evidence the superordinate theme: Belonging (B)

Theme	Participant	Line number	Quote
B1: Individual members sharing a vision	Liam	257	<p>If someone new joins the group, particularly if they are early in their career it is important that the group sets out what it's all about, this is what the group is for, this is what it isn't for, you know</p> <p>E: Do you mean ground rules?</p> <p>L: I think it's more about principles</p>
	James	244	<p>because the group was well run, there were clear ground rules and the people in the group were on the same wave length as me, I felt we could all talk at the same level, I could understand what they were saying, they got me, I don't always feel like that</p> <p>E: Ok, that obviously felt very different then.</p> <p>J: Yes, I felt safe, I got a lot out of it and it's all related really, I had good attendance and I presented cases. Looking back now I hardly missed any and I used to look forward to it. Its only as I think about it now that I realise how different I felt about that group to how I feel about the other group I have been part of more recently</p>
	Sheila	296	<p>well I don't know if it's just about the size, it's something to do with the fact that group at that time was established, together, you know, all the ingredients were right</p>
B2: The group working together to rebuild itself	Julie	182	<p>Well, after that meeting someone else was going to take over the facilitator role and so we had lots of discussion as a group about the size of the group and how it would run now with a new person and we all agreed that it was too big, that</p>

	James	91	<p>was the phase I see as the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, a few meetings altogether about 12 of us, there were meant to be a few more but with people coming or going there were a core of about 12. Some had been part of the original group about half and then 5 or 6 new people but it became apparent very quickly that there were too many of us</p> <p>E: tell me about that</p> <p>J: Well, it was uncontrollable, it didn't help that we had a new facilitator but well, I didn't like it at all, you can't be open and honest and feel safe with that many people and so we decided to split into two groups, by area and meet separately, the same facilitator for each group. That's what I see as the third phase, that's what is happening now</p> <p>It is very much a peer supervision group although..... well.... It's dependent on personality, some people have um... taken or tried to take a central role um, at times <b>BUT</b> we have, when I say we umm there's a few of us that have maintained a strong sense of well, ummm... it should be leaderless and we have made sure by revisiting the ground rules that it stays leaderless.</p>
B3: A sense of safety allows members to make themselves vulnerable	Jackie	295	<p>Well, ummm, I don't feel fear or.....um, worried ..... or umm I feel safe but ummm sometimes people will ask you questions and you haven't got the file in front of you and, that's OK if you well sometimes they ask you a question and you just should know it you know they ask you something that's just blindingly obvious and you just should know it and you don't.... I guess that's the only time that you feel like "oh</p>



	Julie	209	<p>my god, I'm making myself look stupid here" but ,mmmm everybody does it ..... and nobody makes a comment I don't, I don't think it's a scary situation</p> <p>Well to start with we all know each other more, we work in the same base and for the other two EPs that's... they liked it because they are new to the role of being a supervisor and they felt safe to talk about that together because we are all in the same district team together so we work together a lot, share the same office and so they felt safe to talk about things and which if the group .... If the group had been bigger and they had not known everyone so well they may not have felt so safe.</p>
	Caron	172	<p>it doesn't matter what level you are in the service people treat it very seriously and so I think "oh gosh I wonder what people are thinking" but then you listen to others comments and you feel valued and well as one of the newest members of the team it's nice to feel part of something. As a new member you know, being newly qualified it's nice to go along and hear things and you think oh that's good I'm not going mad this really was quite a hard child (goes squeaky and very fast)</p>
	Sheila	262	<p>Ummm, I suppose early on..... when you are relatively new.... I think there was, there was people who were, well some people were much more, ummmm willing to offer something and well to start things off, which was nice (exhales)</p>

<p>B4: In a safe group individuals who have started to unravel can rebuilds themselves</p>	<p>Julie</p>	<p>245</p>	<p>my original experience with someone who was highly experienced were hugely helpful at the same time as being challenging and I brought things that I didn't know would be an issue but it was always useful even if at the time it didn't always feel comfortable</p> <p>E: could you tell me a bit more</p> <p>J: Well I once bought along something that was on my mind but .... I thought it was just getting to me a bit and I started talking about it and I just burst into tears and it took me by surprise and afterwards I was shocked that I had done that because it's not like me to do that and I felt a bit embarrassed but it did feel OK, it felt like the group were OK with me doing that even though I hadn't expected to do it. The group was safe for me to do that in I suppose. I could fall apart safe in the knowledge that the group would put me back together again</p>
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**Appendix 14: Quotes to evidence the superordinate theme: Not Belonging (NB)**

Theme	Participant	Line number	Quote
NB1: The impact of breaking confidentiality and boundaries	Sheila	353	<p>..... well I had had a bad experience in my own supervision with boundaries and confidentiality so in a way I had gone back a few stages and then I just refused to take those risks and I just wouldn't share with the group coz I didn't know the group really well and I thought well stuff that (pffff) coz if it can go wrong in individual supervision then the risks are even higher in a group. There are even more people who could break the rules.</p>
NB2: The effect of poor group cohesion	Sheila	151	<p>Ok, right, weeeeell (big deep breath) ummmm, (another deep breath) ..... I I I I , well it seems a bit fluid .....and I'm um I think there's a liiittle bit of a uh, a concern that uh, well its tricky trying to get everyone together at the same time..... but I think that once you've missed one or two well, .... It's hard to feel you can go back and then, well this term I, well I haven't been able to make any of them (laughs, nervously) so ummm, missing out feels horrible, going along does feel nice but fluidity is an issue, in terms of numbers. Well there's quite often different people there now, each time and well, it didn't used to be like that it was always the same people each time and you well felt like you belonged but its changed now and well ..... it's not the same (silence)</p>
	Lisa	299	<p>It feels quite uncomfortable and for someone whose quite nervous it's like "oh golly, did I do the right thing" and he asks you quite a lot of questions (gulps loudly) and you sit there and think "help" (laughs wildly)... it is useful and it's</p>

	Caron	103	<p>about getting out of your comfort zone and sharing your inner thoughts actions feelings (very fast talking) and..... not having them judged, that's wrong but actually having them reflected back to you</p> <p>well its very much like you kind of bring your case and urmmm and then <b>They</b> will kind of assk questions and help you think urrrr along the urrr way and urm and urm well in a great way</p>
	Sarah	126	<p>I can talk for myself, I've probably got there about 3 times this year, soo that's 3 out of about 10, umm I can't speak for other people but my feeling is that there is probably a core group of about 3 people who go to most and then the rest are sort of like little satellites that dip in and out over the year, its once a week, Monday afternoon, hour and a half, two hours so we have quite a big chunk of time, and its urmm solution circles type format.... Or that's how I understand it</p>
		141	<p>I think we used sort of a similar format as we use for team meetings so I'm not aware... well sometimes I've got there 5 minutes after the start but I'm not aware that they were agreed.....well, there are agreements about timings and when and where and all that but no, no I'm not really aware we've gone into the group rules as such.....</p>
		162	<p>At one point the group bourgeoned and I remember being..... I was shocked,</p>

			<p>the meeting was here at this base and I had booked the room and I didn't know so many people were coming and they just kept arriving and we couldn't get enough chairs (not pausing for breath) and I found it hugely uncomfortable and I think other people who had been used to the well-established group felt the same</p>
	Julie	195	<p>Well, it was uncontrollable, it didn't help that we had a new facilitator but well, I didn't like it at all, you can't be open and honest and feel safe with that many people</p>
	James	184	<p>Let's just say I didn't ever really want to take a case to talk about because it just didn't feel right so I tended to either avoid going or not really feel like participating when I did attend. It didn't feel right, the way it worked and well, I didn't then have enough of a relationship because I didn't attend enough to have that out with anyone</p>
		232	<p>Sometimes I wonder if it's my problem but .. mmm, when you consider we are all psychologists I'm just amazed sometimes at peoples inability to listen and support each other and then so I feel a little apart from that group, like I don't fit because I don't understand it</p>
	Jackie	273	<p>I think there might be an element of why people don't always prioritise it because they think they don't have a case to bring but it doesn't work like that for me because I go coz I like to hear what other people have got to say but maybe some people don't feel there is anything to gain</p>

			<p>unless they have a problem to share</p> <p>E:mmm, interesting</p> <p>J: It's obvious really I suppose but I hadn't thought of it coz it's not my perspective,..... however having said that there are some people who don't come all the time but when they do it's not just because they have a case, it's just that when they can fit it in they'll just turn up..... so I'm not sure really about all that.</p>
NB3: Poor group supervision can leave members with unmanageable emotions	Sheila	65	Well it's sometimes a bit overwhelming so well, I haven't always attended, you know .....
	Lisa	327	The first time I spoke I left feeling like I'd been exposed, I was a fraud, "this girl knows <b>nothing</b> about supervision" and that felt very uncomfortable
	Julie	281	<p>Well it feels quite strange, I'm not sure whether I really belong but I don't think this is necessarily to do with power although that has a part to play but I have been supervising for a long time, much longer actually than some of the seniors and I feel quite confident with the other people</p> <p>E: OK, so it's not about your role</p> <p>J: it's not about me not being a senior, I get impatient with it, I get irritated because people follow their own agenda about things that are contextual..... I think the group has struggled to define what it's about and I feel.... I know I need supervision for this important role (supervising EPs) and I get irritated when I know it's not good and we are putting aside quite a lot of time in our programme and</p>

	James	194	<p>other people are quite so committed to it so it makes me cross, it feels like we are wasting our time.</p> <p>Well its ... some felt safe and some really didn't I was like.... What am I doing here..... (tails off)</p> <p>E: You have mentioned that this really effected your attendance, can you tell me a bit more</p> <p>J: Yeah, I think I ... it was probably an unconscious decision in the first place but I think it was becoming more conscious and I tried to fight against that and I... I really did have to say to myself, come on you should be there, I should be part of this because that's not giving it that's not fair to other people who are going and it doesn't look good in terms of my programme management but ...</p> <p>E: What is contributing to your feelings about attending</p> <p>J: ummmm .....mmm partly because I'm .....we did touch on this in the last meeting.... I'm not the only one who hasn't committed to the group and it was aired by ***** that because the group hasn't really jelled that because people aren't really committed I'm not sure I really want to bring this to this group.... I'm not sure how safe it feels</p>
NB4: Group members feel a constant pressure to perform	Sheila	188	<p>once it was <b>tricky</b> coz you, well you feel like you've got to come up with something and well I know last time I was like well I need to say something, I I I, well I did have something and I was like ohh, I don't know ..... should I bring this up but um, well no one else is speaking so I better so I did and then it was kind of (high pitched laughing – hard to hear) well it was like, really awkward</p>

	Lisa	290	I'm going to be honest now, initially and still to a certain extent they actually make me feel quite anxious, I'm very aware that I'm much less experienced than a lot of them and the facilitator has a way of going round the table and asking if we want to discuss a case and I feel under pressure sometimes and I couple of times I feel caught out so I might mutter something under my breath and then that's it I'm having to talk for 20 minutes
		347	next time I needed to be a bit more prepared, I knew I wouldn't not go but at the same time I need to be a bit more in control and present myself in a better light and I suppose what I'm saying is there is an element of not complete honesty now for me
	Caron	121	Well I always think about it in advance because well (laughs, goes all high pitched and inaudible) ..... I think about a pupil and well no and now well there's always loads of questions and you think ohhhh, I haven't thought (inaudible and laughing) well basically now I try and think about using the time more usefully
		164	you end up with loads of suggestions and strategies and you think "urr, oh nooooo I don't urm, I don't want to do that" soooo well you have to well, I have to think carefully about what I'm going to bring
	Jackie	297	sometimes people will ask you questions and you haven't got the file in front of you and, that's OK if you well



			<p>sometimes they ask you a question and you just should know it you know they ask you something that's just blindingly obvious and you just should know it and you don't.... I guess that's the only time that you feel like "oh my god, I'm making myself look stupid here" but ,mmmm everybody does it</p>
NB5: Group needs vs Ind needs	Sarah	<p>181</p> <p>255</p> <p>53</p>	<p>on a personal level there's something for me about talking things through or thinking in a big group on a particular mmm, well with stronger individuals or however you want to look at that, not takes away your voice a little bit but well, I'd say you need a middle number, there's a good number you know because when you start getting a table full the dynamics are well, it's not as easy to say the things that you want to say or maybe.... Some people.....are having....more input than other people because it seems that in the 15 minutes that we have to present a case there can be a ceiling in terms of the number of people that can <b>actually</b> contribute so I would say that is something that makes a difference to me</p> <p>I don't feel that it's a waste of time, whatever we discuss I always come out thinking it was a good use of time but it just depends whether you've been able to speak, to get your voice heard.....</p> <p>that's aside from all the stuff about it being useful for helping you to be part of a team and well, all that (mumbles).....<b>BUT (LOUD)</b> for me it's the problem solving</p>

	Julie	310	<p>The ability to manage peoples individual needs as oppose to the needs of the group and that's where the facilitator has to be so skilled ..... being able to gently but cooperatively ensure that everyone gets heard but at the same time everyone goes away feeling the session was useful. It's difficult because it's a very delicate balance, the facilitator is not in control but they are steering the group to take control themselves rather than deferring to a leader. That is a really hard skill</p>
	James	222	<p>I've got suspicions that it's partly to do with ..... Not always getting what other people mean when they say certain things and urmmm, if I'm honest finding certain aspects of the way....certain people interact...irritating, I'm aware that's my problem as much as theirs but sometimes it tends to dominate how I'm feeling in a meeting by ummm certain people that don't listen to each other or .....</p>

## Appendix 15: List of superordinate and subthemes for each participant

<b>Lisa</b>
<p><b>Productive</b>  P1: Being part of group supervision actively develops ones practise and an EP  P2: The range of perspectives is unique to group supervision</p>
<p><b>Restoration of self</b>  R1: Being part of group supervision helps restore a sense of self  R2: The process of group supervision reduces the impact of the background noise of the day job  R3: Being part of group supervision builds ones capacity to face the task of being an EP</p>
<p><b>Active process of getting in a zone</b>  A2: Working to shut out the insignificant 'background noise'  A3: Active process that the supervisee needs to engage with  A4: Two way process between the supervisee and the group  A5: Making sure the supervisee can get their own house in order before going off to help others</p>
<p><b>The group as a separate entity working as one</b>  G5: Protective nature of 'the group'</p>
<p><b>Not Belonging</b>  NB2: The effect of poor group cohesion  NB3: Poor group supervision can leave members with unmanageable emotions  NB4: Group members feel a constant pressure to perform</p>

<b>Caron</b>
<p><b>Productive</b>  P1: Being part of group supervision actively develops ones practise and an EP  P2: The range of perspectives is unique to group supervision  P3: Greater assimilation of knowledge results from reduced anxiety when others are the focus of the group  P4: The best form of training in supervision, learning by observing others being supervised</p>
<p><b>Reaffirming oneself as a psychologist</b>  RP1: Being part of group supervision gives chance to reflect on the factors that affect ones decisions  RP2: During group supervision there is a unique opportunity to think psychologically as a group</p>
<p><b>Active process of getting in a zone</b>  A3: Active process that the supervisee needs to engage with  A4: Two way process between the supervisee and the group</p>
<p><b>Belonging</b>  B3: A sense of safety allows members to make themselves vulnerable</p>
<p><b>Not Belonging</b>  NB2: The effect of poor group cohesion  NB4: Group members feel a constant pressure to perform</p>

<b>Jackie</b>
<p><b>Productive</b></p> <p>P1: Being part of group supervision actively develops ones practise and an EP  P2: The range of perspectives is unique to group supervision  P3: Greater assimilation of knowledge results from reduced anxiety when others are the focus of the group</p>
<p><b>Restoration of self</b></p> <p>R1: Being part of group supervision helps restore a sense of self  R2: The process of group supervision reduces the impact of the background noise of the day job  R3: Being part of group supervision builds ones capacity to face the task of being an EP  R4: Taking part in group supervision is the ultimate psychological experience</p>
<p><b>Reaffirming oneself as a psychologist</b></p> <p>RP2: During group supervision there is a unique opportunity to think psychologically as a group  RP3: The process of group supervision allows participants to step away from the corporate side of the Job</p>
<p><b>Active process of getting in a zone</b></p> <p>A1: Drilling down to look at all the impacting factors  A2: Working to shut out the insignificant 'background noise'  A4: Two way process between the supervisee and the group</p>
<p><b>The group as a separate entity working as one</b></p> <p>G3: Automaticity of 'the group', fluid together not fluid within'  G5: Protective nature of 'the group'</p>
<p><b>Belonging</b></p> <p>B3: A sense of safety allows members to make themselves vulnerable</p>
<p><b>Not Belonging</b></p> <p>NB2: The effect of poor group cohesion  NB4: Group members feel a constant pressure to perform</p>

<b>Sarah</b>
<p><b>Productive</b></p> <p>P1: Being part of group supervision actively develops ones practise and an EP  P2: The range of perspectives is unique to group supervision  P3: Greater assimilation of knowledge results from reduced anxiety when others are the focus of the group  P5: How useful is it? Is it only useful if it's productive?</p>
<p><b>Not Belonging</b></p> <p>NB2: The effect of poor group cohesion  NB5: Group needs vs Ind needs</p>

<b>Julie</b>
<b>Productive</b> P1: Being part of group supervision actively develops ones practise and an EP P2: The range of perspectives is unique to group supervision P4: The best form of training in supervision, learning by observing others being supervised
<b>Restoration of self</b> R1: Being part of group supervision helps restore a sense of self R2: The process of group supervision reduces the impact of the background noise of the day job R4: Taking part in group supervision is the ultimate psychological experience
<b>Reaffirming oneself as a psychologist</b> RP1: Being part of group supervision gives chance to reflect on the factors that affect ones decisions RP2: During group supervision there is a unique opportunity to think psychologically as a group
<b>Active process of getting in a zone</b> A1: Drilling down to look at all the impacting factors A3: Active process that the supervisee needs to engage with A4: Two way process between the supervisee and the group A5: Making sure the supervisee can get their own house in order before going off to help others
<b>The group as a separate entity working as one</b> G1: Identity of 'the group' not just the identity of the people in it G2: 'The group' evolving and having a life of its own G3: Automaticity of 'the group', fluid together not fluid within' G4: 'The group' has an established purpose G5: Protective nature of 'the group'
<b>Belonging</b> B2: The group working together to rebuild itself B3: A sense of safety allows members to make themselves vulnerable B4: In a safe group individuals who have started to unravel can rebuild themselves
<b>Not Belonging</b> NB2: The effect of poor group cohesion NB3: Poor group supervision can leave members with unmanageable emotions NB5: Group needs vs Ind needs

<b>James</b>
<b>Productive</b> P4: The best form of training in supervision, learning by observing others being supervised
<b>The group as a separate entity working as one</b> G1: Identity of 'the group' not just the identity of the people in it G2: 'The group' evolving and having a life of its own G5: Protective nature of 'the group'
<b>Belonging</b> B1: Individual members sharing a vision B2: The group working together to rebuild itself
<b>Not Belonging</b> NB2: The effect of poor group cohesion NB3: Poor group supervision can leave members with unmanageable emotions NB5: Group needs vs Ind needs

<b>Liam</b>
<p><b>Restoration of self</b></p> <p>R2: The process of group supervision reduces the impact of the background noise of the day job  R3: Being part of group supervision builds ones capacity to face the task of being an EP  R4: Taking part in group supervision is the ultimate psychological experience</p>
<p><b>Reaffirming oneself as a psychologist</b></p> <p>RP1: Being part of group supervision gives chance to reflect on the factors that affect ones decisions  RP2: During group supervision there is a unique opportunity to think psychologically as a group  RP3: The process of group supervision allows participants to step away from the corporate side of the Job</p>
<p><b>Active process of getting in a zone</b></p> <p>A1: Drilling down to look at all the impacting factors  A2: Working to shut out the insignificant 'background noise'  A3: Active process that the supervisee needs to engage with  A5: Making sure the supervisee can get their own house in order before going off to help others</p>
<p><b>The group as a separate entity working as one</b></p> <p>G1: Identity of 'the group' not just the identity of the people in it  G2: 'The group' evolving and having a life of its own  G4: 'The group' has an established purpose  G5: Protective nature of 'the group'</p>
<p><b>Belonging</b></p> <p>B1: Individual members sharing a vision</p>

<b>Sheila</b>
<p><b>Productive</b></p> <p>P1: Being part of group supervision actively develops ones practise and an EP  P2: The range of perspectives is unique to group supervision  P3: Greater assimilation of knowledge results from reduced anxiety when others are the focus of the group</p>
<p><b>Reaffirming oneself as a psychologist</b></p> <p>RP2: During group supervision there is a unique opportunity to think psychologically as a Group</p>
<p><b>Active process of getting in a zone</b></p> <p>A1: Drilling down to look at all the impacting factors  A4: Two way process between the supervisee and the group  A5: Making sure the supervisee can get their own house in order before going off to help Others</p>
<p><b>The group as a separate entity working as one</b></p> <p>G1: Identity of 'the group' not just the identity of the people in it  G2: 'The group' evolving and having a life of its own  G3: Automaticity of 'the group', fluid together not fluid within'  G4: 'The group' has an established purpose</p>
<p><b>Belonging</b></p> <p>B1: Individual members sharing a vision  B3: A sense of safety allows members to make themselves vulnerable</p>
<p><b>Not Belonging</b></p> <p>NB1: The impact of breaking confidentiality and boundaries  NB2: The effect of poor group cohesion  NB3: Poor group supervision can leave members with unmanageable emotions  NB4: Group members feel a constant pressure to perform</p>

## Appendix 16: Quotes to evidence superordinate theme: FUTURE ISSUES (FI)

Theme	Participant	Line number	Quote
F11: EPs need specific training in supervision and group supervision	Sheila	392	<p>ohh, (laughs) well, I think going back to all the counselling stuff I had learnt previous to being an EP it was all 1:11:11:1 all the time and groups were like Noooooooo and the managers were like no were never gonna say you can do group anything so in a way that was one experience</p> <p>E: interesting</p> <p>S: I can remember when I first came to work here and people talked about group supervision and I was worried that people didn't understand the power of group dynamics and the fact that sometimes in group supervision you are opening up a huge can of worms and you have to know what you are doing so I suppose for me group supervision is something I would only take on after I had had a lot of experience of 1:1 and possibly I feel I'd need some different training too. I know that in my previous job in youth work we had a lot of input on groups and in our EP training we really only touched on that. I get the general feeling that it is not a subject many EPs are familiar with. I mean we spent at least a week studying group dynamics which I'm sure is more than most EPs have done but I still don't feel I would be ready to offer group supervision so well, I think we should be cautious.</p>

	Jackie	78	<p>ummm, awwww (deep breath) I think, I think we touched on it on our training but it would have been very, phewww (blows out) brushed over. I did go on a half day workshop arranged by one of the managers here a while back, it was more like a workshop and just covered some of the models and some basic stuff and well, that's it I think</p>
	Julie	400	<p>Yes, yes I do but even with the experience I have had in individual supervision I don't feel ready to really say I could do group supervision and yet I think some people would just say go on then, what harm can it do..... but I've experienced it and well, if you weren't aware of the dynamic and power relationships, mmmmm, some people are very vulnerable in a group, then if they feel that an EP is someone powerful and they are facilitating, they might feel under pressure. I've experienced groups with a very well trained and well experienced facilitator and a group where this was not the case and it has had a very direct impact on how I have felt in that group so without a doubt this is of the utmost importance in my view</p>
	Liam	123	<p>years and years ago I used to do lots and lots of courses, I did all the post qualification courses that were available at the time, I did preparing you for management courses, the week long course at Southampton, quality assurance courses, leadership ones, but nothing that ever came under the title of supervision</p>



		134	<p>well, it's like I said before, I think it's, it's something we go along with .....um.... we go along with some kind of umm, cock sure ness</p> <p>E:Mmmm</p> <p>L: for want of a better word and that could be because there is some, um, certain implied arrogance .... You know of course we can do this because it's part of our skills and I think that is presumptuous really</p>
	Lisa	556	<p>Well thinking back to the training I think you'd need something similar but it would need to focus more on group dynamics and power relationships but you would need to do individual supervision and be good at it first I think, it is linear, you need to have that under your belt before you can move on to managing a group.</p>
	James	316	<p>I think some EPs are perfectly placed to be doing this but my experience with some quite senior, experienced EPs is that they would need a lot more training before they could facilitate a healthy supervision group</p>
		324	<p>Well I have been involved in some excellent training but it's the refreshers and update days and monitoring of your practice that make all the difference. People can have all the theory in the world about how to run a group but you need some honest feedback and regular monitoring, it's crucial that supervisors are supervised</p>

	Sarah	108	<p>themselves in a group where they feel safe to talk about how tough it is, it's no good if that supervision group just becomes a competition and a chance to show off with examples of how good a supervisor you are. It's not helpful for me, it's like we are all pretending that its easy when we know full well it isn't</p> <p>I'm just trying to think back to the supervision opportunities I had on my masters at the Tavistock which was ummm, quite reflective and everything but mmmmm, it was quite a different model from here but .....</p> <p>Nahhhh, I don't remember any training I've ever had really.</p>
		349	<p>being part of supervision any type well, it's good training, it teaches you how to do it, it's being modelled and well in some ways its more useful than any kind of training.</p>
	Caron	243	<p>It's something, I, I , I would <b>love</b> to do more supervision but at the moment I don't think I have all the necessary training and what have you to urrm well to run a group but how I'd like to develop that is to shadow someone on the team so that I would feel more confident. And I'd definitely value some more training, like I know in some places they have had specific training in supervision and I think I'd certainly want that as a minimum because I've had some on my doctorate but well it was more learning through peer supervision.....</p>

F12: The participants would need training to be able to take part	Sheila	329	<p>I don't know..... I suppose it's like going back to the idea of being on a different level with people who really <b>get</b> supervision, well with some of the key workers that I supervise well some of them really get supervision now and I see them progressing through the levels and really getting to the point very quickly and well others are like still really struggling with the concept. So in the end I'm not sure whether it's the profession that affects it or whether it's the level of experience they have had.</p> <p>E: Yeah, I see</p> <p>S: It's like we talked about right at the beginning when we talked about fluidity, a group that has been together for some time is more fluid so I don't know if that means you should have people grouped by experience ummmm. The thing is when you are new and you join an experienced group you learn so much so well maybe not, ohh, I don't know.</p>
	Jackie	397	<p>So the suggestion was that ... we would bring cases.... We would use the same format, I would invite a professional involved .. like if they were talking about speech and language I'd invite a SALT along, I'd be there, they'd bring the cases.... (almost whispers) no takers..... no takers..... I have pushed it and pushed it.....</p>
		391	<p>At the end of the day it's a problem solving approach, which is what we do anyway but part of the skill is getting people to the place where they know they need it, I mean</p>

	Liam	377	<p>how many EPs given the choice would avoid supervision</p> <p>I have to say the last thing I would call it is supervision, I'm not sure where the word comes from, greek or latin but it certainly gives a sense of something that's given or offered by someone in power to those who are not, to someone who should receive it and I don't think that's the kind of activity that we really want to be promoting, well I'm not sure, we might want them to have it but I'm not sure that they think that's what they need</p>
	Lisa	377	<p>It's interesting to talk about it retrospectively because talking now to you it makes me realise I'd been on the training, I knew what supervision was all about and yet I really wasn't prepared when I first went along, I thought I'd just have a chat for a few minutes but I hadn't linked it really to what it was actually going to feel like.</p> <p>E: The main thing is though that you are talking about what it was like first time..... you went back again, that was brave</p> <p>L: It was, it took a lot but I knew it was important, the training was really key there, I knew it was good for me and I had to work through it</p>
		489	<p>A lot of professionals that we work with would not of done anything like this before, Its not a concept that school staff are very familiar with and I think if I've just talked about how much we can struggle with being</p>

	Caron	226	<p>reflective then it would be a concern for me if I was trying to introduce this with some professional groups, particularly school staff. If I turned up to my first supervision session with my in tray having just done a masters in educational psychology I wonder what a group of LSA's would turn up expecting</p> <p>E: Interesting point (laughs)</p> <p>L: I think it could easily turn into a group moan session, not that moaning isn't beneficial but it must be managed well and I think key to all this is expectations, its what the people turn up expecting to do. I would recommend that the people had some basic training initially and the training would involve some examples of live supervision. The two day ***** course we did was brilliant for that but I did it at a different time to experiencing supervision so I still forgot what it was going to be like but if you had say week 1 training and an example and next week straight in people would be more aware of what to bring, they'd be prepared, mentally. I think people need to be aware of how it might make you feel and that sometimes you might feel uncomfortable but that's ok.</p> <p>I tried to put in place was group supervision for school staff as a control condition for what I was doing but urrm, well but well nobody took it up and they were like "ohhh no we don't need that" and well, well I think it would be an <b>excellent</b> thing to do but well Ive tried, you see I've</p>
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			<p>tried this year to set them up but the staff have been very resistant because they want you to come in and solve the problems rather than thinking the capacity is already there in the school.</p>
<p>FI3: Everyone underestimates the unique skills of group supervision facilitators</p>	<p>Sheila</p>	<p>141</p> <p>220</p> <p>437</p>	<p>Yeah (high pitched) mmm, well it tends to be.... A leader..... and well, and then err, the group feeding in but (laughs) well the leader (laughs again) doesn't really feel like part of the group in the same way but erm, ..... they are there to sort of.... Facilitate (laughs) well you know, keep things going</p> <p>well you know, when you have someone who is highly experienced, in all the levels of supervision like, they can take themselves out of the picture can't they and then they have very little influence in a way.... They just become like this bland background colour that's just keeping everything going but whereas ..... (high pitched) I don't know..... it just... it feels like well the group has started to evolve now and with a different leader it's like, well its sometimes going off on a tangent</p> <p>Well I think my experience of two very different facilitators has really reinforced my view that the back ground and training of the facilitator does make a difference to the impact it can have. You can't just facilitate group supervision because you are an Educational Psychologist. Managing a group takes a</p>







			<p>commissioned this group may well have had un realistic expectations about what can be achieved in a group who are only just learning to work together in their role.</p> <p>E: Ok so has this experience had an effect on your thoughts about EPs being involved in group supervision</p> <p>J: Well something I think is really important now, because of the experience I have had is that the person who has commissioned the work in the first place needs to be really clear what they are commissioning and what type of supervision they want, they need to have really thought about what they want to get out of it and its so important that EPs are encouraging that person to think thoroughly and not just agreeing to anything and everything, you know is it actually professional supervision that they want or is it a quality circle or a problem solving forum. There is a real skill in that initial negotiation and making sure that someone has thought about the issues they want the group to be working on and whether those issues would actually be addressed more suitably in a group or would it actually be better to do it through individual supervision.</p> <p>Then there is the dynamic of the group, is the group in a safe place at the moment, who are these people why are they being brought together, all those things, I suppose I have learnt over a long period of ..... through experience and even though you may have heard about these issues in training it's not until you live through some difficult supervision groups that you really understand what it's like and then you would be really careful before</p>
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	Liam	341	<p>jumping in and saying, yes, I'll do that. Its easy.. well its easy for some managers who haven't been trained in supervision or who haven't experienced supervision to go in and offer group supervision and thinking that its easy to be a facilitator and thinking anyone can do it just because they are an EP but..... I would hate to see us trying to sell something so sensitive when we haven't been trained properly</p> <p>I think two things, I think....the one is, I'm gonna contradict myself. The one is you could do that if you developed a certain level of relationship with the school or a certain group of teachers or a parent group or whatever and you'd do it from the basis of you've established some level of credibility with them and its organic and it develops out of something, they see you as someone who they could possibly disclose something too and you know that you, I could see it, I haven't actually done it but I could see that working</p>
		382	<p>I think that, I think two things, if you are going to be offering this type of option to other professionals you need to consider the skills that are needed and then look to your team to see who has those skills and I think there will be some EPs who could definitely do that and some who couldn't. I think the success of our group is in no small part due to the skills and personality of our manager and the esteem within which her team hold her, I'm not sure others would be able to do that.</p>

