Working with vulnerable groups in complex systems: Exploring the experiences of Educational

Psychologists working with Youth Justice Services

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Abstract

Prior research has explored the views of Educational Psychologists (EPs) on their function and practice within the Youth Justice Service (YJS). The role of the EP is in supporting organisations other than schools is well established, however, there are few studies which specifically relate to EPs' organisational experiences of working within this context.

This study aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of EPs in a YJS role, considering their views of the context as well as their role, practice, and contribution. A qualitative participatory approach was taken, with a co-researcher supporting the topic focus, and semi-structed interview design. Eight EPs were then interviewed. A reflexive thematic analysis was then conducted to analyse the data.

Three themes and 14 sub-themes were established in this study. The themes identified challenges for EPs in YJ, particularly around navigating their professional identity, contextual novelty, organisational structures and culture, as well as an affective impact of the role. EPs also identified strengths in their practice, including the skills that they bring to the context. The main findings relating to this research indicate that EPs experience insecurity around their professional identity. This experience appears to be impacted by a challenging work context in which EPs find themselves morally and ethically conflicted, constrained by emotionally taxing work, as well as their experiences of working with a wide range of professionals. This research proposes that EPs

face a significant challenge in operationalising social justice principles in the YJS as a result of pervasive power, discrimination, and inequity within the criminal justice system.

Implications for practice include the importance of appropriate supervision for EPs working with a YJS as well as how adopting learning from organisational psychology and systems psychodynamics can support EPs to better understand their role in this context. This research proposes that exposure and training would be beneficial for EPs to develop an understanding of the YJS where this is a novel work environment. Furthermore, this research indicates a need for a framework to support socially just and values lead practice within a power entrenched system.

Further research including other YJS professionals as well as the young people receiving YJ involvement would be beneficial in order to develop a holistic understanding of the organisation.

Keywords: *Youth Justice, Educational Psychology, professional identity, organisational learning, multi-disciplinary working.*

Declaration

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I declare that while registered as a degree student at UEL, I have not been a registered or enrolled student for another award of this university or of any other academic or professional institution.

I declare that no material contained within this has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

I declare that my research required ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee (SREC) and that confirmation of approval is embedded within this thesis.
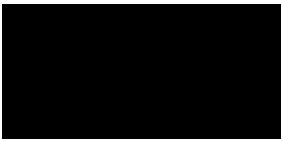
Eleanor Hobbs
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List of Abbreviations Used

BAS   British Ability Scales

CAMHS   Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

CYP   Children and young people

CJS   Criminal justice system

DBS   Data Barring Service

EHCP   Education Health and Care Plan

EP   Educational Psychologist

LA   Local Authority

MDW   Multi-disciplinary working

PEP   Principle Educational Psychologist

SALT   Speech and Language Therapist

SEMH   Social, Emotional, and Mental Health

SEN   Special Educational Needs

SENCO   Special Educational Needs Coordinator

SEND   Special Educational Needs and Disability

SEP   Senior Educational Psychologist

UNCRC   UN Convention on Rights of a Child

WISC   Weschler Intelligence Scales for Children

YJ   Youth Justice

YJB   Youth Justice Board

YJS   Youth Justice Service

YOT   Youth Offending Team

YP   Young Person

VBP   Values Based Practice

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1   The Youth Justice Context

The age of criminal responsibility in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is 10 years old while in Scotland criminal responsibility is 12 years old. The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) established the current system of youth justice that is in place, introducing Youth Offending Teams (YOT) situated within local authorities (LAs). This service is responsible for overseeing children aged 10 to 17 who are serving an order in the community (community order) or those who have not been charged for a crime (The Crime and Disorder Act, 1998). YOTs are comprised of a range of professionals such as police, social care, speech and language therapists (SALTs), health services, volunteers, and education. Some LAs have more recently started to refer to YOTs as the Youth Justice Service (YJS). For clarity, this thesis will refer to services relating to youth justice as the YJS. The system of criminal justice will be referred to as the CJS.

The YJS is overseen by the Youth Justice Board (YJB). The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) also established the Youth Justice Board, outlining their functions including "monitoring the operation of the youth justice system and provision of youth justice services; identifying and promoting good practice; and providing advice to the Secretary of State on a range of specified matters" (YJB, 2024, p. 8).

In their most recent strategic plan in April 2024, the YJB has outlined that they seek to contribute to the support of YJ in the following ways:

- contribute to effective resourcing of youth justice services

- set clear standards for justice

- support improved performance of youth justice services

- use data and evidence to identify opportunities to innovate and improve

- promote and strengthen engagement with communities and victims

- monitor services to constructively challenge statutory partners and agencies (YJB, 2024, p. 8).

Engaging with children and young people (CYP) involved with crime is complex. Often such young people have a complex set of experiences, systems and needs (Farrington et al., 2016). Historically and currently, disproportionality in youth justice is high with over representation of boys, young people with speech, language and communication needs and children looked after (YJB, 2024). However, since the implementation of the Crime and Disorder Act, these young people have increasingly become viewed as young offenders first and their vulnerabilities regarded as 'risk factors' to criminal involvement (Farrington, 2002). This language suggests adults placing the responsibility over pathways into and out of offending firmly onto the child (responsibilising) and implies a deterministic relationship between experiences and offending. This is concerning due to the potential for criminal profiling and bias around certain groups of

young people such as CYP from ethnic minority backgrounds. They are overrepresented in prisons and are more likely than white children to receive harsher and more restrictive outcomes such as custodial sentences which, a review stated, cannot purely be explained by the severity of the crime committed or having prior offences (Youth Justice Board, 2021). It is without question that disproportionality and bias within the youth justice system is prevalent and impacts significantly on the lives of children and young people who are already vulnerable to marginalisation. It is therefore of great importance that the views and experiences of YJS professionals are explored in attempting to unpick the experience of working within this context.

Arrests of children increased by 9% than in 2022, although though the number remained lower than pre-pandemic levels (YJB, 2024). There was an increase of 1% in first time entrants to the YJS, the first increase seen in the last ten years (YJB, 2024). The reoffending rate increased from the previous year, the first increase since the year ending March 2014 (YJB, 2024). The time from offense to completion remains higher than pre-pandemic levels (YJB, 2024). Figure 1 below indicates that while arrest numbers are lower than in previous years, a trend upwards indicates that something is not working well for CYP and thus the area of YJ requires exploring. Furthermore, CYP are predominantly receiving community sentences, as opposed to custodial sentences according to the most current data (YJB, 2024). This indicates that the YJS in their role with supporting community sentences, is an organisation which is relevant to explore.

Figure 1.1

Number of recorded arrests of CYP
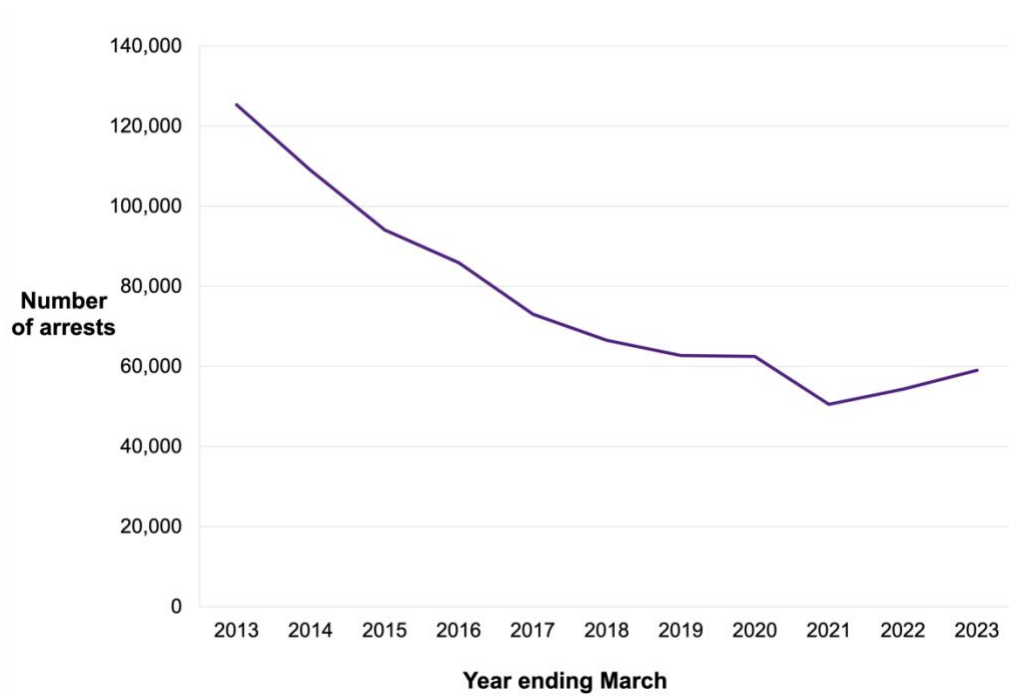
1.2   The YJS and Child First

Work within youth justice has focussed primarily on preventing re-offending with a focus on risk and responsibilising (Johns et al., 2016). The Youth Justice Board has implemented a purposive transformation to their service delivery by promoting a "Child First" principle in their strategic plan for 2021-2024 and continuing from 2024-2027. This principle aims to deliver a YJS grounded in person centred, strengths-based practice (YJB, 2021) in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC concerns children's rights, with articles 12 and 13 stating that children should have the right to express their views on matters

affecting them and that any views expressed should be considered with due weight (Lundy, 2007). As this research is taking place towards the end of the initial date for this strategic plan, the author considers that investigating professional's views of the context of YP, including the ways in which they practice in this context, are pertinent in exploring the ways Child First principles can be implemented.

The principles, or tenets, of Child First involve a positive model of practice (Case & Haines, 2015) in efforts to move away from a risk lead approach (Haines & Case, 2018). This includes increasing participation, person centred practices, and the promotion of CYP's strengths. Please see the table below for more information. As well as making efforts to work in a more positive way with CYP in the YJS, Child First also encourages partnerships, i.e. working with a range of support services within and outside of the system of YJ in order to better understand need and provide appropriate specialist intervention.

Table 1.1

The Child First guiding principles

Tenet	Components
1. See children as children	Prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.

2. Develop pro-social identity for positive child outcomes	Promote children's individual strengths and capacities as a means of developing their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future- focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
3. Collaboration with children	Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
4. Promote diversion	Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

1.3 EP Involvement with the YJS

Education may be a challenge for many CYP known to the YJS. There are a range of well researched links between YJS involvement, educational experiences, and SEND. For example, pathways into and out of offending may be impacted by childhood and teenage experiences, particularly relating to school experiences (McAra & McVie, 2010). Research has demonstrated that negative school experiences and in particular punitive practices, such as exclusions, place

CYP at a higher risk of entering the CJS (Skiba et al, 2014; Crawley & Hirschfield, 2018; Mowen & Brent, 2016). School exclusion is associated with a range of adverse outcomes, including mental health difficulties, unemployment, and homelessness (Pirrie et al., 2011). A significant outcome in the findings of Mowen and Brent (2016) and Kent et al., (2023), indicates that school exclusions increase the risk of arrests and being younger at first conviction.

Neurodiversity, including autism, is said to be overrepresented in YJ populations (Hughes et al., 2012). SEND, specifically SEMH, is underdiagnosed in CYP who are excluded from school (Timpson, 2019), meaning that additional needs and therefore support provision may not be considered as the underlying reasons for behaviour. While causal links are uncertain, SEND, exclusions, and CJS exposure are connected as CYP with SEND are overrepresented in the CJS (Anckarsater et al., 2007; Hughes et al., 2012). This process of exclusion, involvement with alternative provisions (such as pupil referral units), and exposure to the CJS is referred to as the school to prison pipeline (Crawley & Hirschfield, 2018; Kent et al., 2023). Some go so far as to state that these adverse educational experiences are not only significant for YJ involvement, but they could also be viewed as direct referrals for YJ experience (Mallett, 2016). Considering the impact of school exclusions, and SEND overrepresentation in YJ, the importance of education in reducing youth offending (Taylor, 2016) cannot be understated.

Other significant risk factors to YJ involvement are CYP's socio-economic background, history, and experience of trauma (Yates, 2012). Haines & Case (2018, p 114) state that:

"The lives of some children who become embroiled in the YJS have been and are so disadvantaged and harmful that it requires specialists who understand the linkages between (particularly negative) life experiences and offending and who are capable of working with children in this situation".

Understanding that CYP receiving YJS involvement may experience a range of educational needs and harmful systemic experiences, the EP is well placed in supporting the YJS to understand education, SEND, inclusion, and linking with schools (Fallon et al, 2010). YJSs may commission an EP service as part of their multi-disciplinary offer in supporting CYP and staff (Ryrie, 2006). As part of Child First, EPs may be commissioned to support YJSs, particularly in considering the ways in which person-centred practices could be operationalised, as well as in supporting and identifying need. EPs can offer varying levels of involvement including, direct work with CYP and families, professional supervision (Ryrie, 2006), and managing systems (Farrell et al, 2006). However, the author's personal experience demonstrates that EP involvement in YJ is variable as while some YJSs do have a commissioned EP, others have little to do with EPs. As a result, EP experiences in YJ may be varied with regard to their role and the extent of their involvement.

1.4　Working in Complex Organisations

The YJ context could be perceived a complex organisation. Haines & Case (2018, p 134) state that "lack of consensus and the presence of ambiguity around appropriate youth justice policy and practice have encouraged complexity and hybridity in how youth justice has been conceived and delivered". The context is complex in that politics, structure, and culture interact in a way that strains the organisation (Stahlkopf, 2008). Divergence between LA YJSs, the ethos of associated professionals, and YJS outcomes presents with issues indicating an "incoherence" and possibly "chaos" (Haines & Case, 2018 p 132). Working in an organisation with a complex and even chaotic climate has significant implications for the practice of professionals. In YJ for example, studies have highlighted issues including burn out and stress (Lane et al., 2023), compassion fatigue, and dissatisfaction (Auerbach et al., 2003; Gould et al., 2013). Furthermore, others have noted issues of professional and/or occupational insecurity around roles, length of practice, and sustainability (Case et al., 2020). The YJS profession is arguably a stigmatised profession working with stigmatised groups. In Morris (2015), YJS professionals perceived themselves as working in an undesirable profession and with CYP who are viewed as hard to engage.

YJSs have a complex identity in finding a line between punishing or helping CYP. A contradiction exists for YJS professionals between their perceived function or role, the way they are perceived by others, and the structure of power/hierarchy in which they practice (Eadie &

Canton, 2002). Burnett and Appleton (2004) went some way to explain the dichotomy or confusion in the YJS parallels of benevolence and control, indicating that in one YJS, professionals were able to reach a balance in their practice with CYP through their individual casework. Ellis and Boden (2004) promoted the view that YJS professionals work with principles of helping as opposed to punishing, however Burnett and Appleton (2004) and Ellis and Boden (2004) indicated that they had not demonstrated evidence to support a specific joined up YJS culture. They indicated that the professional culture pertained to the identities of individual roles or agencies within the YJS as opposed to a total YJS culture. This highlights the complexity of joining up a service which is comprised of different host professions, particularly in developing a shared organisational understanding and identity. Morris (2015) reported that YJS professionals found the punitive elements of their role challenging, specifically due to a perceived clash between their values and the values of the CJS. In this study it was difficult for YJS professionals to find ways of resolving this conflict and work with others who practiced differently. This signals that multi-disciplinary working (MDW) in YJS may induce tension, particularly in such examples of value misalignment.

1.5   Current study

The current literature does not go far enough in exploring the YJS context or climate in England. Research pertaining to YJ predominately relates to US samples. While there is certainly knowledge which can be applied to the UK context, the systems and socio-political contexts are

distinct. As a result, the author argues that it is important that the YJS context in the UK is explored through a professional lens.

Due to EPs' well reported role and responsibility in supporting local CYP (Hill, 2013) involvement with YJSs is relevant to their levels of skill. Few studies have explored the contextual factors of EP working outside of schools, and specifically the YJS. However, EPs are known to work with a range of organisations through secondments and dual roles (Hill, 2013). As a result, the author hopes to contribute by developing a more contextual understanding of the ways in which EPs experience their YJS work, as well as working in an environment which may be perceived as complex.

1.6   Summary

The following chapters will explore a systematic literature review and thematic synthesis of the current literature base and knowledge gaps. The author will then highlight their methodology for the present study, exploring the ontological and epistemological positing of this thesis, as well as the theoretical frameworks which underpin the study. The findings of a thematic analysis will then be discussed before the author moves into an exploration of the findings and the implications of this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, a systematic literature review is presented. The aims, review question, search criteria and articles are presented. The literature is then explored through a thematic synthesis and key findings are discussed.

2.1   Aims and Review Question

A systematic review was conducted in November 2023 to explore existing literature on the topic of this research as well as to explore any gaps in the evidence base.

The review aimed to:

1) Promote the voices of CYP who receive/d YJS involvement.

2) Explore what CYP who receive/d YJS involvement want to share with others about their experiences.

The review was conducted to answer the following review question:

1) What are the views and experiences of CYP receiving YJS involvement?

2.2   Literature Review Methodology

This review was conducted using 7 databases accessed through EBSCO Host (APA Psych Info, Academic Search Ultimate, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Education Research Complete, ERIC, British Education Index). The language used in Educational Psychology (the author's research area) varies to the language used in different disciplines, therefore the author used the thesaurus function on EBSCO to determine further search terms relating to youth justice (see Table 1 for terms).

A key philosophical orientation of this review was centred around Children's Rights; therefore, it was crucial that the search investigated research in which views were gathered directly from young people who have been involved with crime. After defining youth justice terms, the author was able to search across databases using variations of terms relating to youth justice. The search terms related to research concerning the direct views of any person currently or previously receiving, involvement from the YJS.

Table 2.1

Review search terms

Terms relating to youth offending	Terms relating to youth justice service involvement	Terms relating to views and experiences
Juvenile Justice	Youth Offending Team	Views
Criminal Justice	Youth Offending Service	Experiences
Youth Justice	Youth Justice Service	Perceptions
Youth Offend*	Youth Justice Team	Beliefs
Youth Crime	Service	Voice
Young Offend*	Involvement	
	Engagement	
	Referral	

Note: * the asterisk at the end of terms denotes an open ending to broaden the search term

From this search, inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined by the author, as shown below.

Table 2.2

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

	Include	Rationale	Exclude	Rationale
Population	People who have previously received or are currently receiving involvement from a YJS in the UK	Answers the review question	People who have not previously received or are not currently receiving involvement from a YJS in the UK	Not relevant to the review question
Age	Age 42 and below	Age of the oldest person who has been of age to receive involvement from the current system youth justice	Age 43 and above	Would not have been eligible to receive involvement from the current system of youth justice
Focus	Articles seeking direct views from the research population	Answers the review question	Articles which do not seek direct views from the research population	Not relevant to the review question
Language	Articles published in English	Accessibility to author	Articles not published in English	Author unable to access languages other than English, risk of

				mistranslation/misinterpretation
Source types	Peer reviewed articles, unpublished theses	Increases the number of voices heard from the population in this review. Has undergone some element of quality check	Literature which has not undergone some element of quality check	To ensure that quality data is included
Publication date	Post 1998	The Crime and Disorder Act established the current youth justice system in 1998	Pre 1998	The current systems of youth justice were not yet established

Figure 2.1

PRISMA
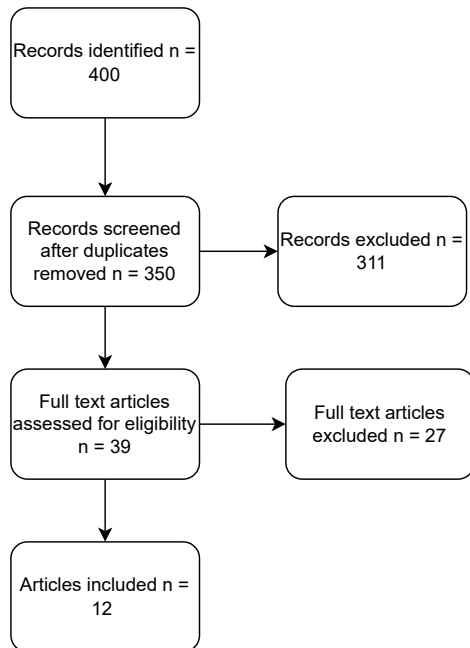
Through this systematic review, a total of 12 articles were selected for review in order to answer the literature review question: Creany (2020), Day (2019), Ellis & France (2010), Heath and Priest (2015), Hopkins, et al., (2015), Jack, et al., (2015), King (2022), Larkins & Wainwright (2020), O'Shea & McGinnis (2019), and Trivasse (2017), Wainwright & Larkins (2019), and Walsh et al., (2011).

2.3 Literature Appraisal

In order to synthesise the knowledge gained from the existing research base, it is vital to ascertain whether the evidence is of adequate and quality and meaningfulness. Gough's (2007) Weight of Evidence (WoE) was used to assess the research quality of the papers in this review and in order to "evaluate the extent that each piece of the evidence contributes to answering the review question" (Gough, 2007).

Gough (2007) highlighted that a WoE assessment is useful in assessing individual papers in answering a range a criteria:

- WoE A: a generic, non-review specific assessment of research integrity. This includes:
    - Transparency of purpose
    - Accuracy
    - Accessibility
    - Specificity

- WoE B: a review specific assessment about the relatedness of research methodology to the review question. This includes:
    - Purposivity

- WoE C: a review specific assessment about the related of the focus of research in answering the review question. This includes:

  - Utility – provides relevant answers

  - Propriety – legal and ethical research

- WoE D: an overall assessment of the extent to which research contributes to answering the review question.

This approach was deemed to meet the criteria of a systematic review by the author as it enables appraisal at the level of the quality of the research as well as how useful the research is in answering a review question. With regard to the nature of this review pertaining to the views of a specific population, the author deemed that it was important that the research included within this review was specifically about the direct views of young people receiving YJS involvement. The gathering of views from this population was considered a necessary part of the research inclusion criteria and therefore a contributing factor to a paper's weight of evidence.

2.4 Article Appraisal

The articles appraised were assessed using the four WoE criteria as demonstrated by the table below. The appraisal was marked out of 3 where 1 = low, 2 = medium, and 3 = high.

Table 2.3

WoE assessment

Paper	WoE A: Research integrity	WoE B: Purpose	WoE C: Utility & propriety	WoE D: Overall
Creany (2020)	**Medium: 2.14** 1: Mostly male sample. 1: Small sample size 2: Not a representative demographic (all white British). 2: Participants selected by YJS workers, possibility of sample bias. 3: Transparency of purpose. 3: Accessible reporting. 3: Appropriate tools for data collection.	**High: 3** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS (This study also interviewed professionals however the author only analysed CYP findings.)	**Medium: 2.66** 2: Focussed on views around delivering peer mentoring. Did not explore how peer mentoring could support mentees. 3: Appropriate consent. 3: Useful as answers research question.	**Medium: 2.6**
Day (2019)	**Medium: 2.28** 1: Unpublished thesis (included as theses are examined with academic rigour).	**High: 3** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS	**Medium: 2.6** 2: Only included young people involved with youth justice who are also CLA.	**Medium: 2.62**

	1: Mostly male sample. 2: Participants selected by YJS workers, possibility of sample bias. 3: Transparency of purpose. 3: Accessible reporting. 3: Appropriate tools for data collection. 3: Sample demographically representative of the population.		2: CYPs views investigated through an exploration of pathways to offending. 3: Appropriate consent from researcher. 3: Opportunity to refuse to complete the interview. 3: Useful as answers research question.	
Ellis & France (2010)	**Medium: 2** 1: Unclear about research question. 1: Unsure about demographics of the participants. 1: Unsure of the specificities of recruitment. 2: Multiple levels of questioning, building on prior interviews. 3: Accessible reporting.	**Medium: 2** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS. 1: Includes populations not involved with a YJS. It was not always clear which participant group contributed to certain findings.	**Low: 1.8** 1: Unclear on ethical procedure. 2: Useful as answers research question.	**Low: 1.9**

	3: Appropriate tools for data collection. 3: Clear aims.			
Heath and Priest (2015)	**Medium: 2.5** 1: Small participant group. 2: Interviews took place in a clinical setting which may have influenced how and what they shared. 3: Equal split of gender of participants. 3: Transparency of purpose. 3: Accessible reporting. 3: Appropriate tools for data collection.	**High: 3** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS.	**Medium: 2.6** 3: Clear ethical considerations. 3: Useful as answers research question. 2: Only worked with CYP known to YJS & CAMHS.	**Medium 2.7**
Hopkins, et al., (2015)	**Medium: 2.16** 1: Majority of the group were male. 1: Participants were interviewed (even though investigating communication need). 1: Time constraints meant some interviews were mapped deductively.	**High: 3** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS.	**Medium: 2.25** 3: Informed consent, adaptations made for those who did not consent to recording. 3: Useful as answers research question. 2: Only related to views on literacy and assessment.	**Medium: 2.47**

			1: Study was conducted in only one YJS reducing generalisability.	
	1: Social desirability bias could have affected the results of the study.			
	2: Possibility of unknown clinical SCLN.			
	2: More structured interview schedule to support participant response.			
	2: 85% agreement on themes for interviews selected for coding reliability.			
	3: Sample demographically representative of the population.			
	3: Piloted to ensure reliability and appropriateness of questions.			
	3: Transparency of purpose.			
	3: Accessible reporting.			
	3: Appropriate tools for data collection.			
Jack, et al., (2015)	**Medium: 2.8** 2: Only gathered data in 1 YJS limiting	**High: 3** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS.	**Medium: 2.8**	**Medium: 2.86**

	generalisability (although nature of study stated as exploratory). 3: Participants selected at random to reduce bias. 3: Transparency of purpose. 3: Accessible reporting. 3: Appropriate tools for data collection.	(Also explored the views of parents and professions, they author only assessed the findings of CYP).	2: Only worked with CYP known to YJS & CAMHS. 3: YJS worker consulted as to whether research may be detrimental for CYP. 3: Parents invited to CYP interviews if requested by CYP. 3: Good consent procedure. 3: Useful as answers research question.	
King (2022)	**Medium: 2.6** 1: Small participant group. 2: Participants selected by YJS workers, possibility of sample bias. 3: Participatory method supported participants' co-production and ownership over a resource. 3: Transparency of purpose. 3: Accessible reporting.	**High: 3** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS.	**High: 3** 3: Good consent procedure. 3: Useful as answers research question. 3: Use of accessible tools for gathering data.	**Medium: 2.8**

	3: Appropriate tools for data collection. 3: Public resource created as part of dissemination. 3: Clear aims and research question.			
Larkins & Wainwright (2020)	**Medium: 2.4** 1: Unclear research question. 1: Mostly male participant group. 3: 5 YJSs included in study. 3: Randomised sampling. 3: Clear aims. 3: Research tools designed by CYP with YJS experience. 3: Supported by an action planning group to enhance change.	**High: 3** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS.	**High: 3** 3: Good consent procedure. 3: Useful as answers research question.	**Medium: 2.8**
O'Shea & McGinnis (2019)	**Medium: 2.25** 1: No examination of the long-term impact of the project for the participants. 1: Mostly male participant group.	**High: 3** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS.	**Medium: 2.66** 3: Views gathered inclusively (1:1 and additional sessions given to young people if they wished).	**Medium: 2.6**

	1: No evaluation of the training resource developed in this project. 3: Multimedia project (accessible and engaging tools). 3: Co-produced DVD research in order to enhance dissemination and action. 3: Appropriate tools for data collection. 3: Transparency of purpose. 3: Accessible reporting.		3: Good consent procedure. 3: Useful as answers research question. 3: Experience evaluated throughout. 2: Implications relate to social workers. 2: Incentive of participation was hours off community sentence. Concerns about ethics of this as not an equitable practice across research with CYP in YJ.	
Trivasse (2017)	**Medium: 2.4** 1: Social desirability bias could have affected the results of the study. 2: Two participants selected by YO workers, possibility of sample bias. 2: Interviews with the exception of one were conducted separately to any YJS contact to	**High: 3** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS.	**Medium: 2.2** 1: Approval from an ethics committee was not required as this was a service evaluation. 1: Parental consent was only requested for 1 participant. 3: Reminders given that participation was voluntary and	**Medium: 2.5**

	distance the evaluation.		that they could cease participation at any point.	
	3: Appropriate tools for data collection.		3: Confidentiality and anonymity were also reiterated.	
	3: Transparency of purpose.		3: Useful as answers research question.	
	3: Accessible reporting.			
	3: Structured interview schedules and open questions were used to minimise bias or influence.			
Wainwright & Larkins (2019)	**Medium: 2.5** 1: Participants recruited from one LA reducing generalisability. 1: Predominantly male participant sample. 2: Looking specifically at 'unnamed' issues so may be highly interpreted by the researchers. 3: Anonymised sampling. 3: Included young people involved with YJ in the interview	**High: 3** 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS.	**High: 3** 3: Good consent procedure. 3: Research participants given a gift voucher whether or not they participated in the research to ensure equity. 3: Useful as answers research question.	**Medium: 2.8**

	design and data analysis. 3: Large sample size for research of this design. 3: Diverse participant demography. 3: Appropriate tools for data collection. 3: Transparency of purpose. 3: Accessible reporting.			
Walsh et al., (2011)	**Medium: 2.4** 1: Unclear research question. 2: Included CYP from one county, thus may not be generalisable. (although the author acknowledges that a county is wider area than other studies of this nature). 2: Likert scale of 1-3 does not account for nuance in the CYPs experiences. 2: Small number of participants took part in the qualitative aspect, although	High: 3 3: Voice of CYP known to YJS. (While this also used a quantitative measure, this was explored in relation to direct views so remains relevant to the author's research).	High: 3 3: Good ethical procedure. 3: Participants were screened by YJS workers and considered not to be at risk of harm by participation.	Medium: 2.8

	there was a larger group in the quantitative measure. 3: Clear research aims. 3: Good split of a male and female participants. 3: Appropriate tools for data collection. 3: Transparency of purpose. 3: Accessible reporting.			

Ellis & France (2010) was the only study which was assessed as low. The author deemed that it was pertinent to include this paper due to the low number of existing research exploring the views of CYP known to the YJS. The author will explore the findings of CYP from their included quotes in an attempt to only report on the views of CYP known to the YJS. The author notes that none of the papers reached the 'high' criteria. Mostly this was due to a lack of female representation in the research, indicating that the female voice is not included in the present evidence base which is concerning. Walsh et al., (2011) stands out as the only study which did not adopt a purely qualitative methodology. It was included as a result of the qualitative aspect of this study, whereby the authors sought and shared direct views of CYP receiving YJS involvement.

2.5 Thematic Synthesis

The author explored the papers through a thematic synthesis with consideration of the following views of CYP who receive/d YJS involvement:

1) Promote the voices of CYP who receive/d YJS involvement.

2) Explore what CYP who receive/d YJS involvement want to share with others about their experiences.

As each of the papers identified explored a range of views and experiences of young people who offend, the author then organised the information yielded from these studies into codes and then themes in line with a thematic synthesis (Thomas and Harden (2008). This thematic synthesis aimed to explore the voices of the young people who took part in the included research in line with the literature review question. The constructed themes describe the authors understanding of the factors that the CYP in these papers feel is important to understand about their lived experiences.

2.5.1 Identity

Within much of the research conducted with young people who offend, the theme of identity was significant. In many of the papers, this theme was explicit. For example, Day (2019)

used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences and perceptions of 19 children in care around their pathways to offending. This study suggested that for this group of young people, identity was an important factor in their pathway to offending. Specifically, the study found that identity disruption, negotiation, and renegotiation, as well as associated feelings of anger and frustration within the context of care, impacted the behaviour of this group and lead to a pathway into offending. It should be noted that this link was deduced by the study's author (an adult), rather than the young people themselves. This study demonstrates that an identity renegotiation took place for this group of young people, notably constructed through their perceptions of how they are viewed by others and criminalised from an early age. The voices of this group of young people came through strongly with a sense that post moving into care, they no longer felt like children. Rather these CYP perceived that due to the nature of the rules and expectations placed upon them in care, they were treated as adults and criminalised for behaviours which in a "normal" home, they would not. As a result, many had internalised a negative self-image of being "bad" as a result of the treatment they experienced in care. The internalisation of negative constructs may also explain this group's routes into offending as there was a sense of determinism for some of these young people and that the negative views of others were accurate and true.

Heath and Priest (2015) also discussed the theme of identity in their research with four young people who offend and receive support from a Child and Adolescent Mental Service (CAMHS). Using semi-structured interviews, this research explored how this group of young

people understand transitions, instability, and coping. In this paper it was clear that for some of this group, their identity was an important factor for coping with the difficulties they had experienced and making changes. As in the study by Day (2019), some of the young people spoke of frustration for the way they have been negatively treated or viewed by others. There was an indication that some of this group wished to prove those people wrong. There was again an agreement to some extent that some assigned labels were correct as there was a feeling of needing to change in order do so. Some young people appeared to embrace an identity construct of "aggressive", however it was felt that this trait was an important protective factor necessary for survival. In this group, there was a sense that offending and "harmful behaviours" were part of their identity and that they were "stuck" in these behaviours. This was not always fixed however, as some of the young people in this study felt that they could change. It was clear from this that some of the group felt that offending had been a choice that they had made and therefore they could choose not to engage in offending. There is sense in this notion of the responsibilising this group, where the move away from offending is the sole responsibility of the young people themselves. Thus, the internalisation of this responsibility appears to have contributed towards the sense that offending is a part of these young people's identities.

In King (2022), young people who offend were invited to participate in two studies. In study one, five participants gave their views on engaging with a youth offending service (YOS), while in study two, six participants took part in a co-production project. In this study, identity was explored through a more positive lens, with the young people who took part exploring their sense

of identity transformation. One young person specifically spoke about their developing confidence and openness, while another explored the idea of wanting to continue making improvements in his life. The paper suggested that considering the idea of identity is particularly important when working with adolescents as this is considered a natural stage of their development. Furthermore, this paper considered how supporting identity transformations, e.g. creating distance from the "past self" is beneficial for young people who offend, particularly regarding a more positive identity reframe. It was not clear in this study if the young people were active in this thinking, or whether this idea was translated by the adult researcher however, the young people who took part in the co-production study included elements of this theme in their project. For example, they spoke of "getting a second chance" and visually represented a transformation between their "old life" and "new life" which suggests this is a theme which is important to them. Creany (2020), worked with 20 young people involved with the YJS and 20 professionals working in the service were interviewed to explore the topic of peer mentoring. While there where were mixed views, many saw this scheme as positive, particularly regarding the provision of support to other young people who are navigating the YJS. Many felt that they would like to become a mentor and that this would be a helpful program to support both themselves and others in a shared identity transformation ,or as a way of creating distance from the "past self" as discussed in King (2022). As explored in Day (2019) and Health & Priest (2015), identity was linked with a range of factors including pathways into offending, offending behaviours, coping with adversity, and making change. This paper further supports this view and

suggests that professionals should consider identity as an important and meaningful aspect of their work with young people receiving involvement from a YJS.

In Walsh et al., (2011), 44 young people involved with the YJS completed questionnaires with six of those also taking part in interviews relating to mental health. This was a mixed methods study investigating mental health needs and perceptions of CYP known to the YJS. High levels of mental health need were found in this study however, the theme of identity was apparent as the young people involved felt that they did not identify with having mental health difficulties or relate to diagnoses, and they struggled to seek appropriate support for their difficulties as a result. This is an interesting finding as there is a disparity between the young people's self-construct and their level of need according to the measures, while the other papers in this theme do not explore the relationship between personal constructs and another version of reality. This further indicates the importance of gaining views from young people directly with regard to identity in order to better understand them and support their understanding of the constructs of the systems around them.

Wainwright & Larkins (2019) explored race with 50 young people who offend. The authors invited young people with experience of offending to support the formulation of interview schedules and looked for responses from their participants where race was both present and "unspoken". It is clear from this research that for this group, race and ethnicity are important parts of their identity, although this was not always mentioned explicitly. For example, many

young people framed their discussion of race through their family. Race was not mentioned with regard to their reasons for offending. For these young people, race, ethnicity and identity were found to be sources of difficulty and tension at times, particularly between different communities and for those who have experienced racism. Race and ethnicity were also sources of strength for some young people however, particularly in supporting their identification with others and sense of community. This may also be true for some of the group in supporting their relationships with professionals as some felt they were less able to identify with professionals, e.g. a Youth Offending Team (YOT) worker, who was of a different race and gender to them. Furthermore, the authors suggest that a lack of engagement with YOT work may be attributed to a lack of open discussion around race and ethnicity or culturally sensitive community work. That said, this is highly interpreted by the authors who translated the words and silences of this group of young people to consider race, even where this was not mentioned explicitly. The authors suggest that while race and ethnicity is not often an open discussion, these are topics that this group of young people often thought about and consider important aspects of their identities.

2.5.1.1   Summary of theme 1

The findings of the papers within this theme, indicate that identity is important to young people notably with regard to their own understanding of their offending and the systems around them, how labelling by others has impacted their self-constructs, their protective factors, their engagement with support, and their hope for transformation in the future. It appears from

examining each study, that there is a clear rationale for considering different aspects of identity with young people receiving YJS involvement and that this should be explored explicitly.

2.5.2 Power

The theme of power came through strongly from the young people in the following studies. For example, in Ellis & France (2010) 110 young people were interviewed about assessment in 3 groups; young people with a statement of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), young people who have been excluded from school, and young people who are receiving YJS involvement. The topic of power is discussed by these young people in relation to their feelings of others exerting power onto them, feeling powerless, and their efforts to regain power in various situations. For most in this participant group, the idea of assessment was that of surveillance onto them by professionals. It was clear that most of the participants felt that they did not understand assessment, nor did they always know they were being assessed or why. This demonstrates a lack of transparency and informed consent from the professionals assessing these young people and highlights a significant power imbalance. Some experienced judgement from professionals and assessment was often associated with adverse experiences or consequences, such as a school move, although they were not always aware of the link between assessments and their outcomes. This study found that the young people who experienced professional involvement in this way felt a lack of trust, suspiciousness and a sense of betrayal as a result the imbalance of power and lack of transparency. Some young people found that in order

to regain some power and agency over their situation, they could avoid and attempt to control assessment via the withholding of information or removing themselves from school. It is clear that the group in this study had a strong sense of injustice around their treatment, powerlessness and a lack of agency over their own lives. The author reminds the reader that this paper scored low in the WoE assessment particularly due to the uncertainty of whether the YJS population of CYP explored such views. The author has ascertained some of the YJS specific views through their examination of direct quotes and has reported these.

O'Shea & McGinnis (2019) explored some of these implications in their work with 13 young people involved with the justice system and 10 social work students. This research specifically focussed on what these young people felt they need from social workers by positioning them as peer educators with a group of social work students. There was a sense that by taking part in this research, the young people felt empowered and proud of their participation as they wanted to be able to show their work to and help others. By shifting their position to that of a teacher, the power appeared to have shifted resulting in a positive experience for the young people involved.

In Hopkins, et al., (2015), the topic of communication and literacy was explored with 31 young people who offend through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Most of the young people viewed themselves as "poor communicators" and lacking confidence in the areas of communication and literacy which related to increased severity of punishment and sentencing.

Many of these young people wanted to make changes to improve their communication skills in order to access the systems around them. While these findings also link with the theme of identity, the young people in this study reported that they experienced the system they were trying to navigate (particularly the court system) as unjust and disempowering. They discussed that they felt that the system left them powerless due the use of inaccessible language, lengthy papers to read, finding it difficult to pay attention in meetings and in court, and a lack of respect shown to them by the adults around them. As in Ellis & France (2010), this left these young people with a lack of understanding and agency over the decisions being made about them, and a sense of powerlessness over their lives. Larkins & Wainwright (2020) explore the same concept in their work. In this study, four young people in custody were recruited as co-researchers who designed interviews on the topic of reducing offending. 46 young people involved with the YJS participated in the interviews. Later eight YJS employees and a health service commissioner joined two participants for an action-planning element. The young people in this study did not see themselves as playing an active role in identifying their problems or solutions and many they felt that they were unable to make sense of the specific court orders that they had received. While literacy was not explicitly explored, it may be that this impacted on these young people's sense of understanding over their YJS involvement, further highlighting the disempowerment of this group due to inaccessible court orders and a lack of co-production when formulating and implementing support.

Jack, et al., (2015) interviewed 14 young people receiving involvement from a YJS and CAMHS, five carers and five CAMHS professionals to explore their experiences of mental health interventions. The findings relating to the voices of young people have been explored in this synthesis. In this study, the young people who took part expressed that involvement from CAMHS had been unsettling, confusing and not always welcome. It is clear from the that these young people had not been actively involved in the referral process and the CAMHS involvement had not been discussed, planned or explained transparently with them. This had left many of the young people feeling anxious about receiving mental health and worrying about the possibility of mental health stigmatisation from others. This resulted in a sense that these young people were disempowered as they did not have agency over their own lives and were not fully informed about their care. It was clear that these young people would have appreciated the opportunity to share their views and speak with others about their referrals and support. This study found that this may have impacted some young people's motivation to engage with CAMHS support as they did not perceive this involvement as valuable. As in the previous studies discussed, there is a clear demonstration that these young people experience an inequitable distribution of power and lack of agency, specifically around their own lives. Ellis & France (2010) and the current study indicate that this is particularly true with regard to support services.

2.5.2.1   Summary of theme 2

The findings of these studies highlight that the CYP receiving YJS involvement in these studies experienced significant disempowerment throughout their lives. Power imbalances and injustices were experienced throughout various levels of professional involvement as well as within the CJS. Disempowerment, inaccessibility, and lack of agency were reportedly linked with CYP's levels of engagement with professionals. This indicates a need for professionals to consider the ways in which power is experienced by young people and how their practice may be oppressive and inaccessible.

2.5.3   Relationships

The papers in this theme explored a range of relationships and relational situations. In order to consider the various implications yielded from the voices of the young people who participated, the findings have been grouped into sub-themes. The voices of the young people in these studies provide important implications for the ways they wish to experience professional involvement, including from the YJS. Facilitating factors and barriers to successful involvement are explored.

2.5.3.1   Sub theme 1: The professional relationships

2.5.3.1.1   *Facilitating factors*

In Larkins & Wainwright (2020) the key themes identified related to relationships, social engagement and resources and punishment and reparations. It was clear that this group of young people viewed relationships as important protective factors, and they were very clear about the ways in which they would like staff to work with them. Most young people in this study hoped for opportunities to foster trusting, supportive relationships. The key factors of a good relationship that were identified in this study included: respect, being listened to, having fun, consistency, confidentiality, mutuality, equality, and relatability. They discussed that their support should be individual to each person. Many spoke about wanting more practical help from YJS staff, such as with employment and training, accessing services such as housing, or support for their mental health. It was felt that practical support was crucial as for many of the young people in this group, they viewed lack of resources as the function of their offending with many experiencing prisons as a way to access resources such as food and shelter, training opportunities and support. They wanted their punishments to be more meaningful and helpful for their future, for example they hoped that their orders would link to training or employment. This was also seen in O'Shea & McGinnis (2019) where the young people expressed a desire for social workers to provide person-centred, practical support with administrative tasks, education, or

employment opportunities although this paper was focussed towards a different group of professionals.

In Larkins & Wainwright (2020) it was clear that the young people in this group deeply valued the importance of building positive, person-centred relationships and that they had a clear understanding of how these relationships could support them to reduce offending. However, it was not clear from this paper how the action planning group had worked and whether these young people experienced any change. Similar views were gathered in O'Shea & McGinnis (2019), where the importance of positive relationships was a key factor for this group of young people. In particular the group highlighted that they appreciated good interpersonal skills from their social workers. For example, they wanted to feel valued, listened to, respected and to receive honesty and openness. They hoped that their relationships with social workers could be empowering and meaningful rather than procedural, specifically wanting their professionals to take time to explain situations as opposed to simply telling them to do something.

Trivasse (2017) interviewed 11 young people involved with a YJS to explore their views about their journey with the YJS. In this research the author found that overall, many of the young people had a sense that YOT work was "better than expected". This was particularly true when compared with other services and professionals with whom these young people had received involvement. Many of the young people in this study stated the importance of building good relationships with their key professionals. They stated that they wanted their YOT worker to care

and show that they want to help. The young people discussed that by doing this, they would feel more able to trust and open up to staff which they saw as beneficial for their support. Some spoke about creating a parent-child relationship with staff and found this helpful as they would appreciate someone other than a parent to talk to. There was a sense that if care is consistent, caring and transparent, young people may feel more able to engage with professionals in a more meaningful way. These young people mostly felt that their YOT worker was helpful and more supportive than other professionals, however there were elements to the relationship that they found difficult.

2.5.3.1.2   Barriers to successful professional involvement

It was clear that the young people in Larkins & Wainwright (2020) often experienced that they were not being listened to, respected or taken seriously. There was a sense that many of these young people had not accessed positive relationships with staff and professionals as there was a view that the YJS was not a service of support, rather, the YJS was viewed as punitive. There was a strong sense that their professional involvement had not been positive, and the young people had experienced negative treatment which was disempowering, less meaningful and had resulted in disengagement as similarly expressed in Ellis & France (2010). Day (2019) gathered similar views from young people receiving YJS involvement with regards to professionals working in care settings. Notably these young people highlighted the negative treatment, adultification,

and criminalisation that they had experienced in care settings and how this had impacted on their own internalisation of a negative self-image.

While it is clear that the breakdown in a professional relationship can be attributed to negative treatment, O'Shea & McGinnis (2019) gathered that the young people in their study also had a level of expertise with regard to working with professionals and thus they were highly attuned to times when a member of staff is not "interested in me". Wainwright & Larkins (2019) also discussed a lack of engagement with professionals YOT worker may be attributed to a lack of open discussion around race and ethnicity as well as culturally sensitive practices. Thus indicating that the professionals involved with the young people in these papers were not adopting a person-centred approach to their work including the consideration of professional fatigue as well as race, culture and ethnicity.

The barriers explored in Trivasse (2017) related to these young people feeling that there had been a lack of clarity around the purpose and expectations of the YOT which had led to confusion and anxiety around what to expect. Continuity of care also came up for many young people in this group as a key factor for more positive involvement as many had experienced frequent changes in their team and uncertainty around the role of different services. Within this, there was also a sense of frustration as the young people felt that there was a lack of communication between services, professionals and with the young people themselves. However, there were some young people who felt that the YOT was purely punitive and thus

they felt that their work and relationships with this service were more procedural or "tick box". It appears that the understanding of the function or purpose of a YOT had an impact on the way that this group of young people interacted with their professional. Furthermore, in Walsh et al., (2011), many young people felt that they would not confide in certain members of staff as this relationship was short-term. Many of these young people were concerned about potential consequences from speaking with professionals about their mental health, notably this related to issues of confidentiality, trust and stigmatisation as in Heath and Priest (2015) and Jack, et al., (2015). It was clear from the discussions highlighted in this study that for many of these young people, mental health was represented by stigmatised constructs and misinformation. Many of these young people felt that they could help themselves and that they did not need additional support for their mental health. It is clear that the negative relationships experienced by these young people had impacted the likelihood of seeking support and using services.

2.5.3.1.3 Summary of sub theme 1

With regard to the professional relationship, a range of facilitating factors and barriers were explored. The CYP in the research included in this review indicated that positive relationships were a protective factor and key aspect of their support. Inter-personal skills were explored by the CYP as crucial to fostering a positive, collaborative, professional relationship. Support which was meaningful, practical, and skill based was viewed as desirable to these CYP. Some CYP explored times in which they had experienced barriers to a positive professional

relationship. Many of the barriers explored, related to theme 1, as CYP felt that issues relating to identity and their treatment by others negatively impacted the professional relationship. There were also links with theme 2, as CYP experienced disempowering relationships which negatively impacted the professional relationship. For some CYP, the YJS as a service was viewed as punitive and procedural, rather than supportive, and many experienced the service as confusing and unclear in its purpose and links with other services. Mistrust and expertise from professional involvement was highlighted as a key barrier to the relationship as well as a lack of openness to discuss topics such as race and ethnicity. This sub theme indicates clearly, a range of views with regard to how CYP wish to be involved with professionals and the factors which they view as key to both positive and negative relationships, with implications for professionals to consider in their involvement.

2.5.3.1   Sub theme 2: Peer and family relationships

In Creany (2020), the young people spoke on the importance of shared experiences in positive supportive relationships with peers and that they would appreciate the opportunity to work with someone who had been through similar experiences. Some also discussed their sense that this type of programme may support their relationships with staff through the chance to develop more trust with the team they work with.

However, some of the young people involved in this study felt that they would not like to take part in this type of scheme. There was a sense that these young people were experiencing many demands on their time through their involvement with various services. Therefore, for this group, a peer mentoring scheme may be an additional demand for which they have little room. For many of these young people, disengagement in services is often due to their experience of challenging situations and a feeling of saturation from professional involvement, therefore a further intervention may be too much of a demand. It was also evident that for some, the idea of meeting new people and potentially mixing with people with whom they have challenging relationships, this scheme was not desirable and could be a potentially negative experience. The study's author did not explore these potential barriers in depth with the young people, however the professionals were consulted and gave their views on the potential for risks that could be associated with this work.

Walsh et al., (2011) found that the young people in the study had high levels of mental health needs. For those who were interviewed, relationships were an important factor in seeking mental health support. Some of the young people involved in this research discussed that they would prefer to seek support from someone who understands them and who they have a good relationship with. For those who have good relationships with family, they would seek help from their parents and carers, although most of the participants stated that they did not have positive relationships with their family and therefore they would seek help elsewhere, such as through friends. There was also a sense that if their difficulties were particularly challenging, then some

young people may not seek support through their friends as they felt that they would not be able to help. It was also evident that some of the young people in this group felt cautious about talking with friends about mental health and emotions as they were not always sure if their friends could be trusted to keep their information confidential. Thus, there were many young people in this study who did not have confiding relationships with family or friends and as in Jack, et al., (2015) and Larkins & Wainwright (2020), would not want parental involvement as part their care.

2.5.3.1.1   Summary of sub theme 2

CYP voiced their experiences of the importance of positive peer and family relationships. Shared experiences and opportunities for peer support were highlighted by some as supportive for facilitating positive experiences including relationships with peers. Relationships were viewed by some as helpful for support seeking. Many CYP explored that they did not have many positive relationships, including with their family, and that they would therefore not wish for their involvement in their support. Some CYP also indicated that they feared sharing with their peers due to possible issues of stigmatisation and confidentially breaches. This theme highlights that many CYP who are known to the YJS experience significant challenges in their relationships with family and friends, indicating a lack a support available outside of the professional realm. This also demonstrates the importance of working with CYP known to the YJS to gain their views on who they feel should be informed about the details of their care, and that their views are respected to ensure they feel safe.

2.5.4 Summary of the Literature

A clear rationale for further inquiry into the YJS experience from the perspective of CYP was found as many of the views in the literature related to a specific topic of focus, as prescribed by the researchers. Thus, more person-cantered or participatory approaches with a diverse demographic of CYP may support disempowered CYP in this research area. It would also be helpful for the evidence base to include more explicit research on the experience of YJSs and a more varied range of professionals as many of the present studies related to mental health professionals. Furthermore, the author considers that there is a gap in the literature relating to explicit experiences of inequality, particularly racism. One study explored race subjectively (Wainwright & Larkins, 2019), however the author perceives that this does not go far enough in exploring the topic. As race is a key issue in YJ, the author views that this is relevant to any study relating to YJ and thus should be made explicit.

Much of what was explored related to CYP's experiences with professionals. There were discussions of professional fatigue, as well as issues of confusion around roles, implying that multiple professionals are involved in the lives of these CYP through the YJS. The importance of positive professional relationships was explored by participants throughout the included studies, highlighting a range of key skills and components of the professional relationship, including what makes for meaningful support. However, CYP also communicated a significant lack of supportive relationships, experiences of disadvantage, and social exclusion in their lives. The YJS and

associated professionals may therefore be considered a key part of CYP's inner systems, potentially as influential as a parental figure or peers, and providing a vital resource for CYP. The implications for professionals include practicing with good interpersonal skills, as well as an understanding of the impact of language or labelling, and the social challenges CYP in YJ may experience. Professionals should be explicitly aware of how much of a footprint their involvement leaves in the lives of these CYP, particularly the emotional impact of their relationship with the CYP, and the psychological implications around identity development.

CYP's experiences with services and organisations were also significant to the findings from this review. As explored across each of the themes, the CJS, specifically courts, as well as the YJS and associated services such as mental health teams were viewed as inaccessible. CYP experienced a lack of clarity around the role and function of these systems, organisations, and professionals, e.g., the mixed views around the YJS as a punitive system versus the YJS as a system of support. Such findings indicate key issues in the way YJ work is operationalised and received by CYP. Firstly, it is implied that professionals are not appropriately communicating their work in order to provide clear, person-centred intervention. Secondly, these findings highlight a level of organisational or systemic complexity in which professionals find it difficult to communicate their function in YJ, and/or they do not fully understand or experience barriers to their role. It is crucial therefore that professionals involved with YJ are clear around their role and contribution and that they are able to communicate their practice clearly with CYP, particularly to ensure informed consent.

The findings of these themes emphasise the complexity of the experiences described by the CYP. Overlap was found between the themes with implications which CYP view as impacting their life experiences and journeys into and out of offending. The present research is discussed in the following section, where the author will explore their journey of defining their research population and focus.

2.6   Changes to this Research

At this point in the chapter, the author wishes to be transparent about their research design process. Going into the literature review the author had in mind that the focus of this research could pertain to the voices of CYP receiving YJS involvement, with CYP considered an appropriate and meaningful participant population. Having completed a review of the literature, a clear rationale for further inquiry into the YJS experience from the perspective of CYP was found. Specifically, the literature provided a rationale to explore CYP's perspectives of the YJS, particularly with regard to professional involvement. The author had hoped to recruit a YP as a co-researcher to further inform the direction and purpose of the research. This was with the understanding that the views of CYP receiving YJS involvement are unique to their experience, and the author cannot assume that their own experiences would support a research enquiry which would be relevant and meaningful to this population. Ethical approval was gained for this investigation, with a view to recruit via a range of LA YJSs.

Individual professionals in YJSs and service heads were contacted as part of the recruitment process in order to reach CYP. The author entered into discussions around the nature of the research, how recruitment would be advertised via professionals in the service, and how the CYP would be compensated for their support via vouchers. Discussions also included the significance of a participatory element which would be relevant for YJSs considering the Youth Justice Board strategy to increase service user participation and person-centred practice through their "Child First" plan (YJB, 2019). After a considerable amount of time attempting to make contact with YJSs the author was unable to access a single YP receiving YJS involvement. In the research timeline, the author reached December 2023 without having recruited and therefore made the decision to change this research. This is explored throughout this section.

CYP's participation and agency is entrenched within the UNCRC which states that children should have the right to express their views on matters affecting them and that any views expressed should be considered with due weight (Lundy, 2007). Therefore when considering whether to remove the findings from this review as a result of changing the research, the author reflected on the weight of the views expressed and the rights of CYP to have their voices heard and considered in research and professional practice. With the aims of promoting the voices of CYP and learning from their experiences, the initial literature was appropriate to include despite the change of research population as it is relevant to the overall understanding of the YJS and experiences of receiving professional and service level involvement.

This literature review highlighted experiences which were pertinent to professionals working within the YJS. This included CYP providing their views on how they wish to be understood and treated by professionals, as well as how their prior experiences have impacted on their relationships and engagement with professional support. The perspectives of the CYP in the literature review provide a rationale to consider the professional experience of working with CYP who receive YJS involvement in order to clarify their practice and the impact of their role. Further to this, CYP in the initial literature review indicated challenges which were associated with their experience of working with the YJS, including issues of confusion around professional roles and the function of the service, inaccessibility, and lack of agency. As a result, the author wondered whether professionals working within the YJS are aware of the complexity experienced by CYP, share similar views, or have experiences which align with those of the CYP in this review. It is therefore relevant to explore the YJS with professionals in order to consider this specific context. An exploration of the YJS experience from a professional perspective may support a more holistic understanding of the organisation and provide implications which support a service experience that is more supportive to CYP.

2.6.1 EPs' Experiences of Working with YJSs

Considering the author's own experience in attempting to recruit via the YJS and the findings from an initial review of CYP's voices in the literature, a clear rationale to explore the YJS

context from the professional perspective has been presented. Considering the range of professionals working within the YJS, as indicated by the initial literature review, the focus was narrowed to a specific group of professionals.

In some LA services, EPs contract work with the YJS in order to reach CYP receiving YJS involvement. A range of literature has supported a rationale for EP involvement in YJ, for example through, training (Francis & Sanders, 2022), research & person-centred practices (King, 2022), supervision, direct work with CYP, consultation, and the sharing of knowledge (Howarth-Lees and Woods, 2022).

Some literature has explored EPs' views on their practice and experiences of working with the YJS. The themes which emerged from this literature include descriptions of the type of work EPS undertake in YJSs, barriers to EP practice in YJSs, and experiences of organisational complexity.

In a discussion paper, Ryrie, (2006) indicated that EPs can offer involvement including, direct work with CYP and families and professional supervision. Ryrie also highlighted complexity in the YJS EP experience, including unpredictability and sudden changes to the lives of CYP. This was perceived as contrasting to the ways EPs typically work with schools. Hall (2013) explored YJS practice with EPs. This thesis reported that EPs felt their practice related to investigating need, solution focussed approaches, working in partnerships with professionals, CYP and

families, and genuine positive regard. Clear boundaries, providing space for CYP, personal characteristics, and awareness of the YJS context were also perceived as important to YJS practice in this study. Gumbs (2023), another thesis, explored the views of EPs in YJSs. In this study, EPs indicated that they facilitated practice at individual, group, and systemic levels. Their levels of work included assessment and strengths-based practice with CYP, supervision with YJS staff, consultation with families, joint working and training with other professionals, and exploring policy. These EPs also indicated that they could support the organisation via their modelling and application of psychology and developing links with schools. Barriers to practice included lack of resources (e.g. time), lack of support from YJS staff, poor relationships with YJS staff, and a lack of understanding of the EP role from others. Gumbs also highlighted that EPs experienced the YJS as reactive and unpredictable. Warnock (2005), another thesis, gained similar findings around the specifics of the psychological role in assessment. This study also raised concerns from psychologists regarding the ethics of consent in YJ and a dilemma for EPs between their perceptions of CYP as their client, and the YJS focus on offense and criminality. Labelling CYP as offenders or anti-social was viewed as problematic. Peer support and supervision were perceived as helpful in navigating ethical conflict.

Considering EPs in specialist roles often sit within two teams, for example the EPS and the YJS (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009), the author considers that the nature of the YJS and dual role working may impact the ways in which EPs perceive their work and contribution in the context

of YJ. Gaskell & Leadbetter (2009) for example, explored the impact of multi-agency or dual role working, in both shaping and threatening EP identity.

While there is some existing literature on EPs' perceptions of YJS practice, and implications suggesting that the context is challenging, there is a rationale for the author to focus on EPs in the present research in order to further explore their experiences of practicing within YJSs, as well as the ways in which EPs perceive their role and contribution in this context. It is perceived that the literature has gone some way to explore the EP role in YJ, however a more explicit focus systems and organisational focus is needed in order to understand more about the working context.

This study will focus on the EP experience of the YJS, in the hope of developing a clearer picture of the YJS context and to disentangle the complexity which was experienced by both CYP and EPs in the literature. The following chapter will detail the research focus, aims, and questions, as well as describe how this research was conducted.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Having reviewed the literature relating to the views of young people receiving YJS involvement, this chapter presents the methodology for the current study. This chapter will highlight the research approach, design, recruitment, and data collection. This study's ontological and epistemological positioning is discussed as well as the theoretical and conceptual frameworks adopted by the author.

3.1   Aims and Purpose of the Current Research

3.1.1   Aims

The aims of the current research were to:

1. Explore the EP experience of working with a YJS.

2. Understand where the EP role fits within a YJS.

3. Better understand the YJS organisation.

It was hoped that these aims may serve to support a clear enquiry into the work of EPs across a range of LA YJS organisations and that through the support of a co-researcher, the research will feel relevant and appropriate for those who participate.

3.1.2 Research Question

The current research had the following research question and sub question:

RQ 1. How do EPs experience working with a YJS?

      SQ. How do EPs perceive their own practice, role, and contribution in a YJS?

3.1.3 Purpose

By moving forward into the data collection stage with these aims, the author hoped that the complexity of this organisation might be better understood, as well as how EPs in this service are currently working and potentially could be working. With this in mind, the current research has adopted an exploratory approach.

Exploratory research does not test hypotheses, rather it seeks to provide links and connections between theory and hypotheses, providing new explanations and ways in which to understand and interpret reality in different ways (Reiter, 2013). The current research is exploratory as it investigated the experiences and perceptions of EPs, in order to better understand concepts including working within the YJS context, views on practice and professional identity, and the ways in which EPs construct an understanding of their contribution.

The author wishes to acknowledge that as the initial intention of this research was not possible due to difficulties already explored in this chapter, they wish to contribute towards a greater purpose of social justice. The hope is that this exploratory work with EPs in YJ will ultimately serve to benefit the CYP whom these EPs support, providing insights into the ways in which practice and multi-disciplinary working may contribute towards the support of vulnerable CYP.

3.2   Ontological and Epistemological Positioning

In order to determine an appropriate methodology for the current research, it was crucial to explore ontological and epistemological positioning and the role of such positioning in Educational Psychology research and practice. Ontology and epistemology are defined as "philosophical constructs rooted in the nature of reality and how knowledge and knowing come to be" (Daniels & Alston, 2023 p 17). Ontology is concerned with the way an individual views reality and the nature of understanding reality (Moore, 2005). Epistemology is related to the knowledge of reality and concerns how one can discover what can be known (Moore, 2005). Moore (2005, p. 106) describes that epistemology is also related to the relationship between the "knower" and "what can be known". In research this may refer to the researcher and their investigation. The positioning of a researcher impacts upon their research at every level from the literature review to the methodology, data collection and analysis. It is vital that positions are

stated explicitly and that a range of paradigms are explored and understood in order to encourage a researcher's self-reflection, exploration of biases and in order to provide clarity around the steps taken to produce or highlight knowledge as well as any discourse to which the research contributes (Reiter, 2013).

To be rigorous and reliable, exploratory work needs to take into consideration epistemological and ontological perspectives of reality (Reiter, 2013). Having considered a range of ontological and epistemological positions in the context of research, the current research adopted a critical realist ontology and epistemology. Critical realism relates to the construction of narrative rather than the discovery of a singular truth and is often related to qualitative research methods (Cruickshank, 2003).

The critical realist paradigm emerged with the hypothesis that while a true reality exists, it is also complex and subjective (Robson & McCartan, 2016). In this sense a critical realist paradigm posits that knowledge may be socially produced, interpreted and is hermeneutic in that it is impacted by and can be understood through personal experience, language and context (Robson & McCartan, 2016). In research, this would also include the researcher's own experiences or perceptions and how they might interact with their investigation as there is an emphasis around understanding others in order to understand facts, valuing perspectives, and respect for the importance of experience in informing knowledge (Panhwar, et al., 2017). Bhaskar (1975) in his formulation of critical realism, highlights the need for a distinction between

ontology and epistemology and an argument against the dualism of knowledge and knowing as either a universal reality or individual realities (Bhaskar, 2020). In this sense, critical realism can be understood as a middle ground, or perhaps unity between positivism and relativism (Patomaki & Wight, 2000).

By adopting this position, the author concludes that knowledge in this research can be known through the describing, interpreting, and explaining of EP's perspectives and experiences, while considering that these views are situated within the 'reality' of the systems in which their practice and experiences are situated. The author proposes that the system of YJ in which the EP profession is situated may be considered real, although the YJS experience may consist of individual and contextual perceptions which constitute the ways in which people make sense of systems. The YJS is viewed by the author as a reality, as the foundations are entrenched within national law and international conventions as well as the historical and socio-political background of the local and national contexts of criminal justice. They also acknowledge that legislative and legal contexts are inductive in that they may be made sense of and translated into research and practice through socially constructed understanding and interpretation. Therefore, a critical realist position is considered appropriate by the author.

Reiter (2013, p.7) argues that "instead of pretending to be neutral, we need to be aware, explicit, transparent, and honest about our starting position, standpoint, situatedness, or positionality". Considering the interaction of the author's own experience and the research focus,

the author highlights the importance of transparency in the construction of a research design. The author supports a view that researchers bring themselves to research, and despite possible attempts at detachment from the research subject, the researcher carries with them theories, hypotheses, experiences, and biases. In order to attempt to remove biases, the researcher should therefore engage in processes of reflection and reflexivity in order to understand where their understanding comes from and how it influences their research (Reiter, 2013). With regards to the critical realist positioning of this research, the author views their experience as an interpretation relating to the organisational context of the YJS which they hope to explore with those who have more direct experiences of working within this context. The author does not view their experience as a singular truth, however. They posit that their experience may indicate a possible reality with regard to the system of YJ, and hopes that through the exploration of EPs' experiences, more may be understood about the interaction between the system of YJ and individual professional practice. The author will discuss their own process of reflexivity later in the chapter.

3.3   Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

3.3.1   *Soft Systems and Systems Thinking*

Broadly speaking, systems thinking refers to the development an understanding of underlying, non-linear structures (Richmond, 1994), patterns in complexity, and interrelatedness

between individual parts to form a whole (Arnold & Wade, 2015). Systems thinking has gone through many iterations of definition and redefinition (Arnold & Wade, 2015) and as demonstrated by the above definition, seems ambiguous, may appear without purpose, or aim, and is often misunderstood. Systems thinking is important as "in order to understand behaviours, we must first identify and then understand the systemic structures and underlying mental models that cause them" (Monat & Gannon, 2015, p. 19).

With regard to the present study, systems thinking is defined as holistic and integrative thinking, with a focus on the interrelationship and connectedness of individual components that constitute a whole system (Monat & Gannon, 2015), and aiming to identify, untangle, and understand complex structures and situations. In this study, the aim is to understand the YJS as a whole system, considering systemic structures and organisational dynamics through the exploration of experiences of systems within the YJS, in this case through the views of EPs.

Born out of a perceived need for a flexible methodology which can be used to understand social realities, soft systems methodology (SSM) describes a way of thinking which supports the unpicking of the complexity and ambiguity of the social world (Checkland, 2012). Checkland (2012) describes a system as "an abstract concept, that of a complex whole entity of a particular kind", "not a description of something real out there in the world", while Bateson (1972), describes a system as an entity which consists of parts that interact with, communicate with, and influence each other.

In SSM, in order to understand the workings of a human system, it is important to understand it holistically through the exploration of subjective world views, properties, relationships, and situations which exist contextually in relation to the whole system (Checkland, 2012). This process is referred to by Checkland as "systems thinking" or "thinking using systems ideas" and it is emphasised that systems thinkers must understand that the process is iterative and based on the perceptions of those who experience the whole entity as well as parts of the whole. There may seem a tension between SSM and critical realism. However, some have argued that the two can unite, particularly in research as "by adopting a realist ontology, researchers employing soft systems methodology can pursue practical relevance, appreciating the central role of meaning in social interactions, but also seek to develop explanations that can potentially extend beyond a given research context" (Armstrong, 2018, P. 479). Armstrong (2018, p. 477) indicated that together critical realism in SSM supports a transformative focus through the recognition of "social, physical, and imagined mechanisms and structures".

As this research relates to a complex organisation or social system, a systems thinking approach is adopted, as the YJS can only be understood through the exploration of emergent properties and situations. In this research, this is conceptualised through the exploration of EPs experiences. In order to do this, the author embraces a stance of not knowing about the organisation, although their experience has contributed to the research design, by inquiring about individual perceptions of those who experience parts of this organisation in their unique

contexts, as well as the organisation as a complete entity. Therefore, systems thinking has

informed the author's understanding of how to go about understanding and unpicking the YJS

across various LA contexts, by considering whether EPs' experiences of YJ contribute to their

practice and impacts their work. Of course, this will only include the perspectives of one part of

the work force in this organisation, EPs. However, soft systems thinking in this research defines

the EP as a system in themselves who communicate and interact with other systems within the

YJS. Therefore, while organisational change thinking has informed this research, and the author

hopes that their research may contribute to a better understanding of the YJS system, the author

is not working directly with the YJS to create organisational change. Systems thinking is therefore

adopted as part of the design of this study as a co-researcher with YJS experience is involved to

support an interview schedule which is appropriate for participants and support the narrowing

of the research topic. SSM therefore is implemented as tool through which to explore the views

of a co-researcher via a Rich Picture, which is explored further in this chapter.

3.3.2 Social Justice

The author is positioned firmly within a social justice perspective on conducting research.

Social justice is difficult to define, however a social justice agenda can be described as principally

emphasising equality, non-discrimination, and freedom (Schulze et al., 2018). A key feature of

social justice is that of Children's Rights, of which this research is aligned with in the context of

the UNCRC (1989). The author wishes to highlight the importance of social justice within EP work

and research. Young people from ethnic minority backgrounds are overrepresented in prisons and are more likely than white children to receive harsher and more restrictive outcomes such as custodial sentences which, a review found, cannot purely be explained by the severity of the crime committed or having prior offences (Youth Justice Board, 2021). It is without question that disproportionality and bias within and around the YJS is prevalent and impacts significantly on the lives of children and young people who are significantly vulnerable. It is important that EPs consider the value of promoting a social justice agenda in their practice with YJSs for these reasons, particularly as these young people are often viewed as young offenders first and their vulnerabilities may be simplified to risk factors to criminal involvement (Farrington, 2002). With these young people situated at the core of EP YJS work, and the stigma or narratives placed upon them according to the research, the author concludes that social justice must be embedded within this research.

This research adopts a social justice position through the exploration of systemic issues of the YJS with the consideration that systemic organisational issues may contribute towards experiences of oppression and inequality for CYP in YJ. CYP in the literature highlighted their YJS experiences as confusing, punitive and disempowering, with significant negative experiences of social isolation and stigmatisation. A social justice perspective of the literature indicates that in this system, CYP are not always receiving clear empowering support in which professionals consider the systemic factors impacting the lives of CYP. For example, CYP in the literature spoke of issues they faced in seeking help, a lack of peer based or parental support, as well receiving

support which was perceived as inappropriate. Such views indicate how crucial the systems around CYP in YJ are, particularly the professional relationship, with the implication that professionals may provide a key role in the place of friends and family. Therefore, by exploring the EP experience of YJ, the author operationalises social justice in affirming that the responsibility lies with adults to reflect on their role in an organisation, whether their organisation is working effectively and positively, as well as their overall function and contribution in protecting vulnerable CYP.

Acknowledging the author's own position within these perspectives and the adoption of a critical realistic ontology, it is important to consider the issue of power. Power is a complex structure to unpick, however, the work of Bourdieu was instrumental in informing the approaches taken by this research. In his work, Bourdieu describes power in terms of the concepts of habitus, capital, and field as tools examining the effect of social structures (Power, 1999). His work states that a person's habitus (attitudes) are developed by social structures and operate with fields in which power is always present through forms of capital (resources) (Power, 1999). In line with a critical realist ontology, power in the present study is viewed as a truth which is embedded within the historical, socio-political context of the YJS. Power has been considered throughout the literature review to explore how CYP experience YJS' and associated professionals, notably with regard to the way CYP reported that negative attitudes and beliefs were shaped by systems such as professionals. The author has also considered their own difficulties in engaging with CYP in YJ may relate to the power of the adults in YJSs who made the

decision not to share the research with CYP. The author had hoped to address power in their original research design by working directly with CYP in YJ and following a participatory research design to ensure their views and experiences were central.

3.4   Research Design

3.4.1   Participatory Research

Reflecting on the frameworks mentioned prior, the author considered that a participatory approach will be most suitable to support this research. Participatory research has various definitions, including, "Participatory research focuses on a process of sequential reflection and action, carried out with and by local people rather than on them." (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p. 1667).

Participatory research can be understood as an approach to research (Schratz & Walker, 1995) in which researchers work collaboratively with an individual or a group who have lived experience of the area, topic, or phenomena of interest. This collaboration in participatory research should be active and inclusive in order to support the formulation of research which is relevant to those involved and which addresses an imbalance of power that can occur in a researcher/participant relationship (Bourke, 2009).

In line with the ontological and epistemological positioning of the current research, a participatory approach acknowledges that the co-researcher's experience in their role as an EP who has an understanding of the YJS is paramount to ensuring that the design and focus of this research is informed and appropriate for the participant group. The author has embraced the assumption that their own lack of experience as an EP within this system means that they are unable to access the individual and unique realities of this organisation, in line with systems thinking and SSM. Thus, the author cannot know how to investigate the experiences of the participant group, and their work within and as part of a specific system, without the insights of an individual who has a lived experience of the YJS.

The purpose of using a participatory approach for this proposed research is to support ownership and agency for the co-researcher over their views and experiences. The voice of the co-researcher will be central with this approach as ultimately their views will determine the area of focus for the research, as well as if or how they wish to disseminate this work and progress any findings to support the YJS, and EPs. The participation of the co-researcher is explored in the following section.

3.4.2   Co-researcher Involvement

3.4.2.1   Recruitment

The author sought out EPs who had experience working with YJSs through a purposive sampling strategy. EPs were offered the choice of participating in the research as a co-researcher or participant and two information sheets were shared with EPs in order to inform their decision. Co-researcher recruitment process lasted from January 2024 to the end of February 2024. A co-researcher was recruited at the end of February 2024. They are an EP who has previously worked with a YJS.

3.4.2.2   Co-researcher Sessions

After an initial meeting to discuss the role and outline what it would entail, two sessions were completed with the co-researcher in order to understand their experiences of the system of YJ. The author chose to complete a rich picture over these two sessions in order to capture a clear, shared understanding of the systems involved within the service and highlight areas which would be important to explore in line with SSM. The rich picture process is discussed below.

3.4.2.3 Rich Picture

A rich picture is a technique which involves the visual representation of systems through the voice of those with experience of the systems (Monk & Howard, 1998). The visual representation of the system supports an understanding of problem situations and how actors construct the elements and actions that are happening within a system to create a whole image of activities such as relationships, and culture (Monk & Howard, 1998).

A rich picture was deemed appropriate by the author in that it is rooted within SSM. The SSM epistemology of understanding human systems through the exploration of perspectives in a way which is meaningful to the actor (Monk & Howard, 1998) lends itself to a participatory approach and is relevant to this research as it relates to the exploration of experiences of working within the YJS. The rich picture in this research served a purpose of organising the information provided by the co-researcher so that their experiences can be better understood by the author and therefore highlight the areas of working which require further investigation with the participant group.

In this research, the author negotiated two sessions with the co-researcher who has lived experience of working within a YJS, in order to draw, discuss, and interpret a rich picture of the YJS. An interview guide was then designed with the co-researcher based on co-constructed interpretations of the rich picture.

The rich picture sessions indicated that the co-researcher experienced the YJS as an organisation which involved multiple professionals, some of whom were working closely with CYP and the service. Some professionals were reportedly located within the criminal justice system and were involved with the YJS, but they were experienced as outside of the YJS. The YJS was experienced as a service which is situated within a system of power, which impacted professionals, CYP, and their families. Some agencies such as the Youth Justice Board were experienced by the co-researcher as having more power, while CYP, families, and schools were perceived as having the least power in this system. The YJS context was understood by the co-researcher as a complex environment where professionals experienced high levels of pressure, demands, and a lack of resources. The YJS role was described as coming with an emotional impact and consisted of competing goals and priorities. Examples of this included the aims of professionals in the YJS to support and provide hope for CYP and families, while working within a system which is punitive and lacks a strengths focus. EPs were viewed by the co-researcher as underutilised but well placed to support the YJS.

The information gathered from the co-researcher supported the author's understanding of the YJ context and how the focus of this research was narrowed to focus on EPs' experiences of practicing in this work environment. The interview schedule gave particular focus to the issues explored by the co-researcher in order to investigate whether other EPs experience complexity in this organisation and whether such reported complexity can be better understood.

Figure 3.1

Rich picture
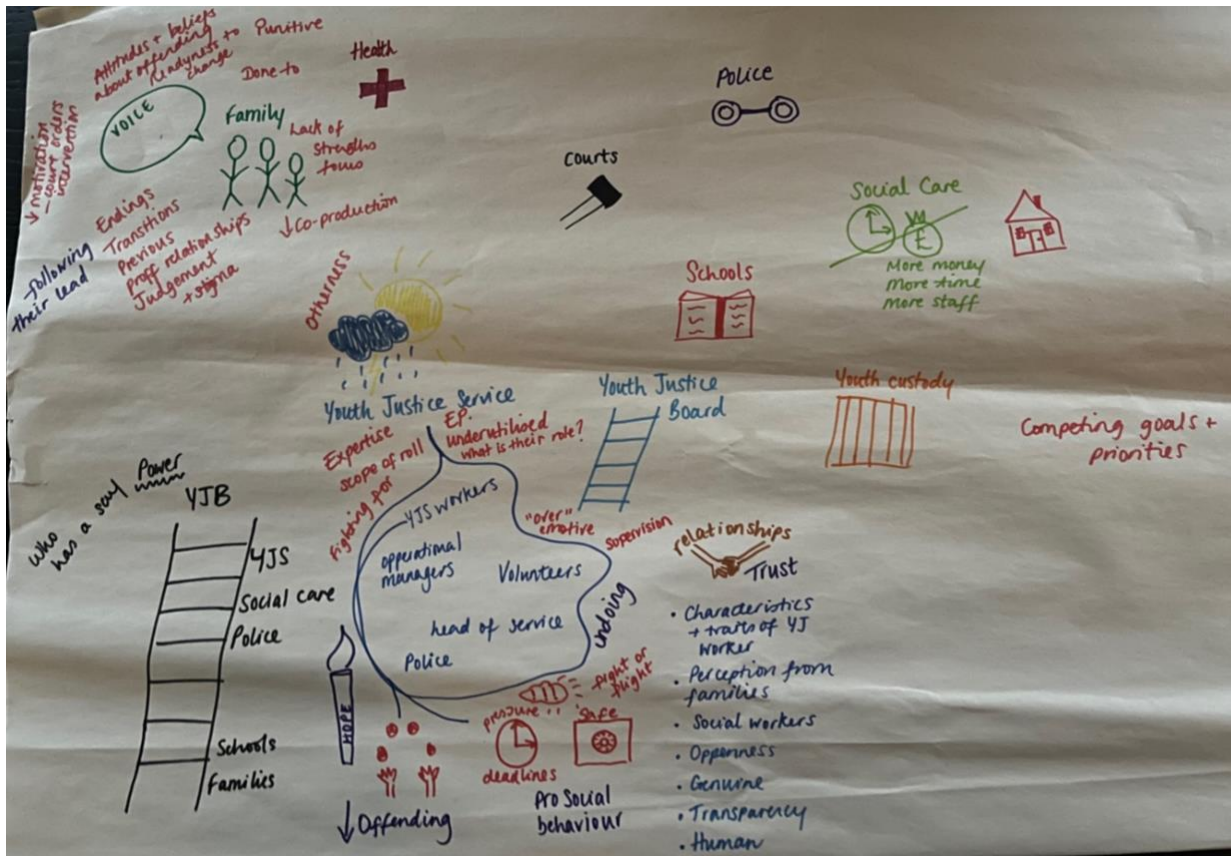
3.5   Data Collection

3.5.1   Participants

Participant recruitment, as with co-researcher recruitment, was purposive in order to recruit EPs who have current or previous experience working with a YJS. EPs were recruited via email to heads of EPSs, via EPs, or through Trainee EPs. As the author had contacted a range of EPs working in YJ for their initial study working with CYP, these EPs were also contacted directly via email to invited them to take part in the present study. The participant sample consisted of eight EPs who have current or previous experience with the YJS.

3.5.2   Interviews

A semi structured interview guide was co-constructed between the author and the co-researcher based on the discussions from completing the rich picture.

Semi structed interviews are a list of questions which are used to guide and prompt a discussion on a particular area of interest for research (Kallio et al., 2016). Semi structured interviews are often used in social research due to both versatility and flexibility and they can be completed with both individuals and groups (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Semi structured interviews have advantages in social research, particularly in enabling reciprocal exchanges

between the interviewer and participant (Galletta, 2012) as well for supporting the interviewer to respond and build on an interviewee's response. The author followed a framework for developing their interview guide developed by Kallio et al., 2016 as shown in figure 3.2 below. A pilot test of the interview guide was not completed due to the time constraints of this research. In this research, seven main questions were written in order to explore the YJS context, the EP role and their practice, as well as EPs' views and values in relation to those of the YJS. Several sub-questions were constructed as prompts in order to gain more detail, or to provide additional information to support the main questions where needed. The interviews were semi-structed, to ensure that the interviews were guided by the themes and topics which the participants wished to explore. They consisted of a combination of pre-designed and spontaneous follow up questions, in order to keep the conversations fluent and to ensure the author's clarity over the themes and topics discussed by the participants. In some cases, the participants language relating to YJS terms differed to those with which the author is familiar, therefore the author checked whether the terms they were using were appropriate for each participant and adjusted where needed, for example, using YOT (Youth Offending Team) or YOS (Youth Offending Service) in place of YJS. The interviews took place in March 2024 on Microsoft Teams and lasted for approximately one hour each. The participants were interviewed individually in order to ensure that the author could accommodate the participants and their diaries. Individual interviews were also chosen to allow for each participant to share and reflect on the interview questions in depth, and ensure they had the time to share relevant information which may not have been covered

by the questions. Each interview was recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Teams software, before being checked for errors in the transcription by the author.

Figure 3.2

A framework for developing a qualitative semi-structed interview guide from Kallio et al., 2016
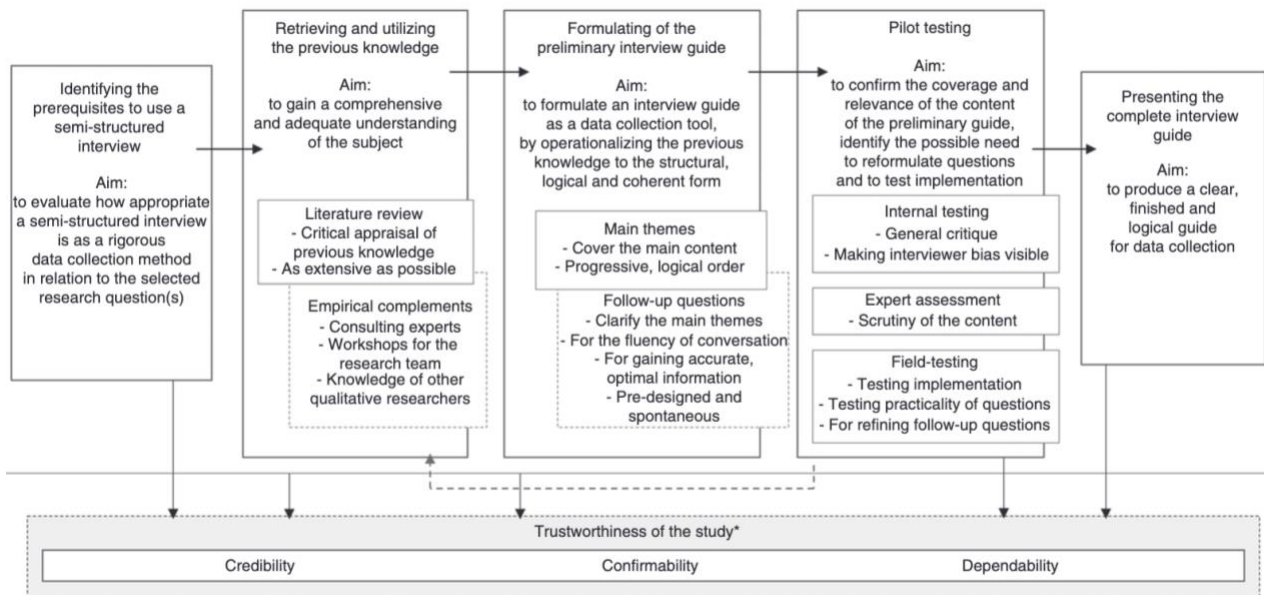
3.6   Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is a "method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative data set, which involves systematic processes of data coding to develop themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 4). TA is considered a theoretically flexible method (Braun and

Clarke, 2022) which offers accessibility even for those who are new to qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Reflexive TA (RTA) embraces researcher subjectivity as a source of meaningful research (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Braun and Clarke view the practice of RTA as subjective, with an emphasis on researcher reflexivity, and a rejection of the concept that coding can be perfectly "accurate" or "objective" Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 8) "as it is an inherently interpretative practice, and meaning is not fixed within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p. 3). Reflexivity involves critical reflection from the researcher to consider their role, research practice, value systems, and processes (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 4).

Making sense of data is a key aspect of the RTA process and is completed through an analytic process following 6 stages:

1) Dataset familiarisation

2) Data coding

3) Initial theme generation

4) Theme development and review

5) Theme refining, defining and naming

6) Writing up

Themes are described as a collection of core ideas which unite concepts, or "meaning-based interpretative stories" (Braun and Clarke, 2022), p. 3. It is the themes which are the output of the process built from codes through the researcher's engagement and immersion in the data. Coding can be inductive in orientation meaning that the data is the starting point for creating meaning or informing ideas, and it can be deductive in orientation meaning that theory or conceptual ideas inform the coding (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 57).

RTA was used to analyse the data gained from the participant interviews. As the author had undertaken a literature review, constructed a research question, and derived a theoretical and conceptual orientation prior to the RTA process, elements of this process were deductive at the level of understanding how themes related to prior knowledge. However, the data drove the formation of codes via the active role of the author, and themes were developed to describe codes as patterns of shared meaning in line with RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Therefore, the coding and theme development elements were inductive and took place at latent level as the author attempted to understand both spoken and unspoken elements in interviews. Appendix I demonstrates an aspect of the author's creativity in the data set familiarisation and meaning making process. Having read transcripts, the author used a visual approach to understand data's meaning prior to the formation of codes. This approach was taken with all data sets in order to ensure the author was fully engaged with the data. Appendix G demonstrates the approach taken to flexibly group codes in order to generate themes, working on paper in order to support movement of codes throughout stages three to five in the RTA process. RTA was deemed an

appropriate methodological process due to the flexibility of the approach and the ability to consider rich data in depth through a process of reflexivity in order to describe patterns of shared meaning between participant data sets.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research differs to that of quantitative research in that it is less concerned with reliability or validity, rather it relates to trustworthiness (Gunawan, 2015). Yardley (2000) highlighted that quality of qualitative research relates to sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. In the present study sensitivity to context has included the adoption of a participatory approach, with the author acknowledging their lack of lived experience in working within this context. The author has also demonstrated sensitivity via a literature review and exploration of the voices of key stakeholders in this context, CYP. Regarding commitment and rigour, the author has demonstrated their desire to promote the voices of marginalised groups by embarking on a journey of engaging with YJSs. While unsuccessful and constrained by time, the author remains committed to supporting this group and hopes to work with them in the future, informed by the findings from this study. Furthermore, the author has demonstrated rigour via a thorough assessment of the evidence base in this area. Having explored a systematic review of the voices of CYP in the YJS, as well as a brief review of EPs views after changing their research, the author

perceives that they are competent in their knowledge the research area with a thorough understanding of the current base and gaps in knowledge.

In supporting further rigour, the author followed procedures in engaging in a reflexive TA and following a framework for developing their interview guide developed (Kallio et al., 2016) in collaboration with a co-researcher. The co-researcher was able to promote rigour, as they have their own research experience, and the author was able to check their understanding of the YJS through the co-researcher's experience. The author has promoted transparency and coherence throughout this chapter and the literature review, including changes which were made to this research. Having explored the issues, adjustments, and personal experiences relating to this research, a clear process has been outlined in how the research came about, was completed, and will be interpreted in the following chapter. Lastly, the impact and importance of this research will be explored in the discussion chapter. The author has stated their hopes around the impact of this study, particularly with the perceived importance of understanding the YJS context in relation to professional practice and the impact on CYP.

3.8 Reflexivity

Trustworthiness in qualitative research may be supported through clear communication of the procedures and clear reflexivity (Mays & Pope, 2000). The author has engaged in reflexive practice throughout this research through supervision and journaling in order to consider the

impact of their own self on the current study. In doing so, they acknowledge that researchers bring themselves into their work and thus impact their research. Reflexivity has also been a key component of keeping this research and analysis trustworthy, and the author has engaged with reflexivity via the consideration and discussions around how their prior YJS recruitment experience has influenced on the design of the present study, as well as how their personal characteristics and prior knowledge may influence the meaning making process. The author has concluded that this experience has impacted on the present study at the level of design. However, by involving a co-researcher in focussing the research, lived experiences which are relevant to the study have been brought in to design the interview schedule and support the dilution of the author's unconscious biases to promote the author's subjectivity. The author has supported their subjectivity in the data analysis processes through the use of supervision and reflexive journaling as well as their immersion in the data, while acknowledging their active role in identifying patterns in the data. In the RTA process, reflexivity was supported by the author's practices of engagement with various processes of data familiarisation and flexible code development and theme formation. This supported an in depth understanding of the data while also remaining reflexive by considering how the author was bringing themselves to the research and the meaning making process.

3.9   Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for the initial study was granted from the University of East London's ethics committee in March 2023. The amended study was approved in December 2023. This section will highlight the ethical procedures undertaken by the author for this research.

3.9.1   *Consent*

Consent was gained prior to participation in this study for both the co-researcher and participants. On initially contacting EPs and services, the author shared the study advert and a brief summary of the roles in order to ascertain whether EPs would like to take part as a co-researcher or participant. To ensure consent was informed, the co-researcher and participants were invited to read the study information sheet and contact the author with any questions prior to meeting. Participants and the co-researcher would then sign the consent form which contained further information regarding their data and storage of the recorded Microsoft Teams calls. Participants were made aware prior to meeting that their interviews would be recorded and that they could chose to turn their camera off should they wish. Participants and the co-researcher were informed of their right to withdraw from this study.

3.9.2   Anonymity

Participants were informed that they would be assigned a pseudonym in place of their real name and that any identifying information such as LA, or specific service names and procedures would be removed. Participants were allocated numbers (e.g. EP 1) to replace their names on interview transcripts from MS teams. Transcripts were then saved on a secure account and the participants allocated a pseudonym. Only the researcher has seen the raw transcripts which were deleted from MS Teams. Sample characteristics were not included as part of the data collection of this study other than years spent working in the service. These were collected to inform the author of the length of EPs experience with the YJS but were not included as part of the analysis in order to protect participant anonymity.

3.9.3   Confidentiality

Participant and co-researcher data including consent forms, video recordings and transcriptions are only available to the author of this study. They have been stored on a secure OneDrive account and will be deleted once the study is finalised through this thesis. The author completed a research integrity course delivered by Epigeum to ensure they were aware of ethical procedures. The author also completed a data management plan which was initially approved in February 2023 and an amended version was approved in November 2023. Confidentiality may be broken by the author if a participant in this study were to make a disclosure regarding a

safeguarding concern such as a risk of harm, or where malpractice and maltreatment are indicated.

3.9.4   Risk

The present study was assessed as having a low risk of harm to the co-researcher and participants. The author considered that discussing professional matters may impact participants through concern around LA or service identification, thus any identifying material was removed or pseudonymised. It is for this reason that participant demographics were not included in this thesis. A resource sheet was sent to EPs with support for mental health and wellbeing should they feel affected by their participation including the discussion of difficulties associated with their YJS work.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has highlighted the methodology of the present study including ontological and epistemological positioning, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, research design, data collection and analysis. The following chapter will discuss the findings from this research.

Chapter 4: Findings

As highlighted in the previous chapter, a reflexive thematic analysis was conducted to investigate the experiences and perceptions of eight EPs via their interviews with the researcher. The following chapter presents the findings from the thematic analysis. The findings are presented in relation to the following research question and sub question:

- How do EPs experience working with a YJS?

    - How do EPs perceive their own practice, role, and contribution in a YJS?

The analysis highlighted three themes, and 14 sub-themes as represented in the thematic map (figure 4.1) below. The findings relating to this research indicate that EPs experience insecurity around their professional identity. This experience appears to be impacted by a challenging work context in which EPs find themselves morally and ethically conflicted, constrained by emotionally taxing work, as well as their experiences of working with a wide range of professionals.

Figure 4.1

Thematic map.
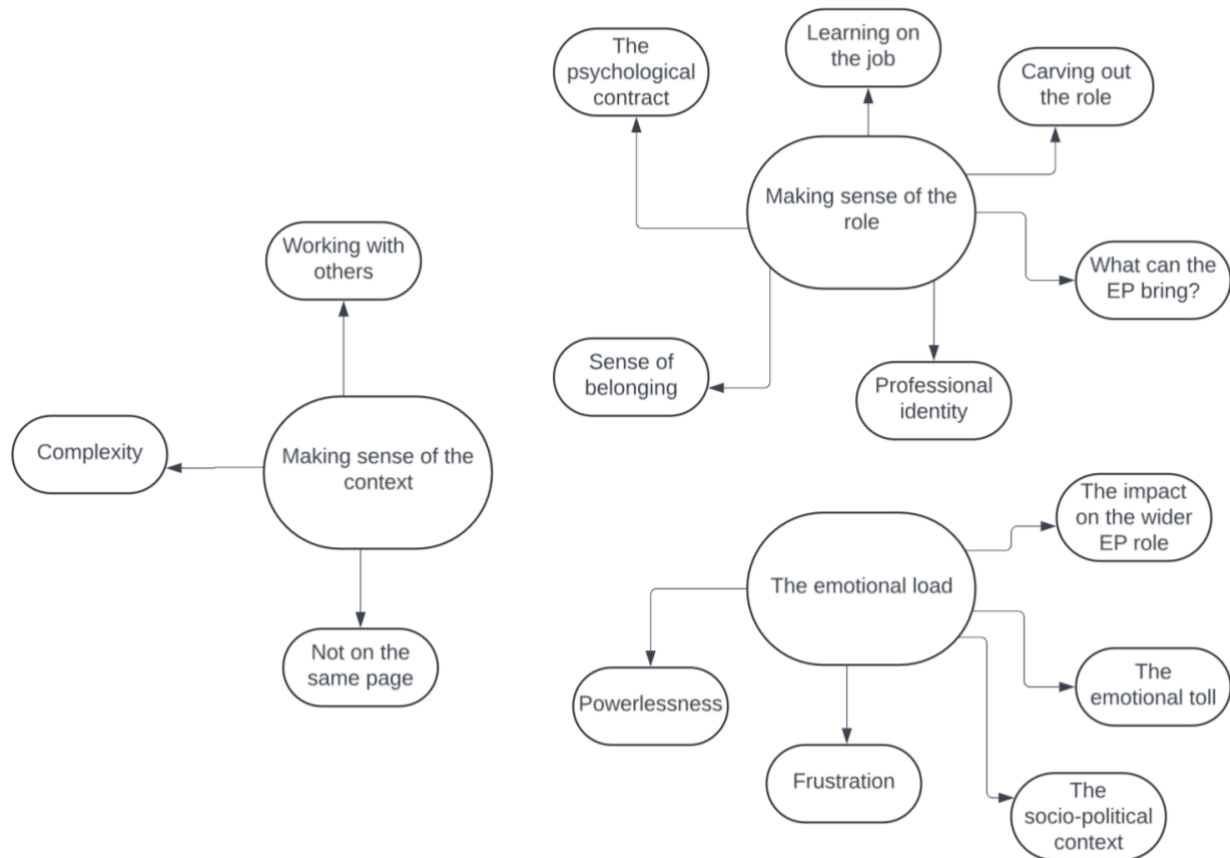
4.1   Making Sense of the Role

Throughout the interviews, each of the participants identified various aspects of their role, practice, and contribution in the YJS. This theme also highlights the ways in which the EPs have come to define the role and made sense of, or not, what they can offer the YJS in relation to what they perceive the YJS is looking for.

4.1.1   Carving Out the Role

This sub-theme relates to how EPs have experienced the initial stages of working with the YJS. It highlights how relationships between EPs and the YJS started, as well as the EPs' perceptions of the factors which facilitated this working partnership getting off to a helpful start.

The perceptions of some EPs working with the YJS indicated that there had been significant contracting and negotiation in order to support their partnership with the service. Annie described "I think there's a lot of negotiating around the role", while Jane highlighted "it's taken a lot of work to get here". Annie and Alysa suggested that clear contracting was an important factor for both EPs and the YJS to be able to make sense of the EP role. Alysa described, "I think there's teething pain, you know. Nobody knows how much time we have, so the whole time thing is a bit of a problem" while Annie said:

The people that have been in the YJS before have carved the idea out that we, kind of, might think about consultation, and then we can explore assessment, but assessment might look very differently to what you might think, or how other professionals do it".

Amelia described their role as "quite informal, there wasn't like a channel that was set up. It came about through our discussions" and that YJS related cases were assigned to them "just because admin would have known I wanted to do them." They explored how the lack of clear contracting had impacted their experience of creating an EP role, saying that "when you work with schools, it's a much clearer sort of, pathway for how the EP gets involved." Managerial input was an important part of the contracting process and for this EP to make sense of their role as:

"It almost seems so big to identify what would be a good way to start and when I'm just left by myself doing it, it's just a bit overwhelming. You just think where, where would I even start with this? I need to know from a management perspective you know, how much time I am going to be given to do this".

In terms of their YJS experience, Mary described that a facilitating factor during the initial stages of this partnership was that "you slowly begin to build relationships. People get used to seeing you in meetings". This indicates that there had been an initial settling in period that enabled relationship building, and which was supported by their presence in the space.

4.1.2 The Psychological Contract

This sub theme explores the psychological contract between the EP and the YJS. It relates to EPs' experiences of the YJS context as a supportive space or atmosphere, which in turn facilitated positive feelings from EPs relating to their way of working and contribution in the YJS.

EPs had a sense that the YJS has been flexible and open which has fostered a sense that the service is supportive of their role and practice. Samantha explored that "I think it helps that the manager is very on board [they] love the EP involvement so [they] are very open to us … doing what we think is best." This EP also perceived that the YJS "are open to working with whoever they can work with who will be able to make a positive difference for the YP". Mary echoed this sense of openness within the YJS in comparison to their work with other organisations, stating that the "YJS have just been so much more open which is really exciting". Annie explored how "I have a lot more flexibility to do assessment, than perhaps an EP who's linked by traded work", which they attributed in part to "working with a much smaller number at the YJS" than compared with their traded school EP role. Some EPs discussed how the YJS way of working added to their contribution as they perceived that they are able to complete more extended pieces of work than in their other EP roles. For example, Annie mentioned that "you're working with children over a long period of time so you get to be on that journey with them" while Mary reported that "I'm getting to do some really extended pieces of work".

For Alysa, an important aspect of their experience was their sense of clarity around their client in the YJ context. They mentioned that "the clients are the young people", adding that in the YJS "I feel like my client is much more directly the YP, instead of the school, which I always feel is my client".

Experiencing the YJS context as open and flexible, EPs explored how this has resulted in greater autonomy over their practice and time. For Mary, this experience was unique to their YJS role as they explored that "it's so nice to be able to go, oh I think we can do this, and then they get on with it straight away rather than wanting to test it first or know more about it". Alysa echoed this, stating "I've been able to basically do what I want. I like that personally; I like that freedom. I like the autonomy", adding that "my work is guided by my assessment instead of my work being tightly constrained by the SENCO telling me how much time we have left", again indicating that this sense of autonomy over time and practice feels different to their non YJ role. Samantha also appreciated the YJS working environment, exploring how their sense of autonomy impacts their work stating that, "they don't check, and they don't say how are you using your time. So, if I say I think this YP will benefit from me doing some intervention, I can just do it".

4.1.3 Learning on the Job

This sub theme relates to the perceptions that many EPs had that they did not understand the nature of the role prior to starting, and that were making sense of their role through their experience.

There was a sense that EPs were unprepared for their YJS role. Amelia described how "it's so different to our area isn't it?", while Alysa reflected "there's no precedent for EP involvement" and Lin explored that "the reality of actually starting and working with the team, it's been quite a steep learning curve". Annie echoed this, stating "it's not a system we were trained to know. It's difficult because I think you're kind of thrown into the job and going, right, be an EP in this system but it's a system that you have no familiarity in".

There was also a perception of the difficulty of applying some of the aspects of their training into practice when they haven't experienced a need to apply them in their non YJS EP role:

"I think there's definitely training that we probably have received that we can bring to it, I know we had stuff on things like trauma and kind of gang culture, but then it's like, how it's applicable, and I think sometimes it's hard to draw from that when you haven't needed it or you haven't experienced it" (Annie).

The perceptions of their role with the YJS for some indicated that their initial expectations had been different to the reality, as Mary described when talking about their YJS hours; "we thought we'd struggle to fill it because they wouldn't use it. And it's been the opposite, we have been really involved and it's been a lot wider that just case work". This EP also added, "it's surprised me how well used we are".

4.1.4   What Can the EP Bring?

This sub theme relates to the contribution EPs can make in YJ. The EP role and identity is explored, and specific skills and practice are identified as part of their YJ work. EPs also explored how their role has not been clearly defined, with some wondering whether the EP role provides a contribution which is distinct from caseworkers or other YJ staff.

For many of the EPs, their role in the YJS was unclear. For example, "I still don't really know how it could look" (Amelia), "I think I'm still trying to figure it out to be honest" (Annie), "a lot of us are still finding our way" (Olivia).

Some EPs explored that they wondered whether the skills that they bring to the YJS are unique to the EP role. For example, Mary stated, "I wonder how often I do something that has a bit of crossover with SALT, CAMHS". Other's spoke of how skilled the YJS are in many of the

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elements of practice that overlap with their practice and contribution. For example, the YJS were perceived as being highly skilled in co-production, establishing relationships with CYP and families, person centred practice, and understanding the importance of CYP's voice. Olivia highlighted that often YJS caseworkers have skills which EPs are not trained in stating, "they are very skilled and highly trained in things like harmful sexual behaviour, sexual abuse, you know, gang culture, things that we as EPs often don't have the level of knowledge and experience around". They added that "caseworkers are predominantly from a social work or probation work background, which is very strongly trauma informed and attachment informed. So, then you start to think, what differentiates their knowledge and their practice from what I do?".

Regarding the EP role more generally, many described their experience of others' uncertainty about the role. Mary reflected that "nobody really knows what we do", and the profession is "grey and woolly", Jane described how "It's so common for people not to be clear on the EP role, or to only have a limited understanding of it. I wonder what it is about our role that seems so unclear". Olivia also explored this stating that:

"I think it's common to being an EP ... we spend a lot of time trying to define our role for people. People don't know what to expect and if they do have an expectation, it can be quite antiquated'.

Jane reflected:

"So much of what we do is working at that point of facilitating and maybe it seems a bit blurry. What we're doing is the kind of soft work, but it's not clear.... it's in the conversations, in the questioning, helping people feel contained, helping people explore. But those things are not so concrete, and I think people find it hard to see".

Some EPs experienced that others see EPs predominantly as assessors as Annie described, "there's the idea that EPs will do assessments, and by assessments they mean standardised like the BAS or the WISC", Amelia also shared this experience "a lot of people are like, oh can you just come and do a cognitive assessment, and I'll be like, no I'm not going to that", while Jane reported that they were seen as "gatekeepers for the EHCP".

There was a perception from EPs that their role needs to be clearly communicated and defined in YJ work, particularly when working with CYP. These EPs perceive that their involvement is unique in comparison to other roles in the service. Amelia discussed how:

"It is really important for your role to be really clear to them, because unlike other people they've been involved with, where they probably don't really have a choice, or their choice would lead to a consequence, our interactions aren't like that and that's really important to be clear about."

EPs named skills and practice that they bring to YJ. For many, skills such as supervision, reflective practice, consultation, containment, and problem solving were viewed as key skills they used when working with adults such as caseworkers in the YJS. For example, "the main chunk of my work is a lot of reflecting with the caseworkers and thinking about areas we might need to tap into a bit more to better understand" (Lin), while Annie spoke of their perception around how crucial their role is in offering "emotional check ins and thinking about capacity" because "they're firefighting and you know, particularly when they have a high caseload or lots of vulnerable children with lots of different needs, it's really hard to hold that in mind or explore that so I think sometimes it's just that containment". Jane spoke of their experience of the impact of their supervision, "after a few years, it became beautiful. I got to sit back, and I was like, they're almost facilitating themselves and they are using the language". It seems that for these EPs much of their role is focussed on supporting the practice of others.

Assessment and identifying need were referenced as important EP skills. Many discussed that these skills were an especially crucial part of their role in the context of YJ. Samantha explored that "there's a lot of undiagnosed need. I mean just looking at the prison population, it's a ridiculous percentage have got a learning need. It's really important that's addressed". Alysa's experience has been that "one of the main parts of my role is identifying that [a YP] has needs. That's why [they're] struggling to meet the expectations of society."

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Identifying need was perceived as a crucial part of their role in making links and being able to view a CYP holistically, such as, "not just seeing them as criminals and seeing the whole context" (Samantha). Annie explains, "I'm trying to bring in a bit of context around why we're seeing some the offending. Why they're vulnerable, why we are seeing certain behaviours or certain defences". Olivia stated that "there's still very much this idea that it's a binary. Is it trauma or neurodiversity, is it this or is it that? So, I'm constantly having these conversations about well, there's a story, there's an interaction of factors". EPs experienced that the role of identifying need was a crucial aspect to support change for CYP. They perceived that this provides opportunities for their contribution to reflect in the changing views of others. For example, Samantha stated that, "only their behaviour has been seen, so to actually say to them ... I've done this assessment. This is what the scores are. This is what that will mean ... they then understand that really does make sense" while Alysa reflected "I think we can make an impact by changing the way people think".

Alysa explored how this linked with an advocacy role, "my role is to shift mindsets around the YP. I do feel in YJ I can hone that even further. The role of the EP to identify a child's symptoms, behaviour, within the context of their underlying needs. I can really do that and then it's a way of advocating for their rights" (Alysa). Advocacy was viewed by many of the EPs as an important part of their role. For example, Mary highlighted that "this is an area where systems have failed so often. It's kind of an opportunity for a family to be heard and held in mind and have someone want to, kind of, that real advocacy role" while Annie reflected that "it feels a lot

like advocacy". Alysa was also clear that "I've always thought my role is like an agent of change, an agent of hope, like someone bringing positivity to a situation. So, I always felt like my role is as an advocate".

Another part of the advocacy role for some EPs highlighted that sharing knowledge with others was a key part of their YJS contribution. As Olivia stated, "I do feel that often they are YP that don't have the tools to advocate for themselves or actually, put their voice into practice, I think you need to work with YP for quite a long period of time to give them this sort of narrative skills and the vocabulary to describe their own experience". Some identified that they contribute a unique psychological perspective in the YJS, for example, "We can share our knowledge and share psychology and give psychoeducation" (Alysa).

It was perceived that the specific population of CYP in the YJS benefit from EP involvement as Jane highlighted that "some of our children from the YJS, they haven't got enough documentation because they're out of school. That means they haven't got what SEND usually wants". Olivia's view was that the EP in the YJS provides "a second chance for a YP to have EP involvement, often they're YP who've slipped through the net or the people that work with them haven't had the support of an EP". This relates to the experience of these EPs around their role in making links in and documenting a CYP's history in order to support their access to recourses such as support, and to support those around the CYP to develop an understanding of what is impacting them. Particularly EPs perceived that their contribution is helpful in "supporting access

to education" (Annie), as well as "if they are going to court, thinking about how they should be spoken to or how information should be presented to them" (Annie).

On this notion of access, positioning was also explored by some EPs. There were indications that EPs experienced a sense of being positioned as "gatekeeper of EHCPs" (Jane) or "the education expert" (Lin). Lin explored their perceptions of how their position is perceived within the YJS, "I think some people on the team, I felt like they would see the title of Doctor and feel that actually, let's get you involved because, you know, it's helpful to have some backing from someone who's a doctor". Other EPs explored how their experience of the way they position themselves as "neutral" (Samantha) and "not part of the system (Mary), facilitated aspects of their practice with staff members in the YJS as well as with CYP and families. For example:

"Everyone else around them is like, I need to listen to you because I'm a social worker, so I have to assess whether you're a good mother or whether you can look after your child. I'm a caseworker, so actually I'm connected with the law, I'm affiliated with them. Or I'm a police officer, so I need to check whether there's been a crime. Whereas we are just authentically interested in the experiences of the family and the YP. We are unique in that way. I think we don't have an agenda." (Alysa).

4.1.5 Identity

EPs also explored the identity of the role, particularly with regard to the importance of psychology as part of their professional identity. Jane emphasised how "from my perspective, we're psychologists first, disregard the educational part, and I think psychology fits nearly everywhere" indicating the importance of psychology across multiple areas of working. Olivia also mentioned the importance of psychology stating that "I feel that psychology holds a key, to all things". Mary stated that EPs are "a bit of a jack of all trades" indicating that the professional identity includes a wide range of skill and expertise. EPs also mentioned that while their profession often involves supporting CYP who experience significant disadvantage, Olivia said that "I think we don't have to confront it as often", perhaps indicating why many EPs have been so significantly impacted by the emotional and socio-political aspects of their YJS role.

For some EPs, their professional identity did not always align with the identity of the wider YJS. Some EPs perceived that their professional identity and personal identity were linked and contribute to the misalignment of the YJS and EP identity. Olivia explored how "it's just, it's kind of quite a cultural difference and now I wonder actually, it that not just about the work, but it's also about access to these professions".

Olivia reflected on the cultural difference between the EP professional identity and the YJS. They perceived that "in EP team meetings. It's all quite polite, it's very polite and well spoken.

In YJ ...there's more of a use of taboo language, there's a lot more letting off steam, there's a lot more sort of banter" and "there's quite a lot of swearing ... a lot of bawdy humour and black or gallows humour which I think some EPs will find quite shocking". Olivia indicated that as well as the organisational culture they have experienced a distinction between topics which are discussed in YJ EP work and those in their work with schools, highlighting that "if you're an EP going into YJS, you've got to be quite comfortable with the language around those things, you know, I mean working in taboo territories comfortably".

Alysa also explored a misalignment between their personal and professional identity and the identity of the YJS stating that "there's definitely going to be a perception of me that I'm not in touch with, you know, cool things, and even young people to an extent", adding that "what they perceive is someone who is out of touch. Someone who comes with a lot of privilege".

4.1.6   Sense of Belonging

This sub theme relates to the sense of belonging EPs experience in the YJS. EPs talked about their experiences of fitting in with YJS staff and the extent to which they feel a part of the organisation.

The YJS was described by some as a different world, for example "it definitely can be tricky trying to understand all the jargon and changes in legislation ... I reflected on very early that I sort

of had that anxiety of not being able to understand sort of their world" (Lin) and "It's given me a lot more insight into that world" (Mary). This highlights how EPs feel outside of the YJS 'world' due to contextual specifics such as language.

A sense of not being part of the YJS team came up in many EP interviews. For example, "We don't really have a base like in schools... you're sort of in the team and not really part of the team" (Alysa) and "I ... wasn't quite part of the service. I've always said I work with; I don't think I am quite part of. So, I think that I'm just different to them and not different to them. But they see me as being distinct from" (Jane). For some this related to the part time nature of their role, "I'm not there every day with them and I'm not as close to the casework as they are, you know emotionally close perhaps" (Olivia), while others found that they are "not as embedded" (Jane) because "I don't sit with the team, I go to the team meeting, and I leave and come back to my section" (Jane). Some felt that their lack of belonging was related to how they are perceived by others in the YJS as, "I kind of fear that they think, oh it's alright for you" (Olivia) and how case workers are "very, very in touch with these YP ... and ... I always come in my jacket 'cause that's, I want to be smart, and there's just a bit of a mismatch there. I did feel really awkward about that" (Alysa). This indicates that EPs feel less of a sense of belonging with the YJS in comparison their EP team and highlights how some EPs are concerned that the way they are perceived by the YJS impacts on the extent to which they are able to belong in the YJS.

A lack of belonging in the YJS was an important aspect of Alysa's YJS experience and linked to their personal and professional identity. They explored how they felt a greater sense of belonging in schools:

"There's a part of me that feels like I can't really be part of their gang or something ... I don't really know how to fit in. Whereas in a school, I loved school, I was keen on school, and I was at school so much I wanted to be a teacher, and then I wanted to be an EP. So, when I'm in a school, I'm like, yeah, I can be here".

They reflected on the challenge of being themselves and fitting in with the YJS, "it's just kind of hard to be yourself and also belong. I can be an EP and belong, but I'll never be part of them". They felt that their lack of sense of belonging was also related to their background and "privileges" which has impacted their ability to relate to the CYP and families they work with:

"To be an EP, the vast majority of the time you have to have toed the line throughout your life. ... you have to get good grades, you have to get good A Levels, you have to get a good uni degree. You have to work really, really hard to get on the course and then work really hard to stay on the course. And there's a whole DBS check, like you can't be a criminal... I'm here to relate and understand their experience but there's almost that separation that I can't really know their experience because I'm in the system, like I've toed the line. I've been in the system, and I've been part of the system".

4.2   Making Sense of the Context

Although many of the EPs were working in different LA contexts, this theme describes their sense of a contextual relevance to their practice in YJSs which had strong links across participants. It explores the YJS context from the EP perspective and how that has impacted on their role, practice, and contribution. It also highlights how they relate concepts including organisational complexity, values, and working with others, to their perceptions of their work within this context.

4.2.1   Working with Others

This sub theme highlights the multi-disciplinary nature of the YJS. It describes the service's links with a range of professionals and the EPs' sense of the impact on their practice. Views were also explored in this sub-theme around the challenges that occur when working with large and varied groups of professionals, as well as the EP's perceived barriers to their contribution specific to their YJS role.

The YJS is understood as a multidisciplinary service by EPs. The multidisciplinary nature of the service was highlighted as a constructive way of working. For example, Annie stated that, "the EP in the YJS is more multidisciplinary and I think in some ways, it's like the most ideal way

of working", Lin explored how "there's quite a lot of joint working. I never really feel like I'm working on my own" and Jane shared that their work in YJ "feels more collaborative". Multidisciplinary working was regarded as positive as "I like the sharing of practise, so I get more knowledge" (Mary), and "you're sitting with lots of different professionals with ... expertise and you can really build on and draw from links from that" and "it can really help you think really critically about what you're doing" (Annie). These views indicate that multidisciplinary working is viewed as an important part of practice for these EPs, particularly as this way of working facilitates opportunities for learning and sharing.

For some however, having more people involved in their work wasn't necessarily viewed as positive. Samantha explored how, "you want to collaborate with everyone but sometimes it can be hard to because there's so many people involved that getting everyone's perspective can be difficult". Mary wondered, "am I going in and making it more messy? More complex because I'm an extra professional going in". Annie explored "if the YJS are seeing the child one day a week, who gets to see the child? Is it SALT, is it [therapeutic team], is it me? I think when a case is so complex sometimes you might not be high on the pecking order". Some also wondered whether their involvement was necessary given the number of professionals involved. Amelia reflected whether CYP "really need an EP at this point, because they've probably got a tonne of other professionals involved that are probably doing ... really pertinent work". Annie added their experience of how this impacts EP practice stating that, "it feels like you see the answer in front of you, but you can't reach it because everyone is out of your control. Everyone else is not

responding or prioritising in the same way". This indicates that working with a large multidisciplinary organisation can present with challenges, including the navigation of many varying viewpoints and professionals, determining which are the most appropriate professionals to be involved with a CYP, and whether EP involvement would be beneficial considering which other professionals are already involved. Mary discussed their perception of how these views are also shared by the CYP receiving YJS involvement stating, "I think they are overwhelmed by it. I think there's a lot of confusion ... a YP couldn't name any of the professionals in the room and didn't understand what role those people had in supporting [them]".

Annie also explored that "you're working within one context and there is lots of other professionals in the context, but it's not the wider system. That's not the LAC team, that's not some schools, or social care, it's not SEN, children's services". Therefore, the experience for this EP is that, while the YJS itself is multidisciplinary, YJS involvement does not always link up with other services. Mary explored that this aligns with their experience of working in a LA where they feel that services are often siloed, "it's one of those LA things where everyone works in their own little team and is quite happy in doing that. But actually, you look at it and really wish they would open up". Jane perceived that this may be part of the specific context of the YJS as, "I think they are in a position where the buck stops with them to a degree. So, they seem to be less likely to look around to see who else's responsibility something should be, or who else would be helping because ... they are the outcome". For Alysa, the quality of the work with some services was a

concern as they stated that "there's a lot of elements of the people that get involved, of the services that involved, that are sort of, not quite fit for purpose".

Considering working with others as an important aspect of their YJS experience, EPs explored their work with schools. Linking up with schools was perceived as important for supporting CYP's outcomes, although many stated that this is challenging in YJ. Samantha described how they experience schools as disengaged with the YJS, CYP receiving YJS involvement, and the YJS EP, highlighting that:

"A barrier would be how receptive the schools are, because you could do the work and find out what the needs are, and I know what the school needs to do but the school just doesn't respond. So, you think well nothing's going to change because the school's not engaging".

Reflecting on school disengagement, Mary reflected that "contact with school is really limited because they are almost just not part of that system anymore". They elaborated that, "I am yet to work on a case where the YP is successfully accessing an education setting". Annie explored that, "there's been issues in the past where schools found out that children are part of the YJS and will try to exclude them or not want them in the school because of risk. It's tricky navigating that". This indicates a contextual factor experienced this EP, due to a school's perception of risk around a CYP receiving YJS involvement. Lin also reflected on their experience

of challenge when working with schools, highlighting their lack of resources to work with this particular group of CYP:

"I think the systems in place can feel frustrating. Like if a YP needs to be back in education there's things that could be put in place, but ... schools aren't able to provide, unable to follow what's recommended because they don't have the resources".

Lin also perceived that schools may be challenging to work with as they "may not have an understanding of their [CYP] need, which can be quite tricky". They explored that schools may be disengaged as they "might prioritise EP involvement for certain YP and that if they're not attending, it's almost, let's focus on the children who are attending and let's prioritise EP time with them". For this EP, schools were not using their traded time to support CYP under a YJS. This may indicate that schools are more challenging to engage if they haven't requested EP involvement. Samantha explored their experience with schools being more likely to engage with their non YJ reports, stating that "I think because it's the school's traded time and they've paid for that report they are more likely to look at it". Mary believed that schools may be disengaged as on finding out that the YJS is involved, some schools appear to pass on the responsibility of caring for these CYP to the YJS, stating that, "not all schools, a lot of schools, feel like they've passed the buck. It's sat with someone else now and we're not going to worry about that".

For some EPs, working with schools in the context of their YJS role is also regarded as challenging due to their experiences in navigating confidentiality, with Annie describing it as, "all a bit cloak and dagger sometimes". They highlighted their experience of needing to hide their role from schools in cases where CYP and their caregivers had not given consent for the EP to work with their school, for example, "there's nothing to do with it on the framework, that is there's nothing to do with the YJS … usually, it's under the guise of social work. All very mysterious". Lin shared a similar experience, highlighting this as a barrier to their involvement with schools in the YJ context stating, "you have to be really delicate with involvement with the school because some schools may not have an understanding of why the YP is with the YJS or whether they're even involved".

4.2.2 Complexity

This sub theme describes a sense of complexity that was portrayed by EPs in relation to the YJS as an organisation, as well as their YJS casework. EPs explored their difficulties and confusion in trying to make sense of the YJS and the CJS, as well as their perceptions of how this impacts CYP and families receiving YJS involvement.

For many of the EPs, complexity and confusion were indicated as significant aspects of their YJS experience. For example, Annie described the YJS saying, "it is complex, and it definitely feels messy at times as well", adding that they have found the language difficult stating, "it's a

whole different system. I still don't know half the acronyms that they use". Amelia explored how navigating the YJS is "so complex, isn't it? It's really hard to get your head around" and Mary stated that "it's massively complex and confusing". Lin linked the complexity to learning, highlighting how they are "trying to learn what I can within the CJS because it's just so complex and there's a lot to learn". Annie reflected on the impact of the complexity on their practice and role stating that "I think that it's messy because as a practitioner I'm trying to navigate a system that fees really complex and messy, and I'm trying to do my job or figure out what my job is ... or what I can bring to the system". They also highlighted their perception of how complexity impacts the CYP and families receiving YJS involvement reflecting:

"It makes me think, if I find the system messy and overwhelming and complex, what does that say about how the child views the system? I'm someone with access to a lot of resources and people to speak to, and not everyone, not every parent or child has that same access or understanding on how or where to even look for information".

The organisational structure was explored by some EPs, indicating that they have found the system of YJ challenging to understand and navigate. Amelia spoke of how "the management structures can be really different can't it?" while Alysa explored how they have found YJ procedures challenging to their practice and contribution as, "it can be more difficult in the YJ context because there's just so much stuff around it that you have to do, you know, protocol".

Alysa also explored how they have found it difficult to understand and work within the legal framework of YJ, particularly with the police, stating that "they're a complete mystery, I don't even talk to the police". Lin also explored their experience of complexity with regard to the organisational and legal language as "it definitely can be tricky trying to understand all the jargon and changes in legislation, I guess I think this was something I reflected on very early that I sort of had that anxiety of not being able to understand sort of their world."

Pace was explored by EPs as a part of their experience of complexity in YJ. Mary described "how quickly it moves when something small changes for them", referring to the pace of change for CYP due to risks such as safety. Annie also referenced this stating that "things will change on a day-to-day basis for these children". Annie highlighted how they have found this pace challenging stating "the urgency of work is different" while Alysa reflected that "I'm finding that a bit tricky ... their way of working is so urgent and immediate and quick".

Both EPs indicated that their involvement was requested urgently, however they were not always able to work in this way due to issues such as consent or time allocation. Alysa described how they have experienced the need to remind the YJS of these elements of their practice stating that:

"You have to be like, I'm sorry we can't move forward until we have consent. It can be a barrier because sometimes the CYP don't have a parental figure who can quickly do things. And

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then people ask me for things, like oh can you just come to this, ... and I'm like, well I need to check my time log and I need to check my allocation. I need to hold on a second".

EPs also highlighted their experience of their YJ work feeling highly complex, particularly with regard to assessing need and facilitating change. Amelia reflected that "a lot of the cases just are ... complex and messy and by nature". EPs discussed a range of factors which contribute towards the sense of complexity in their work. Olivia explored that in YJ "you're working very much with systems where in many ways, the needs of the family... are entrenched difficulties". Annie described that "parents don't have capacity so children might not be supervised and might not turn up to appointments and therefore you can't do the work". They added "you might be putting loads of stuff in at school or in the YJS, but actually there's so much going on at home that it is so hard to navigate". This indicates that YJ work involves working with CYP and families who experience systemic challenges and significant risks which EPs perceive as complex to navigate in their practice. Olivia further reflected that their YJ work feels complex as the challenges experienced by the CYP is an important factor consider when assessing need. They explored that "there's still very much this idea that it's a binary. Is it trauma or neurodiversity, is it this or is it that? So, I'm constantly having these conversations about well, there's a story, there's an interaction of factors".

Annie also explored that the CYP in the YJS face significant uncertainty and disturbances in their lives such as "difficulties with breakdowns at placements, constant changing of

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placements". As a result, Annie has experienced that CYP can often present as disengaged with support stating that "they don't often take it up". Samantha also reflected on how risks can impact on their work as "some YP who for their own safety have been moved out of the borough and then you don't get to finish the work".

4.2.3 Not on the Same Page

This sub theme relates to the values and ideologies of EPs and of the YJS and how these impact EP practice. There is a sense in this sub theme of ideological difference, or dissonance between the culture and values of EPs and the YJS and CJS that EPs experience as detrimental to their work in YJ.

Some EPs described their experience of a clash with regard to the way in which their role and practice is received. Jane explored their experience of the way some caseworkers had received EP supervision, stating that they "wonder whether they saw the point of it ... not everybody does because there's nothing to physically show for it". They added that in YJ "there is valuable work that can be done by an EP, but whether that value is perceived...". Lin discussed that "some caseworkers will respond better to receiving this additional support. Some don't value it as much". Annie stated that:

"You're working with a lot of negativity, you know, case managers who maybe don't have the capacity to hold the same values that you do because they are burnt out by the role, they're still caught up in the brokenness of the system".

Regarding the culture, ideology, and values of the YJS and CJS, Annie indicated that "this is a massive system that usually goes against a lot of the values that you have as an EP". Alysa highlighted a sense of "complete different ideologies" while Amelia reflected "I think when you're working in fields like this, it's probably more important than ever to by guided by your moral compass, but also the values … our core ethics and principles", indicating that EPs feel that the YJS and CJS are not aligned with the ideologies and values of EPs.

The legal and criminal nature of YJ involvement was experienced by many EPs as challenging to their professional ideologies, practice, and contribution. Jane described their sense of a "punitive black and whiteness" in YJ while Amelia perceived that YJ work is "driven by response. Like they come in, they have an order, they have to follow the order. Basically, a behaviourist approach". Alysa said that "there's something about the nature of the organisation being justice law courts, you know which feels intimidating, a bit impenetrable. There's this real, that's the law, you know". This indicates that while YJ was experienced as supportive to CYP in some ways, a sense of punishment and rigid legal margins is restrictive to EP practice. Jane also reported that "they live in a world which is governed by law as well, so … it feels quite a lot more rigid", while Alysa reflected that "you're battling against enormous organisations like the police,

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doing the complete opposite of what you'd ever recommend", adding that "it's so punitive and it's against what you would want and the results of your assessment". Samantha also reflected on how "you bring in the psychology, you bring in all kinds of other factors that you think might be involved, but there's still: no, this is what they've done, so this has to be the outcome", highlighting that decisions were made for CYP regardless of EP involvement.

Olivia also described how:

"There's clearly a deliberate process ... this idea that you need to kind of shock people or frighten them ... give them a nasty shock and it will deter them from doing it again. It's this idea of deterrence which you see in a much more intensified way".

For some, language was a significant area of difference with regard to the YJS and CJS, Jane highlighted "I think that at the beginning it was tricky ... because they have a different way of speaking". They added that "they have this quite punitive language which doesn't really sit right with being an EP".

Judges were identified by some EPs as particularly challenging to the ideals and values which govern their practice. Olivia explored their experience with one particular judge:

"There's a thing where a judge might take a long time to turn up and you know, they're all sitting there waiting and I said, you know, is that deliberate, is it necessary?... Because it's just very painful watching a young person sort of waiting, and the parents are literally shaking with fear and anxiety".

Amelia reflected on an experience of hearing caseworkers discussing judges:

"I know there are particular judges that I've heard them talk about that ... he doesn't fare well with this sort of thing ... or he won't tolerate X or Y. And actually, that shouldn't be the case. It should be consistent across everybody, it shouldn't be dependent on what judge you get."

Olivia further explored their sense that:

"There are chunks of personnel or people who are not tuned in to the diversity of human experience, in how they perceive YP's difficulties and where they come from ... you see that in a much more intense way if you into a court ... and how things like neurodivergence get disregarded".

The experienced discussed by EPs seem to link with issues of power in the YJS and CJS. Olivia explored that:

"I think there is a barrier around the fact that input from YJ, if it's based on a court order, is compulsory, and I have had situations where YP find that they can't really function under that restriction, because if they feel it's compulsory and they have to be there, it stops them, I think, being able to develop a genuine relationship of trust with that caseworker".

4.3 The Emotional Load

The EPs taking part in this research reflected upon their emotional experiences of working in YJ. There was a sense that YJ work has a significant affective impact and for many, wellbeing was highlighted as a concern. The experiences of working with disadvantaged groups, the feelings associated with YJ work, and the emotional impact are explored in this theme with the implications for EP practice and contribution discussed.

4.3.1 The Socio-political Context

This sub theme explores EPs' experiences of working with a vulnerable and disadvantaged population. EPs explored their sense that the CYP receiving YJS involvement experience systemic vulnerabilities, describing their experience of being confronted with the extent of such disadvantage.

Many of the EPs reported that they were working with particularly vulnerable CYP in YJ. Annie described how "I think in the YJS you're working with possibly the most vulnerable demographic of children". For Olivia, the issue of inequality was significant to their YJ experience, describing how "it does confront you with the realities of disadvantage" and "I suppose when you do that casework in YJ you see that, the grindingness of poverty, the grindingness of the daily experience of racism, the actual blunt end of sexism". Mary also highlighted how their YJ work has "really opened my eyes up to the challenges they're [CYP & families] facing", while Annie described how their YJS experience "shines a light on how broken a lot of the systems are". Olivia also highlighted that the extent of the disadvantage and inequality that they had experienced is "much starker in YJ because you're coming up the extremes of negative human experiences".

EPs also discussed their perception of the systemic issues that have impacted the CYP and families they work with in YJ. For example, Mary explored how "they seem to be hit by every system failure that could possibly be and you wonder how it happens" while Annie stated that "it's quite sad, it's quite depressing. You're meeting children who have fallen through all these systems and things can feel hopeless at times". This highlights EPs' perception that the CYP and families known to the YJS have not been best supported by the systems in place. Olivia explored how disadvantage and inequality were often systemic and historical stating that:

"You're working very much with systems where in many ways, the needs of the family, or the individual members of the family, or their child really, are entrenched difficulties, or entrenched difficulties that have got worse because systems have failed people really".

This indicates that a socio-political and historical understanding of vulnerability and inequality is viewed by EPs as important for their YJS work. For example, Olivia highlighted how:

"I think you do need a socio-political level of understanding of where inequality comes from. You have to a little bit about society, statistics in society, data, inequality ... I mean I think that's expected of psychologists anyway. But I think we have it a much more raw form in YJ, those things are apparent all around."

4.3.2 Powerlessness

This sub theme relates to a sense of powerlessness experienced by the EPs in their YJS role. They explored feelings of hopelessness linked to their sense of powerlessness over their capacity to support change for CYP receiving YJS involvement.

Samantha explored how regardless of their involvement; their experience is that "the final decision goes to the police" highlighting that "sometimes I do feel like it's very collaborative. Other times the police or the courts have already made a decision no matter what". This indicates

that even though the EP has been involved with a CYP, their contribution is limited by the powers within the CJS. This sense of powerlessness within YJS EP practice referenced difficulties supporting change within the legal boundaries in which the YJS and their CYP are situated. For example, Alysa stated that:

"There's something about the nature of the organisation being justice law courts, you know which feels intimidating, a bit impenetrable. There's this real, that's the law, you know. In a school you can be more like, reasonable adjustments, like they haven't got to a point where they've crossed the line. But with YJ it's like, OK they've actually committed a crime. And … you have to follow the procedure to the letter."

Annie described their sense of powerlessness to support larger, more systemic changes reporting that:

"It's quite sad, it's quite depressing. You're meeting children who have fallen through all these systems and things can feel hopeless at times. And I think there is that urgency of wanting to change everything, like everything is so broken let's just fix everything and that's not possible. It's not feasible. Sometimes it's the smaller things you have to do and just hope for a ripple effect".

They added that:

"We can't change the whole system. We can't change the police system, we can't change every stop and search, but maybe we can help a child think about how they might cope during a stop and search and profiling, but that ... I think that's hard to navigate".

Alysa also explored a similar sense of powerlessness to change wider systems, although they shared that they had hope of supporting change in other ways, stating "I think we can make an impact by changing the way people think. I don't think we can do anything else. I don't think we can change the system".

4.3.3 Frustration

This sub theme relates to a sense of frustration that was described by many of the EPs. Frustration was felt with regard to EPs' perceived ability to use their skills to facilitate change for CYP and families and engage with others.

EPs found school engagement to be a frustrating aspect of their YJS experience. Mary highlighted that "the school side of it is frustrating', while Lin reflected that "it feels frustrating at times, and I feel the frustration of the YP and parents when they want to be back in education but there is that barrier".

Other EPs explored their experience of frustration with working with others within the context of YJ. For example, Samantha described how they have experienced that their advice and knowledge was not implemented, "it can be frustrating when you know the psychology behind things, but it's not necessarily listened to". Annie indicated a similar feeling:

"It's trying to work with tricky people, and it's not because they're bad or their ill-intentioned, it's because of the space they have for it. But it does really affect practice and it can be really frustrating as an EP. Feels like you're doing twice the work sometimes".

Others highlighted their frustration with the context and the impact on their perceived ability to affect change for CYP. Alysa explored that "in terms of the EP role make change, it can be more difficult in the YJ context because there's just so much stuff ... that you have to do, you know, protocol". Mary reflected on a case where "I think I saw [them] within a week. By the time I'd written out the report two weeks later [they] were already out of borough ... It was a disappointing process because the young person had been quite engaged and really wanted the chance to meet with me after the assessment ... and it wasn't able to happen, it had to be done through an intermediary".

4.3.4 The Emotional Toll

This sub theme relates to the emotional impact of EP YJS work. EPs discussed the emotional weight that they feel in the YJS, as well as the professional and personal consequences of working in such a highly emotive context. Some explored some difficult emotions during their interviews, including feelings of fear, pressure and burn out.

EPs described an emotive aspect to their YJS experience. For many, YJS work was perceived as emotionally challenging. Samantha discussed their sense of an "emotional load you take on from working with these YP" while Olivia described how "I guess it's like doing a critical incident, like every week. It's like the critical incident is there all the time you know, everything's critical when you're in the YJ team". Jane felt that their YJS work included an added sense of pressure stating that "I feel there's a lot of pressure now they're finally seeing you, that you need to step up for them and really try your best to make them feel heard, try to give them a positive experience". They added that "there feels like there's a lot more riding on it", indicating how this EP perceives a significance to their involvement in relation to the outcomes of CYP receiving YJS involvement.

Alysa reflected on how their work in the YJS feels, stating that "it's much more urgent and its sad. It's a sad service". For Annie, their feelings of sadness are also linked to their desire to facilitate change for CYP, being confronted by ineffectual systems, and feeling a sense of

powerlessness in their ability to affect change. They added their experience of how they and others have felt "very hopeless or lost" in YJ work.

For many EPs, the emotional weight of their YJS work impacted on how they approach their practice. Annie described how "we're working with a really risky population who are very vulnerable, and I think you get caught up in that and it's complete firefighting".

The emotional toll perceived by some was impacted significantly by the YJ context, particularly those with whom they work. For example, Annie has experienced "working with a lot of negativity", describing "case managers who ... are burnt out by the role". For Annie this impacted on the way they were able to practice in their YJS role and their own capacity stating:

"That is kind of just like what's the point? And I think you are trying to work with that, but that is exhausting itself, you know, trying to bring that and hold that level of containment for these people who really don't have the capacity for it themselves".

EPs felt that the emotional weight of their YJS role may have the potential to impact on their practice and values. For these EPs, not compromising on their values was important. They felt that it was important to have time away from the YJS in order to support their values, practice and wellbeing, as Annie explained, "it does drain you, so I think that's why it's helpful to have a little bit of time in and out". Annie explored how:

"I think you kind of need to do a stint in YJS and then step out of it because you can get worn down by the system and that clash of values. I think it's helpful to have a refresh to not get burnt out by it all because it is exhausting".

Olivia also explored how "I do have many weeks where I think, do I want to carry on with this? It's all quite a lot to deal with, it's quite uncomfortable a lot of the time", while Mary described how "I think if you just did YJ work then you become part of their system and maybe forget to be aspirational for the YP".

For Annie, the emotional toll had also impacted their personal life. They reflected on how they had found it difficult to navigate the confrontation of YJS work stating that:

"We're going into a system where the conversations are all these awful things and you're hearing that so regularly that I think it sometimes warps your reality or your perspective on what things happen or happen as regularly".

Fear was discussed by some EPs. Annie added how YJS work had increased their fear, stating that:

"It does put you on edge, and it does change your perspective or make you feel more fearful and then that takes away a lot of the space you might have for alternative ways of thinking or changing perspective or reframing things".

For Lin, the weight of the legal system left them feeling cautious over their writing and reporting:

"I guess anything that goes to court, I feel extra cautious that people be looking at every line and when lawyers are involved, it could, every sentence that I write could be picked apart".

For Annie the increased fear they experienced in their YJS role had impacted on the way they navigated bias, stating that:

"Before I came into the role, I would have been a lot better about recognising biases, but I think when you're in it you could feed a lot more into biases because you're a lot more fearful, and that how we know people to react to biases, through fear and anxiety and things like that. Or yeah, you stereotype and things like that, so it's trying to navigate that a lot more, being aware of it".

For this EP fear and YJ work were linked. The exposure to high levels of criminality and risk present in the YJS had distorted their view on young people in their personal and professional life, feeding into biases around offending.

4.3.5 The Impact on the Wider EP role

This sub theme relates to the impact of the YJS EP role on the wider role of EPs. As all the EPs in this study work with the YJS on a part-time basis, they discuss how their role with schools is affected by their YJS role.

The experience for Mary has been that their YJS role had occupied much of the focus of their practice. They stated "I have got really sucked in to kind of the YP who are out of the education system, and I have to be really aware that I have schools and really keep an eye on that". For this EP the YJS role has also added pressure to their work elsewhere:

"It puts a lot of pressure on my workload everything else. That's something I'm still trying to figure out. And I think a major worry in terms of my own practise has been what doing this role has had as an impact on my schools because I'm being asked to attend a lot of short notice meetings, you know, fitting around a YP's contact time with YJ".

Annie described how the emotional impact of the YJS role had affected their practice, considering how they experienced the YJS as challenging to key practice skills:

"It does put you on edge, and it does change your perspective or make you feel more fearful and then that takes away a lot of the space you might have for alternative ways of thinking or changing perspective or reframing things".

For Mary, their YJS role has also impacted the way they navigate statutory Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments, speaking about how "there's a certain way of doing things and I have realised that in EHCP advice I've started putting things that aren't usual that is making the cases quite challenging". They added that "I worry I've become quite challenging" with regard to their work outside of the YJS.

Lin perceived that their work in YJ had been helpful in creating links with other EPs where EP involvement is requested by a school or as part of an EHCP assessment. They reflected that:

"Where there are any links with their own schools, to anything YJ related, they will find that they can come to me and it can be helpful to problem solve together and if there's a statutory case that comes along, it probably makes more sense to go through me if I've already got that understanding of the way that the systems work and for me to already have that relationship with the caseworkers and possibly the family as well".

Some also believed that their writing and reporting had been positively impacted by their YJ work. For example, Lin stated that, "It's taught me to be more specific, needing to be very clear about what it is that I mean rather than something being open to interpretation".

4.4 Summary

In summary the present study found three main themes and 14 sub themes relating to EPs' views on the YJS, and their practice, role, and contribution within this organisation.

It is evident that these EPs were unclear about their EP role and identity in the YJS and that they had found it challenging to contract the role with the YJS. EPs had found that their work in YJ had required learning through experience and that they had often felt unprepared for their YJS role. They were able to identify the skills that they bring to the YJS and areas in which they can contribute within this service, although they were not always sure whether their skills and contribution were unique to the EP role.

EPs found the YJ context as complex and challenging to navigate, feeling that their values were misaligned with the CJS. EPs have appreciated working in a multidisciplinary way, although they found that working with a substantial number of professionals was difficult at times and added confusion. Schools were identified as a particularly challenging system to work with in

their YJS role. EPs experienced the working relationship with regard to the psychological contract as positive, perceiving the YJS as open to their role and flexible with regard to the ways in which they practice.

The emotional load of the YJS role was viewed as a specific challenge for many. The contextual experience of working with CYP who are highly vulnerable and had experienced significant disadvantage was regarded as challenging to cope with in their professional and personal lives. EPs highlighted their wellbeing as a concern and that this work came with a significant emotional impact which impacted their practice within and outside of YJ as well as their desire to stay in the role longer term. EPs felt a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness working within this organisation, leaving them with a sense of frustration as they felt that this impacted their contribution to effect individual and systemic change.

EPs perceived that they did not belong in the YJS. They felt that they were not a part of the organisation or team and that their personal identity impacted on the extent to which they could fit in, particularly in comparison to their work with schools.

The following chapter will discuss these findings further in relation to the existing literature base and highlight their implications for EP practice in the YJS.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will address the aims of the research and highlight the research questions. The findings are summarised before the author relates their findings to the research questions. Existing literature and theory are considered in relation to the findings and research questions. The limitations of this study are considered before the author explores implications for EP practice and directions for future research.

5.1   Aims and Research Question

The research had the following aims:

1) Explore EPs' experiences of working with a YJS.

2) Understand where the EP role fits within a YJS.

3) Better understand the YJS as an organisation.

4) Bridge gaps between research and practice in YJ.

The research aims were considered in the context of the following research questions:

RQ: How do EPs experience working with a YJS?

SQ: How do EPs perceive their own practice, role, and contribution in a YJS?

Three main themes and 14 sub themes were addressed in a thematic analysis of EP interviews, as discussed in the previous chapter. The following chapter will explore the themes in comparison with the research question and sub question, pre-existing literature and theory which is relevant to this topic of research.

5.2 Theme 1: Making Sense of the Role

5.2.1 RQ: How do EPs experience working with a YJS?

Schein (1978) explored the psychological contract as a mutual social exchange relating to the expectations between an organisation and an employee on workload, performance, and salary, as well as the rights of each party (Herriot et al., 2002). This construct was reconceptualised by Rousseau to distinguish between the sense of obligation between parties and the beliefs of the individual employee (Rousseau and Tijoriwala 1998, p. 679). Aspects of the psychological contract between the YJS and EPs were perceived positively, e.g. EPs shared that the YJS were flexible and open to EP practice, enjoying a sense of autonomy and freedom in their work. The YJS was perceived as more open than other organisations such as schools, particularly as EPs were able to complete more extended pieces of work.

For many EPs, the YJS experience was fraught with challenge. Initially, EPs highlighted negotiation and contracting as an important part of shaping a positive YJS experience. However,

EPs spoke of difficulties navigating and explaining service delivery if they were trading with a YJS. Some did feel that they were able to reach a relatively shared understanding of their contract after some time. Managerial backing was considered crucial to support a positive partnership between EPs and the YJS and support a clear way of working in line with previous research (Sloper, 2004; Ryrie, 2006).

A facilitating factor during the initial stages of the EP - YJS partnership was that of EP presence. EPs are increasingly operating within a traded or partially traded service delivery model, and this is typically a way of working with which they are familiar (Fallon et al., 2010; Marsh & Higgins, 2018). It is clear from the EPs in this research, that explaining trading to YJSs who are unfamiliar with this model created confusion, resulting in a challenging start to their YJS experience. As a result, EPs and the YJS did not share an understanding of their purpose and role. Participants spoke of how they had found their YJS experience overwhelming and confusing if their involvement was in an unofficial or voluntary capacity, suggesting that clear negotiation or contracting at a service level is important to facilitate a shared understanding (Huxham and Vangen, 2000). This posits the question of whether a traded model works well for YJSs, or if an alternative model would more effectively suit the needs of the YJS, offering EPs a smoother transition into YJ. Operating an EP service via a traded model may also limit the delivery of EP services with organisations, as EPs are constrained to work with organisations who commission EPs, as opposed to those with the greatest need (Lee and Woods, 2017). Therefore, EP services

must consider whether organisations are aware of their service and the ways in which EP services are commissioned.

EPs' challenges around contracting with the YJS may be due to a lack of knowledge or experience of commissioning at the service level. It is important to note distinction here with regard to the differences between commissioning and contracting practice as EPs may be experienced and possibly confident in negotiating their practice, however they may be less accustomed to commissioning at an organisational or service level. For example, there was a clear contrast between how EPs experienced commissioning, in comparison to contracting a supervisory relationship. Contracting is a key aspect for quality supervision (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, (2010). Thomas (2007) suggests that when effective contracting takes place, both supervisors and supervisees are more likely to experience more successful supervision. The field of organisational psychology has more to offer regarding the importance of commissioning, connecting effective contracting to alliance development, organisational learning (Lumineau et al., 2011), planning, and enabling dialogue (Deakins & Dillon, 2006). Commissioning may be more typically regarded as part of the senior leadership role, with EP time allocated by senior EPs (SEPs), principal EPs (PEPs), or at a directorate management level, highlighting that EPs' experience of higher-level commissioning may be infrequent. Therefore, it may be that EPs are familiar with contracting their practice, e.g. supervisory spaces, and the issue of commissioning with a YJS may relate to unfamiliarity with the context and organisation or perhaps lacking the necessary skills or confidence.

It is pertinent to consider that working with the YJS was a relatively unfamiliar experience for some of the EPs in this study. It was discussed that there is often no precedent for EP involvement in YJSs as this partnership is not a standard role across LAs. Many EPs discussed how they had felt unprepared for their YJS involvement. For some, the issue of a lack of specific training, the application of specific YJS related knowledge, and the extent to which the YJS differs to more familiar school contexts were pertinent. This suggests that EPs found it difficult to navigate the experience of setting a precedent for EP involvement and establishing a shared understanding with the YJS. Some participants experienced a shift in how they viewed the YJS through their experience. Some EPs were concerned about their involvement, worried about how receptive the YJS would be to their involvement, however they had been surprised by how much EP support the YJS requested. This perhaps indicates that the YJS is viewed negatively by others, including EPs. It seems some YJSs are working in a partnership which was experienced positively by EPs over time. Theories of experiential and action learning suggest that experience and familiarisation are important for developing understanding, such as Revan's action learning theory (1982), or Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984). According to Argote and Miron-Spektor (2011), organisational experience interacts with context to create understanding. Therefore, unfamiliarity with the YJS could explain why participants found it challenging to navigate the YJS context and set a precedent for their practice.

Participants felt that their personal and professional identity did not align with the culture of the YJS. EPs found that the YJS context was significantly different to that of the EPS and school contexts of which they are more accustomed. They explored feeling challenged by and culturally different to the YJS. Privilege and access to the EP profession were attributed as contributing factors in this cultural misalignment. Schein (1978) viewed professional identity as constant or stable and relating to the beliefs, goals, attributes and values of which individuals define their role. Others suggest however that professional identity may be more fluid and contextual (Fitzgerald, 2020). EPs commonly have a history working in education prior to their training. Throughout their training, they gain experience working with schools and educational settings through their LA placements. Therefore, educational settings could be considered the main focus of EP work and subsequently their identity. It appears that EPs found the YJS presented a specific contextual challenge to their identity, impacted by organisational culture, individual identity, and novelty of the context. Such findings indicate that EPs find it challenging to navigate their identity within the novel YJS context. This may have contributed to the reasons EPs found it difficult to contract their role and practice, suggesting that commissioning in unfamiliar spaces, and with those who are also unfamiliar with the EP role is a barrier to identity formation and therefore clear contracting.

EPs specifically reported a lack of sense of belonging in the YJS. For some EPs, sense of belonging in the YJS related to the ways others saw them, as well a sense of feeling different and separate to the YJS. Belonging is viewed as a fundamental human need, relating to acceptance

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and interpersonal attachments (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Belonging relates to social identity, values, and the perception of in group and out group dynamics (He, 2023). EPs described the YJS as a different world, particularly in regard to their sense of feeling physically separate in the sense that they did not have a space in the YJS office. It was also perceived that the part time nature of their role meant that they were not embedded within the team. One EP explored how this linked with their identity, including the way they dressed and their level of education. This EP perceived that they were more able to belong in schools, highlighting that their privilege and education prevented them from being able to fit in with the YJS. For some EPs, their lack of belonging pertained to a desire to be distinct from the YJS and supported their neutrality and clarity over their client. For example, some EPs worried about compromising their values by becoming part of the system. This indicates a desire from EPs to feel distinct in their working contexts, although it may also signal that these EPs did not want to be part of this system.

5.2.2 SQ: How do EPs perceive their own practice, role, and contribution in a YJS?

EPs identified aspects of their professional identity which were important, such as their psychological identity and the applicability of their skills and knowledge. Participants referenced a variety of skills and practice in their YJ work including supervision, reflective practice, consultation, containment, sharing knowledge, and problem solving.

EPs are required to receive supervision within their own profession. Inter-agency supervision is also offered by EPs although this is not a requirement. Professional supervision involves three functions: education, support, and managerial practice, and often involves opportunities for reflection and problem solving (Callicott & Leadbetter, 2013). Contracting is a crucial aspect for effective supervision (Thomas, 2007). As discussed previously, EPs found contracting challenging in the YJS, however their views on the supervisory relationship were mostly positive, particularly after providing supervision for a period of time. EPs in this study reported that supervision, providing spaces for wellbeing, and containment as key parts of their role in the YJS. According to EPs, the impact of their supervision provided containment, opportunities for problem solving, and wellbeing support, particularly for caseworkers.

Participants also referenced assessment and identifying need as aspects of their YJS role. Assessment according to the EPs in this study included completing standardised psychometric assessments, dynamic assessment, consultation, and involved person-centred practice. Person-centred work was perceived as particularly important in the YJ context where CYP with whom they are working have experienced significant stigmatisation and stereotyping from others supporting the literature from the review in chapter 2 (Day, 2019; Heath and Priest, 2015); McAra and McVie, 2012; Oliveira & Beaver, 2021;). A flexible and sensitive approach from professionals was viewed as supportive to the relationship as in Wainwright & Larkins (2019). Through this work, as well as the sharing of psychology, participants reported that they were able to support others to consider a holistic view of CYP receiving YJS involvement. EPs reported that they

thought it crucial for their role to be clearly communicated to CYP with whom they work in YJ. Informed consent, autonomy, and trust were cited by EPs as vital to their practice with CYP, as well as rapport building and good interpersonal skills. This supports the perspectives of CYP in the literature review (e.g. Larkins & Wainwright, 2020; O'Shea & McGinnis, 2019; Trivasse, 2017) who highlighted the same areas as being important aspects of positive support. Working with neutrality was perceived as important to engage with CYP and families without an agenda, and as this population may have had negative prior experiences with professionals. This demonstrates that EPs are considering the professional expertise or fatigue which was present in the literature review findings (Ellis & France, 2010; Jack, et al., 2015; Larkins & Wainwright, 2020). EPs found that they were unique in the YJS as they were not connected with the legal instruction of YJS involvement. There is an element of the YJS which is authoritarian (Trotter, 2015) due to the legality of their involvement and YJ has previous been viewed as is doing to CYP rather than with CYP (Case & Haines, 2015). Therefore, EPs viewed informed consent, autonomy, and building trust as particularly important for this population, particularly in promoting a sense of agency over their engagement with EPs, whereas they have no choice but to work with the YJS.

This implies that an aspect of the EP contribution to YJ relates to supporting holistic perspectives of CYP, promoting autonomy, and reframing negative views. Advocacy was regarded as a key facet of their role and contribution to YJ, indicating the relevance of social justice to EPs and the EP identity. Schulze et al., (2018) reported that while EPs found social justice

difficult to define, it is viewed as an important moral framework for EPs in their work with CYP and families. Supporting CYP to share about themselves and reframing negative views of CYP were regarded as particularly rewarding contributions to YJS involvement by EPs. Other ways by which EPs were able to contribute to change for CYP included providing evidence and history in order to support access to resources for CYP and families, such as EHCPs. EPs reported that many of the CYP they worked with in YJ did not have an extensive documented history of need, and that they had been missed by agencies and education providers. Therefore, CYP receiving YJS involvement were perceived as benefiting from accessing EP involvement. This is in line with research, for example Gaskell & Leadbetter (2008) identified particular EP roles in multi-disciplinary work (MDW,) including the application of psychology, problem-solving skills, knowledge of education, team-working, and supporting a holistic picture of CYP.

However, the EP role has often been considered difficult to define (Ashton & Roberts, 2007). Many EPs in this study spoke of difficulties defining their professional identity in YJSs including experiences of outdated or antiquated views. Confusion around roles, professional identity, and overlap between services, was viewed as a barrier. Participants made reference to the perspectives of others. They were unsure whether others understood what they could offer, viewed them as a priority professional, or saw their practice as valuable and unique. While some participants viewed their role as offering a unique contribution, many were unsure if they saw their distinctive contribution in this context, particularly due to the expertise of other professionals around specific YJS issues, such as gang culture or harmful sexual behaviour. This

may have impacted on the difficulties EPs experienced in contracting their role within the YJS context as EPs found it difficult to clarify their purpose. This also indicates a greater professional issue with regard to how EPs identify and communicate their role in novel contexts. Van Maanen and Barley (1984) highlighted that professional identity relates to constructs around uniqueness and belonging within a context, thus if the EPs in this study did not perceive their role as valued or unique, and nor did they feel they had made sense of their own role, there is a barrier to the establishment of a professional identity and role in the YJ context. The author wonders whether EPs are more accustomed to an experience of clarity, uniqueness, and value in other aspects of their role such as with schools, where their role is more established.

The aforementioned findings around identity and belonging imply that EPs saw their practice, role, and contribution as separate from the YJS. For some EPs a lack of belonging was an issue for their practice. For others, their lack of belonging pertained to a desire to separate themselves from the context and was experienced as supportive to their YJS practice and contribution. Whether EPs felt that they were different from the YJS in a positive or less constructive way, this is a clear indication that EPs saw a distinction between their espoused identity, the way they were viewed by others, and the identity of the YJS. Positioning theory is helpful in considering this as it reflects that individuals both position themselves and are positioned by others (Fox, 2015). The ways in which they may impact on professional's sense of belonging are underexplored, however in this study it appears that positioning may have separated EPs from the YJS. There is an implication that EPs view their practice as more socially

just than the YJS, therefore positioning themselves (and possibly the profession) as practicing with a different agenda. A fundamental feature of belonging is one's sense of being valued, needed and important (Durakovic & Aznavoorian, 2024). If individuals experience a sense of meaning, purpose, and belonging they tend to experience positive consequences, including for their identity (Haslam et al., 2009). Ormiston, (2016) argued that group members want to feel both distinct and that they belong. They reported that individuals want to balance both these needs, however higher levels of difference make them feel too distinct, whereas lower levels of difference result in the loss of identity. Therefore, as some EPs felt undervalued, unsure of their distinctiveness, and lacked meaning or purpose in their YJS role, it is likely that their sense of belonging would be undermined.

Furthermore, understanding that CYP in YJ are predominantly from groups who experience marginalisation, it seems that the EP profession may not represent the clients they serve in YJ. A workforce survey conducted by the AEP (2021) indicated a lack of diversity within the EP profession, suggesting that EPs are predominantly white, middle-class women. In this study, one EP who spoke extensively of their feelings of difference indicated that they are dissimilar to those they represent and struggled to relate to their experiences in their practice. Another highlighted how access to the YJS profession is different to that of the EP profession. While unspoken, the author considers that participants were referring to their educational backgrounds and possibly race in their statements, indicating that the EP profession is not representative of the population they serve, nor the professionals they work with in the YJS. In

the literature review CYP spoke of their desire to receive support from professionals who represent them ethnically, racially, and culturally (Wainwright & Larkins, 2019) indicating that indeed, this may present as a barrier to EP practice.

Murphy & Kreiner's (2020) research suggests that in novel or emerging occupations, individuals participate in a process of "occupational boundary play", achieving identity novelty and familiarity which is "core to constructing the sense of oneself as a legitimate actor in the occupational landscape when operating in an emerging role" (p. 827). Boundary play relates to the strategies of both boundary setting (i.e. what the role entails, and how it is distinct from others) and boundary blurring (i.e. how the role is similar to others). Figure 5.1 represents Murphy & Kreiner's model of boundary play in emerging occupational identity development, demonstrating how the perceptions of novelty and familiarity, prior experiences, and sense making mediate an emerging professional role or identity. The author considers that while EP identity may appear to be threatened in the YJS, it could also be viewed as unestablished or emerging. For most of the participants, their YJS role was novel, and they had no prior experiences in this context. As such, in this study the EP role in YJS could be viewed similarly to an emerging profession, and perhaps EPs are currenting engaging with this process of boundary play in resolving their YJS identity. Furthermore, the way EPs are perceived by the YJS, their views of the YJS context, views of their own role and profession, and the prior experiences of a clear school-based EP identity created tension. For example, EPs experienced that the doctoral positioning of EPs was perceived as important to the YJS. They perceived that they were viewed

as gatekeepers to resources such as EHCPs. It seems that they wanted to reject this notion, highlighting a professional discomfort with power and positioning. There was a particular conflict between the ways they are perceived by others and how they view themselves. It may be that this conflict interrupts the identity development process, which is why EPs found it so challenging to establish their role in the YJS. This may also speak to a wider issue around the rejection of power or the ways in which EPs are positioned by others. It is not untrue for example that EPs possess professional power, but this creates discomfort. The author wonders whether EPs need to consider whether their positioning holds a truth and thus requires a level of acceptance in order to resolve the conflict surrounding their professional identity.

Figure 5.1

Murphy & Kreiner (2020): A grounded model of occupational boundary play in an emerging

occupation
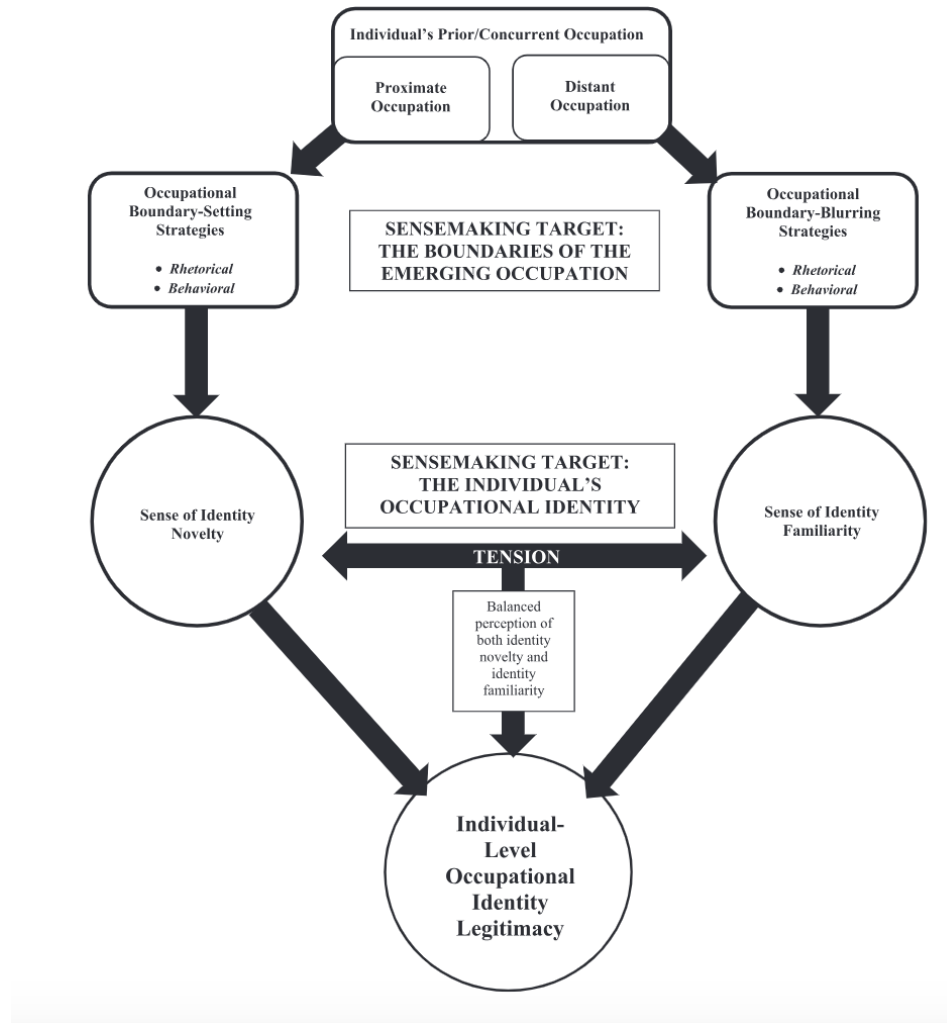
5.3 Theme 2: Making Sense of the Context

5.3.1 *RQ: How do EPs experience working with a YJS?*

EPs described a sense of contextual relevance to their practice in YJSs, particularly with regard to their work with others in the multi-disciplinary context of the YJS. EPs perceived the YJS as a multi-disciplinary organisation. Multi-agency collaboration is particularly crucial in working with vulnerable CYP with complex needs (Horwath and Morrison, 2007), such as the CYP receiving YJS involvement. Some aspects of the multi-disciplinary working (MDW) context were viewed as helpful and positive. However there appears to be a conflict between the positive perception of aspects of MDW and the challenging experiences of the context. The YJS was perceived as a complex context, and EPs highlighted distinct differences from their school-based experiences. EPs reported that MDW in the YJS presented challenges, including navigating large groups of people with different perspectives, identifying appropriate professional involvement, issues of distinctiveness between professionals, and concerns over the quality of involvement of some professionals. EPs also explored their perception that CYP in the YJS also experienced these issues of complexity and confusion over the variety of professional involvement they received, at times finding it difficult to understand the roles of different professionals, in line with Trivasse (2017). Integrating soft systems theory and systems thinking in attempting to make sense of the YJS context, it is important to emphasise that organisations are complex social systems, impacted by the interaction of world views, properties, relationships, and situations (Checkland, 2012).

Therefore, viewing the YJS as a soft system, it is pertinent to consider how EPs have been able to engage with being part of a multi-disciplinary team. Horwath and Morrison (2007) identified five levels of multi-agency collaboration:

1) Communication: professionals from different disciplines talking together

2) Co-operation: joint working on a case-by-case basis

3) Co-ordination: more formalised joint working, but no sanctions for non-compliance

4) Coalition: joint structures sacrificing some autonomy

5) Integration: organisations merge to create new joint identity

In considering Horwath and Morrison (2007), sense making in an organisation involves both collective and individual learning in order to reach a level of integration. However, it seems that the EPs in this study were not yet able to reach the integration stage in their MDW with the YJS. The author suggests that this may be as the learning taking place for EPs was not yet taking place at a group or organisational level. Instead, EPs may have working at the level of co-operation. While the YJS was perceived as multi-disciplinary, EPs described how the YJS does not always link up with other relevant professionals, indicating that the YJS is siloed from other agencies. Literature suggests that silos are presented as destructive and widespread features of organisations, particularly in the public sector (Tett, 2015). Siloed working can be professional as well as structural, relating at times to a resistance to share information due to a belief that it may be used wrongly (Bundred, 2010). Vantaggiato at el., (2022, p. 1436) argue that "silos exist when

intra-organisational communication has broken down, resulting in the isolation of parts of the organisation". EPs in this research highlighted their perspectives around why the YJS and other services could be siloed from one another. Firstly, one EP indicated that the YJS is the outcome for its CYP, thus the organisation views themselves as the intervention and does not seek to involve others unless explicitly instructed. Secondly, with a view of wanting to protect vulnerable CYP, the YJS may not seek to involve others due to fears of how they could be viewed or treated. Another possibility is that of other services not wanting to become involved due to negative perceptions of the YJS and CYP who receive their involvement. This may explain why the author found it challenging to engage with the YJS in the original design of this study. The author wonders whether the YJS is separate (i.e. they separate themselves from others) or if they are separated (i.e. others separate the YJS), or perhaps an interaction of the two. The author considers the following contextual factors as barriers to integration.

The YJS context was perceived as different or novel, particularly in comparison to schools. EPs stated that they found it challenging to navigate the legal framework of the YJS, needing to become familiar with the language and organisational structure. The pace and urgency of YJS work was considered challenging, with EPs viewing the YJS as working reactively and within rapidly changing situations. Ryrie (2006), explored YJS pace in a discussion paper, highlighting similar issues where in the YJS context change can be sudden or unanticipated. He explained how this was impacted by the unpredictable lives of CYP receiving YJS involvement, as well as the court system in which unanticipated decisions can be made quickly. Ryrie further explored how

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this way of working is in contrast to the ways EPs typically work, particularly in their value of planning and reflective practice. The author perceives this as relevant to the current research, as EPs found it difficult to work in the reactive context of the YJS. Reactivity in the YJS was viewed as decisions being made quickly in response to the court, or plans changing due to concerns over risk and safety. For example, CYP may be moved out of borough or to a new housing placement as a result of an incident or in response to a crisis. EPs may have found this difficult as they are most used to or prefer to work reflectively, taking time to plan their work as Ryrie (2006) explained. EPs do respond to crises in their practice of critical incidents. However, research suggests that EPs are potentially more removed from the crisis of the event, as their practice involves supporting schools with planning responses, providing containment, and delivering education, as explored in a recent thesis (Brennan, 2021). Therefore, the author wonders if EPs are unused to practicing within a context of crisis and risk, where finding time and opportunities for reflection in the moment are difficult to achieve.

EPs explored their sense of being separated by others through their YJS group membership. Of concern were significant challenges engaging with schools, although linking with schools was perceived by EPs as important in supporting positive outcomes for CYP. Farrell et al., (2006, p.43) indicated that the EP contribution in multi-disciplinary practice includes connecting school and the community. Research indicates that pathways out of offending can be supported or inhibited by school experiences as highlighted in the introduction to this study. Therefore, the importance of school engagement with CYP in the YJS is significant. EPs in this

study explored how CYP they worked with had been excluded (formally as well as socially) by schools and many were not accessing an educational setting. They noted that CYP were viewed by schools as being outside of school system and a risk to others. CYP known to the service have experienced significant social exclusion throughout their lives as explored by Day (2019), Ellis & France (2010) and Larkins & Wainwright (2020). In contemplating the separation of the YJS, the author wonders whether the view of CYP is related to the othering of the organisation. Schools were perceived to have passed on their responsibility of CYP to the YJS, feeling that they were unable to meet the needs of these CYP. In comparison to their traded work, EPs experienced schools as reluctant to engage with them in their YJS role. Some EPs considered that as well as schools' views of CYP and difficulties in supporting a provision for CYP contributed to their lack of engagement, schools did not engage as they had not requested it. This may indicate that schools may be more likely to engage with an EP who has been directly requested. This is concerning considering that schools can be a protective factor for CYP. Of particular concern is that the schools were experienced by EPs as unable to support this group and thus engage with a multi-disciplinary team as part of their duty of care. Overall, it seems the EP as a professional has not been rejected, as they are welcomed into schools when invited as part of statutory work. Rather, the YJS system appears to have been rejected.

Pertinent to EP perceptions of difficulty in the multi-disciplinary YJS context are their thoughts on values, ideology, and conflict. Participants reported challenges with ideological differences and value misalignment. They discussed issues around the ways CYP are viewed, the

negativity of other professionals, and ethical concerns, which contributed to a sense of conflict or misalignment between the EP profession and the YJS. Specifically, EPs perceived that caseworkers did not always demonstrate the capacity to uphold values, and the system of YJ was viewed as different from the values underpinning EP practice. The approach of CJ was described as rigid, intimidating, and punitive. For example, it was considered to involve stigmatising language, harsh deterrents, and the removal of choice, signalling to the aspects of power present in the CJS. This was especially true for the police and court system, which were viewed as engaging in stigmatisation, disrespect, and harsh strategies. This is concerning as it is well understood how these practices can impact offending behaviour (Lamb & Sim, 2013) and supporting positive relationships (Trivasse, 2017). It is interesting that the perspectives of EPs highlighted issues with operationalising the principles of the YJB's Child First strategy in this study. With the critical realist position of this study, the author views that the history of YJS is rooted in punitive approaches, with a focus on prosecution, conviction and accountability (Haines & Case, 2018). The EPs in this study indicated that to some extent little has changed in light of Child First at the level of policing and courts. Therefore, it seems that the proposed YJS transformation is taking time to implement and that change within the YJS can be challenging (Case & Hampson, 2019) as a result of the structure of power. This aligns with Foucault's (2007) description of hierarchies and power discourse.

Considering Foucault's ideas in this study, the state possesses the ultimate power which the YJS, police, and courts must uphold. The structure of power is therefore embedded in the

law, signalling that the YJS are actors for the state and do not possess the power to implement

great changes in line with the values they or EPs espouse. As a result, there appears to have been

an experience of moral distress from EPs in this study. The concept of moral distress is considered

to occur "when one knows the right thing to do, but institutional constraints make it nearly

impossible to pursue the right course of action" (Jameton, 1984, p6). In other professions, moral

distress is suggested to negatively impact patient care, causing professionals to avoid certain

situations and leave the profession (Morley et al., 2017). It seems that EPs found it difficult to

uphold and share their values in this context of power. With the weight and power of the legal

system, it was also perceived that their capacity to support systemic change felt difficult. EPs

experienced challenges in sharing their perspectives of CYP and recommendations for practice

as decisions were made about CYP irrespective of EPs' views, particularly by the police and

magistrates. Therefore, there appears to be an issue with the perceived applicability of EP values

in practice and a conflict for EPs in wanting to uphold their values and integrity while working

within the system in which the YJS is situated.

The author wonders whether EPs in YJ feel they have to compromise on their values in

order to achieve the goals of the wider system. The sense of conflict is apparent as EPs spoke of

positive aspects of the YJS, such as the psychological contract, and MDW, however the issues of

power are significant barriers to their practice and contribution. Interpersonal and intrapersonal

compromise (inter with other, intra with yourself) relates to what one may sacrifice to gain an

interest or agreement (Lepora, 2011). In the present study, both interpersonal and intrapersonal

compromises are present in the conflicts described through MDW as it was evident that EPs experienced conflict between the ways in which they want to practice and how they feel they are able to practice in YJ. The systems of power which permeate the CJS appear to limit the extent to which EPs' professional opinions were enacted upon. Thus, power in YJ is a barrier to EP practice and inhibits their contribution with regard to systemic, value lead change.

5.3.2 SQ: How do EPs perceive their own practice, role, and contribution in a YJS?

As highlighted, MDW was viewed as supportive to their practice to some extent. EPs explored how joint working enhanced their YJS experience through engagement with collaborative pieces of work. Learning from others and enhancing criticality were cited as positive experiences of MDW in the YJS. Gaskell & Leadbetter (2008) support the view that MDW provides opportunities for developing skills and knowledge, and exposure to alternative practice and theory. However, understanding their role was an area of challenge which was perceived as contextual. Particularly as EPs stated that they felt more secure with their role and contribution in their schoolwork. Huxham and Vangen, (2000) indicated the importance of developing an understanding of the views of others in multi-disciplinary working and the author wonders whether EPs were unsure of their role and contribution due to the initial difficulties at the commissioning stage as well as the novelty and complexity of the environment. For example, they had not reached a clear understanding of the ways in which they are similar or different to other professionals in the YJS (Ashton & Roberts, 2007). The author acknowledges that there is a

clear link between identity as explored in theme one, and the notion of navigating the EP role in the MDW context. While professional identity sat under theme one due to the development of the role in YJ, it also seemed linked with EPs' views of difficulty in working with others. Thus, the link between identity and MDW is explored in the following section.

The knowledge of other professionals around specific YJS issues such as gang culture or harmful sexual behaviour, as well as psychological theory seem to have presented as an identity threat. Research suggests that professional identity and the social world are linked through symbolic interaction, thus working with others is linked with identity construction (Richardson, 2023). Professional identity may be impacted by shared understandings including collective goals and purposes (Richardson, 2023), and therefore relates to EPs' conceptualisation of the organisational context. EPs in this study stated they had not experienced many shared understandings in the YJS, despite working with a range of professionals. Hotho (2008, p. 723-724) also argues that professional boundaries "are constituted by the knowledge domain and by the rules, norms and conventions which socialise individuals into the profession and which differentiate the profession from other groups" implying a contextual factor to identity development. It seems that the multi-disciplinary aspect, and high levels of skill in the YJS context may have been a threat to the developing EP YJS identity and role (Ashton & Roberts, 2007). EPs may have felt de-skilled or illegitimate in this context, particularly in comparison to their school-based role where EPs may experience different positioning of expertise or prioritisation. Feelings of anxiety and insecurity around professional identity may be a response to MDW as EPs identity

may feel undermined. Legitimacy and credibility are considered key facets of professional identity as highlighted in theme 1 (Murphy & Kreiner, 2020), and it appears threatened or disrupted in this context. Branscombe et al., (1999, p. 36) highlighted four areas of identity threat:

1) Categorisation threat (being categorised against one's will)

2) Distinctiveness threat (group distinctiveness is prevented or undermined)

3) Threats to the value of social identity (the group's value is undermined)

4) Acceptance threat (one's position within the group is undermined).

Considering the above, it would be reasonable to suggest that working with others who are more established and possess more contextual knowledge could create an issue for EPs in navigating their identity in YJ. In Gaskell and Leadbetter (2008), EPs were unclear around their contribution in a multi-agency team, however the EP identity became clearer over time. In their study, the enhancing of specific skills and learning about the roles and perspectives of others appears to have had a positive influence on professional identity. However, in the present study, EPs experienced confusion and conflict around the organisational structure, roles, and perspectives of others. Furthermore, the challenges of working with CYP with complex histories, school engagement, and in line with professional values may have threatened the identity development and practice of EPs in the YJS. For EPs in this study, YJ work involved working with CYP and families who experience significant challenges and adversities, which EPs perceive as

complex to navigate in their practice. In this context they found it especially difficult to support their practice of an interactive view of CYP and implementing findings and recommendations from their involvement was experienced as challenging due to the structures of power. School engagement, the reactive nature of the YJS, and moral distress from value misalignment were viewed as specific barriers to EP practice and contribution. As a result, it appears that these YJ EPs were unable to contribute in the ways they hoped to, and practice in line with the values they wish to uphold.

It is clear that they experienced each of the threats in Branscombe et al.:

1) Categorisation threats, with regard to the ways in which they were positioned as gatekeepers

2) Distinctiveness threat, around what separates them from other professionals in the YJS

3) Threat to value, as others possessed specific YJS and psychological expertise

4) Acceptance threat, as others did not recognise the EP as a priority professional or follow EP guidance.

5.4 Theme 3: The Emotional Load

5.4.1 RQ: How do EPs experience working with a YJS?

EPs reported that issues of inequality, deprivation, and systemic failures permeated the lives of CYP indicating that they are a particularly vulnerable group. They stated that they felt confronted by the extreme levels of negative experiences of CYP, including poverty, racism, sexism, as well as the extent to which marginalisation was entrenched within the lives of CYP and their families. EPs experienced the levels of disadvantage as greater and more common in the YJS population than in their school casework. Disproportionality in YJ is well reported, with the most disadvantaged CYP more likely to enter the CJS (Oliveria & Beaver, 2021; Uhrig, 2016). In the Lammy Review (2017) a government commissioned review of racial disproportionality within the CJS, the MP David Lammy noted that this was a significant issue. Therefore, EPs' reports on the extent to which the YJS population experience discrimination were consistent with existing research. Life course theory (LCT), propelled by Elder, links social context, change, and disruption to human development (Elder, 1973). LCT in this context could be applied by professionals such as EPs in supporting their understanding of how CYP enter the CJS, as well as how it is important to consider the impact of YJS involvement on child development. These issues impacted on the complexity of casework reported by EPs in the YJS context. There was also a significant affective impact associated with the YJS and EPs experiences of working with CYP who had experienced such adversities.

The literature reports that CYP have experienced issues with the way race and culture are considered in their YJS support (Wainwright & Larkins, 2019). This indicates the need for YJS professionals, including EPs, to understand the socio-political and historical context of CYP and the CJS, as well as how systemic injustices including poverty, social exclusion, and racism interact with life trajectories to affect future outcomes. Specifically, race is a key social justice issue requiring explicit exploration by professionals in the YJS context. EPs should consider the identities of CYP and the impact of issues such as systemic racism and racial trauma when working with CYP known to the YJS, as trauma and racial trauma have known links with offending and recidivism (Kang & Burton, 2014).

Race was not always explicitly stated by EPs in this study. Some EPs used terminology such as "discrimination" and "marginalisation" which could include race/racism, while some did not explore race at all. This is important to consider as race is an important topic in YJ work. Critical Race Theory relates to the intersection of race, power, domination, and racism, supporting a position which states that history, context and racialisation are factors which impact experiences of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). In the CJS such experiences have historically and continue to relate to exclusion from resources, increased criminalisation, and disproportionate levels of punishment (Lammy, 2017). The YJB have also acknowledged systemic, individual, and institutional biases within the YJ system in a recent report, stating that implicit and explicit racism continues within YJ today (YJB, 2023). This was considered to have resulted in a lack of

safeguarding for CYP and intergenerational trauma was indicated as a factor in a lack of engagement with YJ services (YJB, 2023). EPs in this study discussed their YJS role as advocates for CYP and changing perspectives of others. For example, where a CYP and family is viewed as non-engaging this may be reframed to a CYP and family who experience intergenerational or racial trauma. EPs would be well placed to support such significant issues with regard to the safeguarding of CYP, however as racism was not explicitly discussed or it was implied by EPs in this study there are concerns over the extent to which EPs feel able to address and speak about racism. Having used terms such as discrimination and marginalisation it is evident that EPs are aware of these issues, however CRT would support language which is more explicit and purposeful (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). EPs may contribute to change within this system by adopting CRT in their practice. They may operationalise CRT by naming instances of racism, using explicit and purposeful language, and modelling socially just and anti-racist practice, with a specific emphasis on how CYP and families experience the intersection of their race and their experiences within the CJS.

EPs reported on the intensity of their YJS work in comparison to school-based practice, including experiences of emotional exhaustion. EPs in this study experienced feelings of hopelessness, sadness, fear, frustration, pressure, and powerlessness as contributing factors of their emotional exhaustion. These feelings related to their emotional responses to CYP's systemic disadvantages, discomfort with the ethical climate, difficulties identifying their role and affecting change, as well as the sense of reactivity or "firefighting" in YJS work in line with Gumbs (2023) who noted the

risk of compassion fatigue for YJS EPs. It was felt that emotional exhaustion was not limited to the EPs, as other professionals also experienced fatigue in this context. According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), burnout can result in emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and an impaired sense of personal accomplishment, implying that some EPs in the present study were experiencing issues associated with burnout. Feelings of stress and burn out are well reported among CJ staff (Auerbach et al., 2003; Gould et al., 2013) although there is little in the existing evidence base which specifically relates to the organisational experience of YJS EPs. Rather research has previously focussed on correctional institutions and secure estate staff predominantly in the US (Lane et al., 2023) or reported on aspects of EP practice in YJ (Francis & Sanders, 2022; Howarth-Lees & Woods, 2022; Warnock, 2005). Research regarding applied Psychologists, including EPs, has demonstrated that burn out is a pertinent issue for the profession generally. For example, burn out has been linked with increased emotional exhaustion (McCormack et al., 2018), a lack of autonomy (Sewell et al., 2024) and loneliness (George-Levi et al., 2020) in applied psychological professions. This considered, the wellbeing of EPs (as well as other professionals) in YJ is a concern, and while EPs and other caring professions experience burn out, the levels of emotional exhaustion and moral distress were significant and seemed specific to this context. Interestingly, the literature suggests that CYP felt similarly to EPs in the YJS context. For example, CYP experienced lack of agency and disempowerment in many areas of their lives including the YJS (Ellis & France, 2010; Hopkins, et al., 2015; Jack, et al., 2015; Larkins & Wainwright, 2020). They also experienced fatigue. While EPs experienced emotional fatigue, CYP experience fatigue of professional involvement due to their vast experiences of contact with

a range of different organisations and professionals (Ellis & France, 2010; O'Shea & McGinnis 2019). Despite the sense of emotional exhaustion, EPs reported feelings of increased responsibility in their YJS practice, particularly with regard to providing CYP with a positive experience and not compromising their values.

EPs did however report difficulties with promoting values lead practice in the YJS context, as previously highlighted by the moral distress felt by EPs. The emotional impact relating to the YJS context was reported as a barrier to their capacity for upholding values and some EPs indicated significant issues with coping in this environment. Perhaps it is for these reasons that EPs found it challenging to explore racism explicitly. This was in line with literature exploring the views of other professionals in the YJS context (Auerbach et al., 2003; Gould et al., 2013) and for school psychologists who experienced administrative pressures to practice unethically (Boccio et al., 2016). For some, an increased sense of fear and bias were present as a result of working with this organisation, again demonstrating that EPs were challenged to uphold their values and social justice in the YJ context. For others, it was becoming increasingly difficult to provide containment for other professionals. Supervision was regarded as crucial in supporting these issues, as in Gumbs (2023) and Ryrie (2006), however EPs who experienced emotional exhaustion predominantly reported that the solution was to remove themselves from the system. For example, one EP explored how they felt that it was important to access other work when in a YJ role as they feared becoming less aspirational for CYP, while another spoke of how the system (i.e. the YJ system), can impede EPs capacity to lead with their values.

Considering the relevance of a social justice agenda in light of the issues of inequality, racism, vulnerability, and marginalisation experienced by the YJ population, Briggs (2012) offered the following guide which may support professional reflection in operationalising social justice principles:

1) Am I acting on behalf of others because it is easier or because it is necessary?
2) Is immediate change critical in order to prevent harm, or can I take the time to empower others to advocate for themselves?
3) If I advocate on behalf of others, what will happen when I am not around to lead advocacy efforts? Will change be institutionalized; will the process continue, or will my efforts disappear with me?

It seems that EPs in this study were challenged in their capacity to act on such questions, highlighting a conflict in YJ between professionals, and the system of policy as reported in Case et al, (2020). EPs viewed part of their role as supporting others, as previously explored in line with Gumbs (2023). However, they discussed challenges in finding the capacity to provide support for other professionals. This related to both the emotional exhaustion experienced by EPs, and the perceived emotional exhaustion of other professionals. Boccio et al., (2016) indicated how pressures with regard to ethical issues is linked with burnout, less satisfaction with their role and the profession, and a greater desire to leave their job, demonstrating how the EPs'

sense of emotional exhaustion and needing to leave the service may be linked to their difficulties

defending their values. This link is particularly evident as EPs viewed the YJS context as lacking

positivity and found themselves struggling with the capacity for finding hope in this climate.

5.4.2   SQ: How do EPs perceive their own practice, role, and contribution in a YJS?

The affective impact on EP practice related to difficulties finding the capacity to support

others and apply a social justice agenda to their work. While EPs viewed their role and

contribution as relating to change, their sense of emotional exhaustion was a barrier to practice.

This is line with research suggesting that professionals who experience to significant stressors

can become less adaptable in their decision making and problem-solving abilities (Regehr, 2018).

In making sense of this view, some EPs indicated they had needed to reframe the ways they view

their contribution in YJ. For example, EPs explored how they had wanted to facilitate change at

a systemic level and found that it was not possible. Thus, they had reconstructed change for

themselves, hoping that their impact could create a wider ripple effect through the system as a

result of their work with individuals. This was similarly felt with regard to the systemic issues

experienced by CYP and families. EPs perceived that they were unable to change CYP's

experiences of racism and inequality, however they were able to support CYP with their sense of

making of experiences and capacity to cope with challenge. Therefore, the contribution EPs felt

they were able to make was at the level of the individual, i.e. individual CYP, and professionals as

observed in prior research (Ashton & Roberts, 2007). The author acknowledges EPs efforts to

support social justice in this way, however it would be pertinent for EPs to consider what more can be done to support CYP systemically, in order to cement this way of working in this system. For example, EPs may use trauma informed approaches, CRT, and attachment theories to support the CYP they work with (Kang & Burton, 2014), as well as share their knowledge in this area with other professionals. This may support the wider YJ system to consider the impacts of trauma on engagement with services, issues of recidivism, as well as the concept that YJS involvement and exposure to the CJS may itself be experienced as traumatising and impact on their development (Crosby, 2016).

EPs viewed their role in YJ as relating to an additional sense of responsibility and empathy in comparison to their school roles. As highlighted prior, EPs viewed themselves as advocates in YJ and CYP were perceived to require additional professional advocacy due to their negative experiences and the structures of power. EPs also experienced power imbalances, stating that their YJS work needed additional levels of scrutiny and cautiousness, particularly with regard to the ways in which they write about CYP. For example, one EP felt that their writing needed to be clear as it may be used in court. EP YJ practice was viewed as helpful for other aspects of their work, particularly in how they write about CYP and in creating links with other professionals, however the additional responsibility may have also related to a sense that their YJS work added pressure to their work elsewhere. This implies that EPs may have been finding it difficult to navigate their dual role in the YJS and schools.

5.5 Summary of Findings

The findings suggests that EPs feel their role and contribution within YJ is linked to that of advocacy and social justice, indicating that EP involvement has a relevant and important place in YJ. This considered, EPs remain unclear and concerned about their role, identity, and practice in YJ. This study specifically highlights the difficulties EPs face in contracting, communicating their role and identity, and practicing within a less familiar or novel context of significant power and injustice. The current research contributes to the knowledge base on the fluidity and social interactionist nature of professional identity. The findings in this research indicate issues regarding professional identity development in an emerging professional context including identity threat, EPs' sense of belonging in the context, and navigating a developing identity in a novel multi-disciplinary context.

EP contribution in the YJS may be challenging to define and operationalise in YJ. The EP role did not always seem distinct from other professionals and lacked legitimacy in the eyes of others. Change in the YJS appears challenging. The EP capacity to facilitate change and practice in the ways they want to are limited by the power and policy of the CJS, systemic racism, and the climate of the YJS. This had an affective impact on EPs, implying that emotional exhaustion and burnout in YJ is a significant concern which has impacted their ability to uphold their values and practice in line with their morals. Thus, longer-term EP involvement is threatened in the YJS

context as wellbeing is impacted and the capacity for hope and facilitating systemic change is low.

For the EP profession in the context of YJ, these are significant findings which indicate that the challenges associated with the YJS work environment impact on the development of a clear and defined professional identity. EP work is limited as a result of the structures of power within the YJS and emotionally taxing work, as well as the need for EPs to commit to a way of working which is line with their values and morals. This research adds value for EPs and other professionals working with YJSs as the findings indicate where the complexities of the YJS experience lie within the organisation and greater CJS as a whole. It is clear that the findings indicate that the emotional load and power structure associated with the YJS permeates EP's entire experience of the organisation and their practice and thus it is this finding which requires significant consideration. This research has been able to unpick the issues associated with the EP profession in YJ around identity and emphasises the importance of effective contracting, that EP wellbeing is central to longevity in the role, that contributions must be clearly defined in MD teams, and challenges in finding hope and facilitating systemic change within the YJS power structure.

However, EPs are unique to an extent as CYP in the YJS have agency over their level of engagement with EPs. This distinction is important for some EPs in feeling that they needed to work as outsiders to the system and uphold their values. The EP role in YJ relates to the practice

of supporting CYP and professionals at an individual level, particularly in relation to their role of advocate for a population of CYP who experience significant systemic racism, marginalisation, and inequality.

5.6   Strengths and Limitations

The greatest limitation felt by the author initially was they were unable to reach their original population of focus in working with CYP receiving YJS involvement. The issues with recruitment impacted greatly on the eventual thesis, resulting in considerable time constraints in which to conduct the present research. The author felt the complexity of the system in question through this process and similarly to the EPs in this study, experienced feelings of emotional fatigue and disempowerment. However, the author perceives this work as important to the EP profession and has reflected on the depth of their findings despite their initial sense of disappointment.

The role of the co-researcher in supporting the author ensured that the research was relevant and valid to the experience of a YJS EP was a strength in this study. Their views were crucial in supporting the author's understanding of the YJS at an experiential level and it was through this process that the overall focus of the study was formulated. The author acknowledges that their role could have included further participation at every stage of this research however and that some may argue that this research does go far enough to fulfil a participatory criterion.

If there had not been such significant time constraints, the author would certainly have made increased efforts to encourage their participation at every stage, rather than purely at the design stage. For example, the co-researcher's participation in the thematic analysis could have promoted the trustworthiness of the analysis. The author kept a diary during this research and make use of supervisory spaces in order to encourage reflexivity and reduce bias.

The author acknowledges that they wrote this thesis using the third person. A limitation may be that the author used third person language to tell the story of this thesis. First person may be considered more appropriate, particularly with RTA, in order to demonstrate the author's role within the research (Braun & Clarke, 2024). The author has described how they have actively brought themselves to this research, particularly at the design and analysis stages in order to indicate their role as an active researcher.

A limitation to this study is that it pertains only to a small number of EP perspectives. The author views that further research would need to be completed with YJS professionals and CYP in order to gain a well-rounded sense of the YJS. Furthermore, the EPs who took part in this research were predominantly from London and in whole only included the region of southeast England. In attempting to gather a more representative view of the YJS and increase the strength of this research, the author considers that a wider geographical range of perspectives would be beneficial. However, it was challenging to recruit EPs, and the author relied on the support of their contacts to gather participants.

5.7   Implications

5.7.1   Traversing Novel Contexts

The findings of this study indicate that EPs find it challenging to practice in and contract work in the novel context of the YJS. The author perceives that perhaps EPs found it difficult as they had tried to place their established methods of working and contracting (including service delivery model) into the context of YJ, as opposed to offering a new or adapted methodology. This does not seek to place blame on the EPs in this study, rather the author hopes to emphasise the challenge of adapting established practice within a new context, particularly where commissioners do not have extensive knowledge of the EP role and offering. The challenge in navigating novelty indicates the need for a prior level of knowledge in navigating novel environments or specialist areas. For EPs, this may include more opportunities for training prior to embarking on secondments, or even earlier at the level of EP training. Additional opportunities to shadow YJS work would support, as well as training for EPs in specific YJS knowledge, perhaps via the YJS who could support an increased understanding of the service ahead of time. This could support with ascertaining what the EP may be able to offer in their YJS role in line with what the YJS are looking for i.e. supporting the development of a professional identity in YJ.

5.7.2 Multi-disciplinary vs Transdisciplinary Working

The transdisciplinary approach is a framework for professionals which allows the sharing and integration of expertise of the team members (Grigorovich et al., 2021). Transdisciplinary teams demonstrate better unity, cooperation, satisfaction, and integration (Mullins et al. 1997) compared with multidisciplinary teams Grigorovich et al., 2021). Therefore, the transdisciplinary model may suit the working of EPs in YJ in supporting their sense of identity, effective integration, and understanding of the complex context. Furthermore, this may support EPs' sense of belonging as they may re-position and adapt their role in line with the needs of other professionals. As such, they may provide training and learning opportunities to support knowledge gaps for others, while also receiving their own opportunities for learning from other disciplines. With this considered, the approach may better suit the service in their support of CYP. Through the sharing of EP practice, EPs may re-position themselves as consultants, offering support to those who are best suited to facilitating direct work with CYP and families. This is in line with the views of CYP in the literature, which states that they would prefer to receive support from an individual who is able to relate to their experiences.

In becoming transdisciplinary, starting from a process consultancy methodology may suit EPs in making sense of the relationships, structures, and culture of the organisation (Rockwood, 1993). Further to this, an understanding of the systems psychodynamics approach may support a deeper understanding of organisations at individual, group, inter-group, organisational or

societal levels (Eloquin, 2016). This approach has supported sense making and change process in complex school environments, which like the YJS exist within structures of power, stress, and at times dysfunction (Eloquin, 2016). EPs are well placed to offer consultancy with organisations in supporting the management of dysfunction and chaos, therefore a key implication of this thesis relates to how EPs may reposition their role with the YJS through a consultancy lens. EPs may not experience themselves as "part of" the organisation, nor may they seek to be "part of". They must understand the organisation, including culture and values, but they can apply a psychological lens to the system whole, cementing their role a systems practitioner in a context where direct work with CYP could be facilitated by professionals who could be perceived as more appropriate by CYP.

5.7.3   Applying Social Justice in Structures of Power

The findings of this study indicate that the emotional load, organisational culture, and power structure associated with the YJS pervades EP's entire experience of the organisation and their practice. It is these findings which the author considers to be the most significant with regard to the EP experience.
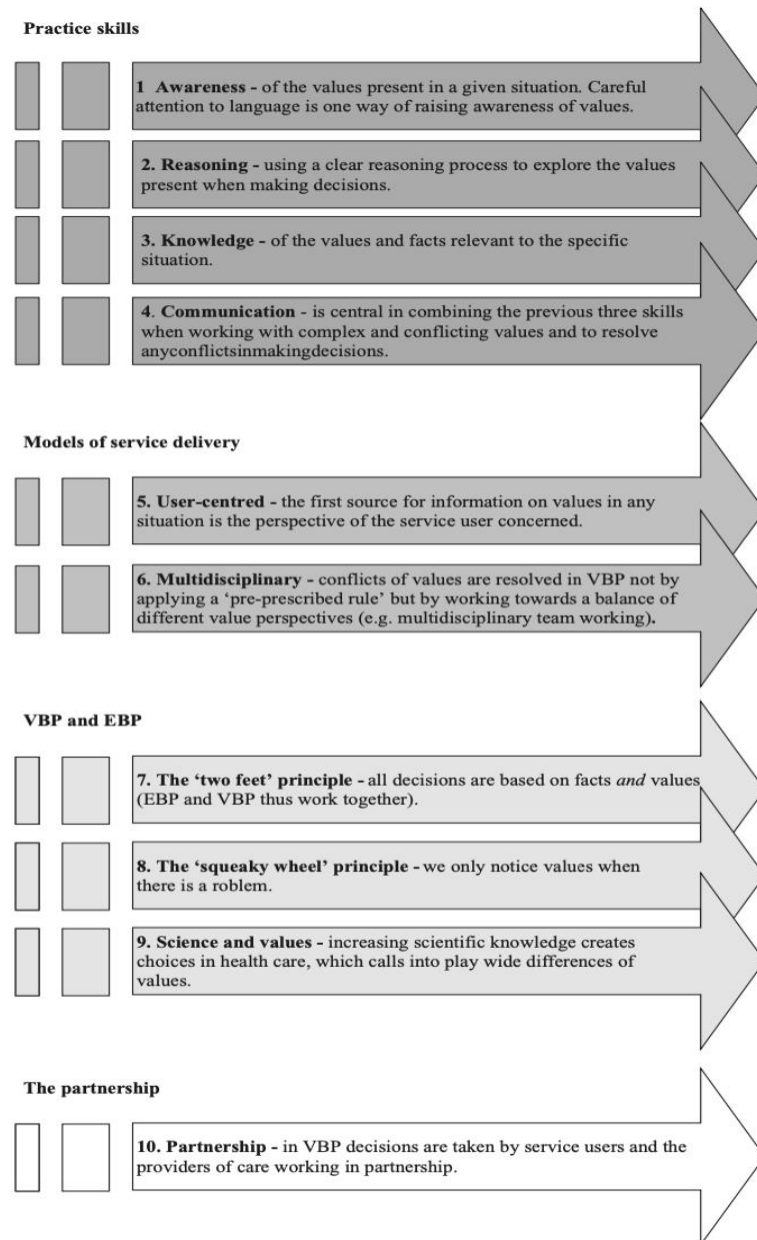
Values based practice (VBP) is a "skills-based approach to working more effectively with complex and conflicting values" (Fulford, 2008, p. 12). Understanding the YJS was perceived as

complex and conflicting, this approach could support EPs in their efforts to promote social justice.

VBP includes 10 key elements (see figure 5.1).

Figure 5.2

Practice skills for VBP

Practice skills

1 **Awareness** - of the values present in a given situation. Careful attention to language is one way of raising awareness of values.

2. **Reasoning** - using a clear reasoning process to explore the values present when making decisions.

3. **Knowledge** - of the values and facts relevant to the specific situation.

4. **Communication** - is central in combining the previous three skills when working with complex and conflicting values and to resolve anyconflictsinmakingdecisions.

Models of service delivery

5. **User-centred** - the first source for information on values in any situation is the perspective of the service user concerned.

6. **Multidisciplinary** - conflicts of values are resolved in VBP not by applying a 'pre-prescribed rule' but by working towards a balance of different value perspectives (e.g. multidisciplinary team working).

VBP and EBP

7. **The 'two feet' principle** - all decisions are based on facts *and* values (EBP and VBP thus work together).

8. **The 'squeaky wheel' principle** - we only notice values when there is a roblem.

9. **Science and values** - increasing scientific knowledge creates choices in health care, which calls into play wide differences of values.

The partnership

10. **Partnership** - in VBP decisions are taken by service users and the providers of care working in partnership.

By working with this clear framework, the author considers that EPs may feel more comfortable and confident in promoting the values of social justice in the YJS. For example, there are concerns over the extent to which EPs feel able to address and speak about racism. Adopting a clear practice framework may support EPs to actively address issues of injustice which they find difficult while CRT could support the use of more explicit language when talking about race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). EPs may adopt CRT alongside a practice framework in order to name instances of racism and model socially just and anti-racist practice.

The structure of power in YJ is significant and change at a higher a level is potentially outside of the power remit of the EP according to the findings of this research. As a result, the author proposes that a socio-political and historical understanding of power, racism, and injustice is crucial in navigating practice and framing a realistic view of what change is possible. As discussed, EPs were able to facilitate change in the YJS at an individual level. EPs could consider how methods of organisational change may be appropriate in the YJS, such as soft systems methodology, however they may also feel more positive about their value added via their construction of change at the individual level. This said, EP work may be contracted to include YJS professionals who possess greater levels of power, such as the police and magistrates. For example, training could be provided with these groups regarding SEND, understanding racial trauma and CRT, attachment, and trauma informed practices in order to reach higher levels of the YJS hierarchy. EPs specifically are well placed with their knowledge of development to work

with professionals to support their consideration of the impact of marginalisation and racism on development, supporting a way of working with CYP which not additionally traumatising or re-traumatising.

The author views that EPs have an important role in supporting schools in YJ as a result of their specific educational knowledge. Sander et al. (2011) suggested psychologists as having a key role in addressing unfair assumptions made by schools. Understanding that schools can be a protective factor for CYP it is crucial that EPs use their links to make connections with schools where consent is provided. EPs could work on a supervisory or coaching basis with schools in order to support them to engage with the YJS and the CYP who receive their involvement.

5.7.4   Containing the Containers

The importance of professional support in complex and emotionally exhausting contexts such as the YJS is apparent, particularly where the EP role may be that of the supervisor, or container for others. Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2010) state the importance of EPs in specialist roles to receive access to specialist supervision. They explicitly state that the supervisor in this case should be facilitated by a professional with the relevant competencies in the area and who has knowledge around the role and context of EPs. This considered, the author wonders whether the supervision received by EPs in these studies had been sufficient in supporting their emotional wellbeing and coping. While they considered supervision helpful, the sense was that some EPs

may not have had their supervisory needs met, potentially as a result of receiving supervision from individuals who either did not understand the context of YJ, or the EP role. Haines & Case, (2018) argue that it requires specialist knowledge to understand the context of YJ and implement practice, therefore EPs may be increasingly supported through a supervisory space with an individual who can support their contextual practice and professional identity.

Taking from psychoanalytical theory, the author wonders whether EPs experienced some emotional projection from other professionals in the system and found it challenging to counter-act systemic defences. Anxiety, reactivity, and possibly hostility towards others could be framed as defences which allow YJS professionals to continue their practice, although with a detrimental organisational impact (Bartle & Eloquin, 2021, p. 256 – 273). For the EPs in this role, the limitations of power and self othering (i.e. their position of difference) could also be considered defences which support a view that they are doing the right thing, and the context is at fault. Returning to systems psychodynamics, EPs may benefit from an awareness of the concepts of transference and defence systems as well as exploring their own feelings of conflict, pressure, or anxiety within supervisory spaces. The author notes a sense that for some EPs, the exploration in interview of moral distress and emotional exhaustion seemed powerful and also novel. It is possible that EPs had never explored their experiences in this way and that their current supervision was not meeting a need, again highlighting the significance of these findings relating to the emotional impact of the YJS experience. Therefore, continued awareness and exploration of their experiences may better support EPs to remain in their YJ role and defend against

contradictions or hostility (Bartle & Eloquin, 2021, p. 256 – 273) therefore supporting the ways in which they feel able to demonstrate their values, morals, and social justice in the YJS context.

5.8 Dissemination

With regard to the dissemination of this research, the author has already presented their findings to an EPS in London. There is hope for continued dissemination through wider discussions and presentations of this study with trainee EPs, EPs and YJS'. The author views the findings from this study as crucial to opening up discussions around working dual roles, professional identity, working within complex systems, and navigating values-led practice. As a result, the author plans to consider how their findings may demonstrate the need for a framework or model for supporting values led practice in complex and ethically conflicting systems.

5.9 Future Research

The author considers that participatory action research may be a methodology which could support the exploration of the afore mentioned framework, as it will be crucial that any framework or model is operational and effective in the YJS context. Further research into the construction and fluidity of the EP identity may be helpful considering the present research identified significant identity issues in the YJS context. The author considers that conducting

research with EPs who work dual roles and in systems outside of schools would be beneficial in supporting a greater understanding of the EP identity and contribution. Understanding more about identity could benefit the profession greatly in disentangling the role and contribution from those of other services or professionals. It would be pertinent to explore the views of other professionals in the YJS context in order to further unpick the YJ system. Furthermore, the author would hope to return to their original thesis plan to work with CYP. The author considers that their voices remain lacking within the literature. Their views would also support a more complete understanding of the YJS system, as well as increase the knowledge around how CYP experience this context.

5.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has explored EPs experiences of the YJS, and their perceptions of their role, practice, and contribution in this context. The author was interested in finding out more about the system of YJ, and how EPs navigate their practice in a dual role with a system of significant complexity.

This research highlighted a number of current working practices for EPs in YJ, as well as range of barriers. It has supported an understanding of the YJS, including factors which EPs feel are supportive to their role, and factors which are felt to impede. The author has indicated that contracting and commissioning, working in novel or emerging professional environments,

identity, navigating complexity, MDW, and emotional impact are all significant findings from this study.

Implications for EP practice and future research have been discussed, with a view that future research may focus more specifically on EPs identity in non-school roles or dual roles, with a focus on how EPs can navigate their identity in complex, ethically challenging environments.

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Appendices

Appendix A Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study Title:

Working with vulnerable groups in complex systems: Exploring the experiences of Educational

Psychologists working within a Youth Justice Service

You are invited to take part a research study. Before you decide if you agree to take part or not,

please read the following information:

Who am I?

- My name is Ellie Hobbs. I am training to be an Educational Psychologist at the University of East London.
- I do not work for the Youth Justice Service and this research has not been planned by anyone who works there.

What is this research about?

- This research will explore the views and experiences of EPs who have previously or are currently working with the Youth Justice Service (YJS).
- I will speak with EPs in order to better understand what they feel is important to know about their work with young people receiving YJS involvement so that they can receive the best and most appropriate support.

- This research will be co-designed by an EP who is currently working with a YJS. I want to do this so that the research could be tailored to their unique expertise on the experiences they have in this field of work.

What will this research involve?

- If you want to take part, please make sure you fill in the consent form.
- I will then meet with you to talk about your views and experiences. It is your choice if you wish to do this in person or on a video call. The information discussed in this session will inform the research findings.
- I will then transcribe our conversations and analyse them. Your real name will not be used at all as I will give you a pseudonym.

How will you be kept safe?

- I can meet with you on video chat if you don't want to meet in person.
- I will not use your real name at in any materials produced for this project.
- I will not tell the Youth Justice Service or your place of work what is said by you.
- I will also ensure that any additional needs/disabilities are taken into account during this research and that suitable adjustments are made.
- This research has been checked by my university ethics committee to make sure it is safe and ethical.

Can you change your mind after saying yes?

- Yes, and you don't need to tell me why. If you decide you don't want to do it anymore, there will not be any consequences.
- After I have transcribed our conversations and assigned a pseudonym, I won't be able to delete the written work however as I will not be able to identify you.

Could I be negatively affected by taking part in this research?

- It is not anticipated that you will be negatively affected, however, I understand that there may be topics which are challenging, upsetting or uncomfortable to discuss.
- Check-ins will be provided at the start and end of any sessions to ensure that you feel safe to participate. I will keep checking in with you throughout the session to make sure you continue feeling safe.

How will the data be managed?

- The University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

- Any recordings will be stored on a secure program (OneDrive for Business) and deleted once transcribed using a pseudonym.
- The consent form will be kept safe on a secure program (OneDrive for Business) and deleted one year after the project is finished so that you can receive the results if you wish to.
- Only I will see the recordings and consent from. No other person will have access to them.

What will happen to the results of the research?

- The results will be written up as a thesis and presented to my university, Educational Psychologists and other professionals who work with children and young people.
- Other materials may be produced from the results, for example, resources/information for professionals who work in this sector.
- <u>Those who participated will not be identifiable from any materials produced from the results of this research.</u>

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?

- If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at <u>u2190382@uel.ac.uk</u>.
- If you have any questions or are worried about anything, please contact:
  - My research supervisor, Dr Pandora Giles. Email: <u>P.Giles@uel.ac.uk</u>
  - The Chair of School Research Ethics Committee, Dr Trishna Patel. Email: <u>t.patel@uel.ac.uk</u>

Appendix B Co-researcher Information Sheet

CO-RESEARCHER INFORMATION SHEET

Study Title:

Working with vulnerable groups in complex systems: Exploring the experiences of Educational

Psychologists working within a Youth Justice Service

Your are invited to take part a research study. Before you decide if you agree to take part or not,

please read the following information:

Who am I?

- My name is Ellie Hobbs. I am training to be an Educational Psychologist at the University of East London.
- I do not work for the Youth Justice Service and this research has not been planned by anyone who works there.

What is this research about?

- This research will explore the views and experiences of EPs who have previously or are currently working with the Youth Justice Service (YJS).
- I will speak with EPs in order to better understand what they feel is important to know about their work with young people receiving YJS involvement so that they can receive the best and most appropriate support.

- This research will be co-designed by an EP who is currently working with a YJS. I want to do this so that the research could be tailored to their unique expertise on the experiences they have in this field of work.

What will this research involve?

- If you want to take part, please make sure you fill in the consent form.
- I will then meet with you to talk about your views and experiences. It is your choice if you wish to do this in person or on a video call. The information discussed in this session will inform the research conducted with the participant group. This will include the questions and focus of discussion.
- As a co-researcher you can be involved in as much or as little of the rest of the research as you wish.
- I will then transcribe the conversations with the participant group and analyse them. Your real name will not be used at all as I will give you a pseudonym.
- If you wish, we can discuss the findings together before I write up the research for my thesis.
- We might decide to create resource or share our findings in another way. It will be your choice if you wish to participate in this.

How will you be kept safe?

- I can meet with you on video chat if you don't want to meet in person.
- I will not use your real name at in any materials produced for this project.
- I will not tell the Youth Justice Service or your place of work what is said by you.
- I will also ensure that any additional needs/disabilities are taken into account during this research and that suitable adjustments are made.
- This research has been checked by my university ethics committee to make sure it is safe and ethical.

Can you change your mind after saying yes?

- Yes, and you don't need to tell me why. If you decide they don't want to do it anymore, there will not be any consequences.
- After I have transcribed our conversations and assigned a pseudonym, I won't be able to delete the written work however as I will not be able to identify you.

Could I be negatively affected by taking part in this research?

- It is not anticipated that you will be negatively affected, however, I understand that there may be topics which are challenging, upsetting or uncomfortable to discuss.
- Check-ins will be provided at the start and end of any sessions to ensure that you feel safe to participate. I will keep checking in with you throughout the session to make sure you continue feeling safe.

How will the data be managed?

- The University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Any recordings will be stored on a secure program (OneDrive for Business) and deleted once transcribed using a pseudonym.
- The consent form will be kept safe on a secure program (OneDrive for Business) and deleted one year after the project is finished so that you can receive the results if you wish to.
- Only I will see the recordings and consent from. No other person will have access to them.

What will happen to the results of the research?

- The results will be written up as a thesis and presented to my university, Educational Psychologists and other professionals who work with children and young people.
- Other materials may be produced from the results, for example, resources/information for professionals who work in this sector.
- <u>Those who participated will not be identifiable from any materials produced from the results of this research.</u>

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?

- If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at <u>u2190382@uel.ac.uk</u>.
- If you have any questions or are worried about anything, please contact:
    - My research supervisor, Dr Pandora Giles. Email: <u>P.Giles@uel.ac.uk</u>
    - The Chair of School Research Ethics Committee, Dr Trishna Patel. Email: <u>t.patel@uel.ac.uk</u>

Appendix C Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Study Title: Working with vulnerable groups in complex systems: Exploring the

experiences of Educational Psychologists working within a Youth Justice Service

Research Facilitator: Ellie Hobbs

Email: u2190382@uel.ac.uk

	Please tick if you agree
I have read and understood the information sheet for this study, and I have been given a copy to keep.	
I understand that any information shared with Ellie and participants will be kept confidential.	

I understand that if I have concerns, I can contact Ellie Hobbs, her supervisor (Pandora Giles, or the Chair of School Ethics Committee (Trishna Patel).	
I understand that taking part is completely my choice and that I can leave the study at any time without explanation or consequence.	
I understand that Ellie Hobbs does not work for the Youth Justice Service.	
I understand that our sessions will be audio/video recorded.	
I understand that I can choose to take part without my face being recorded.	
I understand that the information I share and any of the audio/video recordings for the research will be kept confidential and secure. Only Ellie Hobbs will be able to access this information.	
I understand that only a pseudonym will be used in this research and that I will not be identifiable from any of the material produced.	
I understand that Ellie will keep the pseudonymised transcripts in case of further study. My name will not be on these documents.	
I would like to receive a copy of the results of this study.	
I agree to take part in this study.	

Name

………

Time spent working with a YJS

………

Contact (telephone/email)

………

Date

………

CONFIDENTIAL for researcher use only

University of
East London

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School of Psychology Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION LETTER

For research involving human participants
BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational
Psychology

</div>

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

Details	
Reviewer:	Lydia Tan
Supervisor:	Pandora Giles
Student:	Eleanor Hobbs
Course:	Prof Doc in Educational and Child Psychology
Title of proposed study:	A Participatory Approach to Exploring the Views and Experiences of Young People Receiving Involvement from the Youth Justice Service.

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

If deception being used, rationale provided, and appropriate steps followed to communicate study aims at a later point	☐	☐	☐
If data collection is not anonymous, appropriate steps taken at later stages to ensure participant anonymity (e.g., data analysis, dissemination, etc.) – anonymisation, pseudonymisation	☐	☐	☐
Concerns regarding data storage (e.g., location, type of data, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Concerns regarding data sharing (e.g., who will have access and how)	☐	☐	☐
Concerns regarding data retention (e.g., unspecified length of time, unclear why data will be retained/who will have access/where stored)	☐	☐	☐
If required, General Risk Assessment form attached	☐	☐	☐
Any physical/psychological risks/burdens to participants have been sufficiently considered and appropriate attempts will be made to minimise	☐	☐	☐

Any physical/psychological risks to the researcher have been sufficiently considered and appropriate attempts will be made to minimise	☐	☐	☐
If required, Country-Specific Risk Assessment form attached	☐	☐	☐
If required, a DBS or equivalent certificate number/information provided	☐	☐	☐
If required, permissions from recruiting organisations attached (e.g., school, charity organisation, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
All relevant information included in the participant information sheet (PIS)	☐	☐	☐
Information in the PIS is study specific	☐	☐	☐
Language used in the PIS is appropriate for the target audience	☐	☐	☐
All issues specific to the study are covered in the consent form	☐	☐	☐
Language used in the consent form is appropriate for the target audience	☐	☐	☐

All necessary information included in the participant debrief sheet	☐	☐	☐
Language used in the debrief sheet is appropriate for the target audience	☐	☐	☐
Study advertisement included	☐	☐	☐
Content of study advertisement is appropriate (e.g., researcher's personal contact details are not shared, appropriate language/visual material used, etc.)	☐	☐	☐

Decision options	
APPROVED	Ethics approval for the above-named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice), to the date it is submitted for assessment.
APPROVED - BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE	In this circumstance, the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box at the end of this form once all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to the supervisor. The supervisor will

RESEARCH COMMENCES	then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records. Minor amendments guidance: typically involve clarifying/amending information presented to participants (e.g., in the PIS, instructions), further detailing of how data will be securely handled/stored, and/or ensuring consistency in information presented across materials.
NOT APPROVED - MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED	In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application. Major amendments guidance: typically insufficient information has been provided, insufficient consideration given to several key aspects, there are serious concerns regarding any aspect of the project, and/or serious concerns in the candidate's ability to ethically, safely and sensitively execute the study.

Decision on the above-named proposed research study

Approved with minor amendments	Please select your decision

Minor amendments

Please clearly detail the amendments the student is required to make

Participant Information Sheet: Please complete the sentence "This research has been checked by my university to make sure you will be"

Please include the final approval from the local authority in your application.

Major amendments

Please clearly detail the amendments the student is required to make

Assessment of risk to researcher		
Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?	YES ☐	☐
	If no, please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment.	
If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard, please rate the degree of risk:		
LOW	Approve and if necessary, include any recommendations in the below box.	☐
Reviewer recommendations in relation to risk (if any):	N/A	

Reviewer's signature	
Reviewer: (Typed name to act as signature)	Lydia Tan

Date:	28/03/2023
This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Ethics Committee	
RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE For the researcher and participants involved in the above-named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place. For a copy of UEL's Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard.	

Confirmation of minor amendments (Student to complete)	
I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data	
Student name: (Typed name to act as signature)	Eleanor Hobbs
Student number:	U2190382

Date:	30/03/2023
Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed if minor amendments to your ethics application are required	

University of
East London

School of Psychology Ethics Committee

<u>REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION</u>

For BSc, MSc/MA and taught Professional Doctorate students

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for proposed amendment(s) to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology

Note that approval must be given for significant change to research procedure that impact on ethical protocol. If you are not sure as to whether your proposed amendment warrants approval, consult your supervisor or contact Dr Trishna Patel (Chair of School Ethics Committee).

How to complete and submit the request	
1	Complete the request form electronically.
2	Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
3	When submitting this request form, ensure that all necessary documents are attached (see below).
4	Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to Dr Trishna Patel: t.patel@uel.ac.uk
5	Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with the reviewer's decision box completed. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your dissertation.

6	Recruitment and data collection are **not** to commence until your proposed amendment has been approved.

Required documents

A copy of your previously approved ethics application with proposed amendment(s) added with track changes.	**YES** ☒
Copies of updated documents that may relate to your proposed amendment(s). For example, an updated recruitment notice, updated participant information sheet, updated consent form, etc.	**YES** ☒
A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.	**YES** ☒

Details

Name of applicant:	Eleanor Hobbs
Programme of study:	Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology
Title of research:	Working with vulnerable groups in complex systems: Exploring the experiences of Educational Psychologists working within a

	Youth Justice System (currently in the process of changing title on Research Manager)
Name of supervisor:	Pandora Giles

Proposed amendment(s)

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed amendment(s) and associated rationale(s) in the boxes below

Proposed amendment	Rationale
Title: Working with vulnerable groups in complex systems: Exploring the experiences of Educational Psychologists working within a Youth Justice System (currently in the process of changing title on Research Manager).	As the research population is requested to change, the title has been adjusted to reflect this.
The population for my co-researcher and participants will be: Educational Psychologists currently working or who have previously worked with a Youth Justice Service.	This amendment is proposed due to lack of recruitment with my previous population of young people.
Recruitment strategy: I will recruit directly to EPs through contacting those who have previously or are currently working with a YJS.	This change is intended to most efficiently reach the target demographic.
Method of data analysis: Thematic Analysis.	Due to the population changing, it is considered appropriate to adjust the data analysis to reflect the potential for increased participants and a different style of data.
Location of research: I have included the co-research and participants places of work as well as	This is intended to provide options which would be convenient to the co-researcher or participants.

UEL and MS Teams as options for the location of this research.	
Additional appendices (consent form, information sheets, debrief forms, study adverts and sources of support) have been amended to reflect the change in participant population.	This change ensures that the forms and information are appropriate for the target demographic.

Confirmation

Is your supervisor aware of your proposed amendment(s) and have they agreed to these changes?	YES ☒	NO ☐

Student's signature

Student: (Typed name to act as signature)	Eleanor Hobbs
Date:	29/11/2023

Reviewer's decision

Amendment(s) approved:	YES ☒	NO ☐
Comments:	Please check: please ensure the voucher offer to the co-researcher appears all in all study materials – in the PIS, it might be worth communicating the personal information required for the voucher to be claimed (e.g., name, DoB, address and NI number).	

Reviewer: (Typed name to act as signature)	Trishna Patel
Date:	04/12/2023

University of East London

School of Psychology Ethics Committee

<u>REQUEST FOR TITLE CHANGE TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION</u>

For BSc, MSc/MA and taught Professional Doctorate students

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for a proposed title change to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology

By applying for a change of title request, you confirm that in doing so, the process by which you have collected your data/conducted your research has not changed or deviated from your original ethics approval. If either of these have changed, then you are required to complete an 'Ethics Application Amendment Form'.

How to complete and submit the request

1	Complete the request form electronically.
2	Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
3	Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to Dr Jérémy Lemoine (School Ethics Committee Member): j.lemoine@uel.ac.uk
4	Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with the reviewer's decision box completed. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your dissertation.

Required documents

A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.	**YES** ☒

Details

Name of applicant:	**Eleanor Hobbs**
Programme of study:	**Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology**
Title of research:	Working With Vulnerable Groups in Complex Systems: Exploring the Experiences of Educational Psychologists Working Within a Youth Justice Service
Name of supervisor:	**Pandora Giles**

Proposed title change

Briefly outline the nature of your proposed title change in the boxes below

Old title:	Original title 1: A Participatory Approach to Exploring the Views and Experiences of Young People Receiving Involvement from the Youth Justice Service. Title 2: Working With Vulnerable Groups in Complex Systems: Exploring the Experiences of Educational Psychologists Working Within a Youth Justice System
New title:	Working With Vulnerable Groups in Complex Systems: Exploring the Experiences of Educational Psychologists Working Within a Youth Justice Service
Rationale:	Changed to fit the new population of study (with ethical approval) & to better describe the focus of the study

Confirmation

Is your supervisor aware of your proposed change of title and in agreement with it?		YES ☒	NO ☐
Does your change of title impact the process of how you collected your data/conducted your research?		YES ☐	NO ☒

Student's signature

Student: **(Typed name to act as signature)**	**Eleanor Hobbs**
Date:	**28/02/2024**

Reviewer's decision

Title change approved:	YES ☒	NO ☐
Comments:	The new title reflects better the approved amendments made to the research.	
Reviewer: (Typed name to act as signature)	Dr Jérémy Lemoine	
Date:	05/03/2024	

Appendix G Initial Thematic Map with Codes

Appendix H Examples of Initial Coding and Themes with Extracts from Transcripts

CODE	EP	QUOTE/s	OTHER INFO
Sense of belonging	Mary	"I've tried to fit in with the approach that YJ are taking." "It's given me a lot more insight into that world". "I think if you just did YJ work then you become part of their system and maybe forget to be aspirational for the YP. And being part of the education system is really important I think in terms of my schoolwork". "I think we are good at not being part of the system."	
	Jane	"There's a very slight, low lying, it's not too strong, feeling that when I'm working with YJ I'm working with them. When I am with schools there's an underlying feeling that I'm working for them". "I think that at the beginning it was tricky. It can be tricky because they have a different way of speaking." "Maybe I'm not as embedded as other EPs". "When I am doing the work, I don't sit with the team, I go to the team meeting, and I leave and come back to my section". "I was still that person that wasn't quite part of the service. I've always said I work with; I don't think I am quite part of. So, I think that I'm just different to them and not different to them. But they see me as being distinct from".	
	Alysa‹	"It's like this kind of dynamic of these case workers who are very, very in touch with these YP and what they're interested in and what's cool. And I just feel like, I always come in my jacket 'cause, I want to be smart, and there's just a bit of a mismatch there. I did feel really awkward about that."	

CODE	EP	QUOTE/s	OTHER INFO
Complexity (confusion)	Mary	"I think they are overwhelmed by it. I think there's a lot of confusion. So, a YP couldn't' name any of the professionals in the room and didn't understand what role those people had in supporting [them]." "I think they are quite scared because they don't understand it." "It's massively complex and confusing".	
	Annie	"It is complex, and it definitely feels messy at times as well". "It's a whole different system. I still don't know half the acronyms that they use." "It makes me think, if I find the system messy and overwhelming and complex, what does that say about how the child views the system? I'm someone with access to a lot of resources and people to speak to, and not everyone, not every parent or child has that same access or understanding on how or where to even look for information". "If the YJS are seeing the child one day a week, who gets to see the child? Is it SALT, is it [therapeutic team], is it me? I think when a case is so complex sometimes you might not be high on the pecking order and that might be necessary for the child, but I think, who's prioritised and what support is prioritised and how can you link up?"	

Defining the role	Mary	"I wonder how often I do something that has a bit of crossover with SALT, CAMHS".	
		"Quite often the remit of the work isn't clear."	
		"It usually takes a couple of sessions with the YP and working with the caseworker to figure out what it is that they need to add clarity rather than more confusion".	
	Jane	"I think in my head I know all the ways I could support and when you're trying to explain that sometimes it doesn't quite translate for some reason."	
		"So much of what we do is working at that point of facilitating and maybe it seems a bit blurry. What we're doing is the kind of soft work, but it's not clear. It's not like, here are some documents showing what I've done, here are the fixed outcomes. Its in the conversations, in the questioning, helping people feel contained, helping people explore. But those things are not so concrete and I think people find it hard to see."	
	Annie	"I think I'm still trying to figure it out to be honest".	
		"It took a little bit of time to try work it out".	
		"I think sometimes they have a different perspective on what my role is".	

Frustration	Samantha	"It can be frustrating when you know the psychology behind things, but it's not necessarily listened to".	Police.
		"I'm trying to work with schools as well, talking to the schools and giving them feedback. I found that a bit more difficult though because the schools, when I'm the link EP to a school and I've got the relationship with the SENCO and they've suggested the YP, they're really receptive. But if I'm going to a school about a YP who isn't on their SEN register, sometimes the SENCO isn't the person who is key, I found they're not as receptive."	
	Mary	"The school side of it is frustrating.'	
	Annie	"It's trying to work with tricky people, and it's not because they're bad or their ill-intentioned, it's because of the space they have for it. But it does really affect practice and it can be really frustrating as an EP. Feels like you're doing twice the work sometimes."	
	Alysa	"In terms of the EP role make change, it can be more difficult in the YJ context because there's just so much stuff around it that you have to do, you know, protocol."	
	Lin	"I think the systems in place can feel frustrating. Like if YP needs to be back in education there's things that could be put in place but it's just sort of that schools aren't able to provide, unable to follow what's recommended because they don't have the resources or people to be able to provide that. It feels frustrating at times, and I feel the frustration of the YP and parents when they want to be back in education but there is that barrier."	

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Appendix I Example of Data Familiarisation with an EP Transcript

Appendix J Semi Structed Interview Guide

1. In your view, what are the priorities and aims of the YJS?

2. How do you feel the YJS is viewed by others?

- What about the CYP?
- Families?
- Staff?
- Anyone else?

3. Who do you view as the main stakeholders in YJS work?

- What is the extent of your involvement with different stakeholders?
- What about different services/professionals?

4. What do you see as the role of the EP in the YJS?

- Is this different to the role you have outside of the YJS?
- Do you have dual roles? What are the similarities and differences between your role in these different systems?

5. How well utilised do you feel you are in your YJS?

- Do you have any other YJS experience? How well utilised did you feel in your prior YJS work?

6. How do you feel EP practice fits within the YJS/YJ work?

- Is this different from the way you view practice outside of this system?
- What are the similarities and differences between the way you practice in these different systems?
- Are there any barriers to EP practice in the YJS?
- What do you feel works well?

7. To what extent are the aims and priorities of the YJS similar/ different to the aims of

priorities of the EPS?

- Similarities
- Differences
- How about the values between the two different services?
- Does this effect your practice or your contribution?

Appendix K Initial Literature Review Data Extraction Table

Study Title	Study Type	Author/s, country & year	Participants	Research design & data collection	Research question/s	Data analysis & findings	Utility
Children's Voices — are we Listening? Progressing Peer Mentoring in the Youth Justice System	Published research papers	Sean Creany, UK, 2020	20 young people involved with the YJS and 20 professionals working in the service.	Qualitative: Semi structured interviews.	Aim: To critically explore the benefits, limitations and challenges of using young offenders as peer mentors.	Thematic analysis. Peer mentoring was viewed as potentially helpful by young people. They viewed experiential knowledge (acquired through first-hand or lived experiences) as important for building trusting, supportive relationships. Many young people stated they would be interested in being peer mentors. Some professionals viewed peer mentoring as potentially risky, although they acknowledged young people could benefit from it.	Pros: Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice. Explored views on a pre-existing music mentoring scheme. Cons: Mostly male sample. Focussed on views around delivering peer mentoring. Did not explore how peer mentoring could support mentees. Views of young people explored and translated through an adult lens.
Placing Children in Care at Centre Stage: Exploring the Experiences and Perceptions of Children in Care about their Pathways into Offending Behaviour	Unpublished thesis	Anne-Marie Day, UK, 2019	19 children in care receiving involvement from Youth Offending Teams.	Qualitative: Grounded theory. Semi structured interviews	1. What are the perceptions of children in care about their pathways into offending behaviour? a) What do these tell us about why children in care are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system? b) How do these perceptions compare and contrast with existing conceptualisations about why children in care enter the criminal justice system? 2. What implications do these have for policy and practice?	Thematic analysis Themes of identity (Lack of identity, disruption, negotiation and restriction) within the context of care were linked with feelings of anger and frustration. Pathways into offending linked with identity negotiation & renegotiation as a result of disruption as well as feelings of anger and frustration impacting on behaviour.	Pros: Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice. Explored views on a range of topics (participant led). Looks at experiences of participants who are receiving involvement from more than one service. Cons: Predominately concerns views as an exploration of pathways to offending. Only included young people involved with youth justice who are also CLA. Unsure of the strength of the link between offending behaviour and

							identity found in this study.
							Views of young people explored and translated through an adult lens.
Being Judged, Being Assessed: Young People's Perspective of Assessment in Youth Justice and Education	Published research paper	Katie Ellis & Alan France, UK, 2010	110 young people in 3 groups: 1. Young people with a statement of SEN. 2. Young people who have been excluded from school. 3. Young people who are involved in the youth justice system.	Qualitative: Semi structured interviews (informed by eco-mapping and timelines)	Unclear on specific questions from article. Clearer aims: Explore pathways into and out of crime for three groups of young people by: Examining young people's perspectives of professional assessment in youth justice and education. Exploring the implications of assessment polices on young people being assessed in youth justice and education. Give 'voice' to groups of young people who were seen as 'problematic'	Case studies constructed from interviews. Young people felt they did not fully understand the assessment process, the role of assessment, the limits of confidentiality and the implications of assessment. Young people felt they had been treated unfairly and felt blamed for their choices. Young people viewed professionals as unhelpful and professional support was often viewed as lacking value.	Pros: Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice. Explored views around: offending relationships communities experiences of being victims services professional support Inclusive methods for gathering views. Cons: Predominately explores views on assessment. Includes populations not under a YJS
						Young people who had received more assessments felt better able to challenge the process (often resulted in young people withholding information).	(although there was some overlap between groups). Focussed on views as an explanation for pathways into offending. Unclear research questions. Statement of SEN is outdated. Views of young people explored and translated through an adult lens.
Examining experiences of transition, instability and coping for young offenders in the community: A qualitative analysis	Published research paper	Rebecca Heath & Helena Priest, UK, 2015	4 young people receiving involvement from a youth justice service and CAMHS	Qualitative: Semi structured interviews.	RQ: How do young offenders in the community make sense of life experiences such as transition and instability, and how does this impact on coping behaviours?	Inductive thematic analysis Theme 1: People and places (participants spoke of difficult contexts and their struggles with relationships) Subtheme 1: Environmental factors (difficult living conditions, multiple changes at home and	Pros: Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice. Range of topics discussed: childhood experiences family peer relationships hobbies

						school, violence, lack of choice). Subtheme 2: Relationships (views on the fragility of support networks, transient/superficial relationships, difficulty forming trust with others). Theme 2: Growth (most participants viewed themselves as having made progress. They expressed feelings of frustration for labels they received and wished to prove them wrong. They identified themselves as aggressive and explained how they perceive this trait as a necessary for self-protection). Subtheme1: Personal identity (aggression, control, development, empowerment, expectations).	school experiences supportive adults health Interviewed participants in a familiar environment. Explored strengths with participants. Cons: The researcher was not able to engage many participants. Many young people did not want to take part due to concerns about ability to be open with professionals. The methods of engagement and techniques used to gather views was not specified. Views of young people explored and translated through an adult lens.

						Subtheme 2: Emotional and psychological messages (content, language and reflections around emotional experiences). Theme 3: Managing difficult experiences (participants described their use of harmful coping strategies and acceptance of difficult experiences. They also expressed frustration with services such as CAMHS and did not see the value). Subtheme 1: Strategies (avoidance, self-harm, substance abuse, image, protective factors). Subtheme 2: Receiving services (engaging with professionals, perceived value and accessibility of services).	

| Young offenders' perspectives on their literacy and communication skills | Published research paper | Thomas Hopkins, Judy Clegg & Joy Stackhouse, UK, 2015 | 31 young people receiving involvement from a YJS | Qualitative: Semi structured interviews & focus groups. | RQ1: How satisfied are YOs with their own literacy and communication skills and how important do YOs perceive these to be?

RQ2: How much do YOs believe they understand others in their communicative interactions?

RQ3: How satisfied are YOs with their communicative interactions with others and how does this influence conflict at home, school, and in the youth justice system? | Framework analysis

Theme 1: What is meant by communication? (Views on communication involved speaking or a form of greeting and nonverbal language).

Theme 2: Satisfaction with communication and literacy ability. (Participants reported dissatisfaction with communication and literacy ability).

Theme 3: Implications of communication and literacy difficulties for experiences in the YJS. (Good communication, confidence and presentation was viewed as being required in court and was believed to affect levels of potential punishment). | Pros:

Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice.

Larger sample size than other qualitative studies with this population.

Explores views around different relationships.

Cons:

Only relates to young people's views on literacy and communication.

Researcher did not highlight any methods used to make interviews more accessible.

Mainly male participants. |
| | | | | | | Theme 4: Participation of and preference for literacy activity. (Majority of participants expressed that literacy only occurs at school. A preference was expressed for using slang to communicate over text or email).

Theme 5: Attention and understanding. (Some participants reported that they had found attending in school and within the YJS difficult and struggled to understand their teachers, judges and other professionals. Others had the view that they had positive experiences and found communication by other helpful).

Theme 6: Use of avoidance and confrontation strategies in confiding and conflicting with others. (Participants | Views of young people explored and translated through an adult lens. |

| | | | | | | | reported that they had encountered frequent confrontations and many reported avoidance of communication to resolve conflict or share their feelings).

Theme 7: Self-confidence and self-presentation. (Participants expressed communication often damages their confidence, particularly that of their teachers, parents, the courts and the police. Many felt self-confident about their communication abilities compared with peers).

Theme 8: Reciprocal respect and power. (Trust and respect were viewed as important to enable positive communication for many participants. Many felt an | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | imbalance of power with police and teachers. YJS workers were not felt to use unjust power). | |
| Young offenders' and their families' experiences of mental health interventions | Published research paper | Anna Jack, Caroline Lanskey & Joel Harvey, UK, 2015 | 14 young people receiving involvement from a YJS and CAMHS, 5 carers, 5 CAMHS professionals. | Qualitative: Semi structured interviews. | RQ1: What is the experience of young people and their caregivers of early mental health services?\n\nRQ2: What are the reasons young people and their caregivers give for engaging or disengaging with the service?\n\nRQ3: What is the experience of CAMHS practitioners in respect of accessing and engaging young people at risk of offending in interventions?\n\nAims:\n\nTo explore multiple experiences of mental health interventions with (CAMHS) delivered to young people receiving involvement from youth offending services. | Thematic analysis\n\nTheme 1: Initial anxieties and diverging expectations (conflicting views around mental health, concerns around stigma, unease about treatment, some resistance to intervention)\n\nTheme 2: Understanding, recognition, respect and trust in the practitioner-young person relationship (identified key principles of:\n\u00a0\u00a0\u00a0\u00a0understanding\n\u00a0\u00a0\u00a0\u00a0recognition\n\u00a0\u00a0\u00a0\u00a0respect\n\u00a0\u00a0\u00a0\u00a0trust\nwithin the practitioner-young person relationship and in interventions). | Pros:\n\nExplored the views of young people involved with youth justice.\n\nExplored differences in perceptions and views between all 3 groups of participants.\n\nLooks at experiences of participants who are receiving involvement from more than one service.\n\nCons:\n\nSuggested youth justice services could support mental health teams but YJS views were not gathered in this project. |

					To capture experiences to inform young people's engagement with services.	Theme 3: Challenges of access (difficulty accessing support when needed. Feelings of anxiety and fear around CAMHS environment). Theme 4: Mixed views about family and agency involvement (differing views between young people and parents as to who should be involved with treatment and present in meetings). Theme 5: The importance of perceived effectiveness (views around ineffective support and treatment and the value of intervention).	Gathered views from a number of participants not relevant to this author's search questions. Did not highlight the methods used to support interviewing young people with complex needs. Attempts to explain why young people had certain views without directly asking them – translation of views through adult lens.
Prioritising young peoples' voices in research and work in youth offending services: Themes from free association research methods and a co-production project with young people	Published research paper	Janchai King, UK, 2022	Study 1: 5 participants receiving involvement from a YJS Study 2: 6 participants receiving involvement from a YJS	Qualitative: Grid Elaboration Method & Free Association Narrative Interview Participatory approach to create resource	RQ: What do participants talk about when asked about their engagement experiences with youth offending services? Aim: To influence educational psychology practice by sharing key themes from research and work capturing young peoples' experiences of engaging with youth offending services.	Thematic analysis Theme 1: Transformative relationship with YOT worker (a good relationship with their caseworker helped participants to feel safe and understood, that they could build trust and work together). Theme 2: Identity transformation (reflections on the ways in which their identities were developing and how their perspectives were changing in different areas of their life. Increased confidence and social skills). Theme 3: Engaging (appreciation for YJS structure and individualised intervention. View that some caseworkers are not good at working with children). Theme 4: Then's presence in now (social and relational experiences from the past affected young peoples' engagement	Pros: Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice. Considered accessible data collection techniques. Participatory method supported participants' co-production and ownership over a resource. The resource is publicly available to support young people to understand the work of the YJS. Cons: Focussed on how EPs can facilitate participation, did not include other professionals. The views of young people in study 1 were explored and translated through an adult lens.

						and trust with the service). These themes were also present in the second phase. Themes informed the script narrative for a video as well as the visual representations.	
'If rich people gave more money to poor people': Young people's perspectives on reducing offending and implications for social citizenship	Published research paper	Cath Larkins & John Wainwright, UK, 2019	4 young people in custody and 46 young people involved with the YJS. 8 employed by the local authority YJS and a health service commissioner.	Qualitative: Participatory approach. Interviews. Action research.	Unclear research questions. Aims: to explore what helps young people stop offending to inform service delivery.	Nvivo, themes identified by young people? Theme 1: Respectful relationships built together. (Positive relationships, being listened to and respected by professionals). Theme 2: Social engagement and social resources. (Social resources seen as important for success. Employment particularly seen a preventing offending). Theme 3: Punishment and reparation.	Pros: Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice. Efforts to recruit diverse participants (including more girls). Included young people in custody in the research planning, analysis and interview question design. Used data to inform YJS action planning group. Cons:
						(Restorative justice seen by some as effective. Community work seen as mostly lacking value. Prison viewed as least effective. Some highlighted prisons as important to them for providing food and shelter).	Unclear how data was analysed. Unclear research question. It is not known if any change occurred as a result of the action planning group. Young people's focus of study directed by adult researchers.
'Do you really want me to tell ya!' critical learning in engaging young people in contact with the justice system as peer educators with social work students	Published research paper	Johanna O'Shea & Emma McGinnis, Northern Ireland, UK, 2019	13 young people involved with the justice system (including custodial as well as community orders). 10 social work students.	Qualitative: Focus groups	Unclear research questions. Aims: To develop a multimedia product about the experiences of young people involved with youth justice regarding social workers. To gain perspective on what they need from social workers to genuinely support and help them. That the young people might reframe their	Thematic analysis Theme 1: Feeling valued and respected (young people wanted to be treated with thought, care and be listened to). Theme 2: Feeling empowered in critical life changing situations (young people wanted support that was practical, empowering and met their needs).	Pros: Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice. Views gathered inclusively (1:1 and additional sessions given to young people if they wished). Young people were able to take ownership of their work and co-produce

					assumptions about themselves in education. To empower participants as active citizens.	Young people believed that the social work students might practice differently when qualified as a result of this research. Social work students felt participation in this research had supported reframing of stigmatisation towards young offenders and would support their practice once qualified.	a teaching resource through the creation of a DVD. Findings can be applied to inform range of services. Cons: No examination of the long-term impact of the project for the participants. No evaluation of the training resource developed in this project. Focussed on implications for social workers. Views of young people explored and translated through an adult lens.
Investigating the voice of the young offender	Published research paper	Heidi Trivasse, UK, 2017	11 young people involved with the justice system	Qualitative: Semi structured interviews	Unclear research question. Aims: Service (YJS) evaluation to fulfil national guidelines.	Thematic analysis. Theme 1: The journey through WYJS. Subtheme 1: How participants initially	Pros: Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice.
					To add to the limited body of research exploring YOs' views. To gather the views of a representative sample.	perceived WYJS (negative initial perceptions of the YJS service). Subtheme 2: What participants gained from their involvement (viewed the service as better than expected & increased sense of self-awareness) Theme 2: The relationship with the YOT (the young person-YJS practitioner relationship was viewed as highly important in order to support openness. Practitioners were seen as caring and supportive and participants felt they were there to listen. Participants viewed YJS involvement as a punishment.)	Participants were interviewed at home as well as in the YJS to ensure they felt comfortable. Cons: Purpose of the research was to meet Children's Services national guidelines of greater participation of young people in services. Position of the researcher was not made clear. Interview questions were very focussed. They directed participants to evaluate the service rather than share experiences. Success was defined in the context of the support they received rather than their own achievements.

							Unclear research questions. Views of young people explored and translated through an adult lens.
Race, ethnicity, young people and offending: the elephant in the room	Published research paper	John Wainwright & Cath Larkins, UK, 2019	50 young people in custody or receiving involvement from the YJS	Qualitative: Participatory action research. Interviews with questions created by a group of 4 young people in custody.	RQ1: What was important in the participants lives RQ2: Why the participants felt they became involved in offending behaviour RQ3: What participants thought was important to help them stop re-offending RQ 4: What issues of race or ethnicity are present/silenced here?	Grounded analysis. Race was seen as an important part of the participant's identities and social relations. Race was not explicitly mentioned with regard to the reason they were involved in offending or reducing offending behaviour. Family was seen as a resource to prevent re-offending. The YJS and caseworkers were mostly described as unhelpful. Support was viewed as more helpful if a positive relationship was formed with caseworker.	Pros: Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice. Included young people involved with youth justice in the interview design and data analysis. Large sample size for research of this design. Diverse participants. Cons: Looking specifically at 'unnamed' issues so highly interpretive. Views of young people explored and
							translated through an adult lens.
Perception of need and barriers to access: the mental health needs of young people attending a Youth Offending Team in the UK	Published research paper	Judi Walsh, Victoria Scaife, Caitlin Notley, Jane Dodsworth & Gillian Schofield, UK, 2011	44 young people involved with the YJS	Mixed methods: Questionnaires on: Perceptions of psychological, physical and sexual health needs. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. Questions about life-circum-stances, substance use, and GP registration and use. Interviews.	Research aimed to explore: Young offenders' own views of their mental health needs. Their history of support and preferences for future support. Their views as to what the barriers are in accessing services effectively.	SPSS & thematic analysis. High level of mental health need in participants. Participants were most likely to seek support from people with whom they had a long relationship (parents, friends or worker who they knew well). Low levels of service use were not the result of a lack of provision, but because there were psychological, social, structural and cultural barriers to accessing services (understanding, stigma and confidentiality).	Pros: Explored the views of young people involved with youth justice. Cons: Small sample size for mixed methods. Unsure on rationale for using mixed methods to explore mental health needs. Views of young people explored and translated through an adult lens.

University of
East London

School of Psychology Ethics Committee

REQUEST FOR TITLE CHANGE TO AN ETHICS APPLICATION

For BSc, MSc/MA and taught Professional Doctorate students

Please complete this form if you are requesting approval for a proposed title change to an ethics application that has been approved by the School of Psychology

By applying for a change of title request, you confirm that in doing so, the process by which you have collected your data/conducted your research has not changed or deviated from your original ethics approval. If either of these have changed, then you are required to complete an 'Ethics Application Amendment Form'.

How to complete and submit the request

1	Complete the request form electronically.
2	Type your name in the 'student's signature' section (page 2).
3	Using your UEL email address, email the completed request form along with associated documents to Dr Rita Lopes (Ethics Committee Member): r.lopes@uel.ac.uk
4	Your request form will be returned to you via your UEL email address with the reviewer's decision box completed. Keep a copy of the approval to submit with your dissertation.

Required documents

A copy of the approval of your initial ethics application.	**YES** ☒

Details

Name of applicant:	**Eleanor Hobbs**
Programme of study:	**Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology**
Title of research:	Current title: Working With Vulnerable Groups in Complex Systems: Exploring the Experiences of Educational Psychologists Working Within a Youth Justice Service
Name of supervisor:	**Pandora Giles**

Proposed title change

	Briefly outline the nature of your proposed title change in the boxes below
Old title:	Working With Vulnerable Groups in Complex Systems: Exploring the Experiences of Educational Psychologists Working Within a Youth Justice Service
New title:	Working with vulnerable groups in complex systems: Exploring the experiences of Educational Psychologists working with Youth Justice Services
Rationale:	Examiner recommendation in Viva

Confirmation

	YES	NO
Is your supervisor aware of your proposed change of title and in agreement with it?	☒	☐
Does your change of title impact the process of how you collected your data/conducted your research?	☐	☒

Student's signature

Student: (Typed name to act as signature)	**Eleanor Hobbs**
Date:	**30/09/2024**

Reviewer's decision		
Title change approved:	YES ☒	NO ☐
Comments:		
Reviewer: (Typed name to act as signature)	**Trishna Patel (Ethics Chair)**	
Date:	**07/10/2024**	